

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning. And welcome to Morning Prayers. Please stand as you are able for our responsive reading from the black Appleton Salter book. Today, we'll be reading Psalm 108 found on page 54. "My heart is firm, O God; I will sing and chant a hymn with all my soul."

Congregation:

"Awake, O harp and lyre. I will wake the dawn."

Laurie Sedgwick:

"I will praise You among the peoples, O Lord, sing a hymn to You among the nations."

Congregation:

"For Your faithfulness is higher than the heavens; your steadfastness reaches the sky."

Laurie Sedgwick:

"Exalt Yourself over the heavens O God; let Your glory be over all the earth."

Congregation:

"That those whom You love may be rescued, deliver with Your right hand and answer me."

Laurie Sedgwick:

"Grant us Your aid against the foe, for the help of man is worthless."

Congregation:

"With with God we shall triumph; He will trample our foes."

Choir:

(singing)

Francis X. Clooney, S.J.:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Francis X. Clooney, S.J.:

I am of the Roman Catholic tradition and today in our church calendar is the feast of Pope St. John Paul II, who is inaugurated as Pope on this day in 1978 and was Pope for some 27 years. For our reading today, here is a passage from the homily he gave on October 22nd, 1978. "Our time calls us, urges us, obliges us to gaze upon the Lord and immerse ourselves in humble and develop meditation on the mystery of the Supreme love and power of Christ himself. He who was born of the Virgin Mary, the carpenter's son, the son of the living God, came to make us all kingdom of priests. The second Vatican council has reminded us of the mystery of this power of the fact that Christ's mission as priest, prophet

teacher and king continues even now. All of us, the whole people of God, share in this threefold mission. The absolute let yet sweet and gentle power of the Lord responds to the whole depths of human persons. To their loftiest aspirations of intellect, heart, and will.

It does not speak the language of force, but expresses itself in love and truth. So often today people do not know it was within them, in the depths of their minds and heart arts. So often they are uncertain about the meaning of their lives on this earth. They assailed by doubt, a doubt, which turns into despair. Sisters and brothers help people in despair. Do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help me and all those who wish to serve Christ and in Christ power to serve the human person and the whole of humankind. Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors of Christ, open to his saving power the boundaries of states economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid."

If anyone was a religious leader in our times, certainly one of the top candidates was John Paul II in those 27 years. A charismatic figure, a larger than life figure who was always in the news, always is before people's eyes. He was a leader of a very, very large community of a global nature. He was known for his charismatic personality. He was known for being a scholar. For writing on faith and reason, writing on love and body and the experience. He spoke truth to the power, confronting totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, particularly in his home country of Poland. He was not afraid to speak the truth. He believed very firmly in inter religious interfaith dialogue. He went to the Western wall in Jerusalem. He visited and prayed in a mosque and a synagogue. He gathered people together in the Vatican in 1986 leaders of different traditions that all together might pray in peace. On and on there were many good and leadership qualities about John Paul.

But like any leader who's on the stage of the world he was also exposed in his weaknesses and limitations. We know those as well. Under his leadership the church remained too centralized. Perhaps became more centralized during his time than before. He never seems to have understood or heard the voices of women in the church, their desire for a full role in sharing in power and leadership in the church. He never seemed to understand the people of the United States and how the church works here. And particularly in his last years, he was more neglectful, perhaps even blind to the problem of sex abuse in the Catholic church. And did not do what needed to be done. This man who had many, many, many virtues and some vices, some limitations like the rest of us, also showed his body, his suffering upon the world stage. When he had cancer and an operation on his bowels, everybody in the world knew about this.

When early in his pontificate, he was almost assassinated in St. Peter's square. Everyone stopped and watched wondering if his reign was over in only two years. And in his last years, the slow decline in Parkinson's disease with this vigorous lively man became more and more immobile. And in a wheelchair, barely able to speak. He was a leader. I think a leader on the stage reminds us that leaders are human people. Leaders are people with their own limitations. Leaders are people like you and me who have the good, the less than good, and yet their lives are online. For us, as we think today, the challenge I think is to take up the challenges that he put before us, as I read in the reading from his first homily. We too are called to be prophets. We Are called to speak boldly in God's name.

We are called to speak the truth blessing, what is good denouncing and exposing injustice. Showing the people of God, the way forward. We are called to be priests, not clerics clinging to fancy investments and power. But priests to hold together, preserve and enliven traditions of truth and practice while drawing the community together in worship. While helping to make the sacred part of the real world around us and take the secular things of life and making them sacred again and again. We are called like John Paul, not to be kings, not to be rulers, but to be leaders who are servants of the people of God. Doing the painstaking daily work needed to convene, to preserve, to expand to community, serving the people of every nation, every faith, every background for the common good, we all share. We will do no better than John Paul. We too have our limitations, our weaknesses, our frailty, and all we can do is hope that as he in his many years, when we are called to be leaders, we will do the best we can and repent of our failures.

I close my part with a prayer that he prayed a famous prayer for peace. "Lord, Jesus Christ, prince of peace. You are yourself, our peace and reconciliation. So often you said to your friends, peace be with you. We ask you to grant us peace, make all women and men witnesses to truth and justice. The love of sister and brother. Banish from our hearts, whatever might endanger peace. Enlighten our rulers, that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace. May all peoples on the earth learn to live together in community as sisters and brothers. May the peace we long for blossom forth and reign always over us. Now, and for days to come." Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And now please stand as you are able and let us recite together the prayer that Jesus taught us saying, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespass as we forgive those, the trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us for evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever." Amen. Let us sing, My God. I love Thee, not because. Number 302, found in your Crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Laurie Sedgwick:

Go forth in simplicity. Find and walk the path that leads to compassion and wisdom. Welcome the stranger and open your heart to a world in need of healing. Be courageous before the forces of hate. Hold and embody a vision of the common good that serves the needs of the people. This we pray in Jesus name. Amen.