

## **The Richness of God's Mercy and Love**

*“Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father” (Pope Francis’ 2021 Lenten Message #3).*

The fourth Sunday of Lent shows that this year’s season of Lent is more than halfway spent. The important question we can ask ourselves is how far we have gone in making this season fruitful in our relationship with God and others. We have to remember that all the works of penance and abstinence we undertake this season are meant to help us to experience the mercy and love of God more deeply and to share the same with others. If these works are only ritualistic without touching our lives then they are fruitfulness. The love and mercy of God which we are invited to experience in this season of Lent are evident in the Old and New Testaments as we see in the readings of today.

The first reading, the 2nd book of Chronicle (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> books of Chronicle record what happened from creation to the return from exile during the reign of Cyrus king of Persia). Today’s first reading begins with a description of the infidelity and sinfulness of seemingly everyone in Judah. They failed to heed the words of the prophets leading to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians and the exile to Babylon of those who survived. This history shows that God punishes but its punishment is corrective to save us from eternal damnation. This infinite and definite mercy of God is what St. Paul reminds us in the second reading.

The encounter of Jesus and Nicodemus in today’s Gospel of John gives a solid foundation to the richness of God’s mercy, which reminds us that God has given us the gift of salvation. That is, the mission of Christ is not to condemn us but to save us from the darkness of damnation into the light of salvation. It is left us to believe. Anything that opposes this love God is calling us to live in and from brings us to darkness. The question remains, do we allow Christ the light of the world to come into our hearts and remove the darkness of unforgiving spirit? Forgiveness is three-sided. First is God who assures us of his forgiveness. Second is ourselves that are called to forgive ourselves, and third is our neighbor who deserves our forgiveness. Forgiveness becomes incomplete when any is lacking. We pray that the good Lord will give us the humility and courage to ask and receive his forgiveness, to forgive ourselves, and to share the same with others. Amen.