

## GOD'S LOVE NEVER FAILS, NEVER STOPS AND NEVER CHANGES

Lectio Divina of the Fourth Sunday B in Lent (February 14/2021)

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Prayer: Loving father, We praise and bless you for this evening to prayerfully read, reflect, review and respond to your divine words in the Holy Bible. Thank you for speaking to us through your words of everlasting life. As we go to do the Lectio Divina, We ask your blessing upon us and all our family members. May we feel and share your love joyfully with those enter our life. Give us the grace to experience your love in our daily life. May we have both courage and conviction to speak of your love to those who seem uninterested in their spiritual life. Lord, you have very immensely revealed your love in our Lord Jesus and we thank you for our immense love. Give us a willing heart to know you. Write your laws in our mind. Help us to obey your commands that we may know you and love you in return. We pray in Jesus name. Amen

1 Reading: A Reading from the book of 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

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. Early and often did the LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the LORD against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy. Their enemies burnt the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious objects. Those who escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants of the king of the Chaldeans and his sons until the kingdom of the Persians came to power. All this was to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah: "Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled." In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!"

(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: The Chronicler brings before us the sorry state of the chosen people's infidelities from the time of king Saul until the end of the Babylonian exile which caused them losing the Temple, their homeland, and their language. Finally they "came to their senses," and recognized their own sinfulness and cried out to God for mercy. It was then that God came to their rescue, by choosing to work through the pagan king Cyrus the Great of

Persia, in order to return them to their homeland and to help them rebuild His Temple there. This short, sad summary with a hopeful ending is told from the viewpoint of a conviction that right worship will restore a people and that God is willing to use desperate measures, even the heartbreak of his people, not to hurt them, but to save them and bring them back to Him as His Chosen People.

Reponsorial Psalm 137 Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps.

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

For there our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs, And our despoilers urged us to be joyous:

“Sing for us the songs of Zion!”

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

How could we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land?

If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten!

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not,

If I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!

II Reading: A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 2:4-10

Brothers and sisters: 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 Christ — by grace you have been saved —, raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them

(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: St. Paul teaches us that, although we don't deserve anything from God on our own merits, God has chosen to love, save, and give life to us because of His great mercy and love. He says that Divine grace does three things for us: a) brings us to life in Christ, b) raises us up with Christ, and c) seats us in the Heavens. The sole purpose of these Divine deeds is to show the immeasurable riches of God's grace. St. Paul also reminds us that all our goodness is God's gift to us and, so, is nothing for us to boast about. “By grace we are saved through Faith,

and this is not our own doing; it is the gift of God". St. Paul gives us two affirmations: first we are saved through faith and secondly this faith itself is the gift of God, given to us freely "because of the great love He [has] for us.

### Gospel Reading: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John 3: 14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." 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.

(The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ / Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)

### MEDITATION ON THE THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE BETWEEN JESUS AND NICODEMUS

Who is Nicodemus? He was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. On the spiritual side, he was a man of faith and sincere seeker based on three of his famous encounter with Jesus in the gospel of John. It is commonly understood that he may have been a secret disciple of Jesus based on two events, where he reminded his colleagues in the Sanhedrin that the law requires that a person be heard before being judged (John 7:50-51). Finally, Nicodemus appears after the Crucifixion of Jesus to provide the customary embalming spices, and assists Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:39-42)

What is the spiritual meaning of the lifting up of the serpent in the desert and Jesus being lifted up in the cross? Throughout the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites, God was constantly teaching them things about Himself and about their own sinfulness. Yet the people failed in their faith and murmured against Moses for bringing them to the wilderness. As a judgment against the people for their sin, God sent poisonous serpents into the camp and they began to die. They came to Moses, confessed and asked for God's mercy. When Moses prayed for the people, God instructed him to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole so the people could be healed (Numbers 21:5-7).

Jesus indicated Nicodemus that this bronze serpent was a foreshadowing of Him. The serpent, a symbol of sin and judgment, was lifted up from the earth and put on a tree and those who looked at it and expressed sorrow were healed. The serpent lifted up and cursed symbolized Jesus, who takes away sin from everyone who would look to Him in faith, just like the Israelites had to look to the upraised symbol in the wilderness. Paul is reminding the Galatians that Jesus became a curse for us, although He was blameless and sinless—the spotless Lamb of God.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). In short, Those doomed to die from snakebite were healed by obeying God’s command to look up at the elevated bronze snake. Similarly, we are saved when we look up to Jesus, believing as our Savior.

Exposition of John 3:16: 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. This verse is without a doubt one of the most popular and well-known Bible verses in the Christian world. It provides the core context of the Christian gospel, revealing the fact that God so intensely loved humanity that He sent His son to die on the cross to save mankind from its sin. The entire gospel comes to a focus in this verse. God’s love is not static or self-centered. It reaches out and draws others in.

God’s love is a model for our love and relationship. When we love someone dearly, we should be willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice. Love is a commitment and not merely an emotion. Love is always reciprocal. Everyone has a right to love and be loved and for this our dear Lord is the example. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. St. Augustine says it more succinctly: “Love God and do what you will.” This famous quote from Augustine of Hippo (534-430) is commonly interpreted to mean if we love God, then what He wants will become what we want and what we want will invariably be what He wants. Thus, if we want it, whatever it might be, it is within the will of God.

How do we apply John 3:16 to our lives? The John 3:16 meaning is simple and clear: Jesus Christ died for the sins of humanity, offering salvation to the humanity. It is a true gift with a wonderful benefit: everlasting life in heaven. It’s a simple decision to make a commitment to follow Christ. Like any other relationship, it’s an ongoing commitment to embracing and living out the simple truths in John 3:16. Accepting Jesus and his sacrifice through our prayer life, studying His eternal words and living out His word.

Concluding Prayer. God our Loving Father, we are so in awe of your perfect unconditional love for us. At times it is difficult to comprehend how deep it is. help us to lay aside preconceived worldly ideas of love and so open up our hearts to experience your love. When we experience brokenness and face disappointments, be with us and allow us to feel the balm of your unconditional love. Draw us closer to you that we may experience your love every day. We thank you for creating us and loving us in spite of our limitations. We pray that we will continue to live fully in your unconditional love, always knowing in humility that our value is in you. Loving Lord, You have allowed us to reach this hour. Forgive the sins we have committed this day by word, deed or thought. Give us all a restful and serene sleep that we may continue to glorify you by our deeds when we rise in the morning. (Hail Mary... Blessings)