

5 Lent B 2021 SML
JN 12:20-33

To our Jewish brethren, Jesus revealed himself as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Just within the four gospel accounts, there are 119 Old Testament prophecies that Our Blessed Lord fulfilled in the Books of:

- ✓ Exodus,
- ✓ Leviticus,
- ✓ Deuteronomy,
- ✓ Isaiah,
- ✓ Jeremiah,
- ✓ Daniel,
- ✓ Zechariah,
- ✓ Psalms,
- ✓ the list goes on.

The Gentiles (and the word Gentile means “non-Jew”), on the other hand, received no such revelation as they had no Old Testament. In fact, they either had no god at all, or they had their false gods. So for them, Our Blessed Lord drew an analogy from nature which they could readily understand. "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit."

While the Gentiles (non-Jews) had no religion or a false religion, they were also no strangers to Christ. Our Blessed Lord welcomed them into His fold as readily as He welcomed His Jewish brethren. Beginning with His death and working our way back to His birth, recall those times Jesus interacted with the Gentiles:

- ✓ the Roman centurion, who stood facing Jesus and saw Him breath His last, said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God.”
- ✓ the miracles Jesus performed, healing:
 - ✓ the paralyzed servant of the Roman soldier
 - ✓ the Syrophenician woman’s daughter with an unclean spirit
- ✓ the Wise Men of the East who made their way to the Christ Child at His birth.

Considering this background, look at the Gospel at hand.

The time was less than a week before the Crucifixion. Having catered a good part of His teachings to the Jews, and fulfilling all the ancient prophecies as recorded in the Old Testament, it was now time for the Gentiles to be given a lesson concerning the reason for His coming.

The Gentiles were represented here by the Greeks. Now the Greeks had seen the great crowds and the triumphant entry

into Jerusalem which caused the Pharisees to complain that the “whole world was running after Him.”

They had seen Him cleanse the Temple and had found it appealing that Jesus quoted Isaiah saying that the Temple was a house for every nation (MK11:17). So while the enemies of Jesus were plotting to kill Jesus, the Greeks, the Wise Men of the West, if you will, wished to see Him. Why? Because they knew something was missing in their godless life or their false god existence.

1. At his birth, the Wise Men of the East came to His crib;
2. Now, the Wise Men of the West came to His Cross.

1. The Wise Men of the East saw the humiliation of Jesus in the form of a baby in the crib;
2. The Wise Men of the West saw the humiliation of Jesus in the form of a criminal on the cross.

1. The Wise Men of the East saw a star at his birth;
2. The Wise Men of the West would felt an earthquake at His death.

Even their inquiries were similar:

1. The Wise Men of the East asked “Where is this newborn king of the Jews?”
2. The Wise Men of the West said, “We would like to see Jesus.”

So just considering the time span from the crib to the cross, there was something missing in the lives of the Gentiles for asking to see Jesus, and in the lives of the Jews, as well. Otherwise, they would not have been awaiting the Messiah in the first place. The question often asked is why did Our Blessed Lord come 2000 years ago?

Two thousand years ago, the political, economic, and social conditions of the world were much like our own. For example, in those days there was:

- ✓ an intense nationalism in Israel,
- ✓ a haughty militarism in Rome,
- ✓ with Caesar there arose a kind of dictatorship which absorbed individual rights,
- ✓ economically, there was exploitation of labor and the servile state,
- ✓ taxation was excessive;
- ✓ religion was on the decline:
 - ✓ the Gentiles had lost faith in their gods
 - ✓ and Israel had had no prophet since the days of Daniel.
- ✓ Wealth was in the hands of the few,
- ✓ and life was becoming more of a riddle.

Into this world with its

- ✓ depression,
- ✓ despair, and
- ✓ despondency,

came God. And He came to set men and their world right with God,

- ✓ not only their hearts and their souls,
- ✓ but even their business,
- ✓ their secular affairs,
- ✓ their governments,
- ✓ and their all.

How did He do it? God solved the social, political, and economic problems of the world:

- ✓ not by voicing a new economic system;
- ✓ not by instructing man in the ways of supply and demand;
- ✓ not by a great piece of research to solve their problems.

He solved their problems by:

- ✓ being born in a crib like everyone else,
- ✓ dying on a cross like more than a few others,
- ✓ and rising from the dead, which only He can do.

They destroyed the Temple of His body, yet He built a new Living Temple in its place, where men might once more sing

because they had found their God. That new Living Temple where they found God is the Catholic Church.

No one can deny the Catholic Church has stood the test of time, for 2000 years and counting. Civilizations and governments much more organized and much more powerful than She have risen and fallen these last 2000 years, yet the Catholic Church is still here. Non-Catholic Churches that started 10 minutes after Pentecost have risen and fallen, but the Catholic Church alone has stood the test of time.

Why is that? Because the Church's teaching does not change to suit any lifestyle. Reaffirmed this past week by Our Holy Father in his upholding the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman, the vitriol he has received! Yet you and I know this sacred truth of the definition of marriage is God's law, Eternal Law, as revealed by God to the Church, and not the law of a voice from today.

But once society thinks society has the authority to change God's law, everything is up for discussion. This was predicted.

I'll quote a homily I delivered nine years ago, when the State of NJ redefined marriage. I preached:

People can love whoever they want, but they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us. Because

redefining marriage, or anything else for that matter, which is defined by God's law, is a slippery slope, as what is considered God's law today can be undermined tomorrow:

- ✓ from redefining marriage to include same sex unions now,
- ✓ to redefining marriage to include unions between an adult and someone underage (considering those who think like Warren Jeffs or the teacher who wanted to marry her student after she conceived a child with him)
- ✓ to redefining marriage to include unions among more than two adults, for example one or more men marrying one or more women
- ✓ to redefining motherhood to include men,
- ✓ to redefining fatherhood to include women,
- ✓ the list goes on." End quote.

Well, the list has gone on, and today, society, more specifically special interest groups, thinks it has the authority to redefine gender for all of us:

- ✓ male
- ✓ female
- ✓ both male and female
- ✓ neither male nor female
- ✓ or something else

- ✓ and these life altering decisions can be made by and must be taught to primary graders.

Fulton Sheen once said, “Any religion which keeps up with the times must be prepared to die with the times.” She Who has withstood the test of time and Whose teaching has not changed in that time, is experiencing renewed interest: in the Catholic Church and in Catholic School education. It is no coincidence that since it has been announced that gender fluidity will be introduced into the curriculum of New Jersey public school education starting in kindergartenⁱ, there has been an overwhelming interest in Catholic School education, not just in Medford, but throughout the State of NJ.

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. This quote applies aptly to the Catholic Church as it seemed the Church has suffered a thousand deaths because She does not change Her teaching according to the times. However, since She is still here, She has conquered death with a thousand resurrections, for the same reason, because She has not changed Her teaching according to the times. And She, like the grain of wheat, continues to produce much fruit.

To coin an old phrase, the Church will go on “by hook or by crook.” The hook will be the hook of the fishermen, to catch souls for Christ, and the crook will be the crook of the shepherd, with which we will keep them. For as fishers of men and shepherds of souls, the Church is committed to the high destiny of teaching the truth, God’s Eternal Law. For when truth wins, we win! But when truth loses . . . but wait! Truth can never lose!

ⁱ <https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/family-policy-alliance-murphy-urged-override-sexuality-lessons-veto-deadline-looms/>