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Monday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Date: Monday, March 17, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C
First Reading: Daniel 9:4b–10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 79:8–9, 11, 13 | **Response:** Psalm 103:10a
Gospel Acclamation: John 6:63c, 68c
Gospel Reading: Luke 6:36–38
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

There are moments in life when a single decision changes everything, when the weight of a choice carries echoes into eternity. Today's readings invite us into such a moment. They hold up a mirror, revealing not just who we are but who we are called to become.

The prophet Daniel recounts a prayer of repentance, a cry from a people who have strayed far from God. "We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly." There is no self-justification, no attempt to soften the truth. The Israelites stand guilty before the Lord, yet their prayer is not one of despair. It is a confession made in trust, an appeal to the boundless mercy of God. Daniel, speaking in the wake of the Babylonian Exile, understands what happens when a people forsake justice and turn away from the covenant. His words are ancient, yet they could be spoken today—in a world where selfishness often triumphs over solidarity, where the vulnerable are exploited, and where societies stumble into ruin because they have lost sight of the common good.

But Daniel's prayer does not end in accusation. It ends in hope. He invokes the character of God: "To the Lord, our God, belong mercy and forgiveness." This is the pivot on which everything turns. The justice of God does not crush; it restores. His righteousness does not condemn; it redeems.

The psalmist echoes this truth: "Do not deal with us according to our sins, O Lord." We stand before God in need, not as strangers, but as children who have known His faithfulness. The psalm acknowledges the cycle of human frailty, yet it lifts our eyes to a God whose love is unchanging. In a world that often measures worth in productivity or status, this is a radical message. It tells us that our value is not in what we have done, but in the One who calls us His own.

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Jesus takes this truth and makes it a command. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Mercy is not an abstraction; it is a way of being. It is the refusal to define others by their worst moments. It is the courage to love even when it is undeserved. Jesus calls us beyond fairness, beyond what is expected, into the radical, redemptive love of God.

The instruction to “forgive and you will be forgiven” is not a transaction; it is an invitation to freedom. To withhold mercy is to bind ourselves in chains. To judge harshly is to close the door to grace. When we condemn others, we place ourselves on a throne that belongs only to God. But when we give, when we forgive, when we show mercy, we stand within the very heart of God Himself.

This is the challenge before us, and it is no small task. But we are not the first to walk this road. Today, the Church remembers St. Patrick, the great apostle to Ireland, who knew both captivity and freedom, both suffering and redemption. Taken as a slave in his youth, he could have been consumed by hatred for his captors. Instead, he allowed God’s mercy to shape him, returning not as a conqueror but as a missionary, bringing the light of Christ to the very people who had once oppressed him. His story is one of forgiveness lived out on a national scale—a testimony that true conversion is not just about turning away from sin but about turning toward others with the mercy of God.

What does this mean for us here in Zambia? It means we must examine our own hearts. Do we carry resentment toward a colleague, a family member, a fellow religious? Do we turn a blind eye to the suffering around us, excusing ourselves from action? Do we demand justice for ourselves while denying mercy to others?

Our society is fractured in many ways—by economic inequality, by corruption, by mistrust. And yet, the Gospel calls us to something higher. If we who claim the name of Christ do not model mercy, who will? If we do not forgive, how can we expect reconciliation in our communities? If we do not give generously, how will we reflect the God who gave us everything?

Lent is the season of return, the time to let go of all that hardens our hearts. It is a season to live the mercy we have received. And so, as we walk through this week, and while we keep Pope Francis in our prayers, let us ask ourselves:

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- Where in my life am I being called to show mercy, not just in words, but in action?
- What grudges or judgments do I need to surrender to the Lord, trusting in His justice rather than my own?
- How can I, in the smallest details of my daily life, reflect the love of Christ to a world in desperate need of it?

May we dare to answer these questions not just with reflection, but with the courage to change. And may we, in living mercy, find ourselves drawn ever closer to the heart of God.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.