

God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

“God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life.”

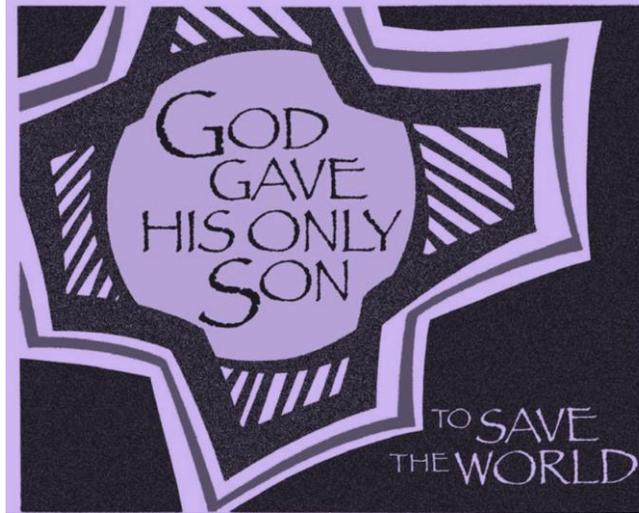
This is one of the most well-known and beloved verses of Scripture. It is from John 3:16. This is a verse that should be memorized, recited, and be the subject of our meditation. We could reflect on the three parts of this verse: God’s love, God’s Son and our belief.

This world that God so loved is not an ideal just place where people live in peace. It’s dominated by man’s greed, immorality, pettiness, dishonesty, crime, and constant feuding that divides people. Yet God so loved this world He wants to bring it healing and new life.

The first reading from the Old Testament Book of Chronicles gives us a summary of Israel’s rebellion against the God who gave them life. It says, “The princes of Judah the priests and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the Lord’s temple. They mocked the messengers of God, despised His warnings and scoffed at His prophets.” Israel’s story is the same today as it was then.

In today’s second reading, St Paul teaches us that the saving plan of God was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He says, “When we were dead in our transgressions, God brought us to life with Christ.” Paul knew that from experience. His obsession with arresting and imprisoning Christians had made him one of the Church’s worst persecutors. Then, out of nowhere on the road to Damascus, the risen Christ appeared to him. With that his life was changed. He had done nothing to deserve it but salvation was now his in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way to salvation, forgiveness and new life for each of us.

Jesus Christ is the bridge between our sin and God’s healing. In the Gospel Jesus refers to an incident in the Old Testament Book of Numbers when poisonous snakes bit the people of Israel. They would have died but Moses was told by God to fabricate a



bronze serpent and put it on a pole and anyone who looked at the snake would be saved from death. Obedience to that command of God would neutralize the poison and they would be restored to life.

The poison of sin infects our world and us. We cannot expel sin on our own. Something has to be powerful enough to pull it out of us, absorb it and

eliminate it. Jesus says, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.” On the cross, Jesus would be like the bronze serpent and bring healing to us. He would draw out the venom of sin in our life and replace it with the grace of new life.

We can sing about Jesus, meditate on Jesus, lament the sufferings of Jesus, celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, and build wonderful churches to honor Jesus. But are we ready to follow Jesus, to open our lives to His teaching, His truth, His forgiveness as it comes to us through His Church? Are we willing to take the step of repentance, to change how we live?

We have been given a cure for the deep illness and rebellion of soul that we call sin. Left to itself, sin is toxic. It will kill us spiritually. But we have a cure in the cross of Jesus Christ. Will we put that cross on a wall or build a beautiful shrine around it or wear it as jewelry? If we do only that, it won’t do us any good, unless we embrace Jesus and follow His teaching in our life.

Reflect on the crucifix this Lent. Let it show the horror of sin. Let it also show the gift of God’s love and the curing forgiveness that can be ours if we follow Jesus.

“God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life.”

