

4th Sunday of Lent – (Year B) – March 11, 2018

2 CHR 36:14-16, 19-23; PS 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6; EPH 2:4-10; JN 3:14-21

Like many of the Readings we hear at Mass each Sunday, our Readings today *can* seem so abstract as to make it challenging for us to see what they have to do with our *everyday lives*.

For example, the 1st Reading speaks of **prophets, kings** and people going into **exile**. Prophets...kings...exile...these are not exactly **common topics of conversation** for us in 2018.

Then, in our 2nd Reading, **St. Paul** writes about God “*seating us with [Jesus] in the heavens*” (cf. Eph 2:6). Well, when we look around and see that we’re still **here**, rather than sitting on **thrones in Heaven**, such language seems **utterly alien** to our **actual experience**.

Even in the **Gospel**, Jesus recalls the time Moses affixed a **bronze serpent** to a pole to save people from *real serpent venom*. Then, he speaks of himself in the **third person**—calling himself the *Son of Man*—an expression we **don’t** really understand...unless we *really* understand the **Old Testament**...which most people *don’t*!

So, the **words** of these Readings may be **familiar**—since we’ve **heard** them many times before! But what do they really *mean*...for **us**?

Do they speak only of Biblical times—the time of Jesus...and also the **thousands of years before Jesus**? Or do they also speak of us...**today**? And if they **do** speak of us...**today**...do they have any real **relevance** in our lives...**today**?

It turns out that we merely have to **look around** us with **clear eyes** to find out just how **absolutely relevant** these **Readings** are for us...**today**!

Here’s a perfect example—In a **2016** meeting with the **Bishops of Poland**, *Pope Francis* said:

We are experiencing a moment of the annihilation of man as the image of God...In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one

of these—I will call it clearly by its name—is [the ideology of] “gender”. Today children—children!—are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex...These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this terrible!

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/08/02/0568/01265.html#en>

Now, let’s consider how the **Bible Readings** today intersect with **Pope Francis’ very strong words** about a *very serious threat* to our society—the **false idea**—the *lie*—that **masculinity and femininity** are *accidents* that we can *fix*, rather than **indispensable aspects** of our **identity**...given to us by **God**.

We can actually do this **step-by-step**, going **Reading-by-Reading**. Let’s start with the **1st Reading** from the Old Testament **Second Book of Chronicles**.

In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD’s temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. (2 Chr 36:14)

In those days, both the **priests** and **people** were *unfaithful*. It’s quite likely that the people were unfaithful, in part, because of the **unfaithfulness of the priests** who **guided** them.

The same is true today, especially when it comes to **gender ideology**—the **utter nonsense** that our masculinity and femininity are *negotiable*, and that it doesn’t matter if **men are with men** and **women are with women**. There are **high-profile priests today** who spread such lies—*in cooperation with the corrupt culture*—and **confuse and corrupt unsuspecting souls** by convincing them that God is “ok” with this “**false gospel**”.

The **1st Reading** also speaks of the people “*practicing all the abominations of the nations*” (cf. 2 Chr 36:14). The **lie about male and female** is spreading like wildfire—from nation to nation—through our **governments**, the **media** and our **educational systems**, **confusing and corrupting** our young people...and **tearing** them...and their families...**apart**.

This is what **Pope Francis** means when he speaks of “**ideological colonization**”. An **ideology** is a *worldview*—a way of looking at reality and interpreting it in a certain way. The **gender ideology**—that male and female distinctions are arbitrary and don’t really matter—goes directly against **God’s Holy Word in the Bible** which

tells us that **God** created **man**—*male and female*—on *purpose*—“*in his image and likeness*” (cf. Gen 1:27).

Colonization means, among other things, to send one’s own citizens into a foreign territory to occupy the new territory while remaining loyal to the country of origin. It’s kind of like **exporting some of your people** into another area to take it over and to thereby expand the overall territories controlled by the home country.

Ideological colonization is exporting one’s ideas—rather than one’s **citizens**—into new territories—and often by **deception, manipulation and coercion**—in order to **indoctrinate** an even larger number of people into a particular worldview.

It doesn’t take a genius to see just how effectively the **exporters of gender ideology** have *infected many societies across the globe* with their *anti-God worldview*. And they’ve done so with **lightning speed**—so much so that many of our **Catholic young people** and even their **parents**, no longer trust their own **Church** or their own **Savior**—Jesus Christ.

The **1st Reading** also speaks of how the **priests’ and peoples’** indulgence in the **abominations** of the nations “*pollut[ed] the Lord’s temple*” (cf. 2 Chr 36:14). This one takes a little more thought, since Christians do not have a single Temple, like the Israelites had in Jerusalem in Biblical times. So what does this mean for us?

Here we recall that, when a person is **Baptized**, they become a *Temple of the Holy Spirit*. When such a person **accepts** and, far worse, **chooses to live according to** gender ideology, they often embrace a **promiscuous lifestyle** which can lead to **debilitating diseases**. Even worse, they even try to **reconstruct their bodies** with **surgery and hormones**.

God knows that when we abandon his **Law of Love** and embrace the **lies of the surrounding culture**, it is *we* who damage *ourselves*—**individually**; as **nations**; and ultimately, the *whole world*.

Yet, even when we abandon God, he does not abandon us!

As the **1st Reading** also tells us...

Early and often the LORD...sent his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the LORD's anger against his people blazed up beyond remedy. Then he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in their own sanctuary, with compassion for neither young men nor young women, neither the old nor the infirm; all of them he delivered into his power...Those who escaped the sword he carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants to him... (2 Chr 36:15-17, 20)

In our own day, God continually reaches out to his wayward sons and daughters through his “**messengers**”—**faithful teachers and preachers of the authentic Gospel**, as well as through **mental health professionals** who refuse to **abandon their patients to slavery** to a **sick ideology**.

But, just like in Old Testament times, gender ideologues “*mock God's messengers*” (cf. 2 Chr 36:16) and **even** convince our young people to **mistrust their own parents**. The **government, media, and educational institutions** work in lock-step to **discredit God** and his **followers** as **backwards** and **ignorant**, while simultaneously promoting their **lies**...as *liberation*.

And just as in Old Testament times, many of those who embrace the “*abominations of the nations*” (cf. 2 Chr 36:14)—specifically, the **lies about male and female**—end up **dead**...from **disease**...or even from *suicide*.

Those **who do not die** often end up **exiled** from **family**, from **Church**, from **God** and worst of all, from *themselves*, trading **genuine relationships** for **counterfeit substitutes** which leave them **starving** for...and isolated from...genuine *love*.

In our **2nd Reading**, **St. Paul** writes to the **Ephesians** about...

God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with... (Eph 2:4-5)

God is our faithful Father, and he agonizes when he sees his children—*you and me*—**suffering** because of our own misguided decisions—our *preference for the darkness of sin over the light of his love*.

And just as he sent his messengers “*early and often*” (cf. 2 Chr 36:15) in **Old Testament times**, when things had nearly reached the “**point of no return**”, he sent his **Son—Jesus Christ**—not only to warn **them**...and **us**...of the dangers we face, but **especially** to give us a *way*—in himself—back home to the Father—Our Father.

Today’s **Gospel** sums up **God’s love** in *these words*:

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God. (Jn 3:16-21)

Why do people prefer the darkness of sin?

More to the point:

Why do people who are immersed in gender ideology want to *force others* to accept their dark worldview instead of coming to the light of Jesus Christ?

Because they do not want to think **something is wrong with them**.

But here’s the fact. **There’s something wrong with *all* of us!** It’s called **sin!**

And until we **all** admit that we are *sinner*s...and until we accept the truth that our *freedom from slavery to this sin* can only be brought about by *returning to the Father...through Jesus*—we will remain enslaved.

Those who are enslaved by sin see the **light** as a *threat*—not only to their **lifestyles**, but especially to their very *selves*. They are convinced that if they question their **worldview** and find out that it’s false—then they will lose their *identity*.

But that is a lie!

Our identity is not bestowed on us by a **sick culture** that tells us that **God made a mistake** and **we have to** correct his mistake in order to become who they *really* are. Our identity comes from God who created us—male and female, in his image, and out of love for us. And our freedom will only come from standing confidently and securely in the light of *that* truth.

Gender ideology is not the only path that plunges us into the darkness of alienation from God and from one another. There are, in fact, **many paths of sin that lead to death**. But we were not made for **darkness and death**, but for **eternal life**—with God and with our loved ones.

Thus, St. Paul writes in the **2nd Reading** for today:

...we are [God's] handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them. (Eph 2:10)

God sent his Son to show us the way out of the dark slavery to sin and into the light of love.

Now it is up to us to **follow** his son...*if* we are to take our rightful place...in our real family.