

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT 2018

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ..."



FROM THE READINGS

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

Their enemies burnt the house of God ... Those who escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants of the king of the Chaldeans and his sons until the kingdom of the Persians came to power. All this was to fulfil the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: "Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled."

Ephesians 2:4-10

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy. When we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that

you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus. We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.



REFLECTIONS

The book of Chronicles tells the story of the Exile: Jerusalem was destroyed, when people were unfaithful to their covenant with God and many of her people taken to exile in Babylon, until a Persian leader freed them many years later. The prophets had warned the people they would bring consequences upon themselves if they were unfaithful to God’s covenant – and this is what occurred. The letter to the Ephesians and the Gospel of John both tell of God’s mercy and salvation in Jesus Christ, and the hope for a really good life now, as ‘God’s works of art’ – for that is what we are and who we are meant to be – and life eternal.

All peoples, all nations, all seasons, all years, all hours and days – you, who have invited us to love, hear our cry! Listen to our prayer. Make our spirits free, our hearts open, our minds healthy, our souls awake. Then we will be able to love as you have asked: with all our hearts, all our minds, all our souls. The *all* is frightening, yet in our deepest moments of truth we know that this is what we desire. O God of all, hear us. In Christ’s name we pray.

Macrina Widederkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 104

Gently lay your hands upon your lips, longing for the grace to speak only words that are helpful this day. Remember the words that you have already spoken. You cannot take them back. Bless them and let them go.

Macrina Widederkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 62

FROM POPE FRANCIS

Today Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life, is calling you, you and you to leave your mark on history. He who is life, is asking each of you to leave a mark that brings life to your own history and that of many others. He, who is truth, is asking you to abandon the paths of rejection, division and emptiness. Are you up to this?

Pope Francis in Dear Young Friends, 30

As far as Jesus is concerned ... as the Gospel shows ... no one is unworthy, or far from his thoughts. No one is insignificant. He loves all of us with a special love; for him all of us are important: *you* are important! God counts on you for what you are, not for what you possess. In his eyes the clothes you wear or the kind of mobile phone you use are of absolutely no concern. He doesn't care whether you are stylish or not; he cares about you as you are! In his eyes, you are precious, and your value is inestimable.

Pope Francis in Dear Young Friends, 33

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

From your reading: What stands out or 'speaks' to you most?

Translate to life:

We are 'God's work of art.'

What could it mean for you to see yourself and others in this light?

Express the heart:

Find words or an image for

- Insights gained from these readings and reflections
- A hope or intention for the future.

ONE HOUR FOR A GROUP

- **Begin with a short prayer**, asking God's presence and guidance.
- **Time with the Text:** Allow quiet time for reading and reflecting. ~15 mins
- **Discussion:**
 1. Each person shares a key insight from their reading and reflection. 10 mins
 2. General Discussion. 30 mins
- **Concluding Prayer Together**
eg. 'Prayer' from this leaflet, a traditional prayer, or your own words.

PRAYER

I am leaning on your Heart, O God.

I am resting there in silence.

All the turmoil that exhausts me
is brought to bear on this great love.

No resistance or complaint is heard
as I lean upon your welcome, O God.

There is gladness for my coming.

There is comfort for my pain.

I lean, and lean, and lean

Upon your heart that hurts with me.

Strength lifts the weight of my distress.

Courage wraps around my troubles.

No miracle of instant recovery.

No taking away of life's burdens.

Yet, there is solace for my soul,
and refuge for my exiled tears.

It is enough for me to know
your heart, O God, is with me,
full of mercy and compassion,
tending to the wounds I bear.

Adapted from 'Leaning on the Heart of God', Joyce Rupp in Out of the Ordinary, 61



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