

4th Sunday of Lent
March 14, 2021
“The Power of Grace”

II Chr 36:14...23
Eph 2:4-10
Jn 3:14-21

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all make mistakes. We all have faults and shortcomings. Some of us even have addictions which can seem impossible to overcome. Some of the habits we have might be illegal. Some might be legal, but immoral. And even the best of us has issues that seem beyond our ability to change.

Many of our faults are the result of our selfishness. But they also can be influenced by our upbringing or the behavior of others around us who are family and loved ones. Some of us might even feel trapped in a situation or lifestyle that resulted from a bad decision we made years ago.

What is also disheartening is that we can know that we are, simply, not living up to what Jesus says in his Gospel. Try as we may, we fail again and again in different ways to be authentic disciples.

I mention all of this because the scriptures for today can bring us a great deal of hope.

The Second Book of Chronicles, which is the last book of the Old Testament, reminds us of the sinfulness, infidelity, and failure of the Chosen People. They were much like Americans and Westerners today. Political leaders, ordinary people, and even many of the clergy have gone astray – espousing behaviors that are clearly against God’s Natural Law and His Commandments! We are told that after the Chosen People failed to heed the messages, warnings, and prophets, God allowed them to be almost completely destroyed.

Nevertheless, after years of exile, God raised up Cyrus. Cyrus the Great was the enlightened, pagan king of Persia. He listened to God in his heart and then permitted a faithful remnant of the exiled Chosen People to return and rebuild Jerusalem and God’s Temple!

In the Gospel selection, Jesus tells us that there is hope. There is hope even for the greatest sinners among us, provided we see and admit our sinfulness and then change our hearts and lives. We must begin to walk in the light of God's truth and God's presence. We must hate the darkness of the culture, and live in Jesus who is the true "Light of the World"!

Furthermore, we must truly learn to believe in all that Jesus has done – and will continue to do for us. He did this by coming into the world and living just like the rest of us. He railed against the establishment and even challenged the religious leaders. He went to the cross willingly – And he did so, in order that we could be raised to the divine life that he had come to share with us!

Jesus didn't come to condemn us, but to save us. However, we must do our part. We must have faith. We must translate that faith into the action of godly works and deeds. We must break with all sin – as well as those situations or occasions that lead us into sin. We must become very wary of any slippery slope. We must avoid excuses or justifications for behavior that is contrary to the Gospel. But we can take heart and be encouraged – because God is always there with His grace! This is the message today in St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

If we reflect upon what Paul says – then God's greatness, His generosity, and His love for the human race should overwhelm us! God has done so much by creating us, this planet, and the whole cosmos in which we live!

Yet, there is even more! God continually sends His grace to us. And we absolutely need His grace to live as fully human and fully developed disciples of Jesus and children of our divine Father. We need this grace to see the truth about ourselves, the truth of our sins and unworthiness, the dark truth of the present world and of our bankrupt culture. Above all, we need God's grace to be able to hear and respond properly to the prophets, the events which challenge us, and the voice of God within us. All of these things can lead us into the kingdom of God both here and hereafter!

Brothers and Sisters, we are all sinners. We all have dark places in our lives that must be opened to God's light and grace. This might seem hard. For some it might even seem impossible. But God is always there with His grace and His light. So, let us pray, today, that we become people of light and grace – and love. And may we respond wholeheartedly to all that God continues to give to us!

Amen.

March 14, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra