

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

First Reading

Wis 2:1, 12-22

The godless say to themselves: He claims to have knowledge of God and calls himself a son of the Lord. ...

If the virtuous man is God's son God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies. Let us test him with cruelty and torture, and thus explore this gentleness of his

Gospel Reading

Jn 7:1-2, 1, 25-30

Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Isn't this the man they want to kill? And here he is, speaking freely ... Can it be true the authorities have made up their minds that he is the Christ?'

As Jesus taught in the Temple, he cried out: 'Yes, you know me and you know where I came from. Yet I have not come of myself: no, there is one who sent me and I really come from him ...'

Reflection

Lent puts Jesus' obedience unto death more and more at the centre of our prayer.

Our own less than perfect obedience sometimes brings fear of punishment in its train.

Today, at 4 am AEDT, Pope Francis pronounced a blessing to the city of Rome and the entire world ('Urbi et orbi') and decreed a plenary indulgence for all affected by the

Coronavirus, especially any who will die without the strength of the sacraments.

In Catholic teaching, an indulgence is the remission of the eventual punishment due for sins that have been confessed and forgiven. An indulgence is a river of grace and pardon flowing from the love of Christ for us on the Cross, a gift of the risen, victorious Lord as judge of the world.

This COVID 19 indulgence can be received by the dying who have ever uttered a prayer throughout their life. Many of the dying in this pandemic are removed from all human contact because of the contagion that it causes.

Pope Francis wishes for a contagion of grace, affecting even the most stricken person, who is barely capable of expressing any response to their mortal situation. Through the gift of the Church, speaking in the name of God who is mercy, he pledges that death will be their moment of mercy, especially those who may die in isolation without being able to receive final rites.

The following comments are found in J. McElwee *Coronavirus indulgences evoke Francis' 'ridiculously-pardoning' church* NCR Online 26 March 2020, accessed 27 March 2020.

“Theologians say the move shows a seemingly unprecedented level of pastoral care for those who suffer from the virus.

Jeremy Wilkins, a theologian at Boston College, said "The conditions there are waived. It says ... the church fulfills the conditions for you. ... I think the church very tenderly

wants to say, 'Be sorry for your sins, and know that you're not alone, and it will be OK.' "

Jesuit Fr. Peter Folan, a theologian at Georgetown University, said: "There's just a deep theology behind that, and just a deep understanding of who God is, that God doesn't ever turn God's gaze away from anybody, especially those at that most important event of their life, which is our death."

Those infected, their families, and health care workers are also offered this indulgence on the usual conditions.

Folan said an indulgence tells those it is offered to, and the wider church, that "there's something about what these people are experiencing now that's integrating their lives more fully to be like the life of Christ."

"Those who are infected with the virus, their families, are configured with Christ, who suffered, and who witnessed suffering. Health care workers are configured to him in the sense that he too was a healer."