

Sat: 27th Feb

Mt 5, 43-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have heard how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes the sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings to your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

As Christians, we are to model our love to the love of Christ. Jesus on the cross did not utter curses and warnings of doom to those who unjustly crucified him. Instead, he said, 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.' Jesus loved those who hated him...what about us? Jesus invites us to love our enemies...those whom we cannot stand the sight of, those we get irritated with, those who backstab us, those whose personalities clash with ours, etc. These are the people with whom we are called to give our love. When we love them, we are striving to be perfect as Jesus is perfect.

Today, let us ask for strength to love our enemies and to strive to be perfect as God...as Jesus...is perfect. To be perfect in God's eyes is to have the same heart as Jesus.

*Jesus, mould my heart to be like yours!*

**Second Sunday of Lent**

Sun: 28<sup>th</sup> Feb

Lk 9, 28-36



Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; there were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept

awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' -He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were

afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

Imagine the amazement Peter, James and John when they saw the great Old Testament heroes appearing alongside with Jesus. How their hearts must rejoice at this sight. For them, this sight confirmed their belief that Jesus would found a people, a nation, like Moses as well as sustain their hope like Elijah. Not wanting to lose this wonderful sight, Peter wanted to build three tents so as to enjoy the moment and not let it pass away. He wanted time to pause and stay on the mountain top as long as they could. However, the divine voice put a stop to all discussions. In the cloud, the disciples understood, though not fully, that they need to LISTEN to the Son so as to follow his same footsteps, i.e. his path to suffer. The disciples were called to listen and to respond.

Today, God tells us the same words as we approach the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent. 'Listen to Him'

We need to listen to Jesus as he speaks to us so that we can follow his same path that he took. Jesus walked the path of self-giving, of sacrifice, of love. When we listen to him, we will also respond to him by making his way ours.

*Jesus, give me enough faith to listen with care... Give me the courage to respond to you.*

Mon: 1st March

Lk 6, 36-38

**Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'**

It is a challenge to listen and respond to these words of Jesus today. Why? Because Jesus calls us to be people FOR others...to give, look at others with compassion, to stop judging, etc. Many times, our human nature tends to focus on what is best for ourselves and not to bother about others. During WWII, Father Kolbe, was put into a concentration camp by the Nazis. One day, a prisoner escaped from the camp and so the commander, in order, to punish the prisoners, ordered ten men to be starved to death. Among those chosen was a young man who had a wife and children. Father Kolbe insisted to take the young man's place. In the death cell, Fr. Kolbe helped the others to die in peace. Because he took too long to die, the Nazis injected poison into his arm. Today, when one goes to visit the cell where Saint Maximilian Kolbe died, one can still see a picture of Jesus on the cross scratched on the wall with his

nails. Kolbe, like Jesus, gave himself for others- A man for others.

*Jesus, help me to listen and respond to this call to be a man/woman for others.*

Tue: 2nd March

Isaiah 1, 10; 16-20

**Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the command of our God, you people of Gomorrah. 'Wash, make yourselves clean. Take your wrong-doing out of my sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good, search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, let us talk this over, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing to obey, you shall eat the good things of the earth. But if you persist in rebellion, the sword shall eat you instead.' The mouth of the Lord has spoken.**

'If you are willing to obey...'

*Am I willing to obey your Word of Life, of Love? Am I stubborn to persist in the way in which will not lead me to you, O Lord?*

Our God is a God who loves each of us. He patiently waits for us to turn back to him... He will never turn any of us away just because we do not meet the mark. God is our Father who wants us to choose everyday to wash ourselves clean by removing all that disfigure us from becoming like him. Today, he invites us, 'Come now, let us talk this over' In this time of prayer, let us talk to God...tell him of our difficulties and weaknesses... give to him all selfishness, pride, anger, etc. that prevent us from listening and obeying his Word.

God loves us... Do we love him enough to go back to him?

Wed: 3<sup>rd</sup> March

Mt 20, 17-28

**Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, and on the way he took the Twelve to one side and said to them, 'Now we are going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the pagans to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day he will rise again.' Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request to him, and bowed low; and he said to her, 'What is it you want?' She said to him, 'Promise that these two sons of mine may one sit at your right hand and the other at your left in your Kingdom.' 'You do not know what you are asking,' Jesus answered. 'Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?' They replied, 'We can.' 'Very well,' he said 'you shall drink my cup, but as for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to**

grant; they belong to those whom they have been allocated by my Father.' When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

St Ambrose once said, 'When we travelled all ways, we shall come to the End of all ways, who says, "I am the Way".'

We love to travel the ways that lead us to glory and honour. The world tells us to always to seek for No. 1, and to be somebody. Yet, travelling all these ways, we will not find inner peace and joy. James and John as well as the disciples were looking to be No. 1 in the Kingdom of God. However, Jesus chose to walk the way of humility and nothingness. He came to serve and give himself to others.

In going ahead of us, Jesus points the Real Way for each of us to follow. Going his way, we will find ourselves walking the path of giving ourselves without counting the cost...perhaps of being a nobody in the eyes of society...even being rejected and looked down upon. Looking at Jesus who is our model, we know that this is the path that will ultimately make us rich...not in material sense, but rich in the eyes of God.

*Jesus, you are My Way! Your Way is not easy and attractive to follow, but I want to try to take step by step to come after you. Please help me to choose to serve others from a heart of love...because I know that when I serve and give myself to others, I am actually expressing my love to you.*

**Thu: 4<sup>th</sup> March**

**Lk 16, 19-31**

**Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angles to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." "My son", Abraham replied "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony..." "The rich man replied, "Father, I beg**

**you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham "let them listen to them." "Ah no, father Abraham," said the rich man "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."**

'The rich man' remains 'the rich man' throughout the story. He has no name because he represents the danger of wealth. Thus, he could be any person who is enslaved by wealth and self-indulgence. Lazarus is the only character in Jesus' parable who is named. Lazarus is a very poor beggar. He is sickly with sores that dogs treat as their personal snacks. In contrast, the rich man wore fine linen and dressed as a royalty. Both died- The rich man to eternal fire and Lazarus to eternal glory. Jesus is not against people with material wealth, but he is concerned with how we use our wealth to help those who are poor and downtrodden. The rich man, in his life-time, had sewn his pocket tight and chose not to notice the needs of others, and therefore, he had sewn up his fate.



Knowing that he had sewn up his fate, the rich man wanted to warn his five brothers...who most likely held the same philosophy as him. Who are these five brothers? The five brothers represent those people, men and women, who live their lives like the rich man... those who choose to sewn their pockets tight against others. Are we one of the five brothers?

Where do we keep our treasure? Money is a mere resource that is to be used and not to be hoarded. Money should be used to serve and not to become our masters.

Today, Jesus wants to remind us that our treasure should be used for others...when we use our resources for others, we will gain compassion. On the other hand, when we hoard and keep our talents, resources, wealth for ourselves, we will only yield emptiness. Once more, we have to make the choice.

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# Prayer for Living

**Fri: 26<sup>th</sup> Feb**

**Mt 5, 20-26**

**Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill, and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin, and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into the prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.'**



Lent is a time to reconcile with one another. It is difficult to forgive someone when the person has hurt us deeply or even for us to ask for forgiveness due to our pride. Yet, Jesus calls us to reconcile with one another first before we approach the altar to worship God.

Pope Paul VI wrote the following, "A love of reconciliation is not weakness or cowardice. It demands courage, nobility, generosity, sometimes heroism, an overcoming of oneself rather than of one's adversary. At times, it may even seem like dishonour, but it never offends against true justice and denies the rights of the poor. In reality, it is the patient, wise art of peace, of loving, of living with one's fellows, after the example of Christ, with a strength of heart and mind modelled on his."

*At this moment of life, who is/are the person/people that I am called to work for reconciliation? Do I have enough courage, nobility, generosity, and even heroism to overcome my own pride, anger, hurts, indifference?*