

Fr Ron Serrao Homily; 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, Year B

**There is a beautiful legend in which someone has pictured the “Last Day” in heaven.**

**On the last day that the gate of heaven is open, everyone is celebrating, dancing and singing, grateful that they have made it.**

**Everyone except Jesus. Jesus is standing very quietly in the shadows near the gate. Someone asks him what he is doing, amidst all the celebration. He replies, “I am waiting here for Judas.”**

**The Lord offers Judas Iscariot a last chance to turn himself in. Ultimately it’s up for him to use his free will whether to enter or not. The story symbolizes the infinite quality of God’s forgiving love.**

**Think about the relationship of God to the Israelites, his Chosen People, as his spouse. Despite their hard-headedness, their added “infidelity to infidelity,” God never gave up on them.**

**In today’s Gospel (Jn. 3, 14-21), we read the most important line in the New Testament, in the whole Bible, for that matter: “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.” God does not refuse anyone! God wants everyone to be saved.**

**How consoling to know that God has opened the gates of heaven for us mortals. We have access to eternal life. We have a standing invitation to be with Him in eternity. However, our response to this standing invitation is not to just stand around, but to go toward the light. We are to make a choice, i.e., to stay in the darkness, or to live in the light.**

**In this Lenten season, let us take a good look at the lives we are living. Are there dark areas in our lives that need healing? Are there relationships that need mending? Are there bad habits that need ending? As we grow older, may we walk toward the light and leave behind the darkness. The more we go toward the light, the more our hearts will be light.**

**As a parish and a community, are we a people who have finally seen the light?**

**A good question we all should ask ourselves is: Am I an agent of darkness or of light? As we journey on, are we spreading light, and pointing toward the light, or are we the perpetrators of darkness and deeds of darkness?**

**Sad to say, the present-day media focus not so much on the positive as on the negative news. There are many bearers of the light. Let us follow them, and let them lead us to the light.**

**We pay tribute to the countless people who risk life for truth and justice to prevail. Many of them have been persecuted, received threats, and even met with death. We salute these people who stand for something or someone greater than ourselves. They are agents of the light.**

**On the other hand, there are people who stand only for themselves and for their immediate family (or families), and close friends. What are they doing for our country and for our people? Worse are those who have all the perks and the privileges at the expense of our suffering people. We pray that they may see the light and share their natural, material,**

**social, and political blessings, for the good of the many suffering people around us.**

**Someone once said that judging people should be like correcting test papers, i.e., no matter how many mistakes, in the end the correct answers will still be the ones that will be counted. We pray, too, that in the end, God's mercy, more than His justice, will prevail. We trust, surrender, and believe we all will make it to God's heart there and then.**

**The light we have to offer is that same light that God offers to us through Jesus. It is the light that he offered the woman caught in adultery, the light offered to Peter and Judas after their betrayal of Jesus, and the same light that was offered to those who nailed him to the cross.**

**Our acts of prayer, fasting and alms-giving are a light of hope offered to a hungry and thirsty world.**

**I remember Mother Teresa, who beautifully said: "If we stop judging people, we will have more time to love them."**

**Let me end with a story about a man who gave a piece of bread to a blind boy begging on the sidewalk. Upon receiving the bread and a pat on his head, the boy uttered: "Thank you, sir! Excuse me, sir... Are you Jesus?" The bottom line is that as we journey on, may people feel and see Jesus more in us. Amen.**