

March 27, 2020  
Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent  
**JOHN 7:1-2,10,25-30**

**Activity for today:**

- Read Gospel Reflection
- Prayer of the Day
- Activity of the Day
- If possible, listen to Pope Francis LIVE at 12:00pm
- Find out the response of the USCCB to Covid-19 ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org))

**Gospel Reflection**

**Gospel Reflection from Fr. Brian Johnson**

***What is it with this guy?*** The crowd around Jerusalem asks this about the prophet Jesus. They know the authorities are after him-to kill Him, but they won't make a move on eliminating Him yet. Today's gospel reminds me of a scene in the movie Michael Clayton when the 'fixer' Michael Clayton gets confronted by his angry brother who is a policeman. Clayton had been arrested snooping around a closed crime scene, and as his brother bails him out, he tells him, *"Nobody knows who you are- You've got all these cops thinking you're a lawyer, and you've got all these lawyers thinking you're some kind of cop, so everyone's fooled? Except you- you know who you are."* That certainly describes Jesus. Some know him, and some don't, and some think they know him, but are wrong. That is exactly what we see in today's gospel. Two lines in the reading prove that Jesus did not fit into anybody's pre-made box. After hearing about Jesus needing to sneak into and out of Jerusalem because the powerful leaders were out to kill him, verse 7:26 says *"Look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him"* and verse 7:30 *"they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand upon him"*. If the Temple bosses are trying to 'eliminate' Jesus, they surely aren't saying or doing anything publicly. Apparently, the Jewish authorities just don't know what to make of Jesus, and how to handle His new reform movement. The purity and justice of Jesus, demonstrated in his teaching and in his practice, threatened the 'powers that be'. His 'real deal' pastoral work, ministering to people in need and treating everyone He encountered with dignity and respect clearly exposed the corruption of the dominant religious leaders. Jesus served, healed and brought relief to everyone

he met, showing them the respect and love due to each person, as a genuine 'child of God'. Such compassionate care was never shown by the Temple authorities who exploited everyone for their own profit-gain. They looked at people only for what they could get out of them. Of course, Jesus' confrontation of them was exemplified in His cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13). So, now they are after Jesus, and it will lead to His crucifixion.

I like how the wisdom of the people is revealed here. They know that if the Temple Authorities are trying to put down Jesus, then He must be up to genuine good and honestly making things better for them. They know 'how things are'.

Trust them, people know corruption when they see it. And there is a hopeful statement in the reading today that we could wish and pray was true. The people also say in verse 7:26, "Do the authorities realize that he is the Messiah?" Again, we could wish. Anytime we read the scripture accounts of Jesus interacting with people, we always want people in the story to accept Jesus. Wouldn't it be great if everyone could be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)? What a set of glorious conversions that would be if all of the Temple priests accepted Jesus and served with Him? They could have-I always felt like King Herod was close to accepting the gospel of Jesus at least at one time in his life by the preaching of John, as Mark 6:20 says, "When Herod heard John speak, he was very much perplexed, **yet liked to listen to him.**" But of course, Herod goes the other way, killing John and ultimately rejecting and cooperating in the death of Jesus too. But the people are not fooled. They know.

How about us? A good test for each of us is to ask ourselves: How would we have responded in the crowd? If we heard Jesus teach and watched his miracles and acts of love toward the sick and the poor, how would we have responded?

Sadly we do know that at different times, Jesus was both accepted and then rejected by His hometown, maybe even by his own kinfolk. Maybe the challenge of his teaching (who likes his call to love enemies, or to give away freely our precious stuff?) or the discomfort His actions cause us, may lead us step back from Him. A Good Lenten meditation is to ask ourselves, "At what point does following Jesus stretch me to breaking, or what word of His pushes me to my edge, tempting me to reject Him or walk away?" It may not be a happy thought, as we all want to think we never would reject him. But if even His own apostles desert Him in Holy Week as he is arrested in the Garden, then we should honestly ask ourselves, "Would I stay and suffer with Him?"

Prayer for Today:

### Morning Prayer of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (from prison)

O God, early in the morning I cry to you. Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you; I can't do this alone. I praise and thank you for rest in the night; I praise and thank you for this new day; I praise and thank you for all your goodness and faithfulness throughout my life. You have granted me many blessings; Now let me also accept what's hard from your hand. You will lay on me no more than I can bear. You make all things work together for good for your children. You know all of our troubles; It's your will that I should know you and turn to you.

Lord, I hear your call and follow; Help me. Give me faith that will protect me from despair, from disordered passions, and from restless vice; Give me such love for God and all people as will blot out all bitterness and envy, and give me hope that will deliver me from fear and faint-heartedness. Amen.

### Activity for the Day:

Take a moment to journal or make notes in a prayer book about your last act of sacrifice for God's glory, and the benefit of another person. Have you struggled or suffered with Jesus doing the right thing and paying a price for it? Today is Friday: the day of Christ's death on the cross for us. Can you stand by His cross, and willingly suffer for His sake, in some act of live for someone?

#### **PLENARY INDULGENCE**

##### *The prescribed work:*

- United spiritually through the media to the Pope's special prayer and blessing on Friday, March 27
- The recitation of the Holy Rosary
- The pious practice of the Way of the Cross
- Or some other form of devotion, such as reciting the Creed, the Lord's Prayer or a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary

##### *The usual conditions:*

- A spirit detached from sin
- Sacramental confession (as soon as possible)
- Eucharistic communion (as soon as possible)
- Prayer for the Holy Father's intentions