

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

Every day we meet the weak and the strong. We applaud successes. Do we endorse the idea that only the fit survive or is there room for compassion? The readings show a God who identifies with the weak and the unfit. The ultimate criterion for God's family is compassion – it's a family trait. Today's readings are a study in compassion. They show a God who identifies with the weak and the unfit.

In the first reading, God's people repeatedly reject the message of the prophets and continue in sinful ways. And God had compassion through it all. Finally, God is forced to use the Chaldeans as agents of his displeasure. Historically, the 70 years mentioned by Jeremiah was really 50 (exile in 586 BC to Cyrus in 538 BC). God uses King Cyrus as his tool of renewal and reconciliation. He returns the people to their land. Be compassionate – it's a family trait.

The second reading mentions sinfulness as a form of death. But "God, who is rich in mercy" brings us back in the participation in the mystery of Christ. Such compassion is God's gift.

In the Gospel, the author speaks of Jesus being lifted up like Moses' bronze serpent. This implies not only Crucifixion, but also Resurrection. Again, the Father shows compassion by giving His only son. Be compassionate – it's a family trait.