

4th Sunday in Lent – “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world” [John 3:17]

Our journey through lent is an opportunity for fresh encounters with God; to enlarge and deepen our vision of our Creator. But as we look again at the people we are, in the light of God’s true nature, our own shortcomings become even more apparent.

Yet God does not leave us to wallow in a sense of unworthiness, but welcomes us with mercy and grace. His cross declares a measureless love, through which we find redemption and forgiveness.

This Gospel flies in the face of the cultures of blame that have become so commonplace in our world, where political capital can be gleaned through narratives of fear and suspicion. As those who have received grace, we are called to speak a different language, a language that makes grace known. Grace and mercy are powerful lenses in our Beacons of Hope.

As we are drawn more close to you,
Your purity and holiness infuses each encounter.
With lives laid bare in your presence,
The contrast of our shortcomings becomes ever more clear.

Yet despite our disappointments,
The failures and weaknesses of which we are all too aware,
Yours is a face of welcome; your outstretched hand
Reveals a grace beyond measure and human comprehension.

The crosses we carry reflect your own
Beckoning us to that place where love outpoured
Bore every injustice and the worst of our intent.
Crying out, even amidst its deepest pain, for a Father’s forgiveness.

But we cannot walk away unchanged;
For those to whom grace has been extended,
Can be its truest advocates amidst this unforgiving world.
Peacemakers; reconcilers; determined that evil shall not repay evil.

The language of grace will outrage and disturb
In a world that treats every stranger with suspicion
That seeks to lay blame and demand retribution;
That assumes the worst of those whose worth has yet to be proven.

We will not be consumed by these unholy narratives
Nor shore up regimes that build themselves on hate.
For guilt and shortcoming is humanity’s common scar
Grace and mercy their eternal conqueror.