

## **Homily - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate. History is shaped by acts of compassion; think of Jesus saving Mary Magdalene from being stoned to death, or Maximillian Kolbe saving a fellow prisoner from execution, or St Margaret of Scotland saving the lives of the starving by feeding the poor, or recently the compassion of the Ukrainians to a captured Russian soldier.

On the other hand, how history has been shaped by humanities lack of compassion, the massacre at Glencoe, the beheading of Mary Queen of Scots, the Moors murderers, the Yorkshire ripper, the Jewish holocaust, the Bosnian Genocide and now the invasion of Ukraine.

We must be guardians of our own conscience. The question we must ask ourselves is, how do I form my own conscience? What is it that feeds my mind? Do I seek the advice of God through prayer before I make a difficult decision? Do I take in the suffering and injustice of those around me? Do I appreciate what others do for me? Do I see life as a gift or a right?

St Paul teaches the people of Corinth to be careful, to be guided by God and avoid the lusts for forbidden things and thinking that we are above correction or remorse.

As we enter into central part of the Sacred season of Lent, a designated time of repentance and renewal; let us consider how compassionate each and everyone of us are. In a few days' time, the Primary Three children make their First confession. How are we as parents, teachers and extended family helping the little children of today to be formed with a Christ like conscience?

Compassion effects every aspect of our moral existence, from the simple act of being patient with someone in front of me at the Health Centre; to not taking on resentment that my son forgot about me on Mother's Day.

Jesus uses a beautiful little parable to describe the compassion of God; that when someone is leading a fruitless life and nothing good is coming from it, only misery and hardness of heart; that we nurture the ground around their lives show them undeserved compassion, and hope beyond hope that, they see the light and ultimately bear good fruit.

In every human being there is despite all the sceptics, a capacity to be kind; it is just that for some it is harder to bring it out into the open than others. And

when life seems all dark and hopeless, then we find it harder to be compassionate.

St Ambrose wrote a beautiful reflection in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century about rising from all our miseries by a strong faith in God, he said, "To rest in the Lord and to gaze upon his loveliness is truly a feast and full of delight and peacefulness".

It was St Ambrose who helped St Augustine through his moral maze, probably heard his Confession and definitely received him into the Church, showing compassion towards him after he repented from the sins of his past life, change your lives through Christ, Augustine would say. I encourage all of us today to do likewise, that through the the compassionate cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the sins of our past life may be forgiven when we have a humble contrite spirit. Please don't squander the chance to be reconciled at Confession before Easter. Life is changed by making a good Confession, Jesus has made that sacrament available to all the Baptised.

God bless you All,

Canon Jeremy Bath.