FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Raise Us Up

O God,
you are rich in mercy and full
of compassion.
From generation to generation,
you poured forth your abundant love upon
your people.
Liberate us from the darkness of sin
and raise us up with Christ,
so that, renewed by the Cross,
we may be strengthened for ministry.
Watch over us when we go astray
and keep us close to the heart of
your Son.
Give us prophetic voices
that joyfully announce your mercy
and love
to all those who are exiled by sin
so that all may find a place at the
heavenly banquet.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 11, 2018

Mercy

Today's Readings: 2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23; Psalm 137:1–2, 3, 4–5, 6; Ephesians 2:4–10; John 3:14–21. The readings today tell of the merciful love of God. Carey Landry emphasizes this aspect of God in the song "God is Rich in Mercy" in which he wrote, "God is rich in mercy, full of compassion." Today's Gospel points out that God's love for us is so profound that he offered his only Son on the Cross so that we might have eternal life. When we consider our ancestors in the faith, we learn they wrestled to follow the Commandments and remain faithful to God just as we do today.

In the Book of Chronicles, the Israelites were taken into captivity as punishment for their infidelity, but even here, God's mercy prevails when King Cyrus, inspired by the Lord, freed the people. Sin causes us to turn away from God, but instead of punishment, God gives us the gift of his Son who has redeemed us; he has brought us out of the darkness into his light. No matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves, God is present and mercy overflows.

In this season of mercy, it is important to name those sins that keep us from God and seek forgiveness. It is also important to show mercy to others, especially those whom we may have harmed in any way. As you ponder God's mercy, consider celebrating the Sacrament of Penance this week.

THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 12
Healed

When we reflect on Scripture, we consider not only physical healing but spiritual transformations. The first thing you might notice in the Gospel is that the official's son is healed, but that is not the end of the story. When the son is healed, the man "came to believe." The Psalm provides a prayer of thanksgiving for the times we have been rescued/healed by God. Make a list of those times God has been with you and healed you. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 65:17–21; Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5–6, 11–12a and 13b; John 4:43–54.*

Tuesday, March 13
Living Water

As you reflect on today's readings, keep Baptism in mind. Water is a mighty force of nature. It can nourish our bodies and the ground or destroy everything in its path. In Baptism, everything unclean in us is destroyed and we are nourished with the Living Water. Ezekiel's vision tells of the abundance where the river flows. Christ is the Living Water that brings us life. *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12; Psalm 46:2–3, 5–6, 8–9; John 5:1–16.*

Wednesday, March 14
Jesus, the Son of God

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the people that he is the Son of God and that the time will come when all will be raised to new life. As in the First Reading, where Isaiah prophesies about the day of the Lord, Jesus too promises that the dead who have done good will hear and have life. How well have you responded to God's voice this Lenten season? God is truly gracious and merciful. Open your hearts to his Word. Write about or draw the images that come to mind after reading the Gospel. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:8–15; Psalm 145:8–9, 13cd–14, 17–18; John 5:17–30.*

Thursday, March 15
Golden Calf

The First Reading once again highlights God's profound mercy for his loved ones. The Israelites have crafted a golden calf to worship. They have lost faith in God and turned away from him. We too struggle to remain faithful, especially when we feel lost, alone, or afraid. Moses helped the people see God's presence. Who helps you see God's presence? Know that no matter the sin, God will not shower wrath upon you but will call you home and wait patiently for your loving gaze. Make a list of the "golden calves" in your life and offer them up in prayer. *Today's Readings: Exodus 32:7–14; Psalm 106:19–20, 21–22, 23; John 5:31–47.*

Friday, March 16
The Wisdom of God

Though written long before the time of Christ, the First Reading describes how those who reject Jesus' wisdom plotted to kill him. Wickedness blinds our hearts to see what is good and righteous. It sets us on a path of destruction. By his death and Resurrection, Jesus confronts sin and death so that we might have life. Do we have ears to hear and hearts to learn the wisdom of God? Invite a wisdom figure from your life to coffee or tea. *Today's Readings: Wisdom 2:1a, 12–22; Psalm 34:17–18, 19–20, 21 and 23; John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30.*

Saturday, March 17
Refuge

During these final days of Lent, listen carefully to the refrain of the Psalm. In times of pain and weakness, God is truly our refuge. This Lenten season may have revealed the blind spots within our hearts, but all should know that sin cannot take hold when we seek refuge in God. Allow God's mercy to wash over you and ask for God's justice. Pray today for all those who seek refuge and safety. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 11:18–20, Psalm 7:2–3, 9bc–10, 11–12; John 7:40–53.*

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