



Wednesday of the 5th Week of Lent



Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Daniel 3:14–20, 91–92, 95

Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3:52–56 | **Response:** Daniel 3:52b

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 8:15

Gospel Reading: John 8:31–42

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

The Scriptures we encounter today invite us to reflect on God’s saving power, on the call to faith that transforms not only hearts but the very fabric of our lives. In the First Reading from the Book of Daniel, we meet the three young men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—standing resolute in their belief in the power of God to save. They are faced with an impossible choice: bow down to the golden statue of the king or face death in the fiery furnace. Their response is not one of defiance for the sake of defiance, but one of absolute trust in the Lord, for they know, as the psalmist says, that “our God whom we serve is able to save us from the burning fiery furnace” (Daniel 3:17). Yet their faith is not one of presumption. They acknowledge the possibility of suffering, yet they are unwilling to compromise their commitment to the truth of God’s sovereignty. “But if not,” they say, “be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods” (Daniel 3:18). Their faith does not demand that God act according to their own desires, but rather their faith is an act of surrender to God’s will, come what may.

The furnace itself becomes a place of purification—a metaphor for the trials that we each face in our lives. We, too, encounter moments when we must decide whether we will stand firm in our faith, even when it seems like the world will destroy us for it. And as with the three young men, it is in the trial itself, in the white-hot heat of adversity, that we encounter God’s saving grace. This moment of crisis becomes an opportunity for God’s power to be made manifest, not through any elaborate theological argument, but through a decision to trust and obey, even unto death.

The Psalm we pray today—“You are blest, Lord God of our fathers. To you glory and praise for evermore.” (Daniel 3:52)—is a hymn of praise, lifting our hearts in wonder at the God who is ever faithful, even in the face of persecution. The psalm is not a detached reflection but a call to each of us to recognize the wonder of God’s saving power, even in the midst of suffering. It is a recognition that the God who saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is the same God who walks with us through the trials and tribulations of our own lives.

In the Gospel, Jesus continues to challenge the hearts of His listeners. In a conversation with some of the Jewish leaders, He tells them, “If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32). Here, Jesus points to the path of freedom—not through political revolution or societal upheaval, but through fidelity to His word. For freedom is not merely a release from physical chains; it is liberation from the lies that enslave the human heart. The truth that Jesus speaks is not an abstract idea but a lived reality. It is the truth of God’s love, of His salvation, and of His desire for our eternal good. In this truth, we are set free—free from fear, free from sin, and free to live as children of God.

Yet, as Jesus speaks these words, His audience resists. They are children of Abraham, they claim, and therefore they are already free. But Jesus points out that true freedom is not about bloodlines or ancestry. It is about living in relationship with God, trusting in His word, and following His commands. He contrasts their claim to be Abraham’s children with their failure to follow the example of Abraham’s faith. Abraham, after all, was willing to sacrifice what was most precious to him, his own son Isaac, because he trusted God. In contrast, the people of Jesus’ time are unwilling to trust Him and to follow His example. The question is, will we choose to follow the example of Abraham, trusting God even when it costs us everything, or will we remain enslaved to our own desires and pride?

Jesus’ words, “If you make my word your home,” echo throughout the Gospels as a call to discipleship. True discipleship is not a matter of merely acknowledging God’s existence or belonging to a particular faith tradition. It is a call to live according to the truth of God’s word, to allow that word to shape our hearts and actions. The freedom that Jesus offers is not the freedom to do whatever we please; it is the freedom to live as we were meant to live, in communion with God and one another, in justice and mercy, and in love.

The challenge for us, then, is to reflect on the ways in which we, like the people in today's Gospel, might be resisting God's invitation to deeper discipleship. We may claim to be children of God, but do our actions reflect the truth of that claim? Are we willing to make the hard choices, like the three young men in the furnace, to stand firm in our faith even when it is costly? Are we, like Abraham, willing to trust God with our deepest fears and desires, knowing that in doing so, we find our true freedom?

As we journey through this season of Lent, we are reminded of the urgency of living according to the truth of the Gospel. Lent is not just a time for personal piety or a time to give up something for the sake of sacrifice; it is a time to renew our commitment to live as disciples of Christ, to live in the truth that sets us free. And this is where we are called to respond—not just in prayer, but in action.

In a world where we face increasing pressures to conform to ideologies and powers that oppose the values of the Kingdom of God, we are reminded that the saving power of God is made real in the choices we make every day. The furnace of modern trials—the pressures of materialism, the rise of divisive politics, the marginalization of the poor—are all places where God's saving grace can be revealed. Just as He delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so too can He deliver us, if we choose to trust in Him and live according to His truth.

As we continue through this Lenten journey, let us ask ourselves:

- In what areas of my life am I resisting God's truth, and what steps can I take to let go of these obstacles to discipleship?
- How can I live out the freedom offered by Christ, especially in the face of societal pressures or injustices?
- What sacrifices am I being called to make in order to remain faithful to the truth of the Gospel, and how can I live with greater trust in God's saving power this week?

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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.