



Monday of the 5th Week of Lent



Date: Monday, April 7, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Daniel 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1–6 | **Response:** Psalm 23:4ab

Gospel Acclamation: Ezekiel 33:11

Gospel Reading: John 8:12–20

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

My friends, the Scriptures today shine a light—a piercing, clarifying light—into the heart of Lent. They invite us to look honestly at the way we judge, the way we pursue justice, and the way we show mercy. And yes, I said shine a light, because that's the image Jesus gives us today. "I am the light of the world," he says. And then he adds: "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Let's stop there for a moment. That's not just a poetic flourish. That's a claim. And not a small one.

Jesus isn't talking about physical light. He's talking about the kind of light that breaks into the confusion of our hearts—the kind of light that reveals what's true, what's false, and what's been hiding in shadow. He's making this claim in the Temple, in front of the religious leaders of his day. And they push back—hard. "Your testimony isn't valid," they say. But Jesus stands firm. He knows who he is. He knows where he comes from. And he knows where he's going.

That clarity? That calm? That unwavering confidence in the truth? That's light.

And now the question shifts: do we walk in that light? Or are we still stumbling in the dark?

The First Reading from Daniel gives us a contrast—two elders, supposedly men of wisdom, consumed by lust, abuse their power to accuse an innocent woman. Susannah, beautiful and faithful, becomes a victim of their sin. It's injustice,

plain and simple. But a young man named Daniel—yes, the same Daniel of lion’s den fame—steps into the moment. He doesn’t stay silent. He doesn’t equivocate. He calls out the lie. And the truth wins.

That’s what it looks like when someone walks in the light. They stand for what’s right, even when it’s risky. Even when it’s unpopular.

Jesus, in today’s Gospel, shows us something even deeper. He doesn’t just defend against injustice—he becomes the very light by which we come to understand what justice is. And when the Pharisees challenge him, when they measure him by their standards, he says something remarkable: “You judge by human standards; I judge no one. But even if I do judge, my judgment is true.”

Think about that. Jesus doesn’t judge by appearances. He doesn’t condemn to prove a point. His judgment is grounded in truth and tethered to mercy. Because his mission isn’t to trap us—it’s to free us. Not to humiliate us—but to restore us.

We need to sit with that, especially in Lent.

Because if we’re honest, we spend a lot of time judging. We judge others for their failings. We judge ourselves for not being enough. And too often, our judgment is rooted in fear, pride, or self-protection. Not in light. Not in love.

But Jesus says: Follow me. Step into the light. And that light doesn’t blind or burn—it heals. It restores. It shows the way forward.

Psalm 23 gives us that image: “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me.” That’s the journey of Lent, isn’t it? Through the shadows, into the light. Not because we’re strong, but because God is with us. Because the Good Shepherd walks beside us—even when we’ve wandered, even when we’re ashamed, even when we’ve failed.

And this has everything to do with justice in our world. Because real justice—God’s justice—is not about vengeance. It’s about restoration. It’s not just about punishing the wrongdoer—it’s about lifting up the broken, the falsely accused, the ones left behind.

In Zambia, and in so many parts of the world, we see how often justice is delayed, or distorted. How poverty, gender, class, or politics can influence who gets heard and who gets silenced. But if we follow Jesus—the light of the world—we are called to a different path. A path that stands with the Susannahs of the world. A path that tells the truth, even when it's uncomfortable. A path that walks alongside the vulnerable with humility and hope.

And today, we also remember St John Baptist de la Salle—a man who took the side of the poor, not with platitudes, but with purpose. He believed in the dignity of the young, the uneducated, the overlooked. He didn't just talk about justice—he built schools. He trained teachers. He saw education not as a privilege, but as a sacred right. And that's light. That's how justice takes flesh.

So where does this leave us?

Lent isn't just about private repentance—it's about public discipleship. It's about letting the light of Christ shine through our choices, our relationships, our courage. It's about refusing to stay in the shadows of judgment and choosing instead to walk in the light of mercy.

Let me leave you with three questions for this week:

- Where in my life am I still judging by “human standards,” rather than allowing Christ’s light to shape my view?
- Who are the “Susannahs” around me—those who are vulnerable, falsely accused, or silenced—whom I’m being called to stand beside?
- And what would it look like for me to speak, act, and live this week in a way that reflects the justice and mercy of Jesus?

Jesus says: “I am the light of the world.” Let’s not look away. Let’s step into that light—and live.

Amen.

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