

# Homily

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent - B

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
February 20-21, 2021

Gn 9: 8-15  
Ps 25: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
1 Pt 3: 18-22  
Mk 1: 12-15

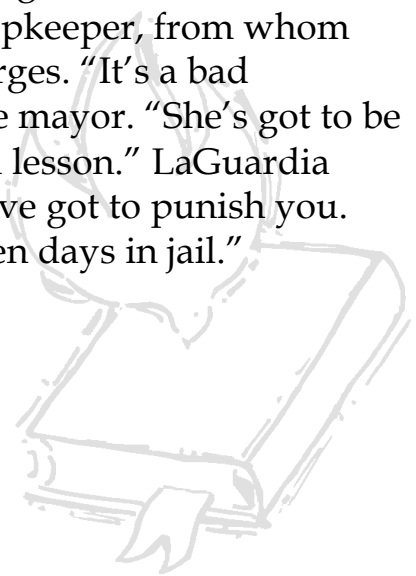
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### The Little Flower

James McCutcheon

Fiorello LaGuardia was mayor of New York City during the worst days of the Great Depression and all of World War I. He was called by adoring New Yorkers "The Little Flower" because he was only five-foot-four and always wore a carnation in his lapel. He was a colorful character who used to ride the New York City fire trucks, raid speakeasies with the police department, take entire orphanages to baseball games, and whenever the New York newspapers were on strike, he would go on the radio and read the Sunday funnies to the kids.

One bitterly cold night in January of 1935, the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city; LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself. Within a few minutes, a tattered old woman was brought before him, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter's husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper, from whom the bread was stolen, refused to drop the charges. "It's a bad neighborhood, your Honor," the man told the mayor. "She's got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson." LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said, "I've got to punish you. The law makes no exceptions-ten dollars or ten days in jail."



But even as he pronounced sentence, the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous sombrero saying: "Here is the ten dollar fine which I now remit; and furthermore I am going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant."

So the following day the New York City newspapers reported that \$47.50 was turned over to a bewildered old lady who had stolen a loaf of bread to feed her starving grandchildren, fifty cents of that amount being contributed by the red-faced grocery store owner, while some seventy petty criminals, people with traffic violations, and New York City policemen, each of whom had just paid fifty cents for the privilege of doing so, gave the mayor a standing ovation.

A just man in an unjust world – as I focused on today's readings, I thought of this story that I once read about the charity of Fiorello LaGuardia during a time of the Great Depression. I thought to myself, "Here is a man who became the focal point of hope in a city that desperately searched for any kind of hope in life. During a time of famine and poverty, here was a man to whom people could turn to find an act of kindness that brought a purpose to life."

We know the world is unjust; in the scriptures, Jesus has made this very clear. Jesus was and is not of this world. If he were of this world,

we would stand up to defend him against the injustices of life. As life has proven, we often do not. The apostles in the gospel of Mark did not stand up for their Lord; practically none of the apostles stood at the foot of the cross when Jesus died, because they were more afraid of losing their lives than standing up for the Christ, the Lord of life.

In fact, in all four gospels, there was only one occasion where an apostle did stand at the foot of the cross with Jesus; that took place in a gospel whose name is attributed to this “apostle that loved Jesus,” when Jesus commissioned him to take care of Mother Mary (Jn 9: 25-29). In the other three gospels, *none* of the apostles were strong enough to stand up for our Lord, who died on the cross for them.

The fact is that we are very similar to the apostles, bishops, priests and people alike – you and me and the person next door. Sometimes the injustices that happen in the world could be prevented if we stood up and did what was right in the Lord’s name. On the occasions when we do stand up to the injustices of the world, we very well know that there are consequences for our actions. The “cancel culture” in today’s society is unrelenting in crucifying those that do not fall into their narrative, no

matter what side of the ledger on which the just may stand. If we choose to defend the gospel message, whether it be for the defense of the poor, the lame, the crippled, the orphan, the widow, the aborted, the person on death row, those people who cannot speak the language, those people have a different culture way of life, religion do unto others – if you choose the side of the gospel, the cancel culture will crucify you, if not in action than certainly in the word of social, electronic or print media.

Unfortunately, the words that you can find in every major religious text of e very major religion – “do unto others” – is abandoned by a great deal in whatever faith it may be when the culture in power impresses their values as the true way, the only way. As we learn from all the major religions, “the golden rule” becomes a unifying theme to all people of faith(source for this homily... [The Golden Rule | Religious Naturalism](#)):

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, for this is the law and the prophets.

*Christianity*

*Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31*

What is hurtful to yourself do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of The Torah and the remainder is but commentary.

*Judaism*

*Shabbath (also Rabbi Hillel)*

Do unto all men as you would they should unto you, and reject for others what you would reject for yourself.

*Islam*

*Mishkat-el-Masabih*

Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.

*Buddhism*

*Udanavarga 5.8*

Tzu Kung asked: "Is there any one principle upon which one's whole life may proceed?" Confucius replied: "Is not Reciprocity such a principle? - what you do not yourself desire, do not put before others."

*Confucianism*

*Analects 15.23*

This is the sum of all true righteousness -  
Treat others, as thou wouldst thyself be treated.

Do nothing to thy neighbor, which hereafter

Thou wouldst not have thy neighbor do to thee.

*Hinduism*

*Mahabharata (Ganguli, Book 13 CXIII)*

Treat others as thou wouldst be treated thyself.

*Sikhism*

*Guru Angad (Macauliffe vol 2, p.29)*

A man should wander about  
treating all creatures  
as he himself would be treated.

*Jainism*

*Sutrakritanga Sutra 1.11.33*

Regard your neighbor's gain as  
your own gain; and regard  
your neighbor's loss as your own  
loss, even as though you  
were in their place.

*Taoism*

*Tai-Shang Kan-Ying Pien*

Ascribe not to any soul that  
which thou wouldst not have  
ascribed to thee.

*Bahá'í*

*Bahá'ulláh*

If we truly believe that Christianity is “the way, the truth and life,” the path we must seek to reach the kingdom of heaven, then we focus our energies towards these penitential practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving is to take time away from this crazy life that the world wishes to live to focus on those three words for which Christ died for us – “do unto others.” When we live like Christ, when we live a life of virtue, can into the world of God and to be like Christ, to be virtuous.

At the university where I teach, I instruct those students taking my scripture courses (Old and New Testament) about various covenants that God has established with us. I teach the students about , the

# 5 COVENANTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## NOAHIC GENESIS 9:11

"I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth"

## ABRAHAMIC GEN 12:1-3

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing ... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

## MOSAIC EXODUS 19:5-6

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"

## DAVIDIC 2 SAMUEL 7:12-17

"... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

## NEW JEREMIAH 31:31-34

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah ..."

Reasonable**THEOLOGY**.org/5Covenants

covenant to Noah and Abraham and Moses and David. That said, every one of those covenants, somehow some way, was broken and violated in the Old Testament.

The only covenant that was able to sustain itself was where God came down into the world, where God became incarnate, where God took on our human nature and our human will. The only covenant that sustained itself was when God lived with us,

was baptized for us, had suffered for us and died and rose for us. We learn in this temptation story, both in the desert and the agony in the garden, that this God-man was able to sustain this covenant when we could not. We also learn that the only way to get to heaven is to hold on to Christ and follow the life of love that he taught us to live, starting with the Golden Rule.

We have a chance for salvation, but we are obligated to live like Christ to achieve this goal, to sacrifice and love like Christ modeled for us. That is what the word, "Mass" means. It means sacrifice Christ is looking for mercy. Christ is looking for sacrifice. Christ is looking for love. We have an obligation this Lenten season to do it as necessary to do what is godlike to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves.

In a practical way this Season of Lent, I ask you to help with one specific project at the parish that might be of great support to those in need. At the border town, there are about ten individuals in our community who have come forward, seeking to be part of our community by receiving the Easter sacraments. They have been meeting



with me every Tuesday night, either together on-site at St Anne's Church or through the online ZOOM meetings that we hold every Tuesday night so that they can learn a little bit more about the faith. On Easter Weekend, all ten (and a couple of their babies) will be receiving the Easter and join us fully at this table of God's love.

What I have done in my other parishes that I have served is that I have asked parishioners to write letters of support to these individuals who seek to be with us. Perhaps during this Lenten season, as these names are listed for your consideration, perhaps you might wish to write them a letter. If you choose to do so, please send them to the following address:

**NORMA CARO  
JESUS CARO  
JENNIFER COOK  
SHANE COOK  
LILIANA FLORES**

**KELLY FLORES  
MARIA GALVAN  
DANIELA GUZMAN  
MARK LETONA  
ROALI PIQUET**

**ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH  
119 NORTH MARKET STREET  
MOMENCE, IL 60954.**

If you would be so kind, I would ask you to write each of these individuals, telling tell them that they are not alone, that we are supporting them, that we are loving them and that we want to sustain the covenant with them, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Especially through the readings we encounter this weekend, we learn that the only way to sustain the covenant is to follow the example of Christ because only Christ was able to sustain himself against the temptations of the devil. Especially through these letters, we are encouraging those adults who seek the sacraments to be like Christ, to allow Christ to lead them and guide them so that, like Christ, we take care of others like Christ takes care of us.

Let us realize that is through our sacrifice, our suffering, our prayer, our fasting, our own giving our love, our faith, our hoping to turn a life that we understand what these Lenten practices are about. Let us never take them for granted. Let us offer this sacrifice for others and share this gift of love. As Fiorello Guardia modeled for us, may we allow the Lord to channel through our own lives to **LIVE LIKE CHRIST!** and do the same with all people that we meet. This is our prayer.