



*A Reflection on the Fifth Week of Lent
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Written on the Heart

Through Moses, God gave the people the commandments, written on stone. They were the outward sign of covenant between God and a people. Centuries later, Jeremiah the prophet tells us that God establishes a new covenant with the people, and this time it's written on the heart. Everyone will know God, for God's law will be within them.

We are approaching the end of the journey, and the end is even more difficult than the beginning or the middle. Jesus' preaching and healing have caused great controversy and will not lead to a happy end. Those in power, who cherish their position and the status quo, do not like the wandering man from Galilee. He threatens them and he threatens everything that they stand for. It is not safe to let him keep going on the way he does.

Jesus knows this. He knows the end is coming. He talks about it, but he uses strange language. He talks about being "glorified," about being "lifted up." To be "lifted up" is to be crucified. Criminals are crucified. How can this be "glorified"? In Jesus, glory comes from shame. Life comes from death. To lose life is to save it. God is "glorified" in the total, complete surrender of Jesus.

If we stick to the surface of these statements they are absurd. If, however, we slowly come to recognize the unfathomable love that God has for the people and the lengths to which God will go to save us, Jesus' words are hope and blessing.

We see now why he came: to be God's love among the people, to go to the ends of life in order to heal the terrible division between and among God and the people and all of creation.

Those in Catholic health care ministry know about such healing. They encounter it every day. How deeply will we enter into the suffering of those we serve in order to heal? Where can we find the funds to continue this work? And what of those who mistrust us, who consider us foolish? What of those who want things to stay as they have been? Whose position trumps compassion? How is God glorified in all of this?

If we have learned anything in this Lenten journey, it is that we don't know everything, and that most things get turned upside down in a desert. Perhaps we



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have also learned that life, wisdom and healing come from the most unexpected places and people: an itinerant preacher, a serpent, an unhappy prophet.

Lent is the season of the heart. It tells the story of God's absolute fidelity. It shows us the movement from externals to the heart. Covenant is not about law with all the guarantees that the law can provide. Covenant is about the heart and what is written there.

What is written on your heart today?

The Catholic Health Association would like to thank Jon Sarta for allowing us to use his music from the albums "The Catholic Music Project Volume V: Lent," and "The Catholic Music Project Volume VI: Easter" for the podcast version of this reflection. His music can be obtained from mjmusic.com.