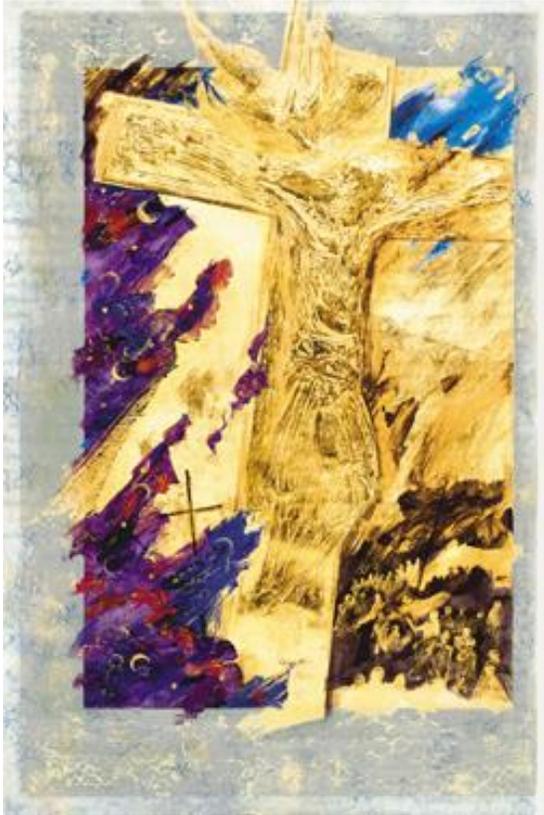


Lenten Reflections

April 8, 2019



It's always said that the truth will prevail. Today's reading brings that to light. Susanna was wrongfully accused of cheating on her husband by two very powerful elders. The community believed the elders because they were wise with age. However, I found that Susanna knew with her faith the truth would be revealed and her innocence restored.

Innocence is very important in faith history for me, because every person goes through struggles and journeys where their innocence is tested. In a few weeks it will be Passover. Passover is the celebration of the freeing of the Jews who were unrightfully enslaved by the Egyptian Pharaohs. Yet again, the innocent prevailing. At this time, during Lent and Passover, we are celebrating the trials others went through for us to have the lives we do now. I truly believe if we strive to live our lives knowing that the past has made us stronger, we will be successful, and the truth will prevail.

*Erica Anderson, Coordinator of
Student Engagement*

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent
Lectionary: 251

[DN 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62](#)

In Babylon there lived a man named Joakim,
who married a very beautiful and God-fearing woman, Susanna,
the daughter of Hilkiah;
her pious parents had trained their daughter
according to the law of Moses.
Joakim was very rich;
he had a garden near his house,
and the Jews had recourse to him often
because he was the most respected of them all.

That year, two elders of the people were appointed judges,
of whom the Lord said, "Wickedness has come out of Babylon:
from the elders who were to govern the people as judges."
These men, to whom all brought their cases,
frequented the house of Joakim.
When the people left at noon,
Susanna used to enter her husband's garden for a walk.
When the old men saw her enter every day for her walk,
they began to lust for her.
They suppressed their consciences;
they would not allow their eyes to look to heaven,
and did not keep in mind just judgments.

One day, while they were waiting for the right moment,
she entered the garden as usual, with two maids only.
She decided to bathe, for the weather was warm.
Nobody else was there except the two elders,
who had hidden themselves and were watching her.
"Bring me oil and soap," she said to the maids,
"and shut the garden doors while I bathe."

As soon as the maids had left,
the two old men got up and hurried to her.
"Look," they said, "the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us;
give in to our desire, and lie with us.
If you refuse, we will testify against you
that you dismissed your maids because a young man was here with you."

"I am completely trapped," Susanna groaned.
"If I yield, it will be my death;
if I refuse, I cannot escape your power.
Yet it is better for me to fall into your power without guilt

than to sin before the Lord."

Then Susanna shrieked, and the old men also shouted at her,
as one of them ran to open the garden doors.

When the people in the house heard the cries from the garden,
they rushed in by the side gate to see what had happened to her.

At the accusations by the old men,
the servants felt very much ashamed,
for never had any such thing been said about Susanna.

When the people came to her husband Joakim the next day,
the two wicked elders also came,
fully determined to put Susanna to death.

Before all the people they ordered:

"Send for Susanna, the daughter of Hilkiah,
the wife of Joakim."

When she was sent for,
she came with her parents, children and all her relatives.
All her relatives and the onlookers were weeping.

In the midst of the people the two elders rose up
and laid their hands on her head.

Through tears she looked up to heaven,
for she trusted in the Lord wholeheartedly.

The elders made this accusation:

"As we were walking in the garden alone,
this woman entered with two girls
and shut the doors of the garden, dismissing the girls.

A young man, who was hidden there, came and lay with her.

When we, in a corner of the garden, saw this crime,
we ran toward them.

We saw them lying together,
but the man we could not hold, because he was stronger than we;
he opened the doors and ran off.

Then we seized her and asked who the young man was,
but she refused to tell us.

We testify to this."

The assembly believed them,
since they were elders and judges of the people,
and they condemned her to death.

But Susanna cried aloud:

"O eternal God, you know what is hidden
and are aware of all things before they come to be:
you know that they have testified falsely against me.

Here I am about to die,
though I have done none of the things
with which these wicked men have charged me."

The Lord heard her prayer.
As she was being led to execution,
God stirred up the holy spirit of a young boy named Daniel,
and he cried aloud:
"I will have no part in the death of this woman."
All the people turned and asked him, "What is this you are saying?"
He stood in their midst and continued,
"Are you such fools, O children of Israel!
To condemn a woman of Israel without examination
and without clear evidence?
Return to court, for they have testified falsely against her."

Then all the people returned in haste.
To Daniel the elders said,
"Come, sit with us and inform us,
since God has given you the prestige of old age."
But he replied,
"Separate these two far from each other that I may examine them."

After they were separated one from the other,
he called one of them and said:
"How you have grown evil with age!
Now have your past sins come to term:
passing unjust sentences, condemning the innocent,
and freeing the guilty, although the Lord says,
'The innocent and the just you shall not put to death.'
Now, then, if you were a witness,
tell me under what tree you saw them together."
"Under a mastic tree," he answered.
Daniel replied, "Your fine lie has cost you your head,
for the angel of God shall receive the sentence from him
and split you in two."
Putting him to one side, he ordered the other one to be brought.
Daniel said to him,
"Offspring of Canaan, not of Judah, beauty has seduced you,
lust has subverted your conscience.
This is how you acted with the daughters of Israel,
and in their fear they yielded to you;
but a daughter of Judah did not tolerate your wickedness.
Now, then, tell me under what tree you surprised them together."
"Under an oak," he said.
Daniel replied, "Your fine lie has cost you also your head,
for the angel of God waits with a sword to cut you in two
so as to make an end of you both."

The whole assembly cried aloud,
blessing God who saves those who hope in him.
They rose up against the two elders,

for by their own words Daniel had convicted them of perjury.
According to the law of Moses,
they inflicted on them
the penalty they had plotted to impose on their neighbor:
they put them to death.
Thus was innocent blood spared that day.

Or [DN 13:41C-62](#)

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Responsorial Psalm [PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6](#)

R. (4ab) Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;

Beside restful waters he leads me;

he refreshes my soul.

R. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side

With your rod and your staff

that give me courage.

R. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

You spread the table before me

in the sight of my foes;

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

R. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

Only goodness and kindness follow me

all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

R. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

Verse Before The Gospel [EZ 33:11](#)

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, says the Lord,
but rather in his conversion, that he may live.

Gospel [JN 8:12-20](#)

Jesus spoke to them again, saying,
"I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life."
So the Pharisees said to him,
"You testify on your own behalf,
so your testimony cannot be verified."
Jesus answered and said to them,
"Even if I do testify on my own behalf, my testimony can be verified,
because I know where I came from and where I am going.
But you do not know where I come from or where I am going.
You judge by appearances, but I do not judge anyone.
And even if I should judge, my judgment is valid,
because I am not alone,
but it is I and the Father who sent me.
Even in your law it is written
that the testimony of two men can be verified.
I testify on my behalf and so does the Father who sent me."
So they said to him, "Where is your father?"
Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father.
If you knew me, you would know my Father also."
He spoke these words
while teaching in the treasury in the temple area.
But no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.