

Lent 5: Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

Baptismal Question

Celebrant: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People: I will, with God's help.

Core Question

What institutions and systems are broken near us? How will we participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?

The Collect

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Read the Scripture Together: *John 12:20-33*

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Reflection: Dying to Live

The central message of Jesus' life and teaching is that we must move toward dying and away from the attitude that I'm going to live only for me and my family; that my life's purpose is to feel fulfilled, be successful, not fail, and have other people think well of me. In order to heal and transform deeply broken systems, structures, and institutions, we must be communities of people who are not the center of our own universe but who live for others and for Christ's reign.

In the Labyrinth: Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

God came among us in Jesus because of the deep, divine longing to love and repair this world. What social institutions and systems are broken around you? Where do you notice systems and structures that reflect racial injustice? How could we together participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of institutions and systems?

Make It Real: In Solidarity Exercise

Jesus' death and resurrection are so close we can sense him. Dwell for a moment with your own anticipation of the passion. After some silence, as a whole group, sing or speak this hymn:

*Praise the one who breaks the darkness with a liberating light.
Praise the one who frees the prisoners, turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the Gospel, healing every dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands with the very bread of peace.*

Invite people to pause and silently imagine communities near and far who live in darkness, illness, hunger and fear: refugees, immigrants with or without documentation, prisoners and detainees in the criminal justice system, victims of human trafficking, and many others. What unjust systems and institutions in our society disproportionately target people of color? In a posture of deep prayer, name these systems aloud. Name and capture them.

Once again review the **Conversation Tips**:

*Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share.
Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story.
Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.*

Now reflect as a group:

- Which of these systems and institutions most intersects with the life of your church or community? Agree on no more than two.
- What efforts can you identify, as a group that contribute to healing and transforming the systems you have named? Research options on the web in real time.
- How could your church actively participate in repairing one of the systems the group identified? Together, set one concrete, achievable goal for engagement in the year ahead.

Closing Prayer

Invite people to name what graces they have experienced in these Lenten sessions. Name the gifts you need, as individuals and as a congregation, to keep walking the labyrinth and becoming Beloved Community. You might finally ask Jesus to dwell richly in you, so that you can share his light and be Jesus Movement people in the world.