

Lent 1

February 21, 2021

Leader: The parishes of the Diocese of Ottawa sit on the unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

All: May we live together in unity and peace.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Almighty God, whose Son fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted, but did not sin, give us grace to discipline ourselves in submission to your Spirit, that as you know our weakness, so we may know your power to save; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Celebrant Almighty God,
**All to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The First Reading is from the book of Genesis, Chapter 9, Verses 8 to 17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you - the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you - every living creature on earth.

I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind.

Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 25 (verses 1-10)

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you;
Let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

**Let none who look to you be put to shame;
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.**

Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths.

**Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.**

Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.

**Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.**

Gracious and upright is the Lord; therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

He guides the humble in doing right and teaches his way to the lowly.

All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

For your name's sake, O Lord, forgive my sin, for it is great.

The Second Reading is from the first letter of Peter, Chapter 3, Verses 18-22

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits - to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ According to the Blessed St. Luke
Verses 18: 15-27

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

“All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

The Gospel of Christ.

People Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Homily

This Lenten season, I want to share some vignettes with you based on five encounters people had with Jesus in the gospels. While these are but a sampling of the many, many moments in which Jesus and individuals enter into dialogue, these particular ones may help us to deepen our relationship with our Lord and to discern the path we are called as individuals and as community to follow.

I want to begin this series with the encounter between Jesus and a rich young man as recounted by Luke in his gospel (18:18-30) It is a story about both the human condition and the values which society places on people and things and, for me, is the ideal entry-point into Lent.

So, here is the story in a nutshell including the event that immediately precedes it. Jesus and his disciples are moving through the Galilee, preaching, teaching and healing and throngs are attracted to his message of hope and affirmation. One day, they enter a village and are met by the usual folk and some very unruly children – at least unruly according to SOME as we soon

discover. Seeing Jesus, the kids burst out of their parents' arms and rush at him, yelling as only kids can yell. They launch themselves at him with abandon and suddenly all is confusion. Parents are embarrassed at their offsprings' behaviour and the disciples...the disciples are apoplectic. They try to grab the little ones and return them to their moms and dads, but the little darlings keep escaping and coming back to where Jesus now sits on the ground, waiting for them with wide-open arms and hugs of heaven. Finally, Jesus has enough of the disciples' judgmental paranoia and calls them out: "Brothers, sisters" He says, "stop playing goalie and let the little ones come to me. They represent everything the Kingdom I've been talking about is all about for they accept me as I am without even knowing who I am. Learn from them...Let them be...let them be".

After the roughhousing and much laughter, the children return to their parents and Jesus prepares to leave the village, intent upon the next leg of the journey towards Jerusalem. As he begins to leave, the crowd presses in on him, for all they want is to be even in his shadow for a moment. The disciples form a flying wedge to get him through the gate when....the crowd begins to pull back, like the waters of the Red Sea parting. Down the middle of the empty space walks a young man, all bedecked in the finest clothing imaginable – he has rings on his fingers, chains of gold around his neck, shoes of softest leather. He smells of the finest perfumes and gives off a message that says, "Look at me -I am so wonderful and successful" and the people buy it.

Strolling up to Jesus, he says, "Rabbi. You see before you a man who has had every success in life. How can I be a part of this Kingdom of yours? How can I buy the eternal life you promise?" Jesus says to him, "You know the answer already – follow the commandments of Moses and Sinai and all will be well." "I do that already", the young man crowed, "and much more besides. I support my synagogue and give to the poor. I attend shabbos services and sit on all sorts of boards in my community...surely that's enough?"

"Let it go", Jesus tells him. "Let it all go."

Seeing his look of confusion, Jesus takes the lad's hands and says, "Let it all go. Sell it all. Set yourself free so you can be free."

"Sell it all? Let it go? You're crazier than I thought you'd be. I can't do that, not now, perhaps not ever." And with that, he withdrew his hands and began to back away through the crowd.

Jesus watched as the young man passed through the gate and headed down the road. In the postscript to the story which I have always imagined, amid the tut-tutting and "well did you evers", Jesus followed him. Soon, the roadway branched left and right and the rich man stopped, uncertain of which way to go. Jesus put his arm around the man's shoulder and said,

“The day will come when you will be able to do as I ask. Don’t be afraid of that moment, for wherever you are, I will be there to guide you home.”

And with that, Jesus waved to the disciples who ran up the road, following Jesus as he turned left, moving towards the Jericho Road. And the young man? ...he went to the right...at least for now.

This is a powerful story with all sorts of avenues down which we can walk and opens all sorts of conversations. It is a story of contrasts: the disciples accept the adults because they are adults but they reject the children because they are children. Their world said that children were worth nothing until they were old enough to enter the work force and be a support for the family: they had no rights, no status other than being burdens to their society. The expectation was that they would keep their place which meant to be silent and above all else, still. Any misbehaviour on their part was seen as a reflection on their parents. They were best kept unseen. Yet Jesus sees them for who they really are: creations of the Loving God, worthy of the same love and respect due to the older folk; indeed, he was attracted to them more than to the adults because they did not have all the inhibitions and hangups (which are learned behaviours) – Jesus loves them simply because they were simply being kids. It was in the midst of the swirling chaos of children at play that Jesus was able to free his inner child – to laugh, dance, sense, feel, learn and grow. He could share with them his wonder at the world in which he lived and breathed.

The contrast really shows itself when the rich young man makes his appearance. The disciples see the persona the young man has created for himself – a very important personage with riches galore and power to do whatever he wishes. He is someone whose favour was to be curried – befriending him would lead to introductions to the who’s who of their world and financial support for the work Jesus and his crew were committed to. They saw the worldly face; Jesus saw the inner man and the tornado whirling within him. Jesus saw that all those outward signs of success were masks he used to hide his true longing – to be someone who was accepted for who he was rather than for who he seemed to be. Jesus saw that this young man, seemingly rich enough and free enough to do whatever pleased him was a prisoner – held hostage by the illness which plagued him. That disease was simply this: the rich young man was controlled by his riches – he suffered from what one person called “mammon illness” which Jesus spoke about when he said, “Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth but store them up in heaven; where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

When Jesus offers to break the chains that bind him by telling him to rid himself of all those treasures, the young man, faced with the sacrifice demanded, balks at the offer and refuses to even think of doing what Jesus has asked. But Jesus, in contrast to the disciples’ view of the children, makes no judgment about this man – there is no critique, only compassion and love. He tells the young man that he understands where he is and promises that he will watch over

him until such time as his heart conquers his pragmatism. The young man leaves, probably angry that he didn't get his way with Jesus but hopefully with a feeling that, as Julian of Norwich was to say centuries later, "All will be well."

For me, this tale of brief encounters invites me to think about how I judge others and how the world I inhabit denies to those we deem inferior to ourselves the basic rights of honour, dignity and opportunity. The narrative calls me to think about what I can do to bring God's kingdom of peace, equity and justice into being. It confronts me with a question I don't want to answer: "What imprisons you Michael, and where will you find the key that will set you free to be the person God wants you to be?"

Amen

The Prayers of the People

(With confidence and trust let us pray to the Lord, saying, "Lord, have mercy.")

For the one holy catholic and apostolic Church throughout the world, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those preparing for baptism and for their teachers and sponsors, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For peace in the world, that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow among nations and peoples, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For all whom we have injured or offended, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For grace to amend our lives and to further the reign of God, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

We ask you to watch over all our parish family, remembering especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Jeanette, Roy, Emerson, and those known to You alone. May we, by example, draw others towards the glorious Light of the World.

In the Worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Church of the Province of Central Africa.

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for our Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre and Sharon York, Executive Director, as well as their staff and clients.

We pray for members of our Parish Ministry Committee.

We pray for Peace Latvian Lutheran Church and their pastor Pastor, Ilmars Zvirgzds (ILL-mars Zveer-goods)

Confession and Absolution

Celebrant: Dear friends in Christ, God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy; he welcomes sinners and invites us to his table.

Let us confess our sins, confident in God's forgiveness.

Celebrant: Most merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

Leader: The peace of our Lord be always with you.

All: **And also with you.**

The Lord's Prayer

Additional Prayers

Leader: Lord, grant us the simplicity of faith and a generosity of spirit that gives without counting the cost; a life overflowing with grace, poured out from the One who gave everything so that we might show the power of love to this broken world, and share the truth from a living Word. Lord, grant us the simplicity of faith and a yearning to share it. Amen

All: Draw your Church together, O Lord, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving him in his mission to the world, and together witnessing to his love on every continent and island. We ask this in his name for his sake. Amen.

Leader: Lord God our Father, Creator: we thank you for the gift of this parish, for those who come seeking you and for all those who minister from this place. Inspire us with your vision to set our roots deeply and firmly in the faith, that we may be stewards of justice to all your creation. Lord God Jesus, Saviour and Redeemer; we thank you for your continuing presence in our parish family. Inspire us to seek you in Scripture, the Sacraments and in one another, that we may be faithful to your call to evangelism and love. Lord God Holy Spirit, Sustainer and Renewer: we thank you for all the wondrous gifts you have poured upon us. Inspire us to serve you in body and in spirit; help us to share our gifts of time, creativity, talents and finances; open us to your renewing life-giving power. O God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit – we praise you, we love you, we seek you and we want to serve you in the name of Jesus, our Redeemer, Friend and Brother. Amen

The Dismissal

Leader: May we know the love of the heavenly Father deep in our hearts; may we understand our significance in the centre of his family and the bonds that hold us close as brothers and sisters. May we understand the lengths that he was prepared to go for all humankind and freely respond in the Today which he has given us to cherish and honour. Amen