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## *Lenten Homilies*

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### **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent**

#### *50 years of Trocaire*

As we are beginning the season of Lent we journey with Trocaire over the next few Sundays of Lent. Did you know that Trocaire is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday this year? In 1973 the bishops of Ireland established Trocaire in response to poverty and injustice in the developing world.

The same year, fifty years ago, Ryan Tubridy, the television and radio presenter and Gráinne Seoige, journalist and television presenter were born.

1973 also saw the United States ending its involvement in the Vietnam War after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords.

Saint Paul VI's was Pope and who famously said: *If you want peace, work for justice.* (Pope Paul VI in his message for the Celebration of the Day of Peace in 1972)

This declaration, "if you want peace, work for justice" is exactly what the Bishops of Ireland put into action, when they established Trocaire in 1973.

In the past 50 years Trocaire has given and enabled many people from all over the world to new hope, new dreams, new tools, new skills. *"From the time when it was first founded Trocaire has taken a strong stance on issues of international justice – exploitation of poor people and minorities, human rights, and the struggle for justice by the people of countries governed by dictatorial repressive governments, especially in Latin America and South Africa."*

In the reading we hear about Adam and Eve, how they got tempted and failed to stay strong. In the Gospel Jesus had been tempted by the Devil. Adam and Eve were presented with a paradise. With a divine order. The creation at its best. God had created them in *His* imagine. Did you ever wonder if God knew that they might be tempted? That Adam and Eve might be curious about what else is there? In the Gospel we hear about Jesus being tempted. After forty days in the desert. Jesus was alone, maybe deep in prayer but no doubt he was challenged. He could have given in. The Devil offered to end his forty days in the desert. However, Jesus, true God and true Man, trusted in God and was able to turn away from the temptation.

Similarly, Adam and Eve and Jesus you and me are tempted here today. We could choose to sit back and let Trocaire do what they do best, without thinking more about. We could ignore what Saint Paul VI's said: If you want peace work for justice. We could leave the Church without paying any further attention to what's going on in the world. But wait a moment:

Adam and Eve's Eyes were opened! Jesus saw through the Devil and its plan!

What do you “see” when thinking about Trocaire? It is the responsibility of every Christian to work for Justice to establish peace.

You cannot sit back – the past twelve months have shown how fragile peace has become. We have to look at the reality of our brothers and sisters – and once we do – there can only be one outcome – to support the work of Trocaire on our behalf – today and for the next fifty years to come.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

### *Somalia – Trocaire and Somalia*

Last weekend we heard about Trocaire turning 50 this year. For all these years Trocaire has put a strong emphasis on raising awareness on us here in Ireland and the unjust world we live in.

“This Lent we learn about Somalia and how conflicts and climate change have led to an unprecedented food crisis in an already vulnerable part of the world.”

What do you know about Somalia? I am honest with you; I knew very little before I got involved with Trocaire’s Lenten campaign.

According to the World Wide Web (internet) Somalia, is a country in the Horn of Africa. The country is bordered by Ethiopia, Djibouti, the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and Kenya.

It is over 10,000km from Dublin away and according to google map It would take you over 165 hours by car to get there. (Those of you that are quick with numbers would know that would mean nearly 7 days driving – non-stop!)

An estimated 17million people are living in Somalia and for the past two decades Somalia has been badly affected by conflict following the civil war in 1991. For the past thirty years this ongoing conflict has had a negative impact on those most vulnerable Somalis, especially women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Somalia has also been hit with more than thirty natural disasters since 1990, including twelve droughts and nineteen floods.

Sadly, it looks like another sad record breaks in Somalia as it looks likely that 2023 is going to be the fifth season with no rain fall. Leading to the death of livestock and the failure of crops. 86% of the people living in Somalia depend on agriculture for survival. Imagine 1.8million children under the age of five face acute malnutrition. About half the population need urgent humanitarian assistance.

Today’s reading is about the Transfiguration, Jesus brings Peter, John and James, three of his disciples up a mountain where Moses and Elijah appeared and Jesus was transfigured, his face and clothes becoming dazzling bright. What an extraordinary experience they have had!

Have you ever experienced something as life changing? The real challenge is the after event. The coming down from the mountain and re-joining everyday life. This experience opened the eyes of the three disciples and surely changed their relationship with Jesus and with God. Karl Rahner, a German Theologian famously said “*The Christian of the future will be a*

*mystic, or he will not exist at all.* ' God wants us to open our hearts and eyes fully to let him in. God, created each and every one of us in his own image and this Lenten season he is inviting us all as individuals to find our own mountains.

What does that mean for us here today? Looking at the Somalian reality, what can we do? Climate change affects all of us.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

#### *Meet the Family*

Trocaire's Lenten campaign introduces us to Ambiyio and Mahat and their eight children raging in age from six months to fourteen years. Like many somalian families, they had to leave behind their village in search of food. Four seasons of drought saw their crop's fail and their herd of two hundred goats died. They left everything behind and walked for three days to find a new home in an internationally displaced persons' camp. Ambiyio, Mahat and their children are among hundreds of thousands of families that had to build a new home in those camps. Imagine no rain for four years. Imagine our green island of Ireland without four months of rain! Never mind four years.

Today's reading picks up on a similar theme – Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt to find a new place to call home. They knew what they had in Egypt was not life giving. It was a place of slavery, of death, captivity. Moses was given God's authority to lead them away from this place to somewhere new. Somewhere different. Somewhere unknown. But with the promise in his heart for something better - a new beginning.

Like every journey begins with the first step but taking that step in the hope to get to the promised land. The Israelites looked forward to the promise land. In Ambiyio and Mahat's situation it was an international refugee camp. After days of walking, the tiredness, the doubt, the fear must have set in many times. No doubt Ambiyio, Mahat and their children struggled to keep walking with little or no food. The place they once called home had become a place of death. Like the Israelites – they too had to take the first step.

Leaving the old behind with Trust in the Lord for a better life. Like the Israelites, Ambiyio and Mahat's hope that they too will be rewarded by trusting in the Lord. With the help of your donation Trocaire has been able to give Ambiyio, Mahat and many families that same hope. Trocaire's healthcare and education is being provided to those who find themselves in the camps. Prayer is something that keeps Ambiyio and Mahat going. Prayer that God will guide them. Prayer that God will give them strength – for a better future. Prayer that God keeps them strong – for the sake of their own children.

Please God, you and me never have the experience of leaving behind our homes because we have not food – no future. Trocaire enables and supports those families like Ambiyio and Mahat. Together we can make a difference by donating to Trocaire. Perhaps you can help today by bringin hope to those that feel hopeless?

## **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**

Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers, mothers to be and all those in a mothering role who tirelessly work to create a positive environment in which our children can thrive. Last week we heard about Ambiyó, the mother of eight children. After the birth of her youngest daughter Ambiyó needed lifesaving care from the Trocaire health clinic nearby. Without the medical care and help she would have not survived. Trocaire, together with other partners, provide maternal care for expecting and new mothers through antenatal clinics, medical care during labour and also by delivering and nutrition programmes to children.

In today's first reading we hear about Samuel anointing David. Like David we were all anointed on the day of our baptism and confirmation. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and with that comes responsibilities – one being we have to look at the struggles that our brother's and sister's face in their daily life in Somalia and other countries.

In the Gospel we hear Jesus healing the blind man. Jesus knew that being blind might have felt similar of that of being homeless, to be an outcast, to be without family support and therefore unable to provide for oneself. Jesus healing opened up new possibilities for the man in the story today. The disciples got caught up in asking questions about whose fault it was that this man was blind? Jesus said that nobody was to blame for the past of this man but that he himself was there to bring life and light to those who follow him and believe in him.

Through our Baptism and Confirmation each and every one of us here share in the responsibilities of the Catholic Social Teaching. The foundation is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God.

The Church, therefore, calls for Integral Human Development, which concerns the wellbeing of each person from every aspect: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual.

In the past few weeks we have had many challenges presented to us. The war in the Ukraine, the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, Ambiyó and her family in Somalia. Of course some might argue we have to start at home. Many families in Ireland are struggling every day of the week. But rather than playing one against the other, how about starting somewhere you know your money can make a difference by given to Trocaire this lent? The past fifty years have shown the impact your donation has made. Let us continue that journey together. Hand in hand or as Trocaire names it "together for a just world"

## **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**

Fifty years ago, when choosing a name for the overseas aid agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland, the Irish bishops chose the Gaelic word for mercy and compassion – Trocaire.

Compassion is an active word that asks that we see the suffering of others and respond with solidarity and action.

In today's Gospel we hear about Lazarus' resurrection. It points towards Jesus own resurrection and indeed yours and mine. We entered into the Divine life in baptism and to our resurrection at the end of time. As we pray in the Creed every week, "He (Jesus) will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead..."

Another look at the Gospel story reminds us there are people in this Gospel too other than Jesus and Lazarus.

There are his disciples, many of whom fear for Jesus' and their own lives by going back to Bethany, the place close to Jerusalem, where Jesus was close to being arrested before.

Thomas, the disciple that spoke up and encouraged everyone to follow Jesus even if that meant to die with him.

There are the Jews that mourned Lazarus death with the siblings Martha and Mary. I wonder how they felt about Jesus, being the Son of God? Were they followers or were they those that wanted to stone Jesus to death?

We have Martha and Mary. The sisters of Lazarus. Mary, the one that works hard and even gets angry with Martha that she was just sitting there when Jesus had visited them before. Mary might have seen her role in serving while Martha seems to be contemplative. She sat with Jesus and anointed his feet while listening to his words. Who can you relate to more? Mary or Martha. There is little bit of both in each and every one of us. A time to rest and a time to act. What Martha, Mary and Lazarus all have in common is that they were all interested in Jesus' ministry. And now Martha and Mary are faced with the pain of losing their brother. They had called for Jesus on time but he decided to delay his arrival by two further days. No doubt Jesus had a plan to show that even death has no power over us if we believe in the Lord. Jesus saw the devastation Lazarus death had caused. He himself cried. The human side of Jesus very obvious, visible for everyone there to see. He showed his compassion and mercy by calling Lazarus out of the grave.

We are invited to show that compassion and mercy to those who need it the most. We cannot walk away. We cannot delay our response. We have to act now. Maybe we have been crying seeing those pictures from around the world. Compassion and mercy is needed from each and every one of us.

Last advent Trocaire had a wonderful poem that shows why Trocaire's work in the past fifty years has been important.

*It's not just that the rains don't come.*

*It's not just that Sami's home was destroyed.*

*It's not just that Mya's daughter is denied an education because she's a girl.*

*In our world today, millions of people live are denied food, safety and a future. They are living in fear and it's not just.*

*This Christmas, your love can make all the difference.*

*Your donation – no matter how small – will provide water, food, shelter and a future for people living in poverty.*

*People like Sarah, Sami and Mya know the future they want. They just need your help to secure it.*

*For them, your kindness is not just an expression of love and kindness. It is a helping hand to a better future.*

## **6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Palm Sunday**

Today we are celebrating Palm Sunday.

Jesus' glories and triumphal arrival in Jerusalem. We also hear the Lord's Passion. The view forward to the Holy week and with that the death and resurrection of our Lord. Today also marks the end of Lent. For the past forty days we journeyed with Trocaire. We celebrated the fiftieth anniversary. We learnt about the Mahat family, the parents Ambiyio and Mahat and their families and how they have been given new hope and new life through the work of Trocaire.

With the knowledge about the work Trocaire has been providing I can't stop wondering what is next for me and you? How are we going to respond to the injustices in our world? Are we happy to sit back and let others do the work?

Let us look at the Gospel to find answers. There are many people named in the Lord's Passion. There are various bystanders. Those curious to see what might happen. Those who are glad that Jesus is being crucified and maybe some that are there afraid for their own lives.

There is Peter. The disciple that followed Jesus' invitation to follow him. He was there with him throughout Jesus' ministry. Peter, the fisherman, that walked with Jesus the same roads, the one that knew Jesus was Christ. Peter, the one Jesus entrusted in becoming the leader of his followers, the first Pope. At the same time, we just heard, the same Peter, was the one that denied the Lord three times.

There is Judas, who betrayed Jesus. Like Peter he was one of the disciples. He journeyed with Jesus, saw the healing power Jesus had and still he betrayed him for money. Some might find it easy to pick Judas as the one "bad" one in this however others might argue, without Judas, there would be no crucifixion and therefore no resurrection. He too plays an important part in our history.

We also have Simon of Cyrene. Would you say he happened to be in the wrong place at the right time or the other way around? Either way he happened to be there and helped Jesus carrying the cross. No option to walk away.

We also have Mary, the mother of our Lord. Mary, who said YES whole-heartedly when the Angel asked her to become the mother of the Son of God. Little did she know, that only would witness her son's death but would also have to suffer the agony of losing her child. It still goes against nature. Mothers are not supposed to bury their children and still it happens so often in this world.

And of course, we have Jesus. The Son of God. As we know from the Prophet Isaiah, Jesus is called “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” His life came to an end while many watched him dying. The pain he must have endured in those final hours of his life – but nevertheless, he kept going, one step at a time to the final moment when he cried out "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"

Looking at those characters who are you in this? Would you speak up? Or would you just standby in fear? Would you risk your own life to speak up for what you think is right? Many humanitarian workers risk their life every day to work on our behalf to help those most in need. Many have given their lives to charities like Trocaire to bring the church social teaching alive in the many countries around the world. After journeying with Trocaire this lent what are you going to do moving forward? Are you Simon of Cyrene that was forced to help? Are you Peter that would like to help and be there but also fall short when asked? I hope you have the strength of Mary, the one that said YES to the Lord all her life. The one that told her son to perform his first miracle. The one, that journeyed with the Son of God all those years and at the end stood at the cross in despair but with the knowledge she had played her part in God’s plan to make the world a better place. Will you do the same?