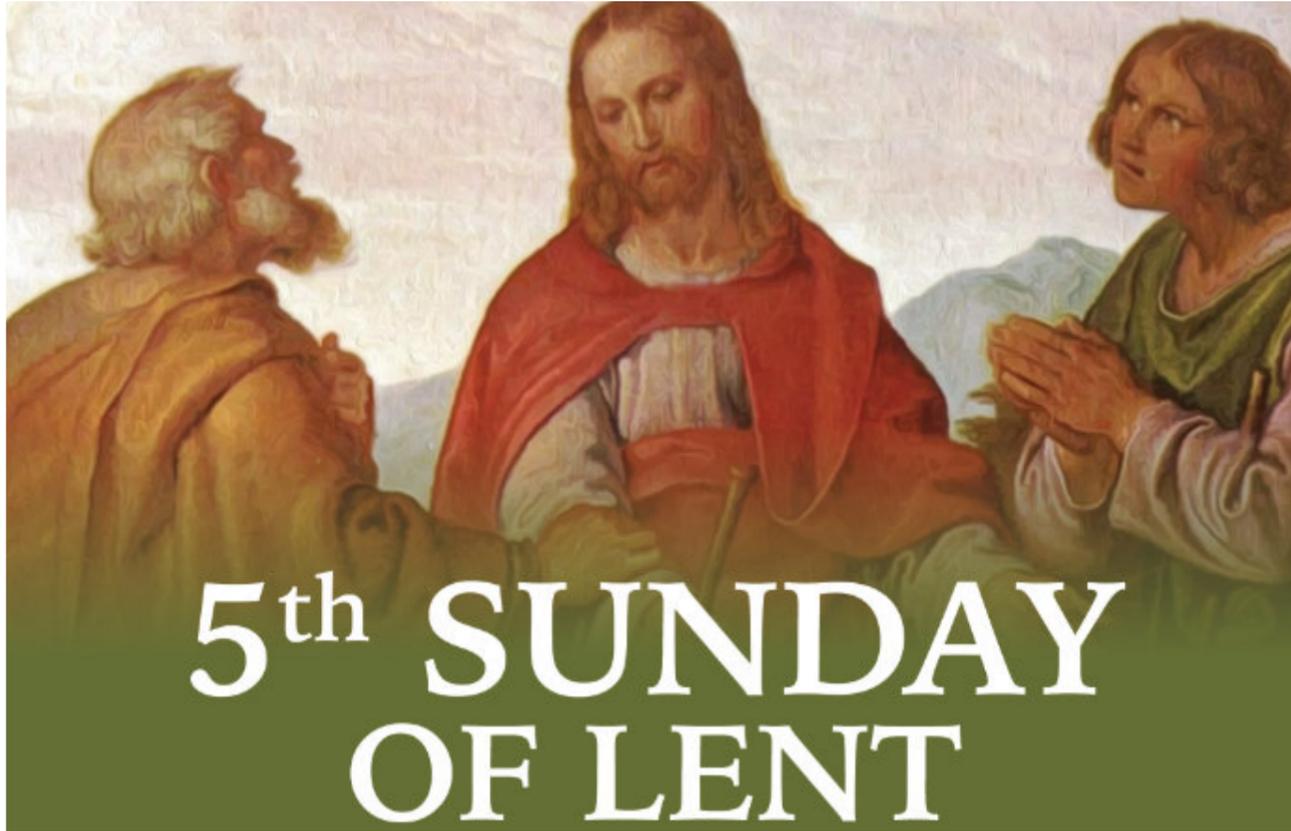




parish newsletter

Fifth Sunday of Lent (Year B) | 21 March 2021

Reflecting on the Gospel



Any good teacher or parent will tell you that once a lesson is really learned it doesn't need to be taught again. When we internalise things we have learned, they become a

part of who we are and influence how we perceive and interact with our world. The same is true for the law God has written upon our hearts. Once humanity learns this lesson,

we will simply know it to be true and act accordingly. Sometimes, it is hard to get people to learn the lessons they need to learn. They are often distracted, disinterested, con-

flicted, misdirected, or just too stubborn and unable or unwilling to see what is right before their eyes. Understanding that God is in a loving and committed relationship with those fash-

ioned and formed in God's own image, seems like such a simple lesson to learn. But history and experience has proven that it is not.

We struggle with faith, especially when that faith asks us to learn something very particular about ourselves. We must, like a grain of wheat, fall to the ground and die. Because God's DNA is at the very core of who we are, there are specific pearls of wisdom that must be acquired before we can live a full life. One very powerful lesson is that it is not the task of the world to tell us who we are and what has meaning, but God. For many, death is not an opportunity for greater life but a permanent ending to the life they have known. Jesus knew every dimension to what it means to be fully human because he was! He knows the joys, limitations, sorrows, frustrations, wonders, suffering, opportunities, and joys of the human experience. Jesus can teach us a wealth of knowledge and life's lessons from his example, espe-

cially obedience.

When we accept the law God has placed in our hearts and gain wisdom from it, then when we suffer we learn to listen more attentively to the Voice behind that law. We naturally flee to our Creator for inspiration, consolation, hope, direction, and comfort as we navigate through this time of darkness. We will not need to run from it, subdue it, fight it, or be overcome by it because we will know, having internalised this profound lesson before, that God will bring new life. God's law is love and love never fails. Even in the moments of Jesus' deepest despair, he glorified the name of his Father. What he learned allowed him to put everything in perspective and be obedient to the tender, loving Voice that echoed within. As Lent quickly winds down, may we learn the same! Then, may we gain the fortitude and wisdom to help others see what is right before their eyes.

Everyday Stewardship

Tracey Earl Welliver, MTS

We parents know that it's tricky, tackling the topic of fear with our kids. We want them to know that it's okay to be scared, that it's something we all feel from time to time. We want them to understand that bravery isn't the absence of fear, but the choices we make in persevering despite that feeling.

Most of all, we want to model the right kind of behaviour for our kids. Whatever our scary situation is — illness, a job loss, life changes — we want them to see us make a choice to face that fear head-on.

Jesus seems to be the parent who is gently broaching the topic of fear with his children. A great sense of fore-



boding hangs over these readings. Jesus knew what was coming. He knew it was going to be hard, both for him

and for his followers, who did not have his courage. Even he admits to being "troubled" and he speaks of "the time of judgement." There is the dramatic raising of Lazarus, the talk of how a grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit, the depiction of Christ as an obedient student of his own suffering.

"Yet what should I say?" he asks them. "Father, save me from this hour?" But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour."

This week, Christ gives us a very parental gift: He shows us his fear, and he shows us how to conquer it. He challenges us to embrace the purpose for which we came to this hour — whatever that hour may hold.

Live the Liturgy

How do we convince people that God's law is written upon their hearts? God is wedded to God's people. This is a simple and fundamental fact of life. Yet, many ignore this truth and carry on as if they, or humanity as a whole, are the centre of the universe. As a grain of wheat has to fall to the ground and die in order to become what it really is, we too must die to our secular images and ideas of ourselves so that we can become who God really made us to be. If all of us kept our focus on God's deep bonded love with human beings, indeed with our very self, then

there would be no need to teach others this fundamental life lesson. They would simply know this truth, as Jeremiah tells us. Somehow, perhaps through original and personal sin, we have lost sight of this reality. We have lost our way and our axis. It is time to find our way back, to learn the virtue of obedience, to pay attention to what God is saying and become aware of the Divine Love that is the reason for all creation. Then, even in our darkest hour when all may seem to be lost, we can say as did Jesus, the model of obedience, "Father, glorify your name." By this perseverance, people can come to know the Lord and what God has done.

If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harvest.



First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel Acclamation	Gospel
All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:34)	A pure heart create for me, O God. (Ps 50)	Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered. (Heb 5:8)	Glory and Praise to you! Whoever serves me must follow me, says the Lord; and where I am, there also will my servant be. Glory and praise to you!	Amen, amen, I say to you, 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. (Jn 20:24)

Masses this Week

21	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT	Jer 31:31-34/Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15 [12a]/Heb 5:7-9/Jn 12:20-33 10.30 Mass St Mary's John Smith & Norah Campbell (RIP) 17.00 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish
22	Monday	Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62/Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 [4ab]/Jn 8:1-11 12.05 Mass St Mary's Alf Hedley (RIP)
23	Tuesday	Nm 21:4-9/Ps 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21 [2]/Jn 8:21-30 12.05 Mass St Mary's Mary Watson (RIP)
24	Wednesday	Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95/Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56 [52b]/Jn 8:31-42 12.05 Mass St Mary's Sheila Burns (RIP)
25	THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD	Is 7:10-14; 8:10/Ps 40:7-8, 8-9, 10, 11 [8a, 9a]/Heb 10:4-10/Lk 1:26-38 12.05 Mass St Mary's Deceased members of the Legion of Mary (RIP)
26	Friday	Jer 20:10-13/Ps 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7 [cf. 7]/Jn 10:31-42 12.05 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Edyta, Misia & Nataniel
27	Saturday	Ez 37:21-28/Jer 31:10, 11-12abcd, 13 [cf. 10d]/Jn 11:45-56 11.00 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Chris Marshall 18:00 Vigil Mass St Cecilia's Wally Hepburn (RIP)
28	PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION ON THE LORD	Mk 11:1-10/Is 50:4-7/Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24 [2a]/Phil 2:6-11/Mk 15:1-39 10.30 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish 17.00 Mass St Mary's Marie Thérèse Grainger (RIP)

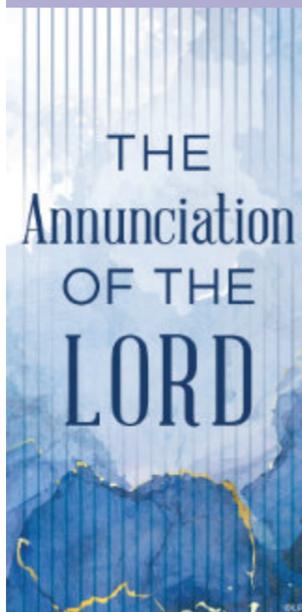
MINISTRY TO THE SICK

Christopher, Paula, Liz, Peter, Emilia, Jean, Teresa and Cath.



Those whose anniversaries occur at this time.

If you would like a name added to our prayer list, please email or call the parish office.



Questions for the Week

First Reading: Around 600 BC, Jeremiah prophesied that God would establish a new, unbreakable covenant with his people, one written "upon their hearts." In what ways is your faith heart-felt?

Second Reading: The author of Hebrews teaches us that Jesus learned "obedience" from his suffering. What have been some fruits from the suffering in your life?

Gospel: We hear today of Jesus' own struggle with his impending death. During this Lenten season, what has been a struggle for you?



Why do we do that?



Question: What is spiritual communion, and do you need to be in a state of grace to receive it?

Answer: The practice of making a "spiritual communion" dates back several centuries and St.

Thomas Aquinas described it as "an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him." Traditionally, a prayer of spiritual communion has been used by those who are unable to receive sacramental communion because of health, inability to attend Mass, or who cannot receive communion because of grave sin. This practice has been encouraged by many saints and spiritual writers and most recently Pope Francis encouraged the practice when the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented so many Catholics from taking part in the Mass or receiving sacramental communion.

Although the graces offered in spiritual communion are not the same as those offered in the sacramental communion of the Mass, this practice is still a powerful opportunity to express our desire for union with the Lord and to be united with Christ and the Church, even in an imperfect way.



A Prayer to Be Open to God's Will

Good and gracious God, I know that life can be unpredictable. Sometimes I know what is good and right, but I don't have the courage to do it. Sometimes I am so busy with my own affairs, I forget to see the needs of people in front of me. Sometimes I am set in my own ways, and I resist growing and learning. Help me, Lord, to be open to Your will. When You prompt me to do the right thing, give me the courage to do it. When those around me need my help, give me Your heart to love them. When I'm stuck in my own ways, give me the grace to grow closer to You every day. Give me the trust and confidence of Mary. Let it be done unto me according to Your word!
Amen

News & Announcements

Lent 2021

Join us online every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for the Rosary, Adoration and Stations of the Cross. See our parish website for details and to download the booklets so you can pray along with us.

Novena to St Joseph

Thank-you to everyone who took part in the Novena to St Joseph. We are still in the Year of St Joseph, so please keep praying our parish prayer to St Joseph and asking him to pray for our parish.

Three Days of Mercy

On the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week we are once again holding three days of mercy. A priest will be available to hear your confession in the Mercy Chapel on the hour, every hour, from 1pm until 7pm each day.

The main church will be locked and you will need to enter the Mercy Chapel directly from the side door opposite the car park. If when you enter there is already someone with the priest please wait outside. Remember also that the usual COVID safety rules will apply and you will have to wear a mask and keep your distance from the priest.

Flock Notes

The first reading today is all about second chances. The Israelites had broken the first covenant God made with them through Moses so, through Jeremiah, he proposes a new covenant: a fresh start, a new chance to be faithful.

Baptism puts us into a covenant relationship with God whereby he promises to be our God and we

promise to be his faithful people. However, like for the people of Israel, sin destroys that relationship and breaks the covenant, on our side. God, of course, remains faithful.

The good news is that rather than being content with broken, one sided relationship, God keeps offering us a second chance.

That's where the sacrament of reconciliation comes in. It is the

The priest will wait for about 15 minutes and if no one is there he will close the church and reopen it at the start of the next hour. If you want to come for confession we advise you to come on the hour.

Holy Week 2021

Maunder Thursday

Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper: 6pm St Mary's

Good Friday

Celebration of the Lord's Passion: 3pm St Mary's
Celebration of the Lord's Passion: 3pm St Cecilia's

Holy Saturday

Easter Vigil: 8pm St Cecilia's

Easter Sunday

Holy Mass: 10.30am St Mary's
Holy Mass: 10.30am St Cecilia's
There is no 5pm Mass on Easter Sunday.

There are no tickets for the Holy Week services but places are still limited due to COVID regulations. Please arrive early if you want to attend any service.

Rewiring of St Mary's

Work is progressing well on the rewiring project. From Easter Monday (5 April) St Mary's Church will be closed while the new lights are installed and scaffolding is erected in the body of the church. Weekday Mass that week will be in the Catholic Centre on Bridge Street..

means by which God fixes our broken relationship and makes a new covenant with us. We could never do that ourselves, so God makes the first move. Our response to his invitation is to accept his offer of a new relationship. God will be waiting for you in the Mercy Chapel, during Holy Week, are you going to meet him?



Our Lady of Mercy Parish • 27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ • (0191) 567 5354 • sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk
www.sunderlandcatholic.com

St Mary's Church • 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ • St Cecilia's Church • Ryhope Road • Sunderland • SR2 7TG

Fr Christopher Hancock MHH JCD, Parish Priest • christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com

Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHH, Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk

Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon

Canon Alexander Barrass, Priest in Residence



A parish of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Reg Charity 1143450

