

Reflection July 6, 2020
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An IHM question. What is written inside your ring? Some answered: "Ego te sponsabo."

Almost every IHM listening right now has this phrase from Hosea inscribed in her profession ring. It was not something we reflected on and chose. It was a part of profession, just as the words of the vow formula. History tells us that Fr. Gillet presented the first members with a ring on that first profession day. That's as much as I know about the ring; but we had one from the beginning. It's a part of us.

Of course, we know the source of the quotation; we know that these words from the prophet Hosea quote God speaking to Israel, expressing constant love in spite of Israel's infidelity: "I will espouse you to me forever."

While many no longer think of their religious life with bridal images, there remains the fact of belonging to God. That began in baptism and then, rooted in baptism, it continues in profession. Whether thinking of Hosea or profession or of today's Gospel, the essential factor is the constancy of God's love, which calls for a response of trust.

God's love is immense and personal; it is all inclusive. Hosea lists the qualities of God's love. God espouses ... takes possession of Israel, of each of us, in right ... in justice ... in love ... in mercy ... in fidelity and, Hosea says, "you shall know the Lord."

In today's Gospel, written centuries later, we hear of people desperately calling upon, and trusting in, this love God offers; they have seen it manifest in the care and power of Jesus. We don't know if they had heard the story of Hosea, but they have heard of cures and they approach Jesus with absolute trust.

The Official comes saying: "My daughter has died, but *if you come*, she will live." The child has died; the mourners are making a din. The father has left it all to go and find Jesus. He is convinced that if Jesus comes, the child will live. And, so it is; despite the interruption from another desperate sufferer they encounter on the way. Jesus goes to the house; the mourners are there, mocking Jesus' assumption that the girl is asleep. He puts them out and takes the hand of the child. She gets up, alive.

On their way, Jesus and the Official were interrupted by the woman who has suffered from hemorrhages for 12 years. Jesus is near enough to touch and she is desperate for healing. She believes in the power of God. She has said to herself, "*If only* I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured." She will not be put off. Jesus turns and sees her. "Courage," he says, "your faith has saved you." She is healed.

The broad, compassionate love of God fills the Gospel; it is meant to fill the world. It is the love Hosea describes, in right ... in justice ... in love ... in mercy ... in fidelity. We see many, daily expressing this kind of compassionate love in the care of coronavirus patients.

But the upsurge of racism in our country also confronts us. We have seen hate, perhaps masking irrational fear, take possession of crowds. We are shamed by the blind and brutal violence. It is in sharp contrast with the consoling love of God expressed in the Scriptures. We know what is written of God's love is for all, but we don't know well how to respond to this other plague in our midst.

On the news recently, I saw the images of a slight 9-year-old African American girl skating in a gracious routine across the bold yellow letters of the "Black Lives Matter Plaza" near the White House. She seemed to me a sign of what could be ... what must be. It is quite usual for a child to be admired. It is urgent that this girl be equally admired and respected when she is 19 and 29 and onward.

May she know how precious she is in the eyes of God, and may we continue to grow in understanding of how much each life matters.

Day by day we can ponder:

How strong is my trust in God's love?

How often do I draw hope from the beauty and goodness of others?