

The B2 LIVING Word

3rd Sunday of Lent to The Most Holy Trinity 2024



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The Most Holy Trinity

UP-TO-DATE bidding prayer service from the Redemptorists.

Our website provides a selection of topical bidding prayers for use in church each Sunday,
reflecting national and international concerns.

The prayers will be posted by 5 p.m. GMT each Thursday for use that weekend.

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3rd Sunday of Lent

Introduction

There are many distractions in our world today and we can easily lose sight of what is really important. We gather today to remind ourselves of where true value and wisdom lie and commit ourselves to treating all people with fairness and respect.

Penitential Act

Jesus turned the tables and cleared the way for all people to draw closer to God.

Lord Jesus, you are the power and wisdom of God.
Lord, have mercy.

You know what is in each of our hearts.
Christ, have mercy.

You call us all to follow you.
Lord, have mercy.

Today's Readings

First Reading Exodus 20:1-17

The Law is given to the people through Moses, teaching them how to live their lives and how to treat one another.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

The Risen Christ reveals the wisdom of God, a wisdom that is beyond anything we can imagine.

Gospel John 2:13-25

Jesus drives the money-changers out of the Temple and proclaims that he will make all things new.

HOMILY

"Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market."

Illustration

Everywhere we go, we are bombarded with messages to buy. Advertising hoardings loom over our streets, at bus stops and train stations. Adverts pop up on our computer screens, as we scroll through our phones or as we stare at the television. Hawkers loiter outside major tourist attractions like the Eiffel Tower. Museums and art galleries have their shops.

We have been conditioned to consume. An experience often only seems valuable if we have a souvenir to help us to remember it. Our worth is too often measured in the possessions that we have accumulated, regardless of the consequences to our earth, or to those who are exploited in the manufacturing, sale or purchase of these goods.

Those who have the power continue to prop up a system that benefits a few. There is no escape for most of us, who are trapped in this cycle as we try to navigate our way through life as best we can.

This is not a new phenomenon as we can see in today's Gospel.

Gospel Teaching

Even the Temple has been turned into a place of commerce. Animals are being sold for sacrifice. Money changers are welcoming pilgrims from all over the place and changing their money so that they can buy what they need to worship.

And yet, Jesus drives all of these people out of the Temple. Why? Does he feel that people should not be able to get what they need to offer the appropriate sacrifice? Surely not.

Here in the Temple, we have a captive audience. People who need certain items, and people who can provide them. The situation is ripe for exploitation. There is nothing to stop the moneychangers and the pigeon-sellers from charging whatever they want, no matter what the people can afford. For pilgrims and other worshippers to give glory to God, they must take part in this system that is designed to take advantage of them. Instead of helping people to draw closer to God, the merchants' motive was personal profit and gain.

Not only this, but the area where the traders had set up was the place set aside for Gentiles (non-Jews) to pray. How could they concentrate on their prayer and worship while surrounded by the hubbub of this marketplace?

This is what Jesus is taking a stand against. He could not allow the exploitation of those who were trying to draw closer to God. He could not accept the hollow gestures, the lip service to religion being offered by those benefiting from this exploitation. He could not have earthly priorities preventing all people from coming to know God.

Instead, he turns the tables, prophesies the destruction of the sanctuary and proclaims that he will raise it all up again in three days.

Application

So what does this mean for us today?

We know that when Jesus spoke of raising up the sanctuary after three days, he was talking of himself. Through the resurrection he has made all things new.

And yet, our world is still filled with exploitation. We still see people who put profit before other people and before their relationship with God. We might not be able to fully break down the systems that enable this, but perhaps we can each try to turn the tables in our own small way.

By living a life where we do not seek our own glory, but the glory of God; by standing up and speaking out when we see greed and unjust practices; by not seeking our own benefit or recognition, but by working together with others for the good of all; by stepping away from the endless need to consume; by stopping, being present and appreciating what we already have; by enabling others to draw closer to God, rather than putting barriers in their way.

As Saint Paul says, the crucified Christ is the wisdom of God. A wisdom which is beyond our imagining. It follows then, that all that we are encouraged to hold dear by the world around us – money, wealth, status – becomes unimportant. True wealth is found in our relationships with others, with Creation, and with God, rather than in chasing the next new purchase.

So let us not pay lip service in our worship of God or make hollow gestures. Let us try not to seek our own gain, but to support others in their journey towards God. And let us follow Christ in our lives, seeking always to turn the tables of exploitation and injustice so that all may glorify God by their lives and actions.

SUMMARY

1. We are surrounded by messages urging us to consume more and more without considering who is being exploited.
2. Jesus took a stand against the exploitation of those who were trying to come closer to God and the barriers that had been placed in their way.
3. We are called to support others in their journey towards God, and to stand up against exploitation and unjust practices wherever we encounter them.

Prayer of the Faithful**Celebrant**

Knowing that God is filled with wisdom and power, we bring before him now our intentions in prayer.

Intercessions

We pray for Pope Francis, the bishops and all clergy: that they may lead the way in prayer, word and action, guiding us towards God.

We pray for all who hold positions of power: that they may be moved by the Spirit to put what is right before profit, and the good of all before their own gain.

We pray for people who are exploited or taken advantage of: that God may console them, strengthen them and move us all to work together towards a fairer world.

We pray for people who are poor, marginalised and excluded: that, confident in God's love for them, and with the support of others when needed, they may break down the barriers that society has placed in their way.

We pray for people of faith: that, inspired by Christ, we may lift our voices and speak out against exploitation and injustice.

Celebrant

Loving Father, filled with faith and grateful for your wisdom, we ask that you may hear the prayers we bring before you today and look kindly upon us as we seek to draw closer to you, through Christ our Lord.

Prayer of Commissioning

As you go out to share the gift of the Eucharist with those who are unable to join us today, may the Lord be ever close to you and guide you as you support others on their journey of faith.

Final Blessing

May the wisdom of God guide you every day of your lives. May God fill you with courage and move you to stand up for others in the face of injustice. And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

4th Sunday of Lent

Introduction

On this *Laetare Sunday*, we rejoice in the light that has come into the world through the Son of God, and in the grace through which we have been saved.

Penitential Act

Jesus tells us that everyone who believes may not be lost but may have eternal life in him. We rejoice in the saving grace that is a gift from God and that strengthens us to live as God intended.

Lord, you did not come to condemn the world, but to save.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you bring light to the world.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you love us with so much love and are generous in your mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Today's Readings

First Reading 2 Chronicles 36:14-16. 19-23

God's persistent love and mercy in the face of rejection are revealed.

Second Reading Ephesians 2:4-10

Through grace, not by our own efforts, we have been saved, so that we may live the good life God has always meant us to live.

Gospel John 3:14-21

Christ is the light of the world, come not to condemn but to save, and those who live by the truth come into that light.

HOMILY

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

Illustration

There are many examples in literature of people who, through the course of the story, move from despair to hope, selfishness to generosity, darkness to light. Rarely do they do this entirely through their own efforts. Usually someone is rooting for them, encouraging them, or coaxing them towards something better. This persistent support empowers them, not only to do better for themselves, but also to do better for others.

In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge is shown a way of living that differs from his self-absorbed existence. He sees what might be if he let joy, light and generosity into his world. He responds, reluctantly at first, but later with uncurtailed joy. In Barbara Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead*, several good people refuse to give up on a boy born into a life of poverty, neglect and addiction, where circumstances seem to make bad outcomes inevitable.

In many cases, the path is not straight. Life is messy, and ups may be followed by downs. Characters resist support. Or they accept support but nevertheless encounter hurdle after hurdle. As in real life, there may be no fairy-tale ending. But it is usually clear that goodness makes a difference, and that even one good person can transform how another experiences the world. Indeed,

those involved in young people's services know that having “one good adult” is crucial in helping a young person to flourish. And surely this continues to apply in adulthood. Scrooge, after all, was no longer young when he accepted love from others in a way that enabled him to bring love into the world in turn.

Gospel Teaching

In John's Gospel, it is Jesus who has the power to transform the lives of those he encounters. This applies in the sometimes abstract, theological sense of salvation and in the concrete sense of how people live their lives.

John describes how people “have shown they prefer darkness to light because their deeds were evil”. They have avoided the light because they fear it will expose their wrong actions. In the first reading, we hear of “infidelity”, “shameful practices”, and the repeated resistance of the people when God sent “messenger after messenger” until it seemed “there was no further remedy”.

But as Paul tells us in the second reading, God persisted. “God loved us with so much love that he was generous in his mercy.” Even when we “were dead through our sins”, God brought us to life with Christ. Paul is clear, however, that we are not saved by anything we alone

have done. We are saved through grace and faith, gifts from God given in Christ Jesus. He is that one good person who empowers us “to live the good life”. He is the

one who John says was sent by God to save the world, empowering us to live by the truth “so that it may be plainly seen that what [we] do is done in God”.

Application

Living the life God intended is impossible if we go it alone. That is why we open our hearts to Jesus as the one who brings light, grace and faith into our lives. Spending time in prayer and reflection, pondering on the scriptures, and celebrating our faith in community can help us experience the transformative light of Christ. This light is not just for us as individuals, even if we experience it through deeply personal prayer. Our life in Christ is not simply an “inward” or “upward” spiritual exercise. Just as we see the power of one good person on many a character in literature – and as we may have experienced in our own lives – so we are called to reach into the world.

Each of us is just one person, but our influence can be transformative if we are the one who brightens another’s day, offers a word of comfort, lifts another up, treats our environment and every person with the respect they deserve as part of God’s creation. Our gestures do not need to be grand, although some of us may be in a position to do great things. Today, let us think of one way in which we might be one good person in the world.

SUMMARY

1. We are not saved through our own deeds, but by the grace and faith received through Christ Jesus.
2. “One good person” is vital to help a person to flourish.
3. Can we share the light of Christ and be “one good person” in the world today?

Prayer of the Faithful

Celebrant

Today’s readings remind us of God’s loving mercy. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.

Intercessions

For the Church, that the people of God may be open to the grace of God in their lives and seek forgiveness for the times they have done wrong.

For those who have experienced harm at the hands of others, that they may be touched also by the kindness and compassion of those who, through God’s grace, live the good life that God intended them to live.

For those who are suffering because of violence, illness, poverty, climate change, disadvantage and all forms of exclusion, that they may experience the love and hope that Christ brings through the actions of those who seek to help, not harm.

For us all, that we may accept the light of Christ in our lives and share that light with others through concrete action for good.

Celebrant

Lord, as we receive your light and grace in our lives, we ask that you continue to hear our prayers, which we make today, trusting in your faithful love.

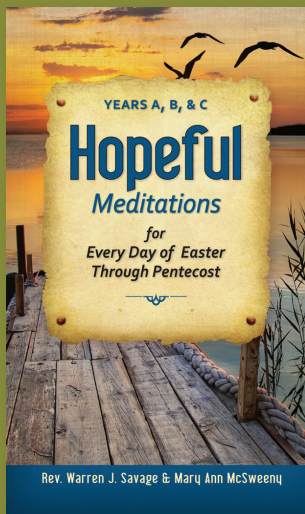
Prayer of Commissioning

As you bring Holy Communion to those who cannot be with us in person today, may you share God’s light and grace with them, and may the nourishment they receive in the sacrament grant them comfort, peace and strength in their lives.

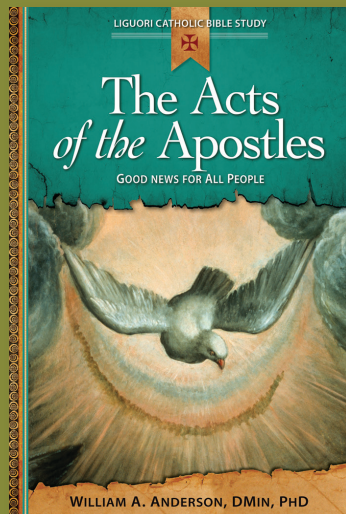
Final Blessing

May the grace of the Lord strengthen you to live as God intended, in your thoughts, words and actions. May those you meet, today and always, experience the light and love of Christ through you. And may almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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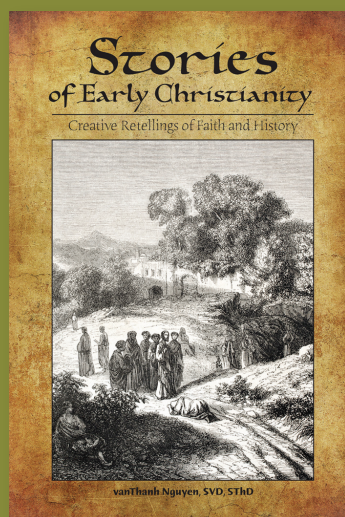
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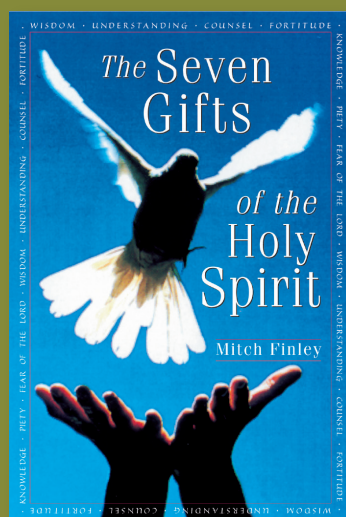
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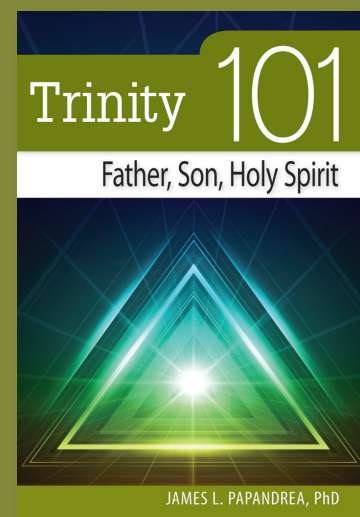
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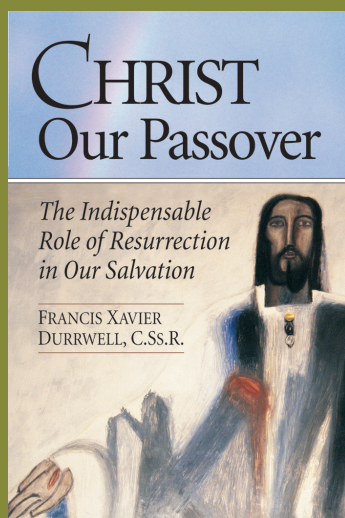
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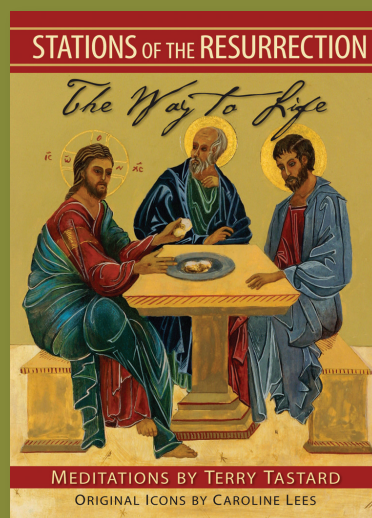
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