



SUNDAY REFLECTION

St. Augustine makes a beautiful observation on the Gospel episode we heard today: after everyone has left, and Jesus and the woman are alone, “Just two are left – misery and mercy” (*“relicta sunt duo – miseria et misericordia”*). This, surely, is the essence of the season of Lent – that we become acquainted with our sin and with the Lord’s mercy. It is the Lord who leads His people from the captivity of sin, just as He led the Chosen People out from captivity in Egypt, and later, from exile.

Pastorally, it may be well worth stressing the fact that Jesus does not gloss over the sin of the woman being condemned by the scribes and Pharisees. Far from minimizing the reality of sin, or legitimating a “liberal” indifference to sins of the flesh, he underscores (and how delicately!) the sinfulness of the woman’s accusers, while also adverting to the sinful nature of her conduct. But whereas the woman’s accusers would deal with the ugliness of sin in an ugly way, Jesus defeats sin by loveliness.

The power and primacy of grace are seen at the beginning of this passage, where crowds have gathered around Jesus in the Temple at daybreak. They have been drawn, not by a message of condemnation, but by the beauty of Jesus and His teaching. The scribes and Pharisees also seek out Jesus, but they are motivated by a harsh agenda of condemnation. We are reminded that the Gospel is founded not on command or on judgment, but on the good news of God’s prior love for sinners.

Just as in the case of the adulterous woman, the change which occurred in Paul did not happen by dint of willpower, but was brought about by his encounter with Christ. Paul never set out to repudiate his former way of life: it simply paled into insignificance beside the knowledge of Christ. The deepest significance of the season of Lent is not repudiation or asceticism, but the recognition of Christ. It is when we recognize the Lord's goodness that, like Paul and like the woman caught in adultery, we become able to let go of things which, in comparison to that goodness, are 'so much rubbish'.

STEWARDSHIP: In today's second reading, St. Paul says, "For His sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth." Does my stewardship suggest that I could say the same?

READINGS PALM SUNDAY

10 APR '22

Lk. 19:28-40:

Is. 50:4-7: "The Lord comes to my help." This is the faith of God's suffering servant in this passage from Isaiah. It is the hope of God's people in every age and circumstance.

Phil. 2:6-11: Jesus' sense of God was so real, so vivid, that He was able to let go of everything, even life itself, in the knowledge that God would deliver Him from every evil.

Lk. 22:14-23:56: This story of Jesus' final hours begins at table, where Jesus has taken His place with His disciples; it finishes with Jesus being placed in the tomb. We listen with grateful hearts, to the events which we commemorate at the table of the Eucharist.

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Jesus was welcomed by the people with cheers and palms - a symbol of victory and sign that "all is well". Palm-bearing date trees were valued for their dignity, beauty and shade and were used at special occasions to welcome heroes and royalty.

No greater love was shown us than Jesus' love for his Father and us, for he gave his life because of his faithfulness to that love. One of Jesus' closest disciples was Peter. Peter loved Jesus, but he didn't always understand what real love required. How very much like Peter we all are! Peter failed Jesus, but Jesus' love for Peter restored their relationship and empowered Peter to learn to love. That should give us all hope.

As you listen to the Passion on this day, place yourself in the story. What does it feel like to be part of the crowd or to be a disciple? What does it feel like to be in Jesus' place during the passion? What would you do if you were Jesus' best friend?

Lent ends with the Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday (Easter Liturgies)

PASSION SUNDAY PASSIONTIDE:

Since the revision of the Catholic liturgical calendar in 1969, Passiontide has been synonymous with Holy Week. Palm Sunday, the final Sunday before Easter, is now known as Passion Sunday, though in practice it is almost always referred to by its former name. (Sometimes you may see it listed as Passion (Palm) Sunday, reflecting the current usage.)

The Traditional Period of Passiontide

Before the revision of the liturgical calendar, however, Passiontide was the period of Lent that commemorates the increasing revelation of Christ's divinity (see John 8:46-59) and His movement toward Jerusalem. Holy Week was the second week of Passiontide, which began with the Fifth Sunday in Lent, which was known as Passion Sunday. (The Fifth Week of Lent was likewise known as Passion Week.) Thus Passion Sunday and Palm Sunday were (unlike today) separate celebrations.

The revised calendar is used in the Ordinary Form of the Mass (the *Novus Ordo*), which is the form of the Mass celebrated in most parishes. The Extraordinary Form of the Mass (the Traditional Latin Mass) still uses the previous calendar, and thus celebrates two weeks of Passiontide.

How Is Passiontide Observed?

In both the Ordinary and the Extraordinary Forms of the Mass, Passiontide is observed with great solemnity, especially because Passiontide includes the Triduum, the final three days before Easter. Under the older, two-week Passiontide, all statues in the church were veiled in purple on Passion Sunday and remained covered until the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night. The practice still largely survives in the *Novus Ordo*, though different parishes observe it differently. Some veil their statues on Palm Sunday; others, before the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday; still others remove the statues from the church altogether and return them to the church for the Easter Vigil.

WHY IS EVERYTHING COVERED THIS FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

As we enter the church this weekend of the Fifth Sunday of Lent it may come as a shock that during the most sacred time of year we would cover everything that is beautiful in our churches, even the crucifix. Shouldn't we be looking at the painful scene at Calvary while we listen to the Passion narrative on Palm Sunday?

While it may appear counterintuitive to veil statues and images during the final weeks of Lent, the Catholic Church recommends this practice to heighten our senses and build within us a longing for Easter Sunday.

The rubrics can guide us. In the *Roman Missal* we find the instruction, "In the Dioceses of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from [the fifth] Sunday [of Lent] may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil."

This is the current practice of the Church, but veiling from the Fifth Sunday of Lent onward is minuscule compared to what was once practiced. For example, in Germany there was a tradition to veil the altar from view throughout all of Lent.

Why cover up something beautiful?

But why go through such lengths to cover up images that are designed to raise our hearts and minds toward heaven?

First, we use veils to alert us of the special time that we are in. When we walk into church and notice everything is covered, we immediately know that something is different. These last two weeks of Lent are meant to be a time of immediate preparation for the Sacred Triduum and these veils are a forceful reminder to get ready.

Secondly, the veils focus our attention on the words being said at Mass. When we listen to the Passion narrative, our senses are allowed to focus on the striking words from the Gospel and truly enter into the scene.

Third, the Church uses veils to produce a heightened sense of anticipation for Easter Sunday. This is further actualized when you attend daily Mass and see the veils each day. You don't want them to be there because they are hiding some very beautiful images.

And therein lies the whole point: the veils are not meant to be there forever. The images need to be unveiled; it is unnatural for them to be covered.

The unveiling before the Easter Vigil is a great reminder of our own life on earth. We live in a "veiled" world, in exile from our true home. It is only through our own death that the veil is lifted and we are finally able to see the beauty of everything in our lives.

CONFIRMATION WHAT IT IS NOT

The following is continuation of the discussion of the sacrament of Confirmation that was begun the week of the conferral of the sacrament on the youth of our parish. Many assumptions are made about this sacrament, most of which are wrong. So, some clarification:

Just as Baptism **gives** new life, Eucharist **nourishes** life, and Reconciliation **restores** life when it is broken, Confirmation **strengthens** that life by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC 1285). It is about strengthening what God has given, and continues to give, to his sons and daughters (cf. CCC 1302-1303).

The Sacrament of Confirmation is not the Catholic equivalent to the Jewish bar mitzvah. Confirmation is not a "coming of age" celebration. True, most young people are just beginning to pass into early adulthood when they receive the sacrament. But Confirmation is not about coming of age. Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation does not mark the end of formal religious education. We never outgrow a need for a deeper knowledge and appreciation of our faith.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is not a rite of passage, nor a graduation from religion class, nor a ratification of a personal faith choice. Rather, it's all about what God is doing for his beloved daughters and sons

And what is God doing? Strengthening the divine life which he gave at Baptism, nourishing us in the Eucharist, and reconciling with us in Penance. Why? So that the individual can better defend and witness to the faith through the gifts and workings of the Holy Spirit. And there are—and will be—many situations where we are called upon to defend and witness to our faith. And we need all the help we can get!

What role does the Holy Spirit play in the Sacrament of Confirmation?

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit completes the grace of baptism and offers the newly confirmed strength as a true witness of Christ. Thus, the newly confirmed is “more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (cf. CCC, 1285). Thus, the Holy Spirit completes what was begun at baptism.

Would it be better to confirm people when they are adults and can make their own choices?

Canon law states that, except when there is a danger of death, anyone who is baptized and has the use of reason, is properly instructed and disposed, and is able to renew their baptismal commitment, is able to be confirmed. The same code states that the proper age for reception of the sacrament is at the age of reason, unless the episcopal conference decides differently (cf. CIC, can. 891).

Perhaps the requirement that one be “properly disposed” is the key to when the sacrament is received. Proper disposition refers to the recipient’s willingness to cooperate with the gifts of the sacrament, which can happen at almost any age. But nowhere is the sacrament described as a ratification of the recipient’s choice or decision about the faith.

Rather, it is the gifts of the Spirit offered to give the recipient the courage and strength to witness and serve—two responsibilities implied in baptism—which are the grace and focus of the sacrament.

Thus, it is important not to view the Sacrament of Confirmation as a rite of passage, a ratification of a personal choice, or a graduation from religious instruction. Rather, it is to be viewed, as are all of the sacraments, as a distinctive working of God in a person’s life.

How does this sacrament benefit us in our adult lives as Catholics?

The Sacrament of Confirmation helps a person remain faithful to his or her baptismal commitment to witness to Christ and to serve others. The gifts of the Holy Spirit associated with Confirmation are strengths (or virtues) that Christian living requires if it is to be fruitful and complete. Thus wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord, are divine aids to Christian living without which fulfilling one’s baptismal calling would be far more difficult, if not impossible.

Perhaps we don’t recognize these qualities as gifts of strength because they have become a part of our Christian living and appear quite natural—a fact that affirms how closely the Holy Spirit works with us.

HOLY MASS Continued

Last time, several weeks ago when we addressed this topic we had moves out of the first part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word and were moving on to the second part the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Following the Prayers of the Faithful there takes place a series of activities to prepare for the Liturgy of Eucharist. The altar is prepared by dressing it either formally or at a regular Mass more simply. What most of us are familiar with is the Sunday or Weekday liturgies. Here the corporal, a large square of white linen is placed on the altar and the chalice, water, bowl, purificators and towel are placed off to the side.

There are some Masses where the altar is completely bare and then the various altar cloths are brought forward, placed on the altar and then the final dressing proceeds as described above. Next week a more complete description of the various items used will be discussed.

DAILY REFLECTIONS FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Monday 4 Apr

Dn. 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-20, 33-62: That authority can be used for evil, as well as for good, is powerfully demonstrated in the story of Susanna. So many innocent people, throughout history, have been the victims of just such abuse of power. That power can, and must, be challenged when it is used for ill, is demonstrated by Daniel's refusal to ignore the demands of justice. And none of us is exempt from this challenge, not if we call ourselves Christians. Too often, people feel powerless to confront the evil that threatens them. Yet, like Daniel in his time, our age too has people willing to fight to combat the evil and injustice in our world.

Jn. 8:12-20: Jesus, the 'Light of the World', promises that if we follow in His footsteps we need have no fear of walking in darkness. Jesus does not rush to judgement – unlike the authorities in our reading from the book of Daniel. Judging by human standards can, and often does, lead to an unacceptable level of injustice perpetrated against the weak, the poor, the dispossessed. We need the light that love for Jesus brings, in order to guide us in our dealing with each other.

Tuesday 5 Apr

Num. 21:4-9: Many of us will readily identify with the problem of remaining patient when things go wrong for us. Our collective patience and trust has certainly been tested during these past two years as our lives and livelihoods have been challenged by the presence of the COVID virus.

What might be the meaning of the fiery serpents being both harmful and healing? The Israelites were instructed to look at that which was causing them harm. Could it be that if we really 'look' at the current pandemic, we might be shaken out of our complacency? Would that give us the courage and strength we need to change the things that need changing in our lives and in our world?

Jn. 8:221-30: When Jesus is 'lifted up', when He has been raised from the dead, then it will be clear that the testimony He has given about Himself is true. But sometimes, we are so much 'of the world' that we fail to understand, we have no confidence in our ability to discern the truth. Jesus only ever did the Father's will, only ever preached the Father's word, only ever relied on the Father's truth. That is why He could be confident both of where He came from and where He was going. We need to place not only our hope, but our trust, in God's will for us and for our world.

Wednesday 6 Apr

Dan. 3:14-20, 24-25, 28: The faith of the three young men is so strong that their reply to the king who has commanded that they worship a golden statue is simply, 'Your question

hardly requires an answer'. It seems they were 'what you see is what you get' kind of people. Their integrity was not dependent on God doing their will: they would will what God willed. The courage they demonstrated did not please the king. When their faith in God was vindicated, it facilitated a change of heart in the king. Is there anyone in my life whose faith has changed my heart?

Jn. 8:31-42: We grow in faith, which is planted in us like the tiny mustard seed. It doesn't come fully formed complete, in us. It needs to be nurtured and developed. Jesus tells those who had believed in Him, that they will be disciples, if they continue to take His word to heart. Often, we assume we know what is meant by a word or a phrase, just as these did when Jesus promised them freedom, which they assumed they already had. They continue to question Him, seeking to understand what He is saying. Perhaps we might be encouraged to question more closely, in order to seek the truth.

Thursday 7 Apr

Gen. 17:3-9: A; change of name for Abram signifies that God's covenant will provoke a significant change in his life. Abram, 'the father is exalted', becomes Abraham, 'father of a multitude'. God's promises will bear fruit in those who accept the covenant and this will be a blessing, not only for Abraham, but for all those who will be descended from him. The Psalm reminds us that 'The Lord remembers His covenant forever'. On Abraham, as for all of his descendants, is laid the duty of keeping the covenant.

Jn. 8:51-59: The questioning of Jesus becomes more aggressive as His words challenge all that was being accepted as fact and truth. All the great leaders of Israel have lived and died and Jesus is saying that those who heed His words will not die. This is a step too far for people whose understanding cannot reach where Jesus is leading. Jesus, however, does not pull back; He insists, "Before Abraham ever was, I Am'. Sometimes faith calls us beyond our current understanding. Sometimes we are required to wait, to trust, to continue to follow while we learn the mystery of love.

Friday 8 Apr

Jer. 20:10-13: Like Jesus in yesterday's Gospel reading, Jeremiah is at the mercy of those who 'used to be' his friends. In 'Tired of Speaking Sweetly' the poet Hanz says that sometimes love wants to 'Break all our teacup talk of God'. If each one of us is indeed a word of God that is to be spoken in the world, then sometimes what we say will be rejected. But if, like Jeremiah, we know that we have 'committed our cause' to the Lord who, in the words of the Psalm, is 'my rock, my fortress, my savior', we will find the courage we need to proclaim the truth.

Jn. 10:31-40: Jesus continues to challenge those who believe He is blaspheming, that is, insulting God, which, in their eyes and culture, is a reason to stone Him. He asks that they listen to an interpretation of their Scriptures different to the one they are accustomed to hear. He asks that they notice what He does. Is what He does God's work? If they will be guided by what he does, then they will recognize the spirit of their God at work. Is that the criterion we are accustomed to use in making judgements about those who differ from us?

Saturday 9 Apr

Ezek. 37:21-28: 'I will rescue them from all the betrayals they have been guilty of'. Sin here is seen as something we need to be delivered from: and God is the rescuer. For Ezekiel, the recognition of God's holiness is the supreme value. The Lord redeems Israel, not because the people have repented, but because of God's holiness, which caused God to enter into a covenant with them, a covenant of peace and unity that will last from generation to generation for ever. The Holy God makes holy the people who bear God's name. this is how the nations will recognize Israel as belonging to God.

Jn. 11:45-57: Some of those who witnessed the raising of Mary's brother Lazarus spread the news abroad. The religious leaders, realizing that Jesus was beginning to get the attention of more and more people, believed His popularity and power would put at risk the agreement they had with the Romans. Their fear at what might be caused them to condemn Jesus in their minds and they were willing to kill Him to allay their fear. Has my own fear ever been the cause of harm to others?

**FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
26 MARCH - 27 MARCH 2022**

Saturday 2 Apr Lenten Weekday 4

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of Day, Lenten Preface III, Eucharistic Prayer II

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Fifth Sunday of Lent Proper of Day, Creed, Lent Sunday Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II

Sunday 3 Apr Mass Fifth Sunday of Lent

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper of Fifth Sunday, Creed, Lent Sunday Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of Fifth Sunday, Creed, Lent Sunday Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper of Fifth Sunday, Readings A Cycle, Scrutiny 3, Creed, Preface of 5th Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer II

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

Monday 4 Apr Lenten Weekday 5 St. Isidor Bishop & Doctor of Church Day Off

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of The Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of The Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III (Intention: Michael Sussilleaux)

Tuesday 5 Apr Lenten Weekday 5 St. Vincent Ferrer

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of The Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of The Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III (Intention: Leo Klock)

Wednesday 6 Apr Lenten Weekday 5

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of The Day, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer II Intention: Raymond Alvarez RIP)

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of The Day, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer II
 (Intention: Bernie Schulski RIP)

12:00 p.m. Mass Portsmouth Naval Hospital

Thursday 7 Apr Lenten Weekday 5 St. John Baptist de la Salle

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III
 (Intention: Imogene Thorne RIP)

4:00 – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass Proper of the Saint, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer III
 (Intention: Louis Rannazzisi RIP)

Friday 8 Apr Lenten Weekday 5

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer II
 (Intention: Michael Curran RIP)

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day, Preface of the Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer II
 (Intention: Francis Fox)

12:00 p.m. Mass Portsmouth Naval Hospital

4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Confessions Adoration

7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross

Saturday 9 Apr Lenten Weekday 5

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day, Preface of Passion I, Eucharistic Prayer II
 (Intention: Lordes Dein-Guerrero RIP)

1:00 – 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
 Proper Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance, Creed, Proper Preface,
 Eucharistic Prayer I
 (Intention: Nancy Beesley RIP)

Sunday 10 Apr Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance, Creed,
 Proper Preface, Eucharistic Prayer I
 (Intention: Parish of St. Stephen, Martyr)

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance, Creed,
 Proper Preface, Eucharistic Prayer I
 (Intention: Nerina Scire RIP)

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance, Creed,
 Proper Preface, Eucharistic Prayer I
 (Intention: Felicidad Purificacion Labrador RIP)

2:00 p.m. Brig Mass