



For God So Loved the World . . .

As we proceed in our Lenten pilgrimage and approach the dramatic days of the Holy Week, we are invited to focus on the essence of it all: God's merciful love for all human beings. His love for us is eternal. It is patient and wise, kind and strong, resourceful and constant. It is best exemplified in Jesus Christ, the God-Man who laid down his life that every human being might have life, life to the full.

This divine life is ours whenever we open our hearts to him in faith and let him fill us up with the light of his presence and grace. This is what we do now as we begin the Eucharistic celebration with faith, hope, and love, and implore God's mercy on all mankind.



INTRODUCTORY RITES



Entrance Antiphon

(To be recited only when no Entrance Hymn is sung.)

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

Greeting

P –The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

All –**And with your spirit!**

Penitential Act

P –To prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries with a renewed heart, let us call to mind our sins and plead for God's mercy. (Pause)

P –For the times we failed to appreciate your love for us, Lord, have mercy!

All –**Lord, have mercy!**

P –For the times we chose to follow the darkness of our passions rather than the light of your example, Christ, have mercy!

All –**Christ, have mercy!**

P –For the times we responded to your love with ingratitude and new sins, Lord, have mercy!

All –**Lord, have mercy!**

P –May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All –**Amen!**

Collect (Opening Prayer)

P –O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of

the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All –**Amen!**

LITURGY OF THE WORD



1st Reading 2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23

God continues to love us even when we go astray. He remains faithful to His promises even when we forget ours. Such is the basic message of this theological reading of the history of Israel.

R – A proclamation from the Second Book of Chronicles

In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practising all the abominations of the nations and polluting the Lord's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

Early and often did the Lord, the God of their fathers,

send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the Lord against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy. Their enemies burned the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious objects. Those who escaped the sword were carried captive to *Babylon*, where they became servants of the king of the *Chaldeans* and his sons until the kingdom of the Persians came to power. All this was to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: “*Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled.*”

In the first year of *Cyrus*, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord inspired King *Cyrus* of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: “*Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!*”

The Word of the Lord!
All—Thanks be to God!

Responsorial Psalm Ps 137

R—Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!



* By the streams of *Babylon* we sat and wept when we remembered *Zion*. On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps. *R.*

* For there our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs, and our despoilers urged us to be joyous: “Sing for us the songs of *Zion!*” *R.*

* How could we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land? If I forget you, *Jerusalem*, may my right hand be forgotten! *R.*

* May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not, if I place not *Jerusalem* ahead of my joy. *R.*

2nd Reading Eph 2:4-10

Our salvation is first and foremost God’s doing. It is the fruit of His compassionate love, which we make our own by clinging to Him in faith.

R—A proclamation from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:
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. By grace you have been saved. He raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heav-

ens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.

The Word of the Lord!
All—Thanks be to God!

Verse before the Gospel

All—(Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!)

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

(Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!)

Gospel

Jn 3:14-21

God loved us first. He loved us to the utmost, to the point of giving His only Son for the very people who were offending Him. There can be no greater love than this.

P—The Lord be with you!

All—And with your spirit!

P—A proclamation from the holy Gospel according to John

All—Glory to you, O Lord!

Jesus said to *Nicodemus*: “Just as *Moses* lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

GLOSSARY: • *Judah*: Originally, this was the name of one of the 12 children of Jacob. He became the forefather of the tribe that was named after him and which settled in the southern part of the Promised Land. Eventually that region was called “*Judah*.” David made Jerusalem its capital city. When the kingdom was divided into two blocks, the southern part was ruled by descendants of David and was called “*Kingdom of Judah*.” • *Babylon*: The capital city of the powerful ancient empire of the Chaldeans, which was situated in the region now called Iraq. One of its kings, Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C., and took to Babylon as prisoners the most prominent inhabitants of the city. They were kept there for about two generations (roughly, fifty years). • *Chaldeans*: Members of a Semitic tribe which came to occupy Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) and destroyed the Assyrian empire at the beginning of the seventh century BC. Their capital city was Babylon. That is why they were also known as “*Babylonians*.” • *Cyrus*: The founder of the Persian Empire. He reigned from 559 to 529 B.C. and conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. The following year he allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and to rebuild the city and its temple. • *Nicodemus*: A Pharisee who went to see Jesus by night. Eventually he became a secret disciple of the Lord. At Jesus’ burial, Nicodemus provided a huge amount of precious spices to be used for the embalming. • *The serpent*: This is the bronze serpent made by Moses at God’s instruction and raised up on a pole in the desert for everyone to see. All the Israelites bitten by poisonous snakes were healed if they looked at the bronze serpent. (See Nm 21:4-9).

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

The Gospel of the Lord!
All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Homily

Profession of Faith (Nicene Creed)

All—I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen!

Prayer of the Faithful

P –God’s constant love for us is the source of our hope for salvation. Trusting in his merciful love, we pray:

All—Lord, graciously hear us!

C –For the Universal Church and all people of goodwill: May they always respond promptly to God’s call to conversion. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For the Holy Father and all our spiritual leaders, the prophets of God in our midst: May all Christians hear their call to an ever greater faithfulness. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For all parents and teachers: May they succeed in leading their children and students to appreciate God’s love and respond to it with constant fidelity. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For those who are entangled in the web of their bad habits: May they find in the example of the saints the encouragement they need to break their chains. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For the sick, the homeless, and the unemployed: May the solidarity of the Christian community be for them an instrument of God’s Providence. Let us pray! **R.**

C –Let us pray in silence for our personal intentions. (*Pause*)
Let us pray! **R.**

P –God of holiness and compassion, we thank You for Your merciful love. Keep us faithful to our commitments and make us

instruments of Your saving love for our neighbor, through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen!



Preparation of the Gifts

P –Pray, brethren . . .

All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P –We place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen!

Preface of Lent I

P –The Lord be with you!

All—And with your spirit!

P –Lift up your hearts!

All—We lift them up to the Lord!

P –Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

All—It is right and just!

P –It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For by your gracious gift each year your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts with the joy of minds made pure, so that, more eagerly intent on prayer and on the works of charity, and participating in the mysteries by which they have been reborn, they may be led to the fullness of grace that you bestow on your sons and daughters.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

All—Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and

earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes in
the name of the Lord. Hosanna
in the highest!

Memorial Acclamation

P –The mystery of faith!

All –When we eat this Bread
and drink this Cup, we pro-
claim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again!

COMMUNION RITE



All –Our Father . . .

P –Deliver us, Lord . . .

All –For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are
yours, now and for ever!

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread

All –Lamb of God . . .

Communion

P –Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the
sins of the world. Blessed are
those called to the Supper of the
Lamb.

All –Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under
my roof, but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(To be recited only when no Com-
munion Hymn is sung.)

Jerusalem is built as a city
bonded as one together. It is
there that the tribes go up, the
tribes of the Lord, to praise the
name of the Lord.

Prayer after Communion

P –O God, who enlightens
everyone who comes into this
world, illuminate our hearts, we
pray, with the splendor of your
grace, that we may always ponder
what is worthy and pleasing
to your majesty and love you in
all sincerity.

Through Christ our Lord.
All –Amen!

CONCLUDING RITES



P –The Lord be with you.

All –And with your spirit!

P –Bow your heads and pray for
God's blessing. (Pause)

Look upon those who call
to you, O Lord, and sustain
the weak; give life by your
unfailing light to those who

walk in the shadow of death,
and bring those rescued by
your mercy from every evil
to reach the highest good.
Through Christ our Lord.

All –Amen!

P –May almighty God bless
you: the Father, and the
Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All –Amen!

P –Go in peace, glorifying the
Lord by your life.

All –Thanks be to God!

The Father's Universal Life-Giving Love

Fathers are expected to be loving, forgiving, and selfless. Unfortunately, not a few fall short of this expectation. And even the very good ones sometimes do fail, due to the weakness of human nature. **There is only one father who never lets down any of his children, and continually takes to heart the full happiness of all of them. This ideal father is GOD.** He alone meets the standard of perfect fatherhood. From Him all fatherhood on earth derives its meaning and authority.

The perfect Father has a personal name – **LOVE**, a name which **expresses the essence of His nature.** He is love in person. (See 1 Jn 4:8.16.) All His deeds are deeds of love: a love that is like a symphony resulting from the combination of the many harmonious notes of His power, mercy, forgiveness, providence, faithfulness, self-giving, communion . . .

Israel experienced God's love with a special intensity and clarity. The Lord's love for His "Special People" was ever-mindful (see Is 49:15f), both tender and firm (see Hos 11:1.3-4.8-11), God's love is rooted in his own eternity. He has loved His people with an everlasting love. (See Jer 31:3.)

But God's love is not limited to Israel. It encompasses all human beings. Creation in all its richness is for all. For all is the call to eternal happiness in heaven. (See 1 Tim 2:4.) But **the greatest sign of the divine love for all men is the gift of God's only Son.**

All men have sinned. In one way or another, they have all rejected God. But God never rejected men. True to His nature, He did not abandon sinful mankind. True love never gives up. (See 1 Cor 13:7.) As a proof of His persistent love, when men were yet sinners, **God allowed His only Son to die** – the just for the unjust – **that all of them might have eternal life and enjoy the gift of an undeserved sonship.** (See Rom 5:8 and 1 Pt 3:18.) So much did God love an unloving and uncaring world! What else could He have done that He did not do? . . .

Jesus revealed all the depth of the Father's love to Nicodemus on the night of the secret meeting, and he would prove it by dying on the cross. The same message is addressed to us today. **We, too, need to know and be convinced of God's tremendous love for us.**

Knowing this, we should **respond with appreciation, gratitude, cooperation, and imitation.** There is nothing that we can do to deserve God's love, but there is a lot we can do to make it bear fruit in ourselves and around us. Jesus learned from the Father to love till death, and he taught his disciples to do the same. It is now our turn to show in practice that we have learnt **the most important lesson in life: to love God in return and to love one another as He has done.** (See Jn 13:34 and 1 Jn 4:11.)



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