






OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH

DURBAN NORTH

LENTEN REFLECTIONS 2021

THY WILL BE DONE

FOR **GOD** SO
LOVED 
 THE WORLD
— — — — —
THAT HE GAVE 
• His only •
begotten **SON**
 THAT WHOSOEVER
BELIEVES in **HIM**
should not perish
• BUT HAVE •
Everlasting
LIFE 
JOHN 3:16

WEEK FOUR

SUNDAY 14 MARCH

Scripture: *John 3: 14 -21*

Reflection:

During the Baptismal Rite at the Easter Vigil the priest asks the Catechumens (*Elect*) "What do you ask of God's Church?" They reply "Faith!" Next, he asks "What does Faith offer you?" They respond, "Eternal Life!"

This is exactly what Jesus told Nicodemus in explaining why God sent his Son into the world "So that everyone who believes may have eternal life."

On this Laetare Sunday we look ahead to Easter; and further ahead to our ultimate Easter at the end of this earthly life. It is faith that guides this journey. We have entered into this season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to purify our hearts and minds and realise with greater clarity our participation in the fraternity of mankind by extending ourselves to our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and needy.

Lent prepares us to renew our faith at Easter, as it prepares the Catechumens (*Elect*) to make their Profession of Faith at Easter when they are Baptised.

Faith, however, is more than a profession of learnt and taught beliefs. Faith is a daily living reality! It influences our attitude, behaviour and lifestyle and guides our journey through life. Each Easter is an opportunity to renew our faith. This is what we are preparing for.

The Church helps us to grow constantly in faith through preaching, teaching and challenging our active participation in the community of the Church as well as the wider community.

At the Easter Vigil the Baptism Candles of the Catechumens (*Elect*) are lit from the Paschal (*Easter Candle*) and handed to them with the words "Receive the light of Christ." Similarly, the congregation's Baptism Candles are also lit from the Paschal Candle as they renew their Baptismal Promises.

Faith makes us children of light. It is a tangible indication that we choose to live and walk in the light of the Lord. Jesus laments "that though the light has come into the world, men have shown that they prefer darkness to the light." As people of faith, we dare to be different to the rest of the world by living our faith as children of light.

Practical suggestion:

Get your Baptism Candle ready for Easter. If you don't have a Baptism Candle, then get a special white candle. If you are not attending the Easter Vigil, ask the priest or deacon to light it from the Paschal Candle during the Easter Season.

Thereafter use it as your Baptism Candle.

Find the Renewal of Baptism Promises in your Missal and read through it, reflecting on the promises that were made at your Baptism, which you made at your Confirmation and which you will renew at Easter.

Prayer:

Lord, strength my Lenten dedication and commitment during this holy season of purification so that I may be renewed in Faith at easter. Amen.

MONDAY 15 MARCH

Scripture:

John 4: 43 – 54

“Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe”.

Reflection:

Science really found its voice in the 20th Century. From the realms of space to the microbes of medicine, we have had theories proved and disproved because of scientific research. Little wonder then, that so many of the younger generation will not believe unless it can be ‘proved’!

Jesus lived in an era when such research and knowledge didn’t exist, and He produced signs and wonders that defied logic and left people wondering as to who He really was. And still, even when they saw these things happen in front of their eyes, they struggled to believe.

There were certainly people who did ‘believe without seeing,’ who in listening to Jesus, had a revelation deep within that this man *was* the promised Messiah. They probably could not have explained to anyone else *why* they believed, but they just *knew*!

Faith, as we know, is the key to that belief!

And faith is a gift; it doesn’t come naturally, it is given us by the grace of God, and it has to be nurtured and kept alive. That is not always easy, least of all when the ‘going gets tough;’ but that is when we have really got to hold on to our faith and believe that we will get through the darkness and emerge into the light once again.

Jesus’ faith was tested too; His agony in the Garden testifies to that, but He put His trust in His Father, and was able to say, “Your will be done!”

Practical suggestion:

Meditate quietly on the state of your faith.

Do you believe deeply and fervently without seeing?

Do you pray for ‘signs’ to strengthen your faith or do you see ‘signs’ that testify to God’s presence in your life?

Prayer:

Lord, I need to believe. Help my unbelief. May I witness to Your presence in my life, and give me a faith that is strong, and will withstand the tests. Amen.



TUESDAY 16 MARCH

Scripture: *John 5: 1 - 16*

Reflection:

Wow – God works in mysterious ways!

We are often saddened by the many good people we know who have suffered ill-health and succumbed to their illness, even though they have had strong faith, prayed continuously and after many people have prayed for their recovery.

Yet, in today's Gospel, Jesus heals a man who had been sick for many years who, on the face of it, appears not to have deserved being healed. He was old by the standards of the time in which he lived. He was a self-absorbed complainer who blamed others for his afflictions; even blaming Jesus for his actions when challenged by the Jews for carrying his mat on the sabbath. To top it all, he appeared ungrateful, disloyal, and unrepentant after Jesus healed him; he reported Jesus to the Authorities!

There are always reasons and lessons we can learn from the different answers God gives to our prayers. We must remember that it is not **my** will but "**Thy** will be done."

What lessons could we learn from this episode?

Jesus' three commands to this man changed his life and, if we hear them, they could change ours.

How much of a 'spiritual invalid who complains and blames others' are we in not living and not acting out our faith?

By telling us to "Stand, take up your mat and walk!" Jesus is commanding us to live and take action in our faith.

Jesus said to the healed man, "Look, you are well, do not sin anymore." It would be a pity if this man, afterwards falls into a life of sin. From the Gospel passage, it would seem that Jesus has cured him in order to allow him to utilise his time and energy for the benefit of the Kingdom: This happens for us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After forgiving our sins, Jesus tells us, "Go in peace and proclaim to the world the wonderful works of God who has brought you salvation."

Practical Suggestion:

Think about the times in your life when you complained about your situation and put the blame for your stresses and hardships on others – or even on God.

Listen to Jesus' words "Stand, take up your mat and walk" and consider what you can do to seek forgiveness and to actively spread the Good News.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, help me to be grateful for the gifts you have given me, to fight against a life of sin, and to be born again this Easter. I am ready to embrace your will with love, even if this means dying to myself. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH

Scripture

John 5: 17 - 30

Reflection:

Jesus had just cured the man who, for thirty-eight years, was unable to reach the healing waters on time. He performed this miracle on the Sabbath and was severely criticised for having done so.

What follows is a sermon, a real sermon on His oneness with God - a very bold and challenging claim bringing to a head the human and the divine, a claim that would result in His Crucifixion.

The Jewish Elders had for years insisted on and ruled that no work of any kind was permitted on the Sabbath, because that was the day that God the Creator of earth rested and smiled upon His masterpiece. To work on that day was a religious crime. The death agenda had begun, to get rid of Jesus.

What they failed to understand was that immediately after the creation, as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, God had begun His work of redemption and that work was about to be perfected by Jesus.

Sin interrupted His rest. God *never* rested nor rests from that saving work - a collaborative effort of Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus had to work every day on earth.

Jesus insists that He is One with the Father whom He calls "*my Father*." The Jews always referred to "*our Father*". This claim to be equal to God was a religious crime of blasphemy!

What He did on earth was a perfect reflection of what the Father Himself would have done – no different. He discerned the will of the Father and obeyed it absolutely. He could never have done so if He were not consubstantial with the Father (*refer to the Nicene Creed*). God loved us so much that He sent His Son who loved us with His human heart so we would be capable of loving divinely as God does: a sacrificial love of mercy and compassion.

Jesus will "come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." The Father does not judge. We will be judged to the extent that we lived our lives with Spirit-empowered activity rather than self-focussed behaviour.

Practical Suggestion:

We acknowledge Jesus as the One who will determine our eternal destiny. We are fully aware of how He will judge. Read the Beatitudes for guidance. (*Matthew 5: 1 – 12*)

Prayer:

Holy Spirit of God, you were sent by the Father in the name of Jesus to help us. During this Lenten season guide my mind and guard my heart. Amen

THURSDAY 18 MARCH

Scripture

Exodus 32: 7 - 14

Reflection:

How often have we turned away from God and made hasty decisions because we lacked patience?

Have you ever wondered if God could forgive you for having showed him your back?

On the Third Sunday of Lent, our Old Testament reading (*Exodus 20:1-17*) gave an account of Moses going up a mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God. While Moses was on the mountain with God, the Israelites below became impatient and restless.

In today's scripture God saw how they had disowned him. Not only have they turned away from God and his ways, but they created their own god made in the form of a golden calf.

They then attributed their deliverance to a golden calf. The Israelites turned to a golden calf because they grew impatient. They had not seen Moses since he went up the Mountain to meet God. Moses was not just God's mouthpiece to the Israelites. He was their moral compass and the presence of God in the wilderness. They completely forgot God who brought them out of Egypt, from the yoke of slavery.

One way or another, we have gone astray, perhaps because we have not felt God's presence in recent times. Possibly out of impatience and confusion, we have made decisions against God. Moreover, we may have forgotten to show gratitude for what God has always done for us. Just like the Israelites, we may have created our own 'gods' and have dedicated our lives to them.

God, however, does not treat us as we deserve. He always spares and forgives us. Even though we turn away from him due to sin, he is always faithful and always ready to welcome us back. The season of Lent provides an opportunity to turn back to God. Grasp this opportunity and begin again.

Practical Suggestion:

Are there things in your life you have turned into your gods?

What are these things that stand between you and the love of God?

Today, think of just three things that prevent you from giving God his time with you. Perhaps you can think of ways to detach from these things.

Prayer:

I love you, Jesus, my love above all things, I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again, Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will. Amen.

FRIDAY 19 MARCH - FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH

Scripture

Matthew 1: 16, 18 - 21, 24

Reflection:

There is very little written about the life of St. Joseph in the Gospels. Matthew gives us his genealogy and the events leading up to the birth of Jesus, ending with the young family returning to Nazareth after having fled into Egypt for safety.

Luke mentions him at the beginning of his Gospel, culminating with the finding of the young boy Jesus in the Temple.

Nevertheless, from what we are able to read, we realise that he was a loyal and steadfast husband to Mary and a loving and devoted father to Jesus. He imparted his knowledge and love of his Jewish heritage and faith to the young child Jesus and we can imagine that he took immense pride and great pleasure in teaching Jesus all the carpentry skills he had mastered over the years.

Pope Francis announced a Year of St. Joseph in honour of the 150th anniversary of the saint's proclamation as patron of the Universal Church.

The year commenced on 8 December. Pope Francis said he was establishing the year so that "every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfilment of God's will."

He said the coronavirus pandemic has heightened his desire to reflect on St. Joseph, as so many people during the pandemic have made hidden sacrifices to protect others, just as St. Joseph quietly protected and cared for Mary and Jesus.

"Each of us can discover in Joseph - the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence - an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble," Pope Francis highlights St. Joseph's role as a father who served his family with charity and humility, adding, "Our world today needs fathers." It is also an opportunity to reflect on the role of fathers in families and in our society.

The Catholic Church honours St. Joseph as the earthly father of Jesus. He is invoked as the patron saint of the Universal Church. He is also the patron of workers, fathers and a happy death.

Practical Suggestion:

For those fortunate enough to have a father who is still alive, be sure to let him know that he is loved and appreciated. Thank God for the gift of your father.

For those whose fathers are not long with them, always make a point of remembering them in your daily prayers.

Prayer:

O God, Who in Your ineffable Providence did vouchsafe to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of Your most holy Mother, grant, we beseech Thee, that he whom we venerate as our protector on earth, may be our intercessor in Heaven. Who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY 20 MARCH

Scripture

John 7: 40 - 52

Reflection:

Jesus cried out “If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me!

As scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water.” He was speaking of the Holy Spirit (*John 7:37-39*). The audience was divided, some thinking Jesus was the prophet, like Moses, “Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves, from your own brothers; to him you must listen.” (*Deuteronomy 18:15*). Others thought He was the Christ, while still others, including Chief Priests and Pharisees, opposed Jesus, supposedly because of ‘law breaking’ E.G: Healing sick people on the Sabbath (*but really from envy*). Such opponents thought Jesus had been born in Nazareth, not Bethlehem, and so could not be the Messiah. Police sent to arrest Jesus did not do so, saying “there has never been anyone who has spoken like him”.

Such powerful, wise, compelling teaching came from Jesus, who is both man and the eternally begotten Word of God. As St Peter admirably exclaimed: “Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life.” (*John 6:68*).

The Pharisees, the self-appointed religious elite, sought the approval of their peers. They put honour from men before the honour that comes from God. (*John 12:43*) and despised Jesus and his followers deeming them “rabble, knowing nothing about the Law – they are damned.” St Thomas Aquinas wrote: those who do not have a knowledge of the law but act in harmony with it, live more within the law than those who do have a knowledge of the law yet do not keep it. “But you must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves.” (*James 1:22*). The Pharisees (*supposedly ‘high class’ Judeans*) disparaged Galilee - “prophets do not come out of Galilee.” But the Messiah (*greater than all prophets*) came from Galilee as had been prophesied E.G: “He will be called a Nazarene” (*Matthew 2:23*); and “The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone”, spoken to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali in Galilee. (*Isaiah 9:1*)

Practical Suggestion:

Reflect on those areas in your life where you may have appointed yourself ‘elite.’

Prayer:

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy corn without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk. (*Isaiah 55:1*)

These Daily Reflections for Lent 2021 are written by Fr. Desmond Nair, Irene Helsdon, Mike Montocchio, George Cominos, Fr. Wandile Cagwe, Veronica Donnelly and Andy McMichael. Please acknowledge the authors when copying and distributing. We wish you a fruitful and blessed Lenten Season.