

***Second Sunday of Easter***  
***April 7, 2024***  
***Year of the Most Holy Eucharist***  
***Reflection #15***

*“Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.” (Numbers 21:6-9)*

The wilderness travels of the children of Israel offer much for our consideration. The story of the bronze serpent is one of the more famous events during this time. As we have seen previously, the people are complaining against God and Moses. As a result of these continued “grievances,” Scripture recalls God punishing the people by allowing them to fall victim to the bites of un-named venomous snakes. One could speculate, the poison of their complaints attracts the poison of the vipers. It is only after they acknowledge their sins, Moses intercedes and God’s mercy provides the remedy. Moses fashions an image of a snake, places it upon a pole and anyone who looks upon it is healed.

We are able to make a psychological observation based on this event. We may rightly say, a person is healed once they face a fear which holds sway over them. Fear has the ability to paralyze a person. Someone may suffer from the fear of snakes, spiders, rodents or sharks. These are visible things which could “potentially” harm us. Our diagnosis: the people no longer fear the serpents because they face their fears, the image of the snake on the pole.

This psychological healing can find further footing when Jesus relates His own death to this event. *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”* (John 3:14-15). Death, one may argue, is mankind’s deepest, most powerful fear. It comes when we least expect it and no one is free from its grasp. When we see Jesus’ body hanging from the cross, we need not fear either suffering or death. Although not present for the moment, the Christian knows that Jesus’ Resurrection has conquered both. Now, ask yourself: “Why do I believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus?” Taking into account the various news stories of these past few years, we may feel the world around us untruthful. We might even perceive this happening multiple times each day. Again, I ask, why do we have faith in a story almost 2000 years old?

Returning to the wilderness event, the serpent raised upon a stick of wood should remind us of another ancient serpent hanging on a tree. From the mouth of both, death enters man’s world. The poison from the snake could kill the body of the man. The poisonous lies that flowed from the mouth of the ancient serpent killed man’s relationship with God, creation and each other. Jesus’ passion and death not only heal mankind, but affirm the truth of God’s love for each person. When we stop and truly reflect upon Jesus on the cross, we are reminded of God’s abiding presence in all aspects of our lives. He is there in the good and the bad of each

life, for He took upon His Divine Self all aspects of our lives. His death affirms everything said during His earthly life. *“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”* (1 John 3:16). Because Jesus is Truth, His words are Truthful and His action of dying on the cross affirm that Truthfulness. Please remember that as we proceed in the future. If God/Jesus is Truth, then when He says His Body and Blood are real food and drink, I ask, would His words cease being Truthful?