

Battling the Goliaths in our Lives



Much of the history of human civilization is written in battles and wars. Every empire, every nation and every clan or tribe has had its own battles. Some battles are won others are lost. Over time the narratives of these battles move from historical facts to fiction and folklore amassing with them all forms of interpretations, often favouring the victor. The Ashanti Kingdom for instance had series of battles with the British during the 17-18 Century, they won some and some they lost. The final battle that brought down the kingdom was in 1900 when the rebellion of the Queen Mother, Yaa Asantewaa was crushed and Ashanti was annexed to the British colony.

Today we have another battle, somewhat different, but equally important in the life of the people of Israel. The Philistines were a thorn in the flesh of the fledging new Israel as they settled in the Promised Land and begin to expand their own territories. Saul is anointed King to lead his people but Saul has a flawed personality. On the one hand he is a great warrior. He defeated the Amalekites, but on the other hand he had his own inner demons of lack of self-confidence. The Philistines posed a threat to his kingship. Saul had to defeat them, but he was afraid. The challenge was laid at his feet by the powerful warrior of the Philistines, Goliath. King Saul was incapable of handling the crisis. This battle was a winner takes all. David, the young shepherd from Bethlehem, steps forward to battle the giant Goliath. We are told he was given the armour of Saul to wear for the battle, but they were so heavy that he could not walk well in them.

[We must always be who we are not to assume others ways and style]

So he decided to go as a shepherd with tools that he knows best. In hand he had 5 stones that he picked at the river bed and a sling to battle the great warrior. But David had something else, confidence, not any confidence, because Goliath also had confidence. David had confidence in God. That was his main weapon for the battle; “the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” In the battle that ensued David defeats Goliath and liberates his people from the taunts of the Philistines.

What made David, that young man from Bethlehem so sure of victory in this battle? It was his trust in the living God, a God who has protected him as a shepherd and a God he has come to trust. With such weapon he was unafraid to face any challenge that came his way.

We all have our Goliaths to face in life as individuals. These Goliaths may be obstacles in our way to growth and to progress, they instil fear and make us shrink. They dominate our space and force us to recoil in ourselves. May be your Goliath is in some form of relationship that has enslaved you, or eating you up. It could be your friend, your partner, your superior, or your boss. May be your Goliath is an illness or an addiction or some weakness that constantly pulls you down. May be your Goliath is one subject or a course.

Or as a family, as a community, or as a nation there are Goliaths that constantly taunts us; corruption, lack of zeal for God, laziness.

Whatever your goliath may be you will have to confront it. It is not going to go away. David invites us to learn from him; to trust in God is an important weapon for fighting this battle, this Goliath of our life; to make sure that the Lord is on your side and listen to what the Lord is saying to you in the struggle with this Goliath. With trust in God as a weapon even a stone on a sling in your hand will do marvellous deeds for you. You may not need a lot to effect a victory.

The battle of David is incomplete without returning to Bethlehem again and and this time to find another man who was to fight even a greater battle, Jesus, son of David, Son of God. We see him today in the Gospel liberating the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. His battle was with the forces of evil and destruction bent on dominating the human person, the forces of death. He won victory in the same way David did, that is, in trusting God and having full confidence in the God of his fathers. Jesus' strategy is however different from that of David. He laid down his life for his friends so that they may have life and have it in abundance. Yet in dying to set us free, he trusted in God.

Jesus teaches us something about victory in our battles with our Goliaths. It may be true that in our lives sometimes we may have to cut the head off of our Goliaths and display it to all as a victory trophy. But it is also true that sometimes the only way to win that battle is to surrender in faith and in love allowing the God of the battle to

have the last word. Here, in this battle, we deepen our trust in God who is the God of history and the God of our lives.

May we learn today in our celebration of the Eucharist to entrust our lives and our lives battles to God with a firm hope that he will be with us on the battlefield. For he has given us already in his son, Jesus the gift that sustains us along the journey, the bread of life.

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