

NOVENA SERMONS FOR THE SHRINE'S FEAST – 2004 (FEB 12TH – 20TH)

THE UNDERLINING THEME RUNNING THROUGH THE NOVENA SERMONS WILL BE 'JESUS' BEST FRIENDS'

Jesus' favorites, those whom he loved most; those he made the main object of his concern, where those who were least considered in his days; the unwanted, the rejected members of society. We, devotees and followers of Jesus, should follow in his footsteps and make the people who "deserve our love least" the main object of our love, precisely because they are those who "need our love most".

FIRST DAY: BY CARING FOR THE REJECTED, JESUS WAS HIMSELF REJECTED BY HIS SOCIETY.

1st Reading: Isaiah 53/1-7

Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm

Gospel: Lk 4/16-30) "Jesus rejected in Nazareth"

Supporting texts for the Homily

- Rejected for healing a crippled man Mt. 12/9-14
- Rejected for forgiving sinners Mk. 2/1-9
- Rejected for welcoming Mary Magdalene Lk. 7/36-39
- Rejected for curing blind people Jn. 9/24-29; Mt. 12/22-24
- Plot to kill Jesus Mt. 26/1-5

Some thoughts for the homily

- Jesus proclaims himself as the Messiah & Savior
- He is sent to preach to the poor
- To proclaim liberty to captives
- To heal the blind and the sick
- To set the oppressed free & rid the world from injustice
- In other words, the unwanted, the marginalized, the sick, the outcast, the sinners,

the weak, etc, will be his predilected ones...

- Because of this, he was rejected, persecuted, accused, done away with from the

Start of his ministry to Calvary.

- We who love Jesus and want to follow
- him should behave like him:

namely, have a special love for the poor, sinners, and outcasts and be ready,
like Jesus, to be persecuted and rejected by our society.

SECOND DAY “JESUS AND SINNERS”

1st Reading: Romans 3/21-26
Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
Gospel: Lk. 19/1-10 “Jesus and Zacchaeus”

Supporting texts for the homily:

- Jesus and Mary Magdalene Lk. 7/36-50
- The good thief Lk. 23/32; 39-43
- The woman caught in adultery Lk. 8/1-11
- The parable of the prodigal Lk. 15/11-32
- Judas, the traitor (Jesus called him friend) Mt. 26/47-50

Some thoughts for the homily:

- Jesus mixes with sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, publicans, etc. and treats them with love and respect, even eats with them !
- Scribes, Pharisees and respectable people objected to it.
- Jesus defends his stand: I came to call sinners, not the just.
- Actually, what are our attitudes as followers of Jesus, Towards sinners and people of ill repute?

THIRD DAY - “JESUS AND THE POOR”

1st Reading Jms. 2/1-747
Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
Gospel: Mt. 9/35-38 “Jesus feels pity for the poor and the needy”

Supporting texts for the Homily:

- He chose to have poor parents (Mary & Joseph) Mt. 1/18-25 & Lk.1/26-38
- He chose a poor life, to be a carpenter Mk. 6/1-3
- When born, poor shepherds were his first friends Lk. 2/8-20
- He chose poor and simple men as disciples Mk. 1/14-20
- He had pity for the hungry, multiplication of loaf Mk. 6/34-44
- He exalted the poor, called them blessed Mt. 5/1-3

Some thoughts for the Homily:

- For the Jewish people, poverty was a curse, a sign of God's rejection..
- Hardly anyone cared for the destitute. No pity for them.
- Yet, by choice Jesus was poor, his village, his Parents, his profession.
- Jesus loved the needy, those in want.
- As lovers of Jesus what are our attitude towards the poor and the needy?
Are you not shunning them? Do we go out to them in service?

FOURTH DAY : " JESUS AND THE SICK AND THE INFIRM"

1st Reading: Acts 3/1-10
 Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
 Gospel: Lk. 14/1-6 "Curing a Crippled Man on a Sabbath"

Supporting texts for the Homily:

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| - The entire chapt. 8 th and 9 th of Matthew | <u>"Jesus' Healing Ministry"</u> |
| - Bartimaeus the blind man | Mk. 10/46-52 |
| - Jesus Heals many people | Mk. 3/7-11 & Lk 4/38-41 |
| - Jesus curing a sick man in the synagogue | Mt. 12/9-14 |
| - Paralytic in the pool. | Jn. 5/1-18 |
| - The man born blind | Jn. 9/1-7 |

Some thoughts for the Homily:

- Sickness for the Jews was considered a punishment for sin.
- Jesus reversed this belief. He showed compassion for the sick and relieved them.
- Much of his time and ministry was spent in curing the sick. (Mt. chapt. 8 & 9)
- What is our attitude towards the sick and the inform, not only towards our family members or friends, but even to strangers?
- How much time we spend visiting and ministering to the sick and infirm?
- Can we not be a little more like Jesus? How?

FIFTH DAY: "JESUS AND ENEMIES"

1st Reading: Acts 7/54-60
 Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
 Gospel: Lk. 23/33-34 "Jesus forgives his Executioners"

Supporting texts for the Homily:

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| - Jesus teaching on love for enemies | Mt. 5/21-26; 43-48 |
| - The "Our Father" | Mt. 6/12 & 14, 15. |
| - Parable of the unforgiving servant | Mt. 18/21-35 |

Supporting thoughts for the Homily:

- Love should embrace all men & women: friends and enemies, family members and strangers as well, love is universal.
 - To forgive enemies is hard, yet possible with God's help.
 - Jesus gave us an example. Jesus forgives us all our wrongs.
 - Are we following Jesus' example?
 - Are we praying for those who wrong us? Then, what's the meaning of 'the sign of peace' that we perform at Mass before Communion?
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SIXTH DAY: "JESUS AND WOMEN"

1 st Reading:	Tobit 8/4-7	
Psalm:	Suitable hymn or psalm	
Gospel:	Lk. 10/38-42	<u>"Jesus and Martha & Mary"</u>

Supporting texts for the Homily:

- Woman caught in adultery	Jn. 8/1-11
- Widow of Naim	Lk. 7/11-15
- Widow's mite	Mk. 12/41-44
- Woman cured of Hemorrhage	Mk. 5/25-34
- His first apparition was to women	Mt. 28/1-10
- Peter's mother-in-law	Mt. 8/14-15

Some thoughts for the Homily:

- In Jewish society women were thought to be of little value.
- They were like "Things" to be possessed by men, like cows or domestic animals.
- They had no rights, they could be divorced at will.
- No respectable man would speak to a woman in public.
- In case of adultery "She" only had to be stoned to death, not the man.
- Jesus broke all these unjust social conventions and gave women the dignity of a "human being".
- What about us? How do we treat them? What respect we confer on them?
- Do we treat our mothers, wives, sisters, women colleagues, our maids, as Jesus would?
- Are we prepared to deal with and treat women as Jesus did with his mother?

SEVENTH DAY: JESUS AND THE NON-JEWS" "GENTILES & FOREIGNERS"

1st Reading: Acts 10/1-5; 34-35; 44-48
Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
Gospel: Jn. 4/5-24 “The Samaritan Woman”

Supporting Texts for the Homily:

- Jesus & the Romans (Their invaders) Mt. 8/5-13
- Jesus & the Greeks (Heathens “par excellence” Jn 12/20-26
- Jesus & the Syro-Phoenician Woman (Foreigners) Mk. 7/24-30
- Jesus & the Roman Official Jn. 4/46-53
- Jesus and “Gentiles” The Foreign Magi Mt. 2/1-5; 9-11

Some thoughts for the Homily:

- The Jews of Jesus’ time thought themselves to be the “only chosen race”.
 - The Jews never mixed with peoples of different races, ethnics, religions, social customs.
 - They despised the non-Jews as “pagans”, “gentiles”, “heathens”
 - No eating together, no mixed marriages, not even entering their houses.
 - Dealing with non-Jews would defile them.
 - Even when coming from the Bazaar they had to purify themselves with special rites.
 - Jesus, however, mixed with all sorts of peoples: Greeks, Latins, Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians.
 - He talked with them, befriended them, helped them, ate with them.
 - Jesus had no racial, cultural, caste, social or religious prejudices.
 - He was suspected and criticized for it.
 - What about us, yes we, Christians in India today? Are we free from such prejudices?
What shall we do about it?
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EIGHTH DAY: JESUS AND “THE SCUM, THE DISREPUTABLE REJECTS OF SOCIETY:

1st Reading: Romans 5/6-11
Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
Gospel: Mt. 9/9-13 “The Call of Matthew”

Supporting texts for the Homily:

- Jesus mixes with the outcasts in the Jordan Lk. 3/7 & 12; 14:21-22

- The Shepherds who were cast out of the Synagogue
were the first to be called at Christmas Lk. 2/8-20
- The Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee Lk. 18/9-14
- The Ten Lepers Lk. 17/11-19
- Lodging and eating with Zacchaeus and publicans Lk. 19/1-10

Some thoughts for the Homily:

- In Jewish Society some groups of people were branded as outcasts, excommunicated
by the orthodox authorities; such as lepers, tax-collected, shepherds, sinners, law-breakers, etc.
 - They had to be avoided and shunned. Those dealing with them were defiled.
 - Jesus, on the contrary, sought their company, mixed with them, befriended them, ate
with them !
 - Because of this, Jesus was strongly criticized, condemned and despised.
 - And we, how do we feel towards thieves, drug addicts, prostitutes, cheats, sociopaths
and the like?
 - Can we not be a little more like Jesus?
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NINTH DAY: "JESUS AND CHILDREN"

1st Reading: Col. 3/12-15, 21
 Psalm: Suitable hymn or psalm
 Gospel: Mk. 10/13-16 "Let little Children come to me"

Supporting texts for the Homily:

- Jesus praises children Mt. 21/15-16
- Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? Mt. 18/1-6
- Do not despise children Mt. 18/10
- To enter into the Kingdom of Heave we are
to be like little children Lk. 9/46-48.

Supporting thoughts for the Homily:

- In the old days in most societies children were despised.
- Children were mere possessions of their Parents. They had no rights.

- Children were considered inferior to grown up.
- Jesus, on the contrary, loved them, considered them, spoke to them, even played with them.
- What is our attitude towards Children? Do we respect them?
Do we treat them as “things” or as persons? Do we take them seriously?
Are we concerned for their moral and religious education? Do we make time for them?