

Rectoría de San Juan de Dios

IV Sunday of Lent-Cycle B

2 Chr 36, 14-16.19-23; Ps 137; Eph 2, 4-10; Jn 3, 14-21

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Let Us Rise Through Love

Following our Lenten desert itinerary, it is good for us to consider being signs of salvation for others and, like Christ; to rise through love onto new crosses of the giving of our life.

The historical moment that we live in can be compared to that of the people of Israel in the first reading, an enslaved people, immersed in hopelessness. It also can be compared to the darkness of Nicodemus, who felt attracted by the doctrine of Jesus but could not understand the significance of “being born anew.”

Today, many could be stranded, dying, or bitten by the serpent, as were the people of God in the desert (Nm 21, 4-9) when the Lord ordered Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it on a staff so that all who saw it could be healed.

Just as this was necessary in the time of Moses and as the moment came in the time of Jesus for Him to rise as a sign of love and salvation, so it seems necessary today for us to rise up in the middle of our desert, a different desert, but equally dangerous.

How important it is to rise through love now, when we live in the midst of a world that understands little about salvation and love; when many could be stranded and dying of diverse maladies. So many, because of the lack of security in society, are prostrate in their own homes, not going out

except for essentials. So many others are restrained by sickness, or by the senselessness and hopelessness of their lives.

In this stage of our desert journey, the proposal for us is to rise up out of love, to allow the power of love in perfect union with Jesus and His Cross to give us the opportunity to verify His salvation, to confirm that love has the power to overcome all violence, hopelessness or sickness.

Let us follow three steps for being lifted up through love:

1-Let us shake off hopelessness and infidelity.

We rest if we take care of our relationship with God, if we recognize ourselves in the image of the unfaithful people that is painted in the reading from Chronicles but only believe that God will not abandon us, that God always keeps His promises.

The first reading that mentions that *the priests and the people had multiplied their infidelities* leads us to ask ourselves, what are my infidelities to God at this time of my life? We also hear in this reading that when all seemed lost, after seventy years of slavery, God inspired Cyrus, the Persian king, to rescue His people.

From this first idea, let us believe that it is time for us to review our personal history and to recognize the value of our relationship with God, our belonging to His mystery. As King Cyrus says: *“Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of His people, let him go up, and may his God be with him.”*

2- Let us shake off the image of death.

At times, we hold the imprint of our deaths on our faces or inwardly; it is necessary to rid ourselves of that false image; we are not dead in Christ but living. As Paul says to the community of the Ephesians: *“God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ.”*

We are given life in Christ in order to do the good works that God has prepared for us; we cannot sabotage ourselves, destroying the plan of God.

There are some who live as if they were dead and buried; it would be advisable to ask ourselves: do I feel as if I am dead? What are my deaths? There are some who have hidden specific deaths because they are afraid to fully live.

We have to shake off that image of death that prevents us from rising up through love, ultimately because from this paltry specimen of humanity that I could feel that I am, God has destined me to communicate life and love. He rescued me in Christ so that, in Him, I might fulfill the part that He intends me to play in His plan of redemption.

3-Let us be a sign.

We can rise as a sign in the midst of our family or society; today, more than ever, it is necessary to be credible signs of love; the Cross of Christ illumines us, penetrates our darkness, and brings to light our attitudes and those of others.

Our society needs visible signs that will help it to rise

as well, to come out the darkness of its rejection of God.¹ We can be that sign of love only if we are authentic, only if we are prepared to give life. We must dare to live the rationale of donation, clinging closely to Christ, loving with the gift of ourselves. The world today needs nothing more than this—that we show that love is the true power that conquers hate, death, and all evil.

¹ The image of an elderly woman in the parish comes to me; she lived alone and poor. It happened that a young man, stuck in a life of drug abuse, asked for her prayers when he went out at night to engage in his misdeeds and he gave her some money. At times, that young man, who had a very complicated life, knelt and said to her, “Bless me, mother, because today is going to be very dangerous for me; your blessing helps me so much because I see in you my mother and my grandmother.” In this case, the old woman represented the sign of love for that delinquent, a sign that was winning him over.