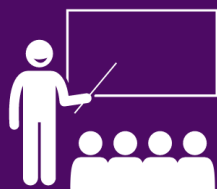




DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

ROOTED IN CHRIST

LENT 2022



TEACHING *Tuesday*

Recognizing God's Grace in the Messiness of Life

In [Gospel reading for today](#), Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent, Jesus miraculously heals a man lying on the ground who had been ill for thirty-eight years. Jesus tells him to rise, pick up his mat and walk, and he does just that. The Pharisees see the man who was ill but is now walking, and instead of standing in awe of God and rejoicing that the man is healed, they are more concerned that he is doing work—carrying his mat—on the Sabbath. When they point out that he is breaking a law of the Sabbath, the man explains that the person who made him well told him to do so. After learning that it was Jesus who had healed the man, the Pharisees began to persecute Jesus because he performed this miracle on the Sabbath. (John 5:1-16).

Being a devout Jew, Jesus most likely knew the laws of keeping the Sabbath, but in his great compassion, he saw a greater good of restoring health to a person so sick. While the law is important for helping people live in holiness, Jesus tells us in another gospel, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27) In other words, today's Gospel teaches us the importance of not allowing rules and norms to prevent us in recognizing God's unpredictable and unlimited grace at

work in our lives.

RISE

*take up
your mat and*

WALK

John 5:8



In the Broadway musical, *Les Misérables*, the lead character, Jean Valjean, is a convict who has served his sentence of nineteen years and is released from hard labor only to discover that he is now an outcast in society because of his crime. After being treated with mercy by the Bishop of Digne, Valjean breaks his parole in an effort to begin his life anew, only to be pursued for years by the ruthless prison guard, Javert. For the rest of his life, Valjean lives honestly, showing great love and compassion to those whom he encounters, though his past life and the law broken as personified

in Javert continuously haunt him. Javert could be considered the antagonist of the saga, however, he is not an evil person—just someone fanatically devoted to the law and is blind to abundance of God’s mercy that doesn’t fit neatly into his own agenda.

Let us pray today that God may help us to see with childlike eyes of faith, to discover those moments of his grace, and to recognize where we can be instruments of his compassion, even when it can be messy.

Sometimes we can be like the Pharisees in today’s Gospel or like Javert in *Les Misérables*—so focused on the rules, norms, or our own personal expectations that we tend to miss the goodness of God or the cries for mercy in our world today. Maybe we let a past wrong done by someone else prevent us from seeing the great work he or she is accomplishing now. Perhaps we refuse to see the goodness that can come from a bad situation, or it may be that we don’t believe people can change for the better. Let us pray today that God may help us to see with childlike eyes of faith, to discover those moments of his grace, and to recognize where we can be instruments of his compassion, even when it can be messy.



Watch this clip from the motion picture, *Les Misérables*, entitled "Freeing Javert" in reflecting on the dichotomy of God's law verses God's love.



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