

MARCH 2, 2026 DEACON ROBERT KINGHORN

Well, what a brilliant first reading we had today, I feel, as we're on the beginning of a journey through Lent.

Today, when we heard from the prophet Daniel. Daniel crying out to God. There was a time when the people of Israel had been in exile, and they were just returning from exile. And Daniel was speaking on behalf of the people to God. He called out to God, and said, "We have sinned and done wrong. We have acted wickedly, and rebelled."

How often do we cry out like that? How often do people cry out like that? Daniel didn't say, Oh, the devil made us do it. No, he said, We have sinned. And we need your mercy, Lord.

And in many ways, we start the season of Lent like that, don't we? We have ashes. Ashes put on our foreheads as a sign of repentance. Indeed, we have sinned. And we call upon our Lord to come back. In fact, I think we're perhaps the only people in the world that confess our sins, isn't it true? You don't hear people going around and saying, I have sinned, I have sinned! No, we always find someone else to blame.

But in this reading from Daniel, Daniel says, Yes, Lord, we need your mercy. We need your blessing as well. And even at the beginning of Mass, we confess our sins. Confess to almighty God that we have sinned. And we ask for forgiveness. And every time we do that, the Lord treats us as a prodigal son. Remember? The Prodigal Son came back. Yes! You're my son. You're alive! You're my prodigal daughter. You're alive! Always welcomed back at that moment.

You know, I think, as I say, we're the only people in the world that confess our sins.

Now I've often mentioned a priest called Father Greg Boyle. He works in Los Angeles with the people who are on the streets. The gang members out there. And he said something recently, one of his quotes I read, which at first confused me and astounded me. He said that God does not protect us from everything, but God sustains us in everything. I thought that was a bit confusing at first. I thought that was God's job! To protect us, isn't it?! No. He says that harm comes our way in life, disappointments come our way in life, but God always sends people to sustain us.

God has decided to work through people for unknown reasons. I wouldn't have done it if I was God. No. But God trusts people. It's when we're hurting, when we've sinned, God sends people to be with us. Just as he sent his Son Jesus to be with us. So this is how God has decided to work in the world.

And so often, when tragedy hits us in life, those heroes and heroines that come to support us in our grief, in death, in disappointing times in life, God sends people to be with us. People like you and me. We are the ones who support one another in life. This is our call as followers of Jesus. We are a people who have to sustain others, so that when we sustain others, when we see people who are hurting, just by our presence, by the very fact that we're willing to stop and be with them, and look them in the eyes, and say I love you, I'm here to help you, people can get faith, and they can get hope in their life, that they can continue.

This simple act of love can sustain people. And when they have a faltering faith, it's this simple act of love that can renew their faith, revitalize their faith, and let them know that they can go on.

It's just the same way as Daniel did that today. In that reading, he called upon the people. He said, Yes, we can go on together. God loves us, God

has forgiven us. We can go, when we admit our sins, and turn to the Lord. There's always forgiveness in our life.

Now the Gospel today that we just heard, this Gospel tells us how God uses us to sustain other people. It's explained how we do it. It said: "Be merciful." "Do not judge." "Do not condemn." "Forgive." You see, this is how we sustain one another. Or, as we often say, we show up. We listen, we don't judge. We don't try to fix people.

This really, for the Church, for the street, the ministry I have in the street, it's the one message I bring to people. People who have been hurt so deeply in their lives. And because of that, perhaps, have turned to drugs, or other ways of soothing the pain in their life. When you can show up, look at them, and say God loves you, God knows what you've been through, and God is with you, you are a good person, this can change people's lives.

When all the time all they've heard is they're no use, they're no good. But, as Daniel said in the reading today, we turn to the Father, yes, there's been sins in our life, but we know you are the one that can protect us and save us. And it's always through others, through people like you and me, that people can—lives can be changed. Little bit by little bit.

So I think today this message, as we begin this season of Lent, that we should be people throughout Lent that reach out to others, and let them know that God loves us, because we love them. And here they are together, one united in the Father, like prodigal daughter and prodigal son, we have returned, and the Lord says welcome, I've been waiting for you, you are amazing.

And so, as we continue, let us pray together. Let us pray to the Father, who sent Jesus to act through you and through me, to witness to God's sustaining love in the world.