

Lent Take-Homes Week Five

Monday March 14

Reading: John 8:1-11

Scripture Verse: "Nor do I condemn you. You may go." John 8:11

Reflection: Jesus calls his followers to be merciful as "your Father is merciful" Luke 6:36.

A merciful attitude and stance in life makes us like the Good Samaritan, like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, like Jesus who raises the widow's son and who forgives the woman caught in adultery. Mercy is acting with compassion towards the hurt in others.

Right after the story of the woman caught in adultery comes Jesus' proclamation—"I am the light of the world." (John 8:12). Mercy is the handle that opens the door to the light. Saint Patrick (whose day we acknowledged this week) is a person who understood this, He returned to the country where he was originally enslaved and extended to the people first mercy and then the gospel.

In Lent we are invited to look inside ourselves and see the parts of us that might be hard-hearted or holding a grudge. We are invited to ask God help us turn away from these attitudes and instead turn towards allowing mercy to affect our actions.

Tuesday March 15

Readings: Numbers 21:4-9, John 8:21-30

Scripture Verse: "Because he spoke in this way, many came to believe in him" John 8:30

Reflection: Jesus was not afraid to speak the truth, or to challenge many of the accepted beliefs and practices of his day.

Today's reading reminds us that Jesus' identity was rooted in his relationship to the God he called Father. Jesus was secure in who he was, and was able to say and do what he did, because he was connected to the will of his Father.

Our faith does not grow in a vacuum. It needs to be nourished. The fruits of faith...a sense of who we are as Christians...a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives as Christians...do not just happen. They are the result of a willingness on our part to take the time and to do what is necessary so that we, like Jesus, can experience a sense of being connected to the will of God the Father.

Through our willingness to gather for worship each week...through our willingness to try to observe a Holy Lent through reflection, penitence, prayer, fasting, alms-giving and reading and meditating on the word of God in Holy Scripture, we are showing a desire to take responsibility for our faith. Through our willingness to participate in Holy Week, we show our willingness to be nourished in the faith. Through entering into the worship of our church we show a willingness to be present to, and to know a little better, the God we are privileged to call "Our Father"

Wednesday March 16

Readings: Daniel 3:13-28 ; John 8: 31-42

Scripture Verse: "...you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" John 8:32

Reflection: What "truth" is Jesus referring to? In order to make the proclamation "Jesus Christ is Lord" we need to accept the truth about ourselves. It is only when we are honestly willing to come to terms with who we are that we can accept our need for Jesus to be Lord in our lives. It is only when we are willing to explore the truth about ourselves that we are able to accept the possibilities for differences to take place in us because of the Jesus we profess to be Lord. The truth about ourselves, and the truth Jesus and his gospel can make in our lives, is the truth that can set us free. For once we accept how we are imperfect, we can become free from perfectionism. Once we accept the fragility of life, we can become free from all impulses to take ourselves and others for granted. And once we are able to move beyond *sinfulness* as a negative word and come to accept how it does describe our imperfect self, we can accept the gift of God's forgiving love. God's love is given to us in our sinfulness. That is the true gift of God's love for us.

In Lent we are invited to examine our lives honestly, to reflect on the greatness of God's love for us and ask God to help us accept His gift of love in a way that touches our hearts and shapes our lives.

Thursday March 17

Readings: Jeremiah 20: 10-13 John 10: 31-42

Scripture Verse: "O Lord of hosts, you who test the just, who probe mind and heart to you I have entrusted my cause" Jeremiah 20: 12

Reflection: What does it mean to be free? Some might think that being free means they have no responsibilities. They can come and go as they choose, do what they want when they want. In our baptism we promise to "proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ." (BAS page 159) We accept responsibility for preaching the gospel in word and deed. In being faithful to this mission we become free.

Jeremiah was a prophet who found his freedom in proclaiming God's word to the people of Israel. In so doing he became free from the threats, mocking and violence that surrounded his ministry. He was free to proclaim that the Lord rescues the life of the poor from the power of the wicked.

Jesus speaks of his commission to be God's Son. Jesus speaks the Word of God and does the work of God. In so doing he is free from being trapped by the expectations and fears of the people around him.

So many times in our lives, God calls us to be free to proclaim the good news of Jesus. God calls us to rise above the murmurings and mocking that are around us in our culture and to speak God's word of love and to work for God's will for justice in a world trapped in greed and accumulation.

In Lent we are invited to experience the freedom that comes with faithfulness to the mission and ministry entrusted to us.

Friday March 18

Reading Ezekiel 37:21-28 John 11:45-57

Scripture Verse: Jesus would die for the nation—and not for this nation only, but to gather into one all the dispersed children of God.” John 11:51-52

Reflection: As children most of us had a place we called “home”, a place where we could go and feel part of a family. As adults we create new homes—places of love and caring.

Both readings today speak about making a home. In Ezekiel, God speaks about making a home among the Jewish people: “My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 37:27)

The message of Jesus is also evident: he will bring home all the dispersed children of God. Jesus’ resurrection has a universal impact. He unites all people in a renewed creation. As Jesus says: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:32)

We believe we are part of a holy catholic church—“catholic” because the church embraces all people—because in the church, all followers of Jesus—regardless of race, gender, status, age, ability etc. find a common home. The church as “home” is a small foretaste of what will happen at the end of time when the whole of humanity will be reunited in Christ.

Since we share the same church “home” and in our entry through baptism into the Christians family we acknowledge “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism—One God and Father of All.” (BAS page 151) we are called to fight against violence, injustice, inequality and every ideology that seeks to deny that all people are created in the image of God. (BAS page 159) We are called to “seek and serve the Christ in all persons” (BAS page 159)

In Lent we are invited to re-dedicate ourselves to “loving our neighbour as ourselves” and respecting “the dignity of every human being” as God gathers his children into his home.