



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Lent (B)
March 14, 2021

Healed through His Wounds

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Jesus refers to the story Michelangelo painted into a corner of the Sistine Chapel, *The Brazen Serpent*. It is about the time the Chosen People were attacked by serpents and many were dying. God instructed Moses to place two serpents on a staff and lift it up over the people. All they had to do was look at the serpents to be miraculously healed of their bite wounds.

We have all been bitten by sin. This can be our own self-destructive choices and attitudes, or we can be victims of other's sins. Yet sin and suffering doesn't

need to have the last word. We can overcome if we choose to look at Christ crucified and learn his lesson of love. Jesus teaches us to not be defined by our ugly choices or the wounds we suffer. Our wounds and weaknesses can become the place of our healing. Jesus wants to heal us. That is why he let himself be lifted up!

To embrace this healing is simple yet challenging. First it requires simple faith to believe you are loved by the Father, no matter what. Second, we need a constant, often-denied effort on our part to sincerely repent and work with God's grace to transform self-limiting attitudes and habits into virtues.

Even if you feel dead in your transgressions now, Jesus has already secured your path to life. Grace awaits you. The first step is to accept the love from he who is lifted up with arms outstretched to receive you. +

Sunday Readings

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

They mocked God's messengers, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the LORD's anger against his people blazed up.

Ephesians 2:4-10

By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

John 3:14-21

[Jesus said,] "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

We have all been bitten by sin. This can be our own self-destructive choices and attitudes.

A Word from Pope Francis

Saint Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

—Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I have any unspoken beliefs that I am unlovable?
- Can I repent from attitudes or actions that distance me from God's love?

Conscience-informed Speech

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSSR

Our high school forensics team didn't win many awards, if memory serves. However, we did learn a lot about speaking in public. We studied and put into practice simple rules for public speaking and debate. We were told to check our content and make sure it was accurate. We were warned about misinterpreting and fabricating information. We were taught the skill of being adversarial and competitive without name-calling. Debate is public, not private or personal. We were instructed that it is never appropriate to demean, belittle, degrade, or dehumanize the opponent. What we didn't know was that we were being taught to reason and think critically and exercise sound judgment.

High school forensics taught me that I shouldn't say everything that I think. There is a difference between personal thought and public opinion. And while personal thought can contribute to the formation of public opinion, some personal thoughts should remain just that, personal, internal, and most importantly, unspoken. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians encourages this: "No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29). Many parents have said it this way, "If you have nothing nice to say, say nothing at all."

Say nothing. That's the key. How



many of us speak and then regret what we've said? How many people in public life have been caught in the act of misspeaking, exaggerating, mixing truth with lies, and fabricating stories about themselves or others? Saying nothing is a valid response—at times the most appropriate response. It's even a holy response, especially if the alternative is a lie or words that will wound.

It is very important to stop and think about the language we use when speaking about people, especially in terms of race, immigration, human sexuality, religion, and politics. I am not advocating political correctness. Sometimes political correctness runs and hides from the truth. I'm looking for a place in the

middle of the road, somewhere between the shield of political correctness and license that permits unapologetically brutal and inflammatory expression.

That place is called conscience-informed speech. It goes beyond self-censure, beyond reasoning and critical thinking; it goes even further than the exercise of sound judgment. Conscience-informed speech asks one to stop and weigh the moral value and implications of one's words. It means speaking with moral judgment enlightened by God and the Word, especially in important moments: political debates, campaign speeches, teaching, preaching, and conversations in the public square. We should not underestimate the ethical responsibility of the speaker. There is a duty to say the right thing or say nothing at all. +

*Sometimes the best response
is no response.*

**PRAYER**

*Lord, you are the source of love,
peace, and justice in the world.
Help me to live in communion
with you and all people.*

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day
of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 15–20

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 65:17–21 / Jn 4:43–54

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 47:1–9, 12 / Jn 5:1–16

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 49:8–15 / Jn 5:17–30

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Ex 32:7–14 / Jn 5:31–47

Friday, St. Joseph: 2 Sm 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16 /
Rom 4:13, 16–18, 22 / Mt 1:16, 18–21, 24a
or Lk 2:41–51a

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 11:18–20 / Jn 7:40–53

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

March 14, 2021

© 2021 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2020 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.