

**Our Lady of Lourdes Parish**  
Westville

**Lenten Programme 2019**

**Come back to me  
with all your heart**



**WEEK THREE**

## SUNDAY 24 MARCH

**Scripture:** *Luke 13: 1 - 9*

### **Reflection**

There are two essential messages in today's Gospel: *"Unless you repent, you will all perish as they did"* and *"it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."* Did you get it?

We fall into the trap of being satisfied with being the 'basically good people' that we are. As a result we sink into the attitudes of minimalism and mediocrity. At the beginning of this Third Week of Lent it is reality check time. What sort of effort are you putting into this Lenten Season of Repentance and Renewal? Don't just read on! Pause and answer the question for yourself – honestly!

Many Catholics have a rather superficial experience and observance of Lent. We give up a few things and possibly contribute to Lenten Appeal but is there any real effort that we make to repent and change, to bear the fruit of our Catholic faith?

The challenge today comes from Jesus himself! He could very well be speaking to us just as he did in this passage to those who prided themselves on being good religious people. Repentance, renewal, change and Metanoia are at the very heart of Lent as we prepare to be genuinely renewed in our faith, attitude, behaviour and lifestyle at Easter. Here's another question: do we genuinely want to change our lives, to do better and be better or are we satisfied with the status quo – 'I'm ok, I don't need to change anything in my life'?

The beginning of this third week of Lent provides an opportunity for those who want to experience something new, to be genuinely born-again at Easter. Don't be content with mediocrity and minimalism in your faith; give God your best, your very best. That's what Jesus did!

### **Practical Suggestion**

Review your Lenten resolutions and observances today. Is there anything better that you can do? Is there anything more that you can do? If there is, then just do it!

### **Prayer**

Father, help me to produce the fruit of my faith in abundance. Strengthen me as your strengthened Jesus your Son so that I may be able to emerge from the past of my weaknesses, faults and failings into a new life and lifestyle with Jesus. Amen.

**Tomorrow is the Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord. Mass is at 6.00pm. Go to Mass and experience the Word made Flesh dwelling within you. Say with Mary "Let it be done to me as you have said."**

# **MONDAY 25 MARCH**

## **Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord**

**Scripture:** *Luke 1: 26 - 38*

### **Reflection**

Today we celebrate the greatest event in human history: God came among us, conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary! At the beginning of each day, the middle of each day and the end of each day we stop whatever we are doing (or at least we should) to remember this extraordinary event: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us! This is the Angelus.

This First Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, which is so well known to all of us, celebrates the fulfillment of God's promise to redeem and save sinful mankind. Generations upon generations of the descendants of Abraham had waited for this. The great God of the Universe comes among us, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. How incredible!

What does it mean for us, the followers of Jesus? Today's great feast is more than just the past event of the Annunciation in Nazareth. It is about our God who is with us. The Great God of the Universe has come among us and is with us. This is where he wants to be, where he chooses to be – in the midst of humanity. In every situation, in every time, in every moment God is with us.

In every celebration of Holy Mass what happened in Nazareth happens in our presence: the Word becomes Flesh – and dwells not just among us but in a most extraordinary way – dwells within us. Let's take it a step further: Jesus who was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, lives within us through his Real Presence in the Eucharist. At Holy Mass we encounter Jesus, we receive Jesus, we are filled with the Presence of Jesus. How amazing is that! Through Holy Mass and by our receiving Holy Communion we become like Mary, bearers of Jesus!

A further thought: Mary said "How can this come about since I am a virgin?" The angel answered "the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow." In the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass the priest says "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the same Holy Spirit. How amazing! That's what today's feast is all about and what it should mean for us.

### **Practical Suggestion**

Go to Holy Mass today and receive Jesus – let him dwell within you.

### **Prayer**

Come Lord Jesus, Come into my Heart, Come into my Life. Amen.

## TUESDAY 26 MARCH

**Scripture**      *Matthew 18: 21-35*

### **Reflection**

We return today to the touchy subject of forgiveness. We all expect and love to receive it. We often struggle and resent giving it. We are acutely aware how we often take advantage of another's capacity to forgive and how others take advantage of our generosity in forgiving- the sting of consistently been called upon to act as Jesus would have us do. This is especially so in relationships.

Peter asks the question about the extent to which we are expected to forgive. Lenten reflection shakes us into the reality of the true question: Why forgive?

In the parable, the motive for the King's reprieve based on the pleas of the servant are unknown: acknowledging that the debt could never be repaid and the uselessness of selling, compassion, making the servant more obligated to himself. Who knows? We know our God forgives because it is in the essence of His Being. He never tires of forgiving, we tire of asking (Pope Francis' words)

Our various rebellions, willful choices, selfish acts, lovelessness, pride, anger, lust, bitterness, hate and more pile up the massive debt towards God which we cannot repay. When we ask to be reprieved, He just blots out the offences. We are expected to do the same to those who offend us for this reason alone.

However in forgiving, we relieve ourselves of the torment of an unforgiving spirit, the gnawing resentment, the gall of hate, the terrible feeling that permeates our being and changes us for the worse because we cannot escape it. The start of this capacity to forgive each and every situation starts when we become more concerned about what our lack of forgiveness is doing to the other rather than concentrating what the offence is doing to us.

### **Practical Suggestion**

Just dig a little into yourselves and find one old instance of not wanting to forgive an offence. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to unburden yourself by forgiving and let that person or persons know – even after many years!!

### **Prayer**

Lord, let me see forgiveness as coming back to you with all my heart. Amen

## WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH

**Scripture**      *Jeremiah 7: 23 – 28*      *Matthew 5:17-19*

### **Reflection**

The Jews have hundreds of laws which they have to abide by. Can you imagine how the people grappled with keeping to these laws? No wonder the

marginalized were in the state of sickness that they were in. They could not even hope to live up to those standards – without some kind of help.

Jesus, in the Gospel, is not referring to man made laws. He was talking about those that God, through His prophets, gave us as a guide to live our lives – lives that He had planned for us. Lives that He would share the burden with and, in most situations, take them on Himself. Out of love for us.

Moses was given the 10 Commandments because God could see that His people needed heavenly guidance, to help them follow “in His likeness”. They were encouraged to “take notice” and “observe” – “that you may enter and take possession of the land that God is giving to you”. That they (we) would make our home with God as the Head.

Jesus tells us that His coming was to “complete” the laws – which our way of life must be directed at - following His ways – the ways that God had given to Moses and which Jesus encapsulated into two loving and caring rules of life. Firstly: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind and secondly: “love your neighbour as yourself.”

Many have forgotten that Jesus holds the keys to the “Kingdom of Heaven” and we so often “infringe” on these commandments and worse still, we guide others the wrong way too. Jesus assures us that if we keep to His “way” of life, which we learn from the Gospels we will share in His “land” of everlasting life. All that he asks is: “Come back to me with all your heart” and you “will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.”

### **Practical Suggestion**

Learning in any form is our personal responsibility. Teach yourself, and those close to you, to live by Jesus’ commandments. Read the Bible regularly by yourself and together as a family. Let God speak to you, He is the greatest of all teachers.

### **Prayer**

Father, you are my only true guide who can show me the way to your heavenly Kingdom. Help me to follow your ways so that I may be with you and that may lead others to you. Amen.

## **THURSDAY 28 MARCH**

**Scripture:** *Luke 11 : 14 - 23*

### **Reflection**

The fact that people did not recognise the goodness in Jesus is evident by the crowd’s accusation that He cast out a devil by the power of Satan. How ironic it is that even in our own time people are blinded to the truth of what is truly good, pure and of God and what is bad, evil and of Satan!

The crowds asked Jesus for a sign to prove who He was as if the healing of the dumb man was insufficient proof, but they were more convinced that he was a sorcerer of kinds. We are fascinated by the spectacular and often a person will follow blindly when they see someone performing miraculous feats and frequently without even testing the authenticity of the so-called marvel.

We live in a time of real confusion where people are searching for something which will bring meaning into their lives. Sadly many follow false prophets and self-appointed spiritual gurus who can only provide disillusionment and misery in the long term. How fortunate we are to have been exposed to the truth and to have found real lasting purpose through our faith in Jesus.

Jesus goes on to warn the people that if they are not with him, then it means that they are against him. We see how fickle the people of that time behaved, being amazed at the healings he performs on one occasion but then quickly turning against him at his trial and shouting “crucify him.”

We see evidence of the same fickleness right here in our own parishes and churches throughout the world where people profess to be Catholic and believe they have some form of entitlement to receive the Sacraments for themselves and their families when it suits them but fail to practice their faith on a regular basis with little or no commitment to their faith. For them Mass attendance is dependant on how they are “feeling” at the time. Some have stopped the practice of their faith all together.

### **Practical Suggestion**

Are you fickle in the practise of your faith? Make a commitment to attend Mass every Sunday and ensure that if you are the person responsible for bringing other members of your family or friends to Mass, that you honour that responsibility and make certain that you are not the cause of others having to miss Mass. Invite someone to go to Mass with you during this Lenten Season. You may be the reason someone comes to faith and finds a real purpose in life.

### **Prayer**

Father, thank you for the gift of faith. Give me the courage to speak about my faith and to look for opportunities to invite others to have a personal experience of our Catholic faith. Help me to encourage those friends or members of my family who have lapsed from the faith to begin attending Mass again. Amen



## FRIDAY 29 MARCH

**Scripture:** *Mark 12, 28-34*

### Reflection

In today's Gospel a scribe wants to know from Jesus which is the greatest commandment of all. Jesus knew the Hebrew Bible contained so many rules to regulate their behavior that a simplification was required. There were the Ten Commandments, the 643 laws of Moses and the 7 Noahite Laws that many Jews believed were all of the same value, "because they all came from God." Others felt that certain laws were more important than others, and for this reason, they applied more. The scribe wants to know from Jesus that he thinks.

Jesus responds quickly, the greatest among the commandments is; "to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength!" He then adds, 'the second is; "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" There is no other greater commandment than these two.

The scribe agrees and concludes, "Well said, to love your neighbor as yourself, is more important than any offering or sacrifice." That is, the commandment to love one another is more important than any commandment concerned with the worship and sacrifices of the Temple. Nowadays we would say that the practice of love is more important than novenas, promises, sermons or processions.

Jesus confirms the scribe's conclusion and says, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God," which is the union of two loves: love for God and love for neighbour. As God is the Father and we are all brothers and sisters we should be living harmoniously in community with all. To return to God in that harmonious state, we must extend the sense "of loving one another" to, "love one another as I have loved you". This will enable us to return to our loving Father, completely.

### Practical Suggestion

What is love? Find out as much as you can about the word, its various meanings, how it is interpreted and the emotions attached.

### Prayer

Loving Father teach us to love fully and unconditionally, remembering always that the greatest love is to lay down our lives for others as Jesus did. Amen



## SATURDAY 30 MARCH

**Scripture:** *Psalm 51: 3 – 4; 18 – 21; Luke 18: 9 – 14*

### **Reflection:**

There is a tendency in most of us to think that what will please God is a long list of all the good things we have done for Him – a record that we are proud of. But in the parable of today's Gospel the tax collector knows that what counts is what God has done *for us*, NOT what we think we have done or are doing for Him! The Pharisee was preening himself, like a peacock, congratulating himself on the kind of person he was, the things he had done; his pride was well and truly on display! However, as the psalmist says today, God is not interested in outward show – He is interested in what is truly in our hearts: our acknowledgement of dependence on Him; our constant need for His divine mercy, and our honest acknowledgement, like the tax collector, of being “a sinner”!

We also have a tendency to ‘beat ourselves up’ about our negative qualities, our flaws, our inadequacies. Ask someone to tell you ten good things about themselves and they will struggle; ask them to tell you ten negative things, and you can't stop the flow! But God loves us *unconditionally*, whether we're achieving for Him or not, and He loves us most when we turn humbly to Him and acknowledge that we are truly sorry and in need, yet again, of His mercy.

So let us resolve to be like the tax collector and not the Pharisee!

### **Practical suggestion:**

Sit quietly today and take Psalm 51 and meditate on the words. Let them seep into your soul. Ask the Lord to speak to you, and reveal to You, above all, His overwhelming love for you as His child. Tell Him how sorry you are for failing Him, and that you will try, with the help of His Holy Spirit, to do better.

### **Prayer:**

O merciful God, remove from me all self-serving vanity and self-congratulatory pride. Give me the courage to honestly face my sins, to acknowledge my need for Your compassion and mercy, and to strive to do better. Amen.

**These Daily Reflections for Lent 2019 are written by Fr. Desmond Nair, Lawrence Surgeson, George Cominos, Deacon Mark Wardell, Veronica Donnelly, Tony Clewlow and Irene Helsdon. Please acknowledge the authors when copying and distributing. We wish you a fruitful and blessed Lenten Journey.**

**Tomorrow, the Fourth Sunday of Lent, is Laetare Sunday. Enter into the spirit of Laetare Sunday by wearing something pink or rose-coloured to Mass**