

LIVING EUCHARIST INITIATIVE

“Common Threads” Homily Helps & Intercessions

March 2009

March 1, 2009 – First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9:8-15 – *God’s Covenant with Noah when he was delivered from the flood.*

1 Peter 3:18-22 – *The water of the flood prefigured baptism, which saves you now.*

Mark 1:12-15 – *Jesus was tempted by Satan, and the angels ministered to him.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Covenant is a strong theme in the first reading from Genesis, God’s promise to Noah that there will never be another flood to devastate the earth. Covenants are bonds of assurance, commitments to faithfulness. We need to know that there are people we can totally rely on, who will be there for us no matter what. We need that assurance, we need that trust. Jesus would not allow anything to break the bond of love between him and the Father. No matter what temptation was thrown at him by the devil nothing would divert him from his mission, from fulfilling the will of the Father. Jesus was not going to throw aside the most important relationship in his life; no one would be allowed to break this bond of trust.

Temptations can seem stronger when we are most vulnerable. After forty days in the desert Jesus was vulnerable, but he remained committed to his mission. Power, prestige, material things, idols and self indulgence have no lasting value. They can seem attractive at the time but they simply do not last. We should put our trust in what lasts, our relationship with the living God. During this economic turmoil we are reevaluating our priorities. It is not easy. We get used to a certain standard of living and it can be hard to change course even if we have no choice. The Eucharist is God’s covenant with us. It fulfills the promise that Jesus made to us, to be with us always. It is God’s bond of love and friendship which will never be broken. The Eucharist gives us the strength, courage and resolve to hold onto the relationships that have eternal value. Don’t let go!

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSION

That through this Eucharistic celebration we will become more aware of God’s abiding love for us. We pray to the Lord.

March 8, 2009 – Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18 – *The sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith.*

Romans 8:31b-34 – *God did not spare his own Son.*

Mark 9:2-10 – *This is my beloved Son.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

How far are you prepared to go to show your love for someone? Abraham, our father in faith, was prepared to sacrifice his son, Isaac, out of love for God. How could any parent ever contemplate doing such a thing? A parent's natural response would surely be to sacrifice themselves for their children. The depth of our love for someone can be tested by situations and events. Are we prepared to truly love for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health? Are there boundaries to our love? Whatever we may think of it, Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son. No matter how unfair it may seem, God was testing the depth of his love. Abraham's love for God and his son is obvious for all to see! If love is true, it will naturally include sacrifice.

Sacrificial love is unconditional; it is the highest form of love. We only have to look at the cross to find a clear and visible definition of sacrificial love. Our God did sacrifice his only Son in order to save us. He allowed his son to embrace evil, sin and death in order to redeem it. There was no other way. Sacrificial love can sometimes be the only way. The moment of transfiguration on the mountain was a foretaste of what lies beyond the cross. But the cross can't be avoided on the path to eternal life, on the road to resurrection. The Eucharist continues to celebrate God's sacrificial love in Jesus. At Mass, Christ continues to offer himself for the salvation of the world. The Eucharist affirms that there are no boundaries to God's love. It is a moment of transfiguration and transformation. It is a foretaste of the paschal feast of heaven which will not end!

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSION

That the Eucharist will continue to transform the way we live and love. We pray to the Lord.

March 15, 2009 – Third Sunday of Lent (Year A Readings)

Exodus 17:3-7 – *Give us water, so that we may drink.*

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 – *The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

John 4:5-42 – *The water that I shall give will become a spring of eternal life.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Have you ever had a conversation that changed your life? Today's Gospel celebrates a conversation that changed a person's life. Little did the woman know when she came to the well for water that her life was about to be transformed through her encounter and conversation with a stranger. Our God is a God of surprises! Jesus exposes the life of this Samaritan woman. Not in a way that demeans or demoralizes her but by uncovering her true dignity and worth. We do not know why she has had five husbands or what kind of relationship she was now in. To move from one relationship to another is a sign of instability and insecurity. Had she ever been truly loved and respected for who she really was? Jesus does not condemn her or judge her. He opens her heart and mind to the truth. He says what she needs to hear and by doing so transforms her life. She will never be the same person again.

At the Eucharist we converse publicly and personally with Christ. Our dignity is restored through the power of his Word and the Sacrament of his love. Everyone is welcome to converse with Christ, to open themselves to his healing presence. We will be challenged and confronted with the truth which will set us free. Moses quenched the thirst of the Israelites as they journeyed to the Promised Land, but no one can quench our thirst for truth and life in the way that Jesus can. The Eucharist is a thirst quencher! How blessed we are! The Samaritan woman also teaches us a valuable lesson: if our thirst for truth is quenched at the Eucharistic table, we should not keep quiet! Tell your friends and neighbors. Evangelize!

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSION

That we will share the truth of the gospel celebrated at the Eucharistic table, we pray to the Lord.

March 22, 2009 – Fourth Sunday of Lent (Year A Readings)

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a – *David is anointed as king of Israel.*

Ephesians 5:8-14 – *Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.*

John 9:1-41 – *The man who was blind went off and washed himself and came back able to see.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Another life changing event is celebrated in this Gospel of the man born blind. It is not that his sight is restored but that his eyes are opened for the first time. This gospel reveals a great deal about human nature. I find it difficult to understand why everyone did not rejoice at this amazing miracle. The Pharisees are very negative in their judgments. They believe that Jesus is a sinner for performing a miracle on a Sabbath and that the man is a sinner otherwise he would not have been born blind! Negative judgments stop us from being affected by obvious goodness. They harden our hearts and blind us to the truth. The first reading from the Book of Samuel focuses on judgment. We so often judge on what we see, appearance, and fail to look into the heart. God sees the potential in everyone, if only we could do the same!

The Eucharist opens our eyes to the wonder and beauty of God. The Eucharist opens our eyes to the truth about ourselves. It uncovers our full potential as sons and daughters of God. It challenges us to let go of prejudice and to root out false and negative judgments. The Eucharist invites us to see with the eyes of Christ. *“And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him.”* (Pope Benedict XVI). Let the light of Christ shine through our lives and may we recognize the glory of God in others.

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSION

That through the Eucharist we will recognize the presence of God in each other, we pray to the Lord.

March 29, 2009 – Fifth Sunday of Lent (Year A Readings)

Ezekiel 37:12-14 – *I will put my spirit in you that you may live.*

Romans 8:8-11 – *The Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.*

John 11:1-45 – *I am the resurrection and the life.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

The Gospel of the Raising of Lazarus beautifully expresses the humanity and divinity of Jesus. At the Eucharist the humanity and divinity of Jesus is always celebrated and encountered. Jesus was obviously very close to Lazarus, he weeps at his tomb. Tears are a sign of love, friendship, joy and grief. So many emotions are contained in a single tear!

When we come to the Eucharistic table we bring all our emotions with us. We do not leave them at the Church door. We bring with us, physically and spiritually, those we love and share our lives with. We present them to our loving Father in prayer. When we come to the Eucharist our hearts are sometimes heavy with sorrow and pain. We bring that pain and sorrow to Christ for healing. When we come to the Eucharist we bring to the banquet table of eternal life those who have died. We pray for them as Jesus prayed for Lazarus. We pray to the only one who can make sense of death, Jesus Christ.

Every Eucharist is a celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ. We profess our belief in him who is the Resurrection and the Life. At the Eucharist we ask Christ to set us free, to unbind us and let us go free. To free us from everything that stops us from being the person he invites us to be. The Eucharist sets us free from sin and restores faith in ourselves.

One of the most important questions contained in the scriptures is asked by Jesus in this gospel: “*Do you believe?*” The Eucharist gives us the opportunity to answer that question. Every aspect of our faith is celebrated at this meal, we taste heaven on earth. May we answer with the same love and conviction as Martha did: “*Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God*”.

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSION

That the Eucharist will continue to strengthen our faith in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, we pray to the Lord.