

Meditations for the Fourth Week of Lent

WE THIRST FOR YOU, O LORD

Proclaiming the Faith

John 3:14-21

The events that give rise to the teachings in today's Gospel begin a few verses before when the Pharisee Nicodemus comes to visit Jesus secretly in the night. Nicodemus has heard about Jesus and is curious, but he is also afraid. He wants to believe, but he isn't quite ready to make a public commitment.

The people of the Gospels aren't so very different from us. Nicodemus

is intrigued by Jesus but unwilling to be seen publicly with him. How often have you learned that someone you've known for a long time is or was raised as a Catholic? This is particularly true of famous people who are afraid that making their faith public will harm their careers. Sometimes we fall victim to this same temptation, hiding our faith out of fear. However, we should remember that while we fear that we may be mocked or made fun of for our faith, in some parts of the world today, people

actually are being killed for their Christian beliefs.

Truly the words of John 3:16 ("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") are at the heart of our Catholic faith. The season of Lent is the perfect reminder that we are called to let our faith show in our daily lives — with joy and fervor!

FOR REFLECTION

- › Do the people I work with, go to school with, and spend free time with know that I am Catholic?
- › Who encourages me most in my faith? Who can I encourage?
- › How can I come more closely to the light of Jesus this Lent?



OUR FAITH

A Good Pharisee



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Although the word “Pharisee” has come to have a very negative connotation, not all Pharisees were wicked. Nicodemus, the curious Pharisee in today’s Gospel, was one of those who eventually followed Jesus. Besides his secret visit to Jesus at night, he appears twice more in Scripture. A member of the Sanhedrin, he defends Jesus when the chief priests and other Pharisees are debating what to do with Jesus. And after the Crucifixion, along with Joseph of Arimathaea, he brought about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloë to anoint Jesus’ body. Tradition says that he was martyred for the Faith.

Catechism CONNECTION

“By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: ‘In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.’ God ‘shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.’”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 604

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Pretzel Prayers

Once considered the official Catholic food of Lent, pretzels date back at least 1,400 years. Because fat, eggs, and milk were part of the Lenten abstinence, these little bites of bread made only with flour, salt, and water were invented. They were wrapped in the shape of arms crossed in prayer and the three holes in the middle represented the Trinity. Traditionally, pretzels were the perfect food to share with people who were struggling for food or living on the streets because they didn’t spoil easily. Make your own pretzels as a family (find a recipe on the Internet) and share them with someone in need in your neighborhood or community.



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Lenten Prayer

Unto to you, I cry, my God!

“No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it [under a bushel basket], but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light.”

— Luke 11:33

Lord, give me the courage to be a brave and bold witness to you in all that I say and do.

SIGNS OF THE SEASON

The Color Purple

The liturgical color for Lent is purple, symbolizing pain, suffering, and mourning. But why purple? Purple was the most expensive color in biblical times. Extracted from a sea snail, it took as many as 12,000 shells to get enough dye to color a handkerchief. Because of the enormous cost, only the wealthiest (almost exclusively royalty) wore purple garments. When soldiers mocked Jesus for being the “King of the Jews,” they put a purple robe on his shoulders to belittle his claim. Therefore, we use the color purple during Lent to remind us of the Passion and death of the Lord.

Weighing in on the student-led movement against gun violence

February 27, 2018 Dan Russo



In our country, there is a growing student-led movement against gun violence and for more reasonable gun control laws, sometimes involving a walk-out and a march.

If students from our archdiocesan Catholic schools were to lead such a march, and if my schedule would permit, I would join them; yes, I would.

It's the height of sadness when students can't feel safe at school. And that sadness is higher yet because legislators still haven't done diddly-squat about reasonable gun control, except to make the proposal to arm teachers, which is not reasonable!

As Christians we are guided by the teachings of Jesus, for example, telling Peter to sheathe his sword, because those who live by the sword will die by the sword (Matthew 26:52).

We are also guided by the Catechism, which teaches that the commandment to love oneself morally justifies self-defense against an unjust aggressor, but within moral limits, such as using violence only as a last resort (paragraphs 2263-2267).

Moreover, we are taught that public safety is the responsibility of police and armed forces; we give them weapons so that we don't need a militia of private citizens, and so that individuals won't take matters into their own hands, like vigilantes, or "stand your ground" advocates.

I understand guns for hunting or recreation, I do; in high school I was a member of the Rod and Gun Club. I suppose a disturbed person could do harm to others with a .22 or a shotgun. But we could control how easy it is for that to happen, and maybe lessen how many get hurt.

People opposed to any gun control get their way by pressuring legislators, or paying them off. We have to do the same; maybe we can't line the pocket of a politician, but we can deprive him/her of office, and so denying them of payoffs from those who can and will make them.

Legislators only have the authority that we give to them by our vote. We have a moral duty to exercise the right to vote, and to vote conscientiously, and to advocate for greater access to mental health care, and for greater control over who can buy what sort of gun.

So, march, yes. If you have the right to vote, fulfill your duty in a conscientious way. And pray, for as Jesus taught, some demons are only dealt with by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21).

God, come to our assistance. Lord, make haste to help us.

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