

Homily. 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time. my ear. A. 4/5 February 2023.

I remember once when I was on holidays, sitting with the congregation at a Mass in a Parish I was visiting. For some time I'd been feeling burdened and worried about a number of weighty matters. That Sunday the reading from John's gospel was of the woman caught in the very act of adultery. I'd heard it, read it, even studied it hundreds of times before, but on this particular day the story suddenly, powerfully moved me. It was as if Jesus himself was looking at me, defending me and assuring me that he loved me and didn't condemn me. The relief to my worries was instantaneous.

Over the years I've had other experiences like this when a piece of scripture has struck home, sometimes challenging me, at other times calming me, but always experienced as a gift and grace of God's love. This bit is important to say because since forever began God has only ever spoken one word to us and that word is love; absolute, unconditional love as a free gift that none of us can ever earn or make up for ourselves.

All of the words in the Bible from both the Old and New Testaments are a commentary on this faithful loving grace from God. All of the stories, songs, poems and prayers, all of the wisdom, history and teaching, every last bit of it, was written down so that we might hear, see, understand and feel right now God's love for us and for the world from its beginning to its end. This is true even of the ugly, confusing and tough bits of the Bible. They're still God's loving word to us proving that in the mess of living God is with us, never abandoning us but always trying to save and redeem us. Jesus Christ is this graceful loving word of God made flesh as one of us. After all, what better way can there be for the very real but invisible God

to speak to us than as one of us, a human being we can see, touch and hear, living with us, sharing in all of our limits and frailty, including our mortality? There simply isn't any better way for this to happen, which is why Jesus is the perfect revelation of God to us, the best of all possible ways for God to be with us and to love us into life. Moreover, since He is risen as Lord, his Spirit and holy love-life now dwells in you and me. This is how the word of God becomes flesh in our own skin letting us come to know and experience Jesus Christ today in a way that's as personal as is the way that we see, hear and know ourselves and others people.

But the story doesn't stop at this. God's love and grace is made for living and for sharing with all who cross our path. Through Isaiah the Prophet God tells us that when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked and help the homeless poor, our light then breaks forth like the dawn and our wounds are quickly healed over. When we get rid of oppression, stop making false accusations and cease speaking with malice, then God's light will rise in our darkness and our gloom become like the midday Sun.

In the end, after all the words are said and done, this is the point of God loving us, of God's word living in us; that, as Jesus said, we become salt with real flavour for the earth and be like a lighted city set high on a hill that no one can deny or ignore. Then, seeing in our words and deeds such undeniable goodness and love, people will give thanks and praise to the one God and Father of all creation who only wants to love us all from death into everlasting aliveness.