

# Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 11, 2018

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Psalms 137:1-6; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21



by Rita Sloan, M.T.S



Reminders of God's boundless mercy, love, and patience permeate the readings for this 4th Sunday of Lent.

The ancient writers of Chronicles expound the infinite patience of God and God's ultimate mercy:

"Early and often did the Lord, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them," (2 Chr 36:15). The saga of repeated infidelities on the part of God's Chosen, the destruction of Jerusalem and years of captivity in Babylon end with the promise of restoration.

St. Paul spells out God's supreme gesture of love and mercy. "Dead in transgressions," humanity knows of its unworthiness, yet gratefully now lives because of Jesus Christ's self-giving, pure "gift of God," (Eph 2:4-10).

The evangelist John shouts God's great love for us: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," (Jn 3:16). Clearly, God continues to patiently abide our slowness to understand, our persistence in the wickedness of our own ways and our shunning of the light and the truth that is the Son.

One line from this gospel is particularly comforting and hopeful: "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him," (Jn 3:17). We are NOT condemned by God, our ultimate judge, wrong and sinful as we might be. We are only condemned by not choosing the Light. We condemn ourselves by turning from the Light.

There are lessons for all here. If God does not condemn us, how can we presume to condemn one another? Of course, this is the message we want everyone to hear, especially those in favor of the death penalty. We must remember that it is not our place to condemn anyone.

Yet, there are lessons here for those of us who work to end death penalty too, those of us who believe we are coming from the Light. This end comes more slowly than we want. We sometimes lose patience. We are equally capable of choosing the dark, bitterness, and even hate when we condemn those who think differently from us, those whom we might deem to be wrong-thinking and blind to the true light. We, too, are both in need of God's mercy, love, and patience, and we are called to emulate God's mercy, love, and patience as we strive to see the death penalty ended everywhere.

God of infinite mercy, teach us your patience and love that we might show others.

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