

A close-up photograph of several purple flowers with bright yellow centers, growing from green foliage. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the same flowers and a hint of a natural outdoor setting.

Daily Reflections

May 2, 2017

Scripture

Acts 7:51-6:1

Stephen said to the people, the elders, and the scribes:
"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears,
you always oppose the Holy Spirit;
you are just like your ancestors.

Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute?

They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one,
whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.

You received the law as transmitted by angels,
but you did not observe it."

When they heard this, they were infuriated,
and they ground their teeth at him.

But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit,
looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God
and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,
and Stephen said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened
and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

But they cried out in a loud voice,

covered their ears, and rushed upon him together.

They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him.

The witnesses laid down their cloaks
at the feet of a young man named Saul.
As they were stoning Stephen, he called out,
"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice,
"Lord, do not hold this sin against them";
and when he said this, he fell asleep.
Now Saul was consenting to his execution.

Our Scripture Reflection

My Mother used to say, "The Lord never shuts the door without opening a window at the same time." Her words certainly fit today's text from Acts. A horrific persecution of the early Church had broken out resulting in the death of the disciple Stephen. Please note: Those religious leaders who cast stones at Stephen are laying their cloaks at the feet of a man named Saul. Saul would soon go through an amazing conversion experience and become the super Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary in the Church's history!

Food for your Journey

Theologian at Union Seminary in New York City, Kosuke Koyama, writes powerfully about "The Hand Painfully Open":

"With our hand clenched in a fist we cannot so much as pick up an orange or a boiled egg from the breakfast table. With a fist we cannot open a water faucet to wash the dishes or our face. Cooking and laundering cannot be done with hands closed in a fist. In terms of everyday human operations our fists are singularly ineffective. We use our open, active hands to do almost everything that we do. The fist, so unpractical and ineffective, is a symbol of power. When the hand closes in a fist, the fingers disappear. When fingers disappear in a fist we perceive the sense of closedness. Human aspiration towards communication suffers a severe blow in such an image of closedness." (33)

The world lives under the shadow of two huge fists, but its healing is in the open, nail pierced hands of Christ.

Jesus reaches out to us with hands "painfully open"; he could not have been crucified with a clenched fist. "Thus God is 'open,' not ideologically fixed. This

God is not afraid of 'losing face.' This God waits patiently, ready to respond to human response. The strange concept of the 'repentance of God' is possible because God rules over history but does not monopolize history. Here is suggested the painful openness of God. Our history is touched by the hands of Christ painfully open" (36).

--Koyama,

"The Hand Painfully Open,"

Lexington Theological Quarterly, 22 (1987), 33-46.hile

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, May I always remember that no matter how hopeless things can seem, You are with me at all times. Amen.