

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (C)

7<sup>th</sup> April 2019

'I do not condemn you — sin no more'

Is 43: *No need to recall the past* Ps 125: *Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage*

Phil 3: *if only I can have Christ and have a place in Him*

Jn 8: 1–11: *Neither do I condemn you ... sin no more*

I guess that by the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent we should probably be making an assessment of how Lent has gone so far, this year! I know that for me in some Lents I feel that I have put in the effort for sure ... whereas other years I have to admit to having let it sail on past without enough of a conscious effort to have put my heart and soul in to Lent. This year? ... well, for me it's been sort-of middling. The good news is that 2 weeks of Lent still remain, these sacred weeks of Passiontide leading up to Good Friday and Easter Sunday: precious days which we can give to the Lord, however good or not-so-good our Lent has been so far.

**Fasting.** It is still worthwhile maintaining our Lenten discipline of fasting. Whatever we have chosen to refrain from in this season, let's hold to it. Let's keep in mind the important day of fasting and abstinence coming up which is Good Friday, a day of Penance across the whole Church. Let's make sure that in the way we eat and drink, and

entertain ourselves, the 2 weeks of Lent left are a worthy lead-up to that holy day of Our Saviour's crucifixion.

**Prayer.** How can we give over a greater time to prayer and the contemplation of the Lord's sacred mysteries in these remaining two weeks of Lent? The obvious way is to set aside at least all the times in Holy Week for the sacred Triduum ceremonies. The Holy Thursday evening Mass, the Good Friday afternoon Passion Liturgy, and the Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday night are a package — they draw us through the dramatic and saving events of those holy days. It should be every Catholic's aim to participate in the full set of Triduum ceremonies, to offer to the Lord from the love of your heart your presence on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and then either the Easter Vigil or Easter morning. The whole sweep of the liturgy is to draw us into close union with the Lord Jesus who offers us His Body & Blood in the Mass; who offers us His Body & Blood on the Cross; who offers us his Risen Body and Eternal Life. Whatever other ways in which in private you're showing Him in devoted prayer that you love Him, do set aside those sacred

occasions of Holy Week in c.12 days' time.

**Almsgiving.** I thank you for the CaFOD collection in mid March which amounted to the best part of £1000- for development projects, and for relief in the areas devastated by Cyclone Idai. But I also draw your attention again to the Lenten Alms box here, which will remain available until Holy Thursday — this will benefit the young homeless in London who take refuge at the Cardinal Hume Centre, and whose lives are rescued from the grim poverty of the streets at a very vulnerable moment. I do urge you to make use of this way to give charitably before Lent is out.

**Reconciliation.** Finally, as I emphasized last Sunday, and with the extra insert, we also need to take our Catholic duty seriously with regard to the confession of our sins and the absolution granted by Christ in that holy Sacrament. There are many chances remaining to be able to seek the forgiveness of your sins — if you have not already done so lately (and I was touched the other day that so many parents of 1<sup>st</sup>-Confession children did take the chance to celebrate the Sacrament the same day as their young ones!).

First and foremost, the Parish Penitential Service on the Tuesday evening of Holy Week (6 priests this year!). But also a couple of evening hours this week when I will make myself available here in the Confessional (Tues & Fri). Of course you are welcome to seek the chance for Confession in other local parishes instead, and we have listed their Penitential Services too for you, in the Newsletter. The moving account in the Gospel today leaves us in no doubt that the Lord welcomes sinners, and wants us to approach Him in a spirit of contrition, and is ready to forgive us. Her detractors would have her stoned, but the Lord — without condoning her faults — saves her by giving her the chance for forgiveness and a new beginning. Every Lent we make this new beginning. Even at the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent we probably need a new beginning ... to Lent! Let's take it. Let's promise the Lord the heartfelt keeping of what remains this Lent, including an honest opening-up to Him of our need for forgiveness. Every one of us needs to hear those words that save us and give us the hope of heaven: "Your sins are forgiven" ... "Go in peace and sin no more."