Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matthew 18:18).

Deut 34:1-12; Matt 18:15-20

Commemoration of St. Clare of Assisi

The figure of Moses emerges within Jewish history as the founder of Israel and the source of the Law. He leads the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt by the Exodus and he is the mediator of the Covenant with God that makes Israel God’s chosen people. His holiness and authority flow from a unique intimacy with God that began at the Burning Bush and was affirmed on Mount Sinai when he speaks with Yahweh face to face. In today’s first reading, Moses dies before the Israelites enter Canaan, denied entry with them because of some unknown sin.

Moses is mentioned over 80 times in the New Testament, making him the interpretive key whom Jesus supersedes and fulfills as the Son of God. Jesus brings salvation history to its intended goal -- eternal life with God in the Beloved Community. Jesus’ death and resurrection are the real Exodus from sin and death into the freedom of the children of God. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross completes all temple worship, replaces Passover and fulfills the Law and the Prophets.

Today’s Gospel shows, in a sense, that the convergence of all the themes surrounding Moses in the Old Testament ultimately focuses salvation history on the gift of reconciliation to unite all of God’s people in a single covenant of love. Love fulfills the Law and the Prophets. Love is the one thing necessary to fulfill human history and restore the image and likeness of God to humanity. The long road that began in the Pentateuch culminates in the person of Jesus, who recapitulates all of Hebrew history and subjects it to God’s justice and mercy.

The day-to-day reality of this hope is accomplished every time sinners seek and give forgiveness, communities are reconciled by mercy, and divisions are healed in prayer. Where even two or three are gathered in his name, they have the power to invoke the presence of Jesus. What we bind on earth is bound in heaven. The immense, abstract themes of the Bible rise or fall, are gained or lost, depending on whether we bring reconciliation within our communities, to our personal relationships and in our hearts.

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