

# FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

St. John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33-45

There are, generally speaking, two kinds of people in the world: those who build up and those who tear down. You will find these people in all places; in workplaces, in schools, in families, and even in the Church.

Those who build up show true humility because they do it not for their own glory but for the sake of something greater than themselves. They look to how they can work with others rather than against others, they look to how they can quietly go about making a contribution and participating in the life of the place rather than hiding in the shadows gossip mongering and criticising and spreading their poison, polluting the community. Those who tear down always have an excuse and claim that they are simply wanting the best for this person or that place, that they are only trying to show what's wrong to make everything better. The reality is, however, that they are seeking their own glory under a false mask of humility. They are like the Hebrews who, after being freed from slavery in Egypt and being led to the Promised Land, complained against Moses (see *Ex. 17:3-7*) because they weren't given their way.

With this Sunday the Church enters Passiontide where she more fervently contemplates the Passion of Our Lord. The most notable mark of Passiontide is the veiling of the Crosses and the statues. It serves to remind us of what truly is glory and that there is no glory within man himself that does not radiate from almighty God. So we veil the statues of the Saints, those men and women we venerate as heroes of the Faith, because the glory with which we honour them is a reflection of the glory of God. Just as the moon itself is not light but reflects the light of the sun, so the Saints are a reflection of the light of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The mark of that humility, the recognition that any glory we may have finds its source in God, is seen, above all, in the Blessed Virgin Mary. She always points away from herself to her Son. You will see this in icons and paintings of her, that her hand always points towards her Son. We go to Mary because she carries us then on to Christ. She is the woman most worthy of all men and women to be crowned with glory, but she is the finest example of humility because she knows that glory lies only within God.

And so as at dusk when the sun sets and its light fades the earth becomes darkness, so in Passiontide the light of Christ is veiled and so there is no reflection of it in the images of the Saints. So we wait and through these last weeks of Lent—this Passiontide and into Holy Week—we confront the darkness of our world, of our lives, and we wait in hope for the dawning of that light on Easter Sunday when we acclaim the Resurrection of Our Lord and the veils are lifted and the glory of Heaven shines forth again.

And so that we may reflect that sublime glory we must seek to be a person that builds up and not tears down, that works with and not against, that seeks what is good in others and not play for power and control by biting at others, either to make a choice to be as Eve and so spread the poison of our pride infecting others, or to be as the Blessed Virgin Mary and recognise that in humility we find true glory because we find God Himself.