



parish newsletter

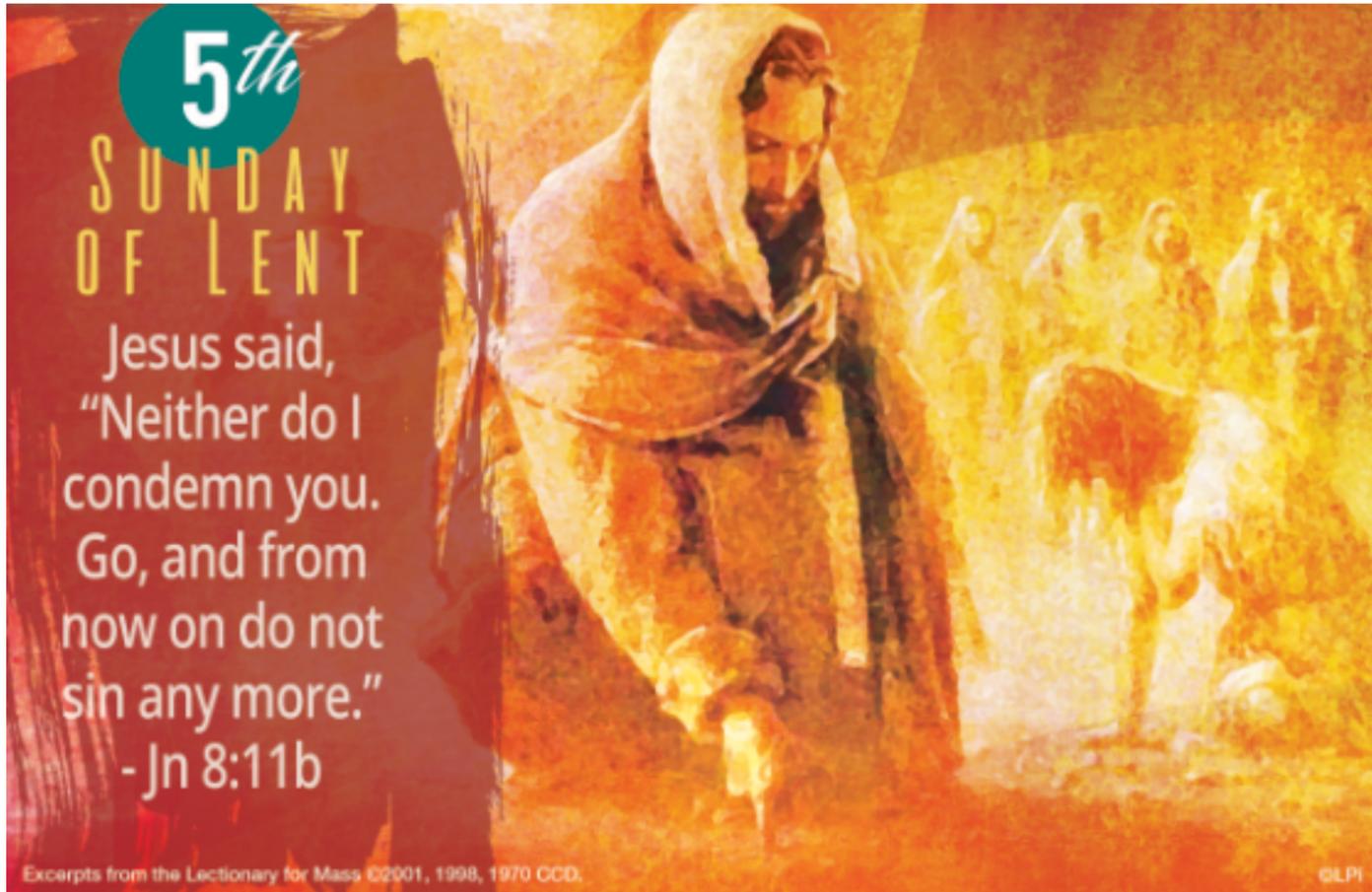
3 April 2022 | Fifth Sunday of Lent (C)

Jesus said, 'I do not condemn you.'

We love to make examples out of those who have erred and done wrong. Publicly punishing others serves as a means of demonstrating the consequences for what is deemed inappropriate or wrongful behaviour. While this may appear an effective way of achieving conformity to established rules, it runs the real risk of distorting motivation. Obviously, we want people to do what is right and pursue healthy, virtuous behaviours and ideals. But is fear of punishment ever the best motivation for avoiding one action in favour of another?

Doing something out of fear is never healthy. Focusing exclusively on our behaviour and what others expect or think, leads to living life with a self-focused superficiality. We become more concerned about protecting ourselves from something negative and unpleasant, than investing ourselves in the freedom, wonder and awe of being human! We can still find our way to the unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour as long as we do not get caught! Being a whole, focused, and God-centred human being requires more. It demands an investment of the heart. Virtuous, moral, and mature lifestyles reflective of the Gospel necessitate love.

When we experience and recognise love, God's unconditional love, in the depth of our soul, we fall in love with what we have found. We then find



ourselves leaving destructive and sinful actions behind in search of something more holy, dignified, true, integral, and loving. This is really "mercy realised." God's tremendous, loving, eternal forgiveness and willingness to bring us back to something more real and tender is transformational. The respect for myself that I receive from God is so life changing that it causes me to run quickly away from anything sinful and self-destructive to things that are whole and holy.

There are many people who want nothing more

than to judge or criticise us. What would actually stoning the woman caught in adultery really accomplish? Nothing more than the inflation of the already self-righteous egos of a few men who think they have power. They have no power because they are sinners too, just like everyone else. What all of us have is the humble ability to express sorrow for pursuing destructive thoughts and actions and receive the power of God's mercy. Then, Jesus' request to "go and sin no more" will be one we proudly heed and follow.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Most of us prefer comedies over tragedies, stories with happy endings over sad endings. This gospel account is a story that refuses to be so simply categorised. The gospel account begins with deadly accusation, and ends with divine mercy. It begins with condemnation that would have led the adulterous woman to death, and ends with Jesus' mercy leading her to new Life. The account begins with human testing of Jesus, and ends with divine invitation to repent. It begins with a narrow focus on application of a law as an excuse for testing the fidelity of Jesus to Jewish covenantal law, and ends with Jesus revealing a

new order in which all are called to repentance and an experience of divine mercy. Jesus' desire for us is not death but new Life. This journey of moving from sinfulness to new Life is both tragic and comic. It is sad and happy. It is a choice. A critical choice.

The crowd brings before Jesus a woman caught in adultery, condemns her, and demands her life. Jesus doesn't condemn the woman. He does condemn her act ("do not sin any more"), then calls her to repent and choose a new way of living. Lent calls us to the same kind of encounter with Jesus so that we face our own sinfulness, hear his invitation

to embrace a new way of living, and make right choices. Central to this gospel is not simply the adulterous woman nor even the crowd that comes to a realisation of their own sinfulness. Taking a central place is encounter with Jesus who calls us to repentance and offers us divine mercy. We are quick to condemn each other; Jesus assures us, "Neither do I condemn you." We must acknowledge our sinfulness and turn toward God. This is repentance. It rests in divine encounter and results in truth: our sinfulness, God's mercy, the promise of new Life.

The "scribes and the Pharisees" use the proscript-

tion of the law in an attempt to entrap Jesus. He responds by confronting them with the reality of their own hard-heartedness and sinfulness. They slink away "one by one," leaving the adulterous woman alone to face Jesus. He extends mercy and compassion as well as judgment and a command to change her life. Do we dare to stand alone before Jesus, bare our own sinfulness, and hear him say to us, "Go, and from now on do not sin any more"?

The gospel reminds us that we encounter Jesus at our own risk: we will be confronted with the truth of our own sinfulness, with the tragedy of our own sinful living. But encounter with Jesus also brings hope: in the confrontation and invitation to repent Jesus offers the joy of new Life.

We begin the last third of the Lenten season. Even if we haven't been all that faithful to our chosen Lenten practices, it isn't too late now to resolve to open ourselves to encounters with Jesus so that we can approach Easter with a renewed spirit seeking new Life. Like the crowd in the gospel, it is often easier for us to focus on the sins of others than on our own weaknesses. Also like the crowd in the gospel, we can encounter Jesus and face the truth of ourselves. Lent is a time to encounter Jesus, turn from our sinfulness in repentance, and seek divine mercy. The remarkable good news of this gospel is that by facing and repenting of our own sinfulness we establish new relations with those around us. Acknowledgment of our own sins and how we have hurt others builds us into stronger members of Christ's Body.

Everyday Stewardship

Make a way

What's your comfort zone: emotionally, professionally, personally? We all have one. But did you realise that you can have one spiritually? Think about what you like and what you don't particularly enjoy when it comes to church, prayer, and liturgy. We all have "those songs" we crinkle our noses at, either because they're too modern or too old-fashioned. We all have "those people" in our parish whose ideas we aren't so sure about, whether that's because they're trying to change too much or because they seem

always to be looking toward the past. Also, when was the last time you sat on the OTHER side of the church during Mass?

As much as we may not want to admit it, even (and especially) as people of God, we get deeply attached to our own personal comfort zones — and we tend to view those outside with distrust.

But what if God had a comfort zone? What if He viewed us, in our sin and our misery, as too "far away" from Himself to reach? Thankfully, our God is a God who "opens a way in the sea and a path in the mighty

waters." Our God is a God who does "something new."

The call to stewardship demands that we look outside of ourselves. Our thoughts, our opinions, our preferences — these things are not important to the steward. Even if there is a vast, dry desert of discord, or a seemingly endless wasteland of opposing views between us and our neighbour, God challenges us to "make a way" out of our comfort zone, that together we may announce His praise.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

Live the Liturgy

Mercy makes us attentive to the voice of truth. We do not know what ever happened

to the woman caught in adultery, after her encounter with Jesus. It is



hoped that she found what she needed to feel true sorrow. What we do know is that through his gentle and wise persuasiveness, Jesus puts the Pharisees in their place and opens the door to grace for this child of God. Being exploited and used to test and discredit Jesus, she who is publicly known to be a sinner is now the victim. Jesus never tolerates people being used and immediately rushes to her defence. As the author of mercy, Jesus became her advocate and opened the door for her

to God's love. Jesus also stands between us and the harsh, judgmental, and often hurtful stance of our world. He invites us to grace, to leave the sin that binds us, and for which we are often criticised, and pursue a life of virtue and freedom.



First Reading

See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Is 43:19)

Psalm:

What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad. (Ps 125[126])

Second Reading:

I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things (Phil 3:8)

Gospel Acclamation:

Now, now –it is the Lord who speaks –come back to me with all your heart, for I am all tenderness and compassion.

Gospel:

“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” (Jn 8:7)

This Week

- 3 FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C)**
 10:30 **Mass** St Mary's Mary Sverha (RIP)
 17:00 **Mass** St Mary's People of the Parish
- 4 Monday**
 09:00 **Breakfast with God** Mercy Chapel
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's John Christopher (RIP)
 18:30 **Big Picture Bible Course** St Mary's Catholic Centre
 20:00 **Prayer Group** St Cecilia's
- 5 Tuesday**
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Mary Metcalfe (RIP)
 12:45 **Rosary** St Mary's
 13:00 **Over 60s** St Mary's Catholic Centre
 13:00 **Three Days of Mercy** Mercy Chapel
 17:00 **Chosen Tuesday** Upper Room
- 6 Wednesday**
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Ints of Joe Jacob
 12:45 **Wednesday Walk** Upper Room
 13:00 **Three Days of Mercy** Mercy Chapel
- 7 Thursday**
 10:00 **Confessions** St Cecilia's
 10:00 **Open House** St Mary's Catholic Centre
 10:30 **Mass & Adoration** St Cecilia's J & C McConville (RIP)
 12:05 **Mass & Adoration** St Mary's Gerard Lavender (RIP)
 13:00 **Three Days of Mercy** Mercy Chapel
 17:00 **Evening with Jesus and Friends** Mercy Chapel
- 8 Friday**
 11:30 **Stations of the Cross** St Mary's
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Jacky Lloyd (RIP)
 12:45 **Soup Lunch** St Mary's Catholic Centre
- 9 Saturday**
 10:30 **Confessions** St Mary's
 11:00 **Mass** St Mary's Sheila Pye (RIP)
 11:45 **Confessions** St Mary's
 12:00 **RCIA** Upper Room
 18:00 **Vigil Mass** St Cecilia's Dec'd of Grainger & Blackmore Families
- 10 PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION**
 10:30 **Mass** St Mary's Living & Deceased SVP Members
 17:00 **Mass** St Mary's People of the Parish



Bernadette, Jean Maureen, Christopher, Paula, Peter, Emilia, Jean, Teresa, Cath, the sick sisters at Oaklea, David, Marion, Dave, Neil, Paul, Andrew, Jacob, Stella, David, Alisa, Susan, Clive, Mary, Ronnie



Norah Doherty, Nora Ridley

Let us know if you would like a name added to the list.

Questions for the Week

First Reading: Active during Israel's captivity in Babylon around 550BC, the prophet Isaiah reminds the Israelites of God's saving acts in their history and offers hope for a new future beyond exile. How does your faith in the Lord offer you hope in times of distress?
Second Reading: Paul speaks to the Philippians of his firm belief that what matters most in his life is his intimate connection to Christ Jesus. How do you think anyone develops this depth of passion for Jesus?
Gospel: The scribes and the Pharisees tested Jesus' fidelity to the Mosaic Law by using a woman caught in the act of adultery. In reply, Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders and showed mercy on the sinful woman. When has someone shown you mercy over judgment?

Why do we do that?



Question: What is the difference between tithing and stewardship?

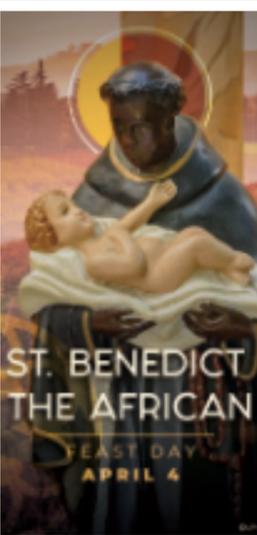
Answer: Both tithing and stewardship are part of a spiritual way of life that calls

us to use all of our resources for the service of the Gospel. Everything we are and everything we have comes from God. Offering back to God what He has given us is part of how we worship and give thanks to God. Tithing is the practice of giving back 10 percent of what we earn. It comes from the Old English word for "ten." The first Scriptural example of tithing came from Abraham who gave a tenth

of his possessions to the priest Melchizedek. He did so as an act of thanksgiving to God. Stewardship as a way of life calls us to use well all that we have and all that we are, placing all things in service of others and God. Stewardship helps us see the good we can accomplish by making God and our spiritual life the most important values in our life. Whatever we accumulate in this life stays here. We can't take it with us! Both tithing and stewardship help us remember that nothing is

mine or even ours ... all belongs to God.

Saint of the Week



St. Benedict the African (1524-1589), was born in San

Fratello, Sicily to Cristoforo and Diana Manasseri, Africans who had been taken as slaves. Some accounts claim that because of his parents' loyal service that Benedict was given his freedom at birth, other sources say that his freedom was granted when he turned 18. At 21 Benedict joined a society of hermits living under the rule of St. Francis of Assisi. Eventually he succeeded his friend, Jerome Lanze, as their leader. When the Pope disbanded the independent hermit society, Benedict joined the Order of Friars Minor and he was sent to Palermo, to the Franciscan Friary of St. Mary of Jesus. There Benedict worked in the kitchens and despite being illiterate and a lay brother (not a priest), he also served as Master of Novices, and as Guardian of the Community. St. Benedict was known throughout his life as a brilliant cook under whose hands food seemed to multiply miraculously, a healer, and a spiritual leader with profound understanding.



ST. VINCENT FERRER APRIL 5

Announcements

Three Days of Mercy
 The three days of mercy are back this Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. From 1pm until 7pm a priest will be in the Mercy Chapel to hear confessions. He'll stay there as long and there are people for confession and then leave until the start of the next hour.
 This will be the fourth time we held Three Days of Mercy and it's always been a time of grace. Take this opportunity to prepare yourself for Easter.
Parish Retreat
 Thank-you to the retreat team that lead us through a wonderful week of grace! Thank-you also to everyone who said yes to God and

made time to pray and meet with their guides. We can't wait to see what grows from the seeds God has planted in the parish!
Children's Liturgy
 It's great to see so many children coming for children's liturgy, but we are still short of catechists to help run it. If your children attend can you please consider joining the team of catechists? You'll need to have a safeguarding check but we can help you with that. Please speak to one of the catechists if you can help.
St Joseph's Panyangara
 Our lenten project this year is to help buy 'eco stoves' to support families in our sister

Parish, St Joseph's, Panyangara, Uganda.
 For Lent we're inviting every family to try and raise £30 or whatever they can to buy a family in Panyangara an eco stove as an Easter gift. Please put your donation in an envelope marked 'Eco Stove' and put it in the collection or hand it in.
 We've been overwhelmed by the response so far and there's still a chance if you'd like to contribute.
St Mary's Church Cleaning
 What are you doing at 9am on Thursday mornings? How about helping out with the weekly big clean? Tea, coffee, biscuits and good company are provided!

Gift Aid Envelopes
 Please collect your new Gift Aid boxes from the back of church. Please note that numbers have changed this year so make sure you take the right box. Thanks for your generosity! If you have any problems or questions please contact Ken Devlin on 07719 904073.
Ukraine Collection
 Thank-you for your generosity in collecting £1000 last weekend to help aid efforts in Ukraine.

Flock Notes

'The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest: it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.'
 Isn't it strange the things you can remember? For example, I can still recite the whole of Portia's Mercy Speech from *The Merchant of Venice*—I learnt it years ago for GCSE English! I suppose if you are going to remember any quote from Shakespeare then a speech about mercy is not a bad place to start.
 Shakespeare says that mercy is an attribute of God himself—powerful words as we prepare to celebrate another Three Days of Mercy. It is precisely that attribute of God that God most wants us to experience right now. So often we put off going to confession and we can all think of good excuses why now might not be the right time to go: I'm busy; I'm not *that* bad; I'm embarrassed about what the priest will think; I can't remember what to say; I'll go next time... The thing is there's no such thing as a 'good' reason not to experience God's mercy. Don't put it off any longer, come back to God's mercy!



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