



LITURGY GUIDE  
Child Abuse Prevention Month

April 18, 2010: Third Sunday of Easter (C)

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41    Revelation 5:11-14    John 21:1-19 or 21: 1-14

In the first reading, the Apostles are brought before the Sanhedrin to be questioned about their preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter speaks with great conviction about their mission to preach in the name of Jesus. No amount of pressure even from the highest worldly authority can stop them, for they understand well that they must "obey God rather than men." The Apostles faced opposition to their message, and they suffered dishonor with tenacity, knowing that they defended and witnessed to the truth.

The Responsorial Psalm praises God for the gift of his help and protection: "I will extol you, O Lord, for you drew me clear..." In the Lord we find consolation and help, and all our mourning is turned into joy.

The image of heavenly worship, depicted often in the Book of Revelation, provides an inspirational portrait of God's glory. It is enriched by the participation of "every creature in heaven and on earth." As God's people, we must be committed to preserve this gathering, and that includes the protection of the weak, the vulnerable, and the helpless. In a particular way, we are called to nurture, support, and encourage our young people. Not only should we be aware of the obligation to protect them as a matter of justice, but as the Church we must do all we can to provide a safe environment where all can grow and flourish in order to serve faithfully the God who made us.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus appears to the gathered disciples at the Sea of Tiberius. In a dramatic gesture of reconciliation, Jesus questions Peter about his love and his devotion, and then entrusts to him the care of his church. Peter commits to feed and to tend the flock with a shepherd's care. The Church is committed to caring for its own members, especially, in the image of the lambs, those who cannot care for themselves. The Church is committed to providing a safe environment--safe pasture-- for all.

Because of the intrinsic value of human life and the dignity of the human person that is given as gift at birth; we are required to protect that dignity. Abuse of all kinds is harmful to the human dignity. Children being the most vulnerable require us to protect them from abuse. We can do that by first training all adults of our parishes that are around children and next by training children how they can protect themselves.

In his recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI speaks about charity as a matter of justice, and its relationship to the truth that is Jesus:

First of all, justice. *Ubi societas, ibi ius*: every society draws up its own system of justice. Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is "mine" to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is "his", what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot "give" what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, "the minimum measure" of it, an integral part of the love "in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us. On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the earthly city according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving. The earthly city is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion. Charity always manifests God's love in human relationships as well; it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world. (#6)

Pope Benedict goes on to speak of the common good from the standpoint of both individuals and institutions:

Another important consideration is the common good. To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us", made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it. To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the *pólis*, or "city". The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practice this charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *pólis*. This is the institutional path - we might also call it the political path - of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*. When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have. Like all commitment to justice, it has a place within the testimony of divine charity that paves the way for eternity through temporal action. Man's earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family. In an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the

community of peoples and nations, in such a way as to shape the earthly city in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided city of God. (#7)

During Child Abuse Prevention Month, we are reminded of the call to be instruments of justice, working for the common good of all, which includes the provision of healing for those who have suffered as victims of abuse. As Jesus entrusts to Peter the care of the flock, we are reminded that this responsibility belongs to everyone as a matter of charity and justice. Child Abuse Prevention Month should lead to heightened awareness of the need to be vigilant about providing a safe environment for all within the Church and for the world.

### **Sample Intercessions:**

One or more of these intentions may be used as part of the intercessions at Masses throughout the week.

For the Church and its leaders, especially our Holy Father, the bishops, and all entrusted with the care of the Lord's flock, to follow the example of the Apostles, who boldly witnessed to God's Word, we pray to the Lord...

For civic leaders entrusted with upholding the common good and justice for all, to act with compassion as they protect the most vulnerable from all harm, we pray to the Lord...

For parents, mentors, teachers, coaches, and all who work with young people, to look after those entrusted to them with a shepherd's care, we pray to the Lord...

For families to live in peace, providing safe and nurturing environments for their children, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have suffered as victims of abuse, to experience their mourning turned to rejoicing in the Lord, we pray to the Lord...

For those who provide help for the abused: counselors, therapists, and advocates, to act with wisdom and compassion in their ministry of healing, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have abused, to seek and find repentance, to work for healing, and to live in God's love, we pray to the Lord...

For young people and for all who are discerning God's will in their lives, to trust as Peter did and accept the call to serve in the priesthood and consecrated life, we pray to the Lord...

### **Suggested songs:**

Amazing Grace  
There is a Balm in Gilead  
Envia Tu, Espiritu  
As Grains of Wheat  
Flow River, Flow (Hurd)  
You Know Me, Lord

Shelter Me, O God  
May the Lord Bless You (Grayson Brown)  
I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say  
Heal Me, O God (Norbet)  
Restless is the Heart