



*From the Pastor  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent - B  
March 18, 2018*

In Part 5 of my *Lenten* series on the required *Sunday Prayer over the People [POTP]*, we look at the *5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent's* blessing. Unlike the Gospel on the *1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent*, which is always the *Temptation of Christ*, and the *2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent*, which is always His *Transfiguration*, the Gospel on the *3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent* have various themes. The *5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent's* Gospels are: *The Raising of Lazarus [Cycle A]* - *The Invitation to the Greeks [Cycle B]* - and *The Woman Caught in Adultery [Cycle C]*. The *Lenten Sunday's POTP*, which echoes that day's readings, leads up to *Good Friday's* unique *POTP*, which we will explore on *Easter Sunday*. As a *Lenten discipline*, pray each week's blessing *each day* of that particular week.

The image above is of *Saint Philip the Apostle*, who introduced *Nathanael [Bartholomew]* and some Greeks to Jesus, worried about not having enough money to feed the hungry crowds before the Miraculous Feeding; and asked a frustrated Jesus to "*show us the Father*" at the Last Supper. He is depicted with leftover loaves and two of the Greeks he brought to Jesus.

*Prayer over the People - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent*

*Bless, O Lord, your people,  
who long for the gift of your mercy, and grant  
that what, at your prompting, they desire  
they may receive by your generous gift.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

***BE MERCIFUL FOR WE HAVE SINNED.*** As foretold by the Prophets, we see in the readings for the *5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent* how God's mercy is beginning to cross the borders of Israel, the limitations of the Law, and even the threshold of death, to reach all people. Greeks [Gentiles or non-Jews], those who were ritually impure and deserving of death by stoning, and those like Lazarus in a stone-cold tomb are already being gifted with Divine Mercy! And, no doubt, each one to whom it was offered accepted God's mercy and the change to start over. Will you come to this *Monday's 7:30 PM Lenten Penance Service* to accept God's mercy?

***GOD PROMPTS; BUT DO WE RESPOND?***

Sometimes we think *we* have to get the ball rolling, that it starts with us ... but God loves us too much to wait for us to make the first move. God has always, now does, and always will set the stage and begin the process. God did so with Adam and Eve: He went looking for them as they tried to hide from Him out of fear. God initiated the call of every Prophet, Judge, King and Ruler of Israel. And as Jesus said in today's Gospel: "*When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.*" [John 12:32] So not only did Jesus go *before* us through death and into life, He has *already provided* the remedy for our sin-sick souls! Now He waits for us to embrace Him and His Cross. God has shown His hand; now it's time to show ours ...

Will we respond to God's gracious call in these final days of *Lent* by confessing our sins, doing penance, and being reconciled? Will we make the once-a-year, grace-filled, spiritually uplifting liturgical events of *Holy Week* a top priority? Will we allow God to use us to invite others to come - or come back to - the Church this *Easter*?

***GOD'S GENEROUS GIFT.*** Why do so many wait until they hit rock bottom before turning to the Lord? Why do we have that ridiculously fatalistic expression: "*All we can do now ... is pray?*" Prayer should be the *FIRST* thing we do; prayer should be *A PART* of everything we do; and prayer should *CONCLUDE* all we do. Not that God cannot - or will not - help us when we're on our last leg. It's just that, just like those who wait too long to go to the doctor when something's wrong, who then suffer so many unnecessary consequences - we put divine assistance and the Church's Sacraments near or at the end of our 'to-do' list.

This *Lent* and *Holy Week* do all you can to accept God's gracious gifts. Allow me or another Priest to '*be Philip*' for you; let us introduce - or reintroduce you - to the Lord Jesus and His compassionate, merciful forgiveness. To whom can you '*be Philip*' by inviting them back to the Church: the ultimate source of God's gracious gifts?

*With God's love and my prayers,*

*Father Mike*

*Very Rev. Michael J. Kreder, KHS*