

Wednesday, July 1, 2009

Canada Day

Genesis 21: 5, 8-20; Psalm 34; Matthew 8: 28-34

While there is no special liturgy in the Canadian missalette for this day of celebration, we will use for our prayer the prayer “for civic occasions” both today and on July 4. Our attention is turned to Abraham’s two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, playing together. This arouses Sarah’s jealousy and she wants Hagar and Ishmael cast out. God promises the distressed Abraham that Ishmael will be the progenitor of a great nation. Once again Abraham must trust. Hagar is sent into the desert and when her water runs out she leaves her son under a tree and sits apart, weeping and praying not to see her son’s death. God consoles her and provides a well of water for her in the desert, a holy place for Muslims today. God heard the cry of the poor, the outcast Hagar. Jesus hears the fierce cries of two Gadarene [Gerasene in Mark] demoniacs, and frees them from their demons.

Abraham’s is a household divided, all too common in our day. Isaac is father of the Israel, and Ishmael the father of Arabs. Once they played together, but for too many centuries they have engaged in caution and outright war. Where might your own family tree need healing, unity and peace? Pray for your family and thank God that all our ancestors are now one in Christ.

O God, you guide all in wisdom and love. Accept our prayers for our nation[s]. Grant wisdom to our leaders and integrity to our citizens. Secure for us harmony and justice that we may live in unity and peace.

Thursday, July 2, 2009

Genesis 22: 1-19; Psalm 116; Matthew 9:1-8

God has promised a nation springing from Ishmael, but here God commands that Abraham offer Isaac as a burnt offering. Father and son walk together to the place of sacrifice, with Abraham assuring the boy that God would provide the lamb. His knife is stopped only by an angelic intervention, and God renews the promise of a great nation. The psalm antiphon is “I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.” Jesus asks what is easier, to say “your sins are forgiven” or “stand up and walk”? Walking is a theme.

Can you take a walk and pray today? Some of us are in wheelchairs, bedridden. Others of us have paralyzed parts of our psyches. Some of us may be afraid to walk with our Father, afraid of what sacrifice might be demanded. Lay your fears, your complaints, your sins, your paralysis as an offering to God. God doesn’t only want the “good stuff.” God wants all of us just as we are. How will you respond?

You have delivered us from death, freed our eyes from tears. We walk before you, God of freedom, and ask that all the heart broken, the hungry, the rejected may join us your land of the living.

Friday, July 3, 2009

Thomas, apostle

Ephesians 2: 19-22; Psalm 117; John 20: 24-29

We are “no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and members of God’s own household.” Why such a first reading for Thomas? Because he may have felt alienated from his community, especially after the Easter night appearance which he missed. What a blessing for us, however, that we can contemplate the compassion of Jesus for this friend. Who else is invited to touch him?

When have you felt alienated, strange, even in your own family, community, parish? Imagine Jesus standing before you right now and holding out his wounded hands to you, his friend and member of God’s own household. Remember that the Spirit teaches us through our imaginations. What does Jesus say to you? What do you do with those hands of his? Contemplate this invitation to intimacy.

Let us weep with all those who flee to save their children, like Hagar, immigrants to our wealthy countries. Let us welcome all who are strangers, or strange to us, we pray.

Saturday, July 4, 2009

Independence Day in the US

Genesis 27:1-5, 9-10, 15-29; Psalm 135; Matthew 9: 14-17

How ironic that this should be called independence day, a day when we hear that Jacob cheats his brother out of his birthright by lying to his blind father Isaac. Acting out about fears of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, we so independently and deceptively are waging war. To the Romans, Paul writes, “Who will save us from this body of death?” Who will save us from the violence of our world? Only Christ Jesus, the bridegroom who is always with us, faithfully loving us, even in our most awful crimes against humanity.

Jacob has to suffer many consequences for his lies. Let us pray for all those who suffer the consequence of our lies: personal lies that hurt family, friends and colleagues; church lies that give scandal; national lies that promote violence and the abuse of power. Pray for God’s mercy.

O God, you guide all in wisdom and love. Accept our prayers for our nation[s]. Grant wisdom to our leaders and integrity to our citizens. Secure for us harmony and justice that we may live in unity and peace.