

4nd Sunday of Lent – B

GOSPEL

+ John 3, 14-21

And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as that metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert. Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life.

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them! No one who has faith in God's Son will be condemned. But everyone who doesn't have faith in him has already been condemned for not having faith in God's only Son.

The light has come into the world, and people who do evil things are judged guilty because they love the dark more than the light. People who do evil hate the light and won't come to the light, because it clearly shows what they have done. But everyone who lives by the truth will come to the light, because they want others to know that God is really the one doing what they do.

Word of God.

HOMILY

03-15-2015

GOD LOVES THE WORLD

This isn't just one phrase more. Words that could be cut out of the Gospel without changing anything important. It's the affirmation that gathers the essential nucleus of the Christian faith. «This is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son». This love of God is the origin and the foundation of our hope.

«God loves the world». God loves it just as it is. Unfinished and uncertain. Full of conflicts and contradictions. Capable of the best and the worst. This world doesn't run its course alone, lost and uncared-for. God envelopes it with love through and through. This has consequences of the utmost importance.

1. Jesus is above all the «gift» that God has given to the world, not just to Christians. Researchers can endlessly debate many aspects of his historic figure. Theologians can keep on developing their more ingenious theories. Only the one who comes close to Jesus as God's great gift can deeply and joyfully go about discovering God's closeness to every human being in all Jesus' gestures.

2. The Church's reason for being, the only thing that justifies her presence in the world, is to remember God's love. This underlies so much of the Second Vatican Council: the Church «is

sent by Christ to manifest and communicate God's love to all human beings». Nothing is more important. What is principle is to communicate that love of God to all humanity.

3. According to the Gospel writer, God gives this great gift that is Jesus to the world, «not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved». It's very dangerous to make a whole pastoral program out of denouncing and condemning the modern world. Only with a heart full of love for all can we call one another to conversion. If people feel themselves condemned by God, we are not transmitting to them Jesus' message, but something else: maybe our own resentment and anger.

4. In these moments when everything seems confused, uncertain and discouraging, nothing stops any one of us from introducing a little bit of love in the world. That's what Jesus did. We don't need to wait on anyone. Why not be good men and women in these moments, introducing in our midst love, friendship, compassion, justice, sensitivity, help for those who suffer? These kinds of things build up Jesus' Church, the Church of love.

José Antonio Pagola
Translator: Fr. Jay VonHandorf

HOMILY

03/18/2012

LENT - LIFTED UP ON THE CROSS

John the Evangelist tells us about an unusual encounter with a leading Jew, Nicodemus, who came to visit Jesus by night. This Pharisee confessed that Jesus was believed to "be a teacher who came from God." He himself was to be led from darkness into the light.

In John's story, Nicodemus represents anyone who sincerely seeks to meet Jesus. In fact, somehow along the story, Nicodemus disappears from the scene and Jesus finishes his address inviting everyone "who does wrong and hates the light...to live by the truth and come out into the light."

According to Jesus, the light that will enlighten everything can be found in the Crucified. "Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life." Are we able to see God's love in that man hanging from a cross?

Accustomed as we are, from childhood, to see the cross everywhere, we haven't really learned to look at the Crucified with faith and love. Our casual looks are not able to see in that face the light that could guide our lives in the most difficult and tragic moments.

Jesus, however, keeps sending us from the Cross all messages of life and love. Those outstretched arms, now unable to embrace the children, and those pierced hands that can't heal the lepers or bless the sick, represent really the open arms of God the Father who continues to welcome, embrace and sustain the lives of all the people who are broken down by so much suffering.

From that face, shut down by death, and those eyes no longer able to look with tenderness to sinners and public women; and from his mouth, no longer able to pronounce His indignation at so much injustice and abuses against helpless victims, God is still revealing His unfathomable love for humanity.

“For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through Him the world might be saved.” We remain free to accept this God or to condemn him. No one will force us into it. It is our choice. But “the light has come into this world.” Why is it that we keep rejecting this light that comes to us from the Crucified?

He alone will be able to throw some light into our unhappiness and continued failings; still “everyone who does wrong hates the light and avoids it.” When we live in an unworthy manner, we avoid the light as we feel exposed before God. We cannot look at the Crucified. On the other hand, “any man who lives by the truth comes out into the light,” as he has nothing to hide. He looks at the face of the Crucified.

José Antonio Pagola
Translator José Antonio Arroyo

HOMILY

03-22-2009

GOD LOVES THE WORLD

(See homily 03-15-2015)

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