

Fourth Sunday of Lent – B 2018
2 Chron. 36.14-17/19-23///Eph.2.4-10///John 3.14-21

→we just heard one of the most beloved, most memorized, and one of the most often quoted verses in the Bible.... *“for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”*

→that verse has been called... “the Gospel in a nutshell.”....and so popular is this verse that it shows up almost everywhere

→it is not unusual at sporting events to see someone holding a sign...John 3:16...there have been stores that have printed this verse on the bottom of their shopping bags...and it has appeared so often.... that one could say that this brief verse of scripture is still “trending” pretty strong, some twenty centuries after it was first written into the pages of Scripture....

→but sadly the verses after this one...often get lost and are not as well-known or quoted or referred too....but they too are crucial to the message in this season of Lent

“and this is the verdict...that the light came into the world...but people preferred darkness

PAUSE

→one of the hallmarks of Lent, that every year receives a significant emphasis at this time year...and likewise one of the focal points of our Lenten theme of “finding hope” is our call to repentance

→it is no surprise that.....as human beings.....we live in the "condition" of sin AND as Christians we are called to be aware of our sins

→to be aware of our sinfulness

→to be aware of those parts of our life that we don't like about ourselves

→and we do this because we are called to REPENT..////to be sorry for our sins ////to regret what we have done and what we have failed to do

→and yet I wonder these days...if that is truly something that many people actually take seriously... or if they even believe it anymore...

→I wonder.....

→[you know]...it is interesting to note [these days] how we deal with this whole idea of repentance---how we deal with being sorry for our sins

→...in some instances we will go to great lengths to do everything to avoid it

→I am often reminded of the many second grade students over the years that I have worked with as they prepare for their first reconciliation...and as you might expect...it is a very big step for them... ---they are usually nervous and anxious, fearful and apprehensive!

→and so....to calm them....I always try to talk to them beforehand....asking them if they have any questions....concerns...fears and so on.....

→and for the most part...when the time comes for them to make their first confession, aside from a little nervousness...they seem pretty comfortable with it all...however their parents and most adults, well that's a whole different story....

→as I have said before.....when there is an opportunity for reconciliation, children will come and talk to the priest they are most familiar with, while adults will go to the priest from the next county...!!!

→years ago....I remember two 2nd graders in particular who once said to me....."if I have to tell you all my sins, I'm going to be here all day..

→and another said, "why do I have to tell you my sins, why can't I tell you & GOD about the good things I do instead!!!!"

→now both of those 2nd graders I believe expressed a very profound insight about human nature

---and the insight is this....we don't like dealing with our sinfulness....with the dark side of our lives

→yet when we do deal with that part of our lives....we will do so in either one of two ways

-----**EITHER** we will look at our sinfulness...and become overwhelmed by it...becoming very conscientious of every thing we've ever done wrong...only to conclude just how awful we actually are.....

OR we look at our sinfulness in a half-hearted ... or indifferent way....perhaps concluding that we really haven't done anything wrong or caused any pain at all

→yet all of us sin....we get impatient and greedy and jealous and selfish and so on...just look at how so many people are these days....what happens daily all around us...

→my sense is that there is a whole lot of sinning going on but not much reconciling....

→and those are the traditional sins....that we all are involved in....

→think about the newer type of sins that seem to becoming part of our landscape these days....the sin of indifference....the attitude of not caring...about anyone else's feelings but our own, or about the well-being of others

→the sin of irresponsibility, or unreliability....of not taking responsibility for our words or deeds or actions, or being accountable to our commitments and obligations, our promises and our word.

→these are just some of ways that prevent us from loving God...and his Son whom he sent into our world so that we might not perish

PAUSE

→calling to mind our sinfulness [which is hopefully something we do every night before we go to bed...something we do every Sunday here at mass] is not meant to demean us as people, but rather it is meant to bring about in us a sense of repentance

PAUSE

→it is a given fact that you and I sin, that is part of our human condition

---we create barriers between God and ourselves

---we cloud up the sky and sometimes prevent the sunshine from shining forth

---however.....we can also break down those barriers

And clear away the clouds from our hearts

we can rectify our relationships

---and we can turn away from those obstacles that prevent us from seeing and acting like we should **and turn back to the love that God offers to you and me**

→these precious weeks of Lent...these coming days before Easter, in particular, are indeed a time to do just that.....to dwell on our sinfulness and **to also decide how I can become a better person**

→now is the time to look at the things I've done wrong and to also look at the ways in which I can improve

→to see how I can become more loving....and kind...and patient...and understanding...

more accepting to God's love in my life

PAUSE

→...what do you think is more difficult to do....to admit that we've been impatient and jealous, greedy and selfish...or to try to be a better person....

Think about that for a moment....[you see]....we tend to do everything and anything we can to avoid dealing with and admitting our sins...but if you ask me...that's the easy part....what's difficult is making up for all those wrongs....i.o.w.....deciding to be more patient, and more understanding, more tolerant and so on.....

PAUSE

→this time of year [Lent] provides us with the opportunity to embrace penance

---however doing penance in our lives is **not** meant to be punishment for the things we've done wrong

on the contrary.....doing penance is about becoming a better person

it is about discovering ways to reach towards the love God has for us and living that love in our lives

→Lent is a time to start moving the clouds in our life away

to let the sunshine of God's love into shine forth

but in order for this to happen, we need to first start looking for the sunshine in our own hearts

we all have it....it is the **light** that our gospel reading speaks of today

God so loved the world...

and reconciliation...being reconciled to God and to each other is the best way for you and me to discover that light that is shining brightly in our hearts