



## Homily Notes

Mar 2, 2015: Second Sunday of Lent  
Gen 22: 1-18; Rom 8: 31-34; Mark 9: 2-10  
**Transformed and Transfigured**

Today's readings are an invitation as well as a challenge to put our faith in the loving promises of a merciful God and transform our lives by renewing them during Lent. Our transformed lives will enable us to radiate the glory and grace of the transfigured Lord around us by our Spirit filled lives. The first reading tells us how God saved the life of Abraham's son Isaac as a reward for Abraham's faith. The link of this story with the Gospel reading emphasizes God's infinite love as seen in the redemptive sacrifice of his own Son for the salvation of the world. That is why Paul recalls in the second reading that God the Father did not spare his own Son from death. What an irony and paradox! God spared Abraham's son, but not his own! Why? It is because God loves us with his everlasting love. Describing Jesus' transfiguration, today's gospel shows us a glimpse of the heavenly glory waiting for those who do God's will by putting their staunch faith in Him.

The primary purpose of Jesus' transfiguration was to consult his heavenly Father and ascertain His suffering, death and resurrection. The secondary aim was to make his chosen

disciples aware of his divine glory so that they might discard their worldly ambitions about a conquering political Messiah and to strengthen them in their time of trial. The Transfiguration establishes Jesus' glorious identity as the beloved Son of God, and places his divine Sonship in the context of Jewish expectations about the Kingdom and the resurrection

In each Holy Mass, the bread and wine we offer on the altar become transfigured and transformed into the body and blood of Jesus. In other words, our Divine Lord is transfigured before our eyes, taking the form of bread and wine. Hence, just as Jesus' transfiguration strengthened the apostles in their time of trial, each holy Mass should be our source of heavenly strength against temptations, and our renewal during Lent. In addition, our holy communion with the transfigured Jesus should be the source of our daily transfiguration, transforming our minds and hearts to do more good by humble and selfless service to others.

**-Jesuraja Fernando**

Mar 8, 2015: Third Sunday of Lent

Ex 20: 1-17; I Cor 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

### **Cleansing Our Hearts**

Today's readings challenge us to keep our covenant agreement with Jesus Christ, just as the Israelites tried to keep the agreements of the Old Testament covenant with Yahweh by promising to obey the Ten Commandments. Today's first reading teaches us that the Ten Commandments are the basis of our religious and spiritual life, just as they formed the rules of life of the Israelites resulting from their covenant with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. The second reading reminds us that we must preach the divine folly of the crucified Christ and the spirit of the cross, especially during the Lenten season. The message of the cross is God's wisdom and power and, foolish as it may seem, it is greater than the Law, greater than

the temple, greater than worldly wisdom or human strength. Today's gospel gives the dramatic account of Jesus' cleansing the Temple of its merchants and money-changers, followed by a prediction of his death and resurrection.

St. Paul reminds us that we are God's temples because the Spirit of God dwells in us. Hence we have no right to desecrate God's temple by impurity and injustice. We are expected to cleanse our hearts of pride, hatred, jealousy and all evil thoughts, desires and planning. Reminiscent of what Jesus did in cleansing the temple, we, as 21st century disciples, must cleanse ourselves of attitudes and behaviors that prevent us from seeing and responding to hurt wherever we find it. Let us welcome Jesus into our hearts and lives during Lent by repentance and renewal of our lives. We will drive out the wild animals that do not belong to the holy temple of our body by making a whip of chords by our fasting, penance and alms giving during Lent and by going to confession to receive God's loving forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation.

**-Arun Chakkalakkal**

Mar 15, 2015: IV Sunday of Lent  
II Chr 36: 14-16, 19-23; Eph 2: 4-10; John 3: 14-21  
**Eternal Life as Free Gift**

The central theme of today's readings is that our salvation is a free gift of a merciful God given to us through Jesus His Son. As an act of love and gratitude to God who is "*rich in mercy*" and as an expression of our faith, we are invited to share his sufferings by doing penance during Lent so that we may inherit our eternal salvation and the glory of his resurrection in heaven. As we continue our Lenten observance in the fourth week, the Sacred Liturgy invites us to enter more deeply into the mystery of God's grace, mercy and salvation. In the first reading from the Second Book of Chronicles, we learn the compassion and patience of God. God allowed Cyrus the Great, a pagan conqueror to become the instrument of His mercy and salvation to His chosen people who were in exile in

Babylon. Today's gospel has a parallel theme but on a much higher level. Jesus, the Son of God, becomes the agent of God's salvation, not just for one sinful nation but for the sinfulness of the whole world. Through John 3/16 the gospel teaches us that God expressed His love, mercy and compassion for us by giving His only Son for our salvation. In the second reading Paul tells us that God is so rich in mercy that He grants us eternal salvation and eternal life as a free gift through Christ Jesus.

The crucifix – the symbol of the “lifted up” Jesus - holds a central place in our churches because it is a forceful reminder not only of God's love and mercy, but also of the price of our salvation. Hence no Christian home should be without this symbol of God's love. It invites us to be generous and compassionate. It inspires us to remove the suffering of other people's misery. It encourages us not only to feel deep sorrow for another's suffering but also to try our best to remove that suffering. Hence let us love the cross, wear its image and carry our own daily cross with joy. **-Arun Vincent**

Mar 22, 2015: V Sunday of Lent  
Jer 31: 31-34; Heb 5: 7-9; John 12: 20-33

### **Dying to Self**

Lent's fifth Sunday's readings present us with a challenge: Just as Jesus became the 'Promised Messiah of Glory' and the 'conquering Son of Man' by offering his life for others, we too must possess heaven by dying to self and spending our lives in self-giving, sacrificial service. Today's readings focus on the upcoming death of Jesus, which is interpreted not only as a priestly sacrifice (Heb 5) but also as the moment of his “exaltation” and “glorification” (Jn 12). The first reading from the book of Jeremiah explains how God will replace the Old Covenant of Judgment with a New Covenant of Forgiveness of sins. In the second reading, St. Paul tells the

Hebrews that it is by his suffering and death, in obedience to his Father's will, that Jesus established the New Covenant. Using metaphors of the 'sown wheat grain' and the 'spent life', in today's gospel, Jesus teaches the same lesson.

The "hour" is referring to Jesus' way of glorifying his heavenly Father and of being glorified by his Father. It is also the way by which he draws all people into the saving action of God. Jesus' being "lifted up" on the cross to glorify his Father reminds us that we too can glorify God by wholeheartedly accepting our crosses from our loving heavenly Father.

Jesus explains to his apostles that it is by his suffering and death that he is bringing life and liberation to the sinful world, just as a grain of wheat sown in the field grows into a plant and produces many new grains. In the same way, it is by the self-sacrificial lives of holy men and women that life and salvation came to mankind. When we "die" to our selfishness, we "rise" to new life in Jesus Christ. To be buried in the earth means avoiding sin, accepting suffering and living for others.

We know that the world owes everything to people who spent their time and talents for God and for their fellow human beings. Mother Teresa, for instance, gave up her comfortable teaching career and with just 5 rupees in her pocket began her challenging life for the 'poorest of the poor' in the crowded streets of Calcutta. Thus, she became, in the words of the Secretary General of the U.N., "the most powerful woman in the world". We see similar cases in the history of great saints, scientists and benefactors of mankind in all walks of life.

**-Sibin Francis**

Mar 29, 2015: Palm Sunday  
Is 50: 4-7; Philip 2: 8-9; Mark: 11: 1-10  
**Weeping Over Me**

Today's first reading is the third Servant Song. Jesus saw some aspects of his own life and mission foreshadowed in the "Servant Songs." The church holds this to be a time of solemn meditation. In today's psalm, the psalmist puts his trust in Yahweh for deliverance and salvation. The context of this day's worship also conveys Jesus' confidence in God's protection in the midst of his trial and crucifixion. The second reading is an ancient Christian hymn representing a very early Christian understanding of who Jesus is, and of how his mission saves us from sin and death. It is a message that Paul received from those who had been converted to Christ. "Jesus was divine from all eternity. But he didn't cling to that. Rather, he emptied himself and became human. He accepted further humbling by obeying the human condition even unto death by crucifixion. Therefore God highly exalted him, giving him the highest title in the universe." Today's Gospel describes the royal reception, which Jesus received from his admirers, who paraded with him for a distance of two miles: from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem.

Does Jesus weep over me? There is a Jewish saying, "Heaven rejoices over a repentant sinner and sheds tears over a non-repentant, hardhearted one." Are we ready to imitate the prodigal son and return to God, our loving Father, through the sacrament of reconciliation during this last week of Lent and participate fully in the joy of Christ's resurrection?

Am I a barren fig tree? God expects me to produce fruits of holiness, purity, justice, humility, obedience, charity, and forgiveness. Am I a barren fig tree? Or do I continue to produce bitter fruits of impurity, injustice, pride, hatred, jealousy and selfishness?

Do I expect Jesus to cleanse my heart with his whip? Jesus cannot tolerate the desecration of the temple of his Holy Spirit in me by my addiction to uncharitable, unjust and impure thoughts words and deeds; neither does he approve of my calculation of loss and gain in my relationship with God.

**-Johnson S**

Apr 5, 2015: Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34, 37-43; Col 3:1-4; John 20: 1-9

### **Resurrection People**

Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. "Easter" literally means "the feast of fresh flowers."

We celebrate it with pride and jubilation for three reasons.

1) The resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian faith. It is the greatest of the miracles--it proves that Jesus is God. That is why St. Paul writes: "*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain; and your faith is in vain... And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins... But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (I Cor 15/14, 17, 20). Without the Resurrection, Jesus would have remained for ever a good person who met a tragic end. People would remember some of his teachings and a handful of people might try to live according to his teachings. All the basic doctrines of Christianity are based on the truth of the Resurrection. "*Jesus is Lord, he is risen*" (Rom.10: 9) was the central theme of the 'kerygma' (or 'preaching') of the apostles. There is a story of two women who stood before Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. One asked, "Why can't we build structures like this anymore?" Her friend answered, "The people who built this had faith. Today we have only opinions. And you can't build a cathedral with opinions."

2) Easter is the guarantee of our own resurrection. Jesus assured Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: "*I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me will live even though he dies*" (Jn 11/25-26). Christ will raise us up on the last day;

but it is also true, in a sense, that we have already risen with Christ. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, Christian life is already a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ.

3) We are to be resurrection people: Easter, the feast of the resurrection, gives us the joyful message that we are a 'resurrection people.' This means that we are not supposed to lie buried in the tomb of our sins and evil habits. It gives us the good news that no tomb can hold us down anymore - neither the tomb of despair, discouragement, doubt nor death. Instead, we are expected to live a joyful and peaceful life, constantly experiencing the real presence of the resurrected Lord in all the events of our lives. *"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad"* (Psalm 118:24).

**-Vanathu Antony**

II Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Acts 4: 32-35; I John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31

### **Serving with Love**

The readings for this Sunday are about mercy, trust and the forgiveness of sins. In the Psalm we repeatedly see several times, "His mercy endures forever." *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever!"* (Ps 117:1).

Besides mentioning the word, our readings illustrate mercy in action. How does God reveal His mercy? He does so, first and foremost, by sending His only-begotten Son, to become our Savior and Lord by his suffering, death and resurrection.

Divine mercy is given to us in each celebration of the sacraments. Today, as we recall Jesus' appearance to the disciples on that first Easter evening, we are vividly reminded of the Sacrament of Reconciliation--the power to forgive sins which Our Lord gave to his apostles. "Whose sins you forgive

are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20-23). Today’s gospel also emphasizes the importance of faith in the all-pervading presence of the Risen Lord of mercy. To believe without having seen is every Christian’s experience. We are invited to liberate ourselves from doubts and hesitation, and surrender our lives to the risen Lord of mercy. Let us ask God to open our hearts so that we might receive into our hearts his Mercy - his Holy Spirit.

Living faith enables us to see the risen Lord in every one and gives us the willingness to render them loving service. (“Faith without actions is dead” James 2:17). It was this faith in the Lord and obedience to his missionary command that prompted St. Thomas to travel to India to preach the gospel among the Hindus, establish seven Christian communities (known later as “St. Thomas Christians”) and eventually face martyrdom. The Fathers of the Church prescribe the following traditional means to grow in the living and dynamic faith of St. Thomas the Apostle. a) Know Jesus personally and intimately by the daily and meditative reading of the Bible. b) Strengthen your faith by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal and community prayer. c) Share in the divine life of Jesus by frequenting the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Mother Teresa presents it this way: “If we pray, we will believe; if we believe, we will love; if we love, we will serve. Only then we put our love of God into action.”

**-Vibin Varghese**

Apr 19, 2015: III Sunday of Easter

ACTS. 3: 13-15, 17-19; I JN 2:1-5; LUKE 24: 35-48

### **The Living Presence of the Lord**

Today’s readings reminds us that our faith in the living presence of the risen Lord should strengthen our hope in His promises, call us to true repentance of our sins and lead us to witnessing to Christ by our works of *charity*. They also remind us that the purpose of Jesus’ death and resurrection was to save us from sins. Hence they challenge us to make our

witnessing to the risen Lord more effective by repenting of our sins, renewing our lives, and meeting Jesus in the Word of God and at the Eucharistic Table. Today's gospel leads us to reflect on faith, doubts and crises. It explains how Jesus convinces his disciples of his resurrection and how he commands them to be his witnesses throughout the world. He prepares them to receive God's power through the Holy Spirit and he directs them to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins. The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes how Peter fulfilled the commandment of preaching given by Jesus. He began his preaching mission in Jerusalem where he presented Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. He also asks the Jews to turn toward God so that their sins might be wiped away. In the second reading, John tells us that true knowledge and love of God consists in acknowledging that Jesus is the expiation for our sins, in witnessing to Him in our lives and in obeying His commandments.

Renew the "Upper Room Experience" in the Holy Mass: The same Jesus who, in the upper room of the Cenacle, prepared his disciples for their preaching and witnessing mission, is present with us in the Eucharistic celebration. He invites us to share in the "Liturgy of the Word of God" and in "The Liturgy of Bread and Wine." In the first part of the Mass, Jesus speaks to us through the "Word of God." In the second part, He becomes our spiritual food and drink. Thus, today's gospel scene is repeated every Sunday on our altars. Like the early disciples, we come together to repent for our sins, listen to God's words and offer ourselves to God along with our gifts of bread and wine. We also give thanks, share in the spiritual food Jesus supplies, and are sent to share his message with the entire world.

**-Tony Jose**

Apr 26, 2015: IV Sunday of Easter  
ACTS 4: 8-12; I JN 3: 1-2; 14-17; JOHN. 10:11-1

### **Shepherds that Serve**

The fourth Sunday of Easter is known as Good Shepherd Sunday and the “World Day of Prayer for Vocations.” The scripture lessons are about shepherds. Each year on this Sunday we reflect on the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, devotedly taking care of his flock. The earliest Christians had seen Jesus as the fulfillment of the ancient Jewish dream of a good shepherd. They also wished to include the gentiles as part of God’s flock. In today’s first reading, Peter asserts unequivocally before the Jewish assembly that there is no salvation except through Christ the Good Shepherd whom the Jewish leaders rejected and crucified and in whose name they preach and heal. In the second reading, St. John tells us how Yahweh the Good Shepherd of the Old Testament expressed His love for us through His Son Jesus, the Good Shepherd by making us His children. The Gospel text offers us both comfort and challenge. The comforting good news is that Jesus the Good shepherd knows us, provides for us and loves us. The challenge is that we should be good shepherds to those entrusted to our care.

Let us become good shepherds: Every one who is entrusted with the care of other is a shepherd. We become good shepherds by loving those entrusted to us, praying for them, spending our time and talents for their welfare, and guarding them from physical and spiritual dangers. Parents must be especially careful of their duties as shepherds by becoming role models to their children by their exemplary lives.

**-Vipin Raj**