

Fifth Saturday of Lent ~ 3/31

"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Ezekiel 37:26-27)

The prophet Ezekiel is not harassing the people in these verses. Rather he offers them a glimpse of what God wants to offer. Prophets, after all, are as much about promise as they are about threats. Ezekiel wants the people to realize that all the difficulties they are going through places them in a position to receive a wonderful new covenant. It will be a covenant of peace, something they desperately wanted. It would ensure their generativity for all ages to come. And most astounding of all, their God will take up residence right in their midst. These people will be God's people.

Imagine the most famous person whom you admire calling you on the phone and asking if he or she might move in with you. Imagine if he or she told you that all the wealth, all the prestige, and all the other gifts that they possessed will now belong to you as well. Would we like that? Sounds good at first but perhaps the longer that we think about it the more questions we might have concerning how this is going to impact our lives. We question who would give of themselves that generously without expecting something in return. If Bill Gates or Julia Roberts called and offered us their wealth or fame wouldn't we be a little worried about what this was going to cost us? Would the positive impact be worth the changes that would naturally have to occur in our own world to accommodate this person? Would we embrace the idea only to regret the decision later?

Ezekiel says the same thing about God. He wants to come into our lives and bring all kinds of goodness with Him. Greater than any famous actor or actress, more powerful than any wealthy businessman, our God wants to give us more than we could possibly hope for in life. We often read these words and say, "Oh yes! I want God to come into my life. This will be wonderful." But...on further thought is my world going to have to change? Am I ready for that? The wonderful promises of the prophets are sometimes as difficult to accept as any fire and brimstone warnings to repent. Either way, they are calling us to accept God and to respond to His grace and as hard as it seems these are not always easy gifts to receive.

Questions for Reflection

- 1. When I read the uplifting words of a prophet, am I confident that God will find me waiting with open arms or do I worry about what this will mean for my life?*
- 2. How do I avoid getting stuck in the "fear" of change?*