

April 7, 2019

From Fr. Jim . . .



Lenten Reflection: We are only one week away from Holy Week. Let us continue to pray for those who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. The Third Scrutiny is celebrated with them today. They reflect on their lives and their call to faith in light of the great Gospel of the Raising of Lazarus from the Dead. "If only you had been here, Lord, then our brother would not have died." Where would we be today, right now, without the Lord in our lives? How can we live in this world without faith? How does faith assist us on the journey through this world to the next one? Can you see your faith growing or what invitations have you received from the Lord to grow in faith in this Lenten time?

In parishes where the Rite of Scrutiny is not being celebrated, the Cycle C readings are used. The people wanted to stone a woman who they caught committing adultery. Only those who were without sin were permitted to throw stones. One by one, the accusers dropped their stones and walked away. Jesus says to the woman: "Has no one condemned you? She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

Choosing not to sin anymore, doesn't mean sinners will never be tempted again. But because of the Lord's mercy and forgiveness; dying and rising; compassion and solidarity; reprieve and redemption we are always able to choose grace over sin and not fall into temptation. It is so important to continue living with the forgiveness given to us by the Lord's passion, death and resurrection and live a life of thankfulness and service to God and God's people. In this we choose to not sin anymore.

Scripture teaches us that God did not come to condemn, but to save. Jesus gives the gift of salvation to the adulterous woman. Although we believe that God will not condemn us, are we ever afraid that God will want to condemn us or change his mind? Do we feel that we have to pay for our wrongdoing in order to get back into God's graces? Are we too hard on ourselves? Do we have trouble forgiving ourselves? Spiritually, we do not have a punishing God. We have a forgiving, saving and merciful God. Although we must suffer the consequences of breaking the laws of the land, there is no sin that is too big that God will not forgive. All that is necessary, on our part, is to receive God's mercy and be open to his love no matter how undeserving. Allow his forgiveness to change us and to move us forward away from our sinful habits and convicted more to living our faith and to the Gospel. Live in gratitude for the Lord's reprieve and his generous and abundant mercy. Celebrate God's unconditional love always.

Whether the Cycle A readings or the Cycle C readings are read today, we, who are preparing to renew our baptismal promises at Easter, journey with those who are coming into God's church and together we examine our lives in the light of the Scriptures for Lent. Whether we will be baptized soon, recently baptized or baptized for a long time, conversion is a continual and life-long process. As we learn to reject evil, grow in our relationship with the Lord, accept mercy and forgiveness, love God and neighbor with all our heart, mind and strength, we die with the Lord only to live with the Lord now and forever.

The Easter Vigil: We are so blessed to be bringing people into the life of the Church at the Easter Vigil this year. Yamileth Perez Gutierrez will be baptized, confirmed and given first Eucharist. Michael Thompson is a baptized Episcopalian and will be received into full communion with the Church and receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Eva Nolasco and Marbella Ramos have also been baptized in other faiths, but they are not able to acquire baptismal records from their former churches in Guatemala. So, following church law for the Rite of Baptism in the Catholic Church, they will be baptized again, on the condition that they have not been baptized before since there is no objective proof of their baptism. We welcome all of them and please keep them in your prayers especially as Holy Week and the Easter Vigil approach. Many Thanks.