

5th Sunday of Lent, 3 April 2022

Scriptures: Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

Homily: Fr. Ken

Today we begin the fifth week of Lent. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week, the most revered and sacred week of the Christian year.

Lent continues to provide each of us the opportunity to remind ourselves of the love God gives us, in the person of our brother Jesus Christ, and the life of Jesus himself, as an example for our own lives, and the values and virtues of an authentic Christian life.

The fundamental reality in today's Gospel story of forgiveness and the peace of reconciliation, are the continuing words and actions of Jesus, reaching out to those in need, especially the poor.

The second reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, is a reminder that as we strive to aid those in need, we are to let go and forget what lies behind us, and reach forward to what lies ahead.

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, we are reminded that God is always seeking to do good for all peoples, but especially the poor, as we see in the life of Jesus. We heard in that reading, how it is that God cares for all people: through the created universe, by the examples of rivers and streams, and the world of animals.

If we were to search for themes in those scripture readings, we could perhaps identify three themes: poverty, peace, and the environment.

Coincidentally, these are the three prominent values in the life of our pope, Pope Francis.

You may recall that from the very beginning of his election to the papacy, the then Argentine Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio chose to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi. Why? Because as he himself said at an early press conference, he chose Francis, the 12th century saint, because he “is the man of poverty, the man of peace, and the man who loves and protects creation”. And, as a personal wish and dream, he added: “How [much] I would like a Church, that is poor and for the poor”.

He continued: “Francis of Assisi gives us the spirit of peace, the poor man who wanted a poor church”.

Pope Francis went on to say that Jesus Christ is the center of the Church, not the Pope. At that moment, many of us who watched on television or on the internet saw clearly the sign of his world view from the very moment he came to the balcony at St. Peter’s Basilica. As you may remember, he wore a simple white cassock, and not the traditional white zucchetto skull cap nor the formal red stole. He led everyone in the prayers of the “Our Father”, the “Hail Mary”, and the “Glory Be”. He then bowed to receive—not give—the blessing and prayers of over 100,000 people in St. Peter’s Square—all silent. Then he blessed everyone in turn. Throughout his life he continues to live the life he preaches.

So, at the beginning of the fifth week of Lent, we pray especially for Pope Francis and for all our Church and world, as we too embrace, and make our own, his devoted concern for the poor, for world peace, and for the environment.

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