



Homily suggestions for the 5th Sunday of Lent: Solidarity Sunday

Development and Peace - Caritas Canada

This broad outline of a reflection is intended to assist clergy in preparing the homily for the 5th Sunday of Lent. You are invited to adapt these according to the liturgical text of the day, the time you have available, the life of the Christian community, and the *Share the Journey* campaign of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada.

Today on the 5th Sunday of Lent, Solidarity Sunday is observed in parishes across the country. The Bishops of Canada, in response to Pope Francis's call, ask us to reflect as a Church on the increase in forced migration around the world and to pray for the millions of people who are compelled to flee their homes. Alongside with our prayers, our Bishops invite us to support the humanitarian work of Development and Peace - Caritas Canada by donating to the annual Share Lent collection taking place in parishes across the diocese.

In the Gospel today, the gaze of our Lord Jesus upon the woman accused of adultery reveals the greatness of God's love and mercy. A love and mercy that saves souls, restores life, and paves the way to a future full of hope.

When the scribes and Pharisees try and compel Jesus to pass judgement on a person guilty of adultery, a brutal death by stoning as prescribed by the legal tradition of the time, Jesus understands that they are setting a trap for him. If he does not condemn the woman they claim has been caught in the act, Jesus knows that he will be accused of insulting the precepts of Mosaic Law. But if Jesus participates and condemns this woman he will be lacking in the love and mercy of God, when Jesus himself is the messenger of a new law. What does Jesus do?

Jesus looks with compassion upon the accused woman and redirects the focus onto the hearts of each of the accusers. What Jesus says does not diminish the law but is instead an appeal to their conscience: "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." These men who claim to judge others realized how they had overlooked the need to judge themselves. After recognizing that they too had sought God's mercy and

forgiveness more than once in their own lives, they left, one after the other, without penalising the woman they had accused.

Jesus then turns to the woman and says, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." In this way Jesus acknowledges the woman's inherent human dignity and treats her as a true child of God. He lifts her up, puts her back on her feet, gives her new life, and brings her back into society. He invites her to experience a fresh start, a new beginning, and to look to her future with confidence. With our Lord Jesus, we are never labelled, rejected, excluded, condemned, or considered undesirable. Long live the joy of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation. These are Good Tidings for one and all!

This Gospel passage invites us to consider mercy as both a gift from God and as a responsibility we have towards our neighbours in need. Jesus's actions encourage us not to remain apathetic or indifferent when attacks – "stones that kill" – are directed at people, depriving them of their human dignity.

In response to the Pope Francis' appeal, Development and Peace invites us to share the journey of millions of people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes to escape war, persecution, extreme poverty, natural disasters or the effects of climate change.

The simple fact of being interested in what migrants and refugees are experiencing, being uprooted from their homes and communities, is the first step towards meeting the other in a culture of encounter. This encounter, which begins within oneself, is rooted in the recognition of the inherent dignity of each and every human being. It

2019 Share Lent

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Share
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is a journey that invites us to experience a transformation of the heart and prepares us to receive the outsider without prejudice and without fear of our differences. This welcome we offer will allow us to share in their journey, to learn their story, to forge bonds of life, and to write together a new story woven by solidarity. At the heart of this solidarity, we will discover the presence of Jesus Christ. Jesus who is a migrant among migrants, a refugee among refugees.

“Faced with the challenges of contemporary migration,” Pope Francis emphasizes, “the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy.” Development and Peace and its partners around the world offer us the means to respond with mercy and solidarity when we support their crucial humanitarian work.

(We suggest choosing a maximum of three examples.)

Here are a few examples. With our Share Lent donations, we can support:

- Children such as Shominara, a Rohingya girl who fled Burma with her family to escape persecution and found refuge in Bangladesh;
- Young women such as Qawthar, who was forced to flee the war in Syria and has been living temporarily in Lebanon for the last six years;
- Women such as Kelly, an Afro-Colombian peasant who has been displaced multiple times because of the armed conflict that has afflicted her country for over 50 years;
- Men such as Amaechi in Nigeria, who escaped with his life when Nigerian armed forces brutally attacked a peaceful community demonstration protesting the harmful practices of a multinational oil company;
- Poor coastal communities in the Philippines who saw their homes ravaged by Super Typhoon Haiyan five years ago, and faced eviction after eviction in slums, with nowhere to go.

Our Share Lent donations will allow Development and Peace and its partners to continue to support the most vulnerable people and disregarded communities who are working to end the cycle of poverty, and to address the root causes of forced migration. Thanks to our generosity, a world of justice and peace is being built. A world, as in Psalm 126, where the captives return to their homeland with shouts of joy!

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” said our Lord God through the voice of his prophet Isaiah in today’s first reading. This call invites us to collaborate with God in the construction of this new world that is springing up thanks to our Catholic community: a world of solidarity, social justice, and peace.

On behalf of our most vulnerable sisters and brothers in the world, I thank you for your donation to Development and Peace and wish you a blessed journey towards the Paschal mystery.

** There will be parishioners at the church exit to collect your donation. If you wish to receive a tax receipt, please use Development and Peace’s donation envelope that can be found in your pew.*