



Tuesday of the 5th Week of Lent



Date: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Numbers 21:4–9

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102:2–3, 16–21 | **Response:** Psalm 102:2

Gospel Acclamation: The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower; all who come to him will live for ever

Gospel Reading: John 8:21–30

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

The people of Israel, journeying through the desert, once again grumble against God and Moses. They question why they were brought out of Egypt—only to die in the wilderness. In response to their rebellion, venomous serpents enter the camp. Many are bitten. Many perish. But even in the midst of their sin and suffering, God, in His mercy, provides a path to healing. He instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it on a pole. All who look upon it will live. They must turn their gaze to the very symbol of what wounded them—not with cynicism, but with faith that God’s mercy can work even through the source of their affliction.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus echoes that profound story. He speaks of His own “lifting up”—on the cross, for the salvation of the world. Like the Israelites of old, many in His time were too caught in their blindness to see the remedy standing before them. They could not grasp the radical truth of His mission. Yet Jesus declares: when He is lifted up, He will draw all people to Himself. His “lifting up” is not merely a moment of execution. It is the moment when divine love and human violence meet—and love does not flinch. It is crucifixion and glorification. Death, yes—but death transformed into life for all who believe.

Lent is our season of transformation. A time to fix our gaze upon the cross—not as a distant artifact, but as a living question to each of us: What do you see here? Do we see only pain and punishment? Or do we see the cost of love—the love that suffers with the suffering, that stands with the condemned, that breaks open death to bring healing?

We are invited to see our world in the light of that cross. Like the Israelites in the desert, or the crowds around Jesus, we may fail to recognize God’s provision when it challenges our comfort. We may prefer silence to justice, comfort to truth. But Lent confronts us with a holy paradox: the cross, once a tool of oppression, has become the doorway to liberation. And it asks something of us.

In this light, we remember Saint Titus Brandsma, a priest who lived in the shadow of rising fascism and nationalist ideology in the early 20th century. At a time when truth was manipulated and entire populations dehumanized, Titus did not flinch. He denounced the propaganda. He defended the dignity of the marginalized. As a journalist and professor, he used his voice when silence would have been safer. For this, he was arrested and eventually martyred in Dachau. His witness is not merely historical—it is urgently prophetic.

We live now in a world where, much like in the days of Saint Titus, forces of nationalism, authoritarianism, and exclusion are again on the rise. These movements often speak the language of fear and control. They divide. They label. They silence. And all too often, the greatest burdens fall not on the powerful, but on the poor. The mother in a Lusaka township, the farmer in a remote Zambian village—these are the ones who bear the consequences of decisions made in distant capitals. These are the ones whose dignity is most easily sacrificed.

In such times, the Gospel demands more than pious thoughts. It calls for a cruciform commitment—to justice, to truth, to mercy. It calls us to stand as Saint Titus stood: not with clenched fists, but with courageous hearts. It calls us to stand up—not only for the dignity of our neighbour, but for the soul of our common humanity.

The Church reminds us that solidarity is not a vague compassion, but a persevering determination to work for the common good. Saint Ignatius teaches us to “see God in all things”—especially in the cries of the poor and the wounded. And the cross reminds us that real love costs. It is not theoretical. It is not safe. But it is the only path that leads to life.

So let us pause and reflect:

- Where in my life have I grown blind to injustice, comfortable in complicity?

- Who are the vulnerable in my community—and how am I called to stand with them?
- As I look upon the cross this Lent, will I allow it to change me?

This is the work of Lent—not only to gaze upon the cross but to allow it to gaze back at us. To let it judge our complacency, yes—but more than that, to invite us into a new way of being: cruciform, courageous, and committed to the healing of the world.

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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.