

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C 2007 - Is 62:1-5; Jn 2:1-12

1. Up in Yonkers, there is a seat in a church
 - a. that I sit in whenever I am there.
2. It is a seat in the chapel of the major Seminary, St. Joseph's,
 - a. The place people study to become priests for the Archdiocese of New York.
3. I sit there to remember the first time I sat there, Back in 1990.
 - a. No it was not my first day of seminary.
 - i. I had actually already been studying for two years
 - ii. in the minor seminary, St. John Neumann, in the Bronx.
 - b. In fact, as far as I knew, it was my last.
 - c. Because even though I had done well,
 - d. graduated at the top of my class
 - e. and was recommended by the minor seminary to go on to St. Joseph's.
 - f. The rector, of the major seminary would not let me come.
4. The reason he gave was that as a convert,
 - a. I could not possibly be Catholic enough to come to his seminary.
 - b. And thus I had to leave, find an apartment, get a job,
 - c. and then maybe in a year, I would be readmitted.
5. Many of you have heard this story, of course;
 - a. But I would wager you have never heard about that seat.
 - b. Because it is where I sat, immediately after the rector's rejection.
 - c. And the reason you did not hear about it is because until recently I would have found it difficult to talk about what I was thinking and feeling as I sat there.
 - i. I was angry of course; I mean, I had given up everything to be a Catholic.
 - ii. But deep down inside, I was afraid
 - iii. That God had let me give up so much just to pull the rug out from underneath me and punish me for my sins .
 - (1) I knew that God was a just God.
 - (a) But I never knew that God's could be so cruel.
6. But then it was what God did to the people of Jerusalem, right?
 - a. I mean, in the six century BC,
 - i. when the Babylonians destroyed their city
 - (1) and carted them off into exile for a generation.
 - b. The people of Jerusalem might have wondered how God could let this happen?
 - c. But everyone else knew why.
 - i. Jerusalem, they said, was like an unfaithful woman -
 - (1) she deserved it;
 - (2) and the Law commanded it;
 - (3) because the punishment in the Hebrew law for a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband was death.
 - (4) Why shouldn't it be the same for a city, or a whole country that

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was unfaithful to God?

(5) It might seem cruel; but it was only just.

7. Indeed you don't have to live in the 6th century BC
 - a. nor sit in a seat in the seminary in Yonkers
 - i. to believe that this is the way God acts.
 - (1) Many do, even today.
 - ii. It is fear behind the threats made by militants,
 - (1) Muslim as well as Christian or Jewish, or any religious persuasion.
 - iii. It is the fear they we instill in our children,
 - (1) and very often carry within our selves into adulthood.
 - iv. It is the fear which causes us to believe the fundamentalists,
 - (1) who promise that God's justice will punish America because of its sins.
8. And yet according to the prophet whose words we hear in this morning's first reading, that is what makes God so odd . . . and marvelous.
 - a. God does not destroy Jerusalem - no, the Babylonians did that;
 - b. God is the one who vindicates Jerusalem,
 - c. Vindicates her as if a terrible injustice had been done to her.
 - i. not through punishment, but through love;
 - (1) If there were any mistakes, they are forgotten,
 - (2) If there were any sins they are forgiven
 - ii. God gives her anew name and thus a new reputation.
 - iii. Like a man marrying a fallen woman,
 - (1) God's justice is revealed in God's love.
9. Maybe that is why John tells this curious story of a wedding, where they run out of wine.
 - a. It would have only been just to let the hosts suffer;
 - i. after all it was their stupidity that caused this mess.
 - b. Indeed that at first seems to be the attitude of Jesus,
 - i. who was attending the wedding with his mother and the disciples.
 - (1) But then after his mother asks him to help, he turns the water into the best wine the guests had ever tasted.
 - ii. This according to John is Jesus first miracle; a simple act of kindness at a wedding.
 - (1) IT was the miracle that was important to the disciples;
 - (a) John says it was why they believed in him
 - (2) But it was the fact that the miracle took place at a wedding that was important to John;
 - iii. Why? Because John knows his Bible;
 - (1) he knows that a wedding is the way the prophets,
 - (a) and not only the one we hear from today,

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- (2) speak about God's relationship with God's people;
 - (a) A relationship where God does not punish
 - (i) but vindicates;
 - (b) A relationship where God forgets mistakes
 - (i) and forgives sins.
 - (3) And thus in his simple act of kindness at the wedding Jesus reveals far more than his ability to make wine out of water;
 - (4) he reveals the kind of God he serves; the kind of God he is;
 - (a) one whose justice is revealed in love.
10. Even though this might be the kind of God Jesus is,
- a. Very often it is not the kind of God we believe in;
 - i. No we believe in the God whose justice is meted out in punishment; preferably of others who have wronged us.
 - b. And maybe, just maybe, that is why sometimes God permits us to experience failures, disappointments even crushing blows
 - i. I have often thought that is why God allowed what happened to me that day at Seminary.
 - (1) to offer us the choice of how we will respond;
 - (a) with punishment or forgiveness
 - ii. Oh make no mistake about it;
 - (1) I was afraid I was being punished by God
 - (2) and angry because I felt the punishment was unjust
 - (a) But over time, I came to realize something
 - (b) I came to realize that God did not punish me
 - (c) God picked me up, and helped me to go on; giving me the time to learn how to forgive the way God did with Israel, the way Jesus did from the Cross;
 - (d) To forget mistakes and forgive sins.
 - (3) I am not sure I am very good at it; in fact I am pretty poor at it; I harbor many resentments, of course am still a sinner.
 - iii. But almost every day I remember that seat in the seminary, where I thought it was the end; and I realize, that for God it was only the beginning; because that is how God deals with all of us;
 - (1) Using the defeats and disappointments in our lives not to punish us, but to teach to forgive sins and forget mistakes; in short to become a sign of who God truly is, Just like Jesus was; the one whose justice is revealed in love.
 - (a) The one whose justice is love.