

APRIL 2026 PRAYER SERVICE

Prayer Service for Chapter 8 of “Love is Much More Than Love” Study Topic The Chapter focuses on John 3:13-17 By Fr. Eli Lopez, USA-SR Spiritual Counselor

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT:

In **John 3:13-17**, Jesus explains to Nicodemus his divine origin and salvific mission, emphasizing faith in him as the path to eternal life and God’s profound love for humanity.

Key Elements of the Passage:

- **Jesus’ Unique Authority:** Jesus declares, *“No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man,”* affirming his pre-existence with the Father and heavenly origin.
- **The Lifting Up:** Drawing from Numbers 21, Jesus compares himself to the bronze serpent Moses raised in the wilderness: *“just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”* This foreshadows his crucifixion as the means of salvation through faith.
- **God’s Love and Purpose:** The passage culminates in the famous verse: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”* God sends the Son not to condemn the world, but to save it.

This discourse highlights themes central to Catholic **soteriology**: divine initiative in salvation, the necessity of faith, and Christ’s redemptive sacrifice.

Complementary Scripture passages to John 3:13-17: Several Scripture passages complement John 3:13-17 by expanding on its core themes: Christ’s heavenly origin and mission, the typology of the bronze serpent prefiguring the Cross, faith as the path to eternal life, and God’s loving initiative in salvation.

Faith Leading to Eternal Life

These passages reinforce that belief in Jesus as the Son of God grants eternal life and conquers sin and death:

- **John 6:35-40, 47:** Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever **believes in me will never be thirsty**... Very truly, I tell you, **whoever believes has eternal life.**” This echoes the promise that believers “may have eternal life,” emphasizing the Father’s will to raise believers on the last day.
- **1 John 5:1-5, 11-13:** “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God... **This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.** Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?... **God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life.**” Faith here overcomes the world, paralleling salvation through belief in the lifted-up Son.

- **John 3:36** (extending the discourse): "**Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life.**" This builds directly on verses 15-17, contrasting belief with condemnation.

Typology of the Bronze Serpent and the Cross

John 3:14's reference to Moses' serpent (Numbers 21:8-9) finds fulfillment in Christ's crucifixion as the source of healing from sin:

- **John 12:32** (cited in commentary): "I, if I am **lifted from the earth, will draw all things to myself,**" signifying the Cross as exaltation and attraction for faith.
- Early Church Fathers like Augustine and Theophylact interpret the serpent as prefiguring Christ: the serpent's likeness without poison mirrors Christ's sinless flesh bearing death for our healing.

God's Love and Sending the Son for Salvation

God's gift of the Son out of love, not condemnation, is elaborated:

- **1 John 3:23:** "This is his commandment, that we should **believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another.**" Obedience through faith and love abides in God, who gives the Spirit.
- **John 6:29:** "This is the work of God, that you **believe in him whom he has sent,**" underscoring belief as the response to God's initiative.

These passages, drawn from Johannine literature, form a theological unity: faith in the crucified and risen Christ—foreshadowed in the Old Testament—secures eternal life through God's merciful love.

READING OF SCRIPTURE:

John 3:13-17

"No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

A TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION:

SHARED PRAYER ON SCRIPTURAL TEXT:

The intent is reflection in the form of a prayer, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS:

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn, for example, "Lord, hear our prayer".

LITURGICAL PRAYER:

Psalms that complement John 3:13-17. These Psalms enrich **John 3:13-17** by poetically expressing trust in God's faithful power, refuge in his love, and triumphant salvation, inviting believers to "**lift**" their hearts in faith.

Psalm 62 beautifully complements **John 3:13-17** by portraying God as the sole rock of salvation, urging unwavering trust amid human frailty, much like faith in the lifted-up Son grants eternal life.

"For God alone my soul **waits in silence**; from him comes **my salvation**. He alone is **my rock** and **my salvation**, my fortress... **Trust in him at all times**, O people; pour out your heart before him; **God is a refuge** for us... **power belongs to God**, and **steadfast love** belongs to you, O Lord."

This echoes God's loving initiative (hesed as steadfast love) and power to save, paralleling the Father's gift of the Son not for condemnation but deliverance.

Psalm 36 highlights God's transcendent love and life-giving refuge, contrasting the wicked's folly with the believer's shelter under divine wings—resonating with eternal life through faith in Christ.

"Your **steadfast love**, O Lord, extends to the heavens... How **precious** is your **steadfast love**, O God! All people may take **refuge** in the shadow of your wings... **with you is the fountain of life**; in your light we see light."

Here, God's righteousness saves both humans and creation, prefiguring the universal scope of salvation in John 3:17.

2 Samuel 22 (David's psalm of thanksgiving) celebrates God as rock and tower of salvation, girding the faithful with strength against enemies, akin to Christ's exaltation, drawing believers to victory over sin.

"For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a **rock**, except our God?... You have given me the **shield of your salvation**... **The Lord lives! Blessed be my rock**, and exalted be **my God, the rock of my salvation**... a **tower of salvation** for his king."

This victory hymn underscores divine deliverance, mirroring the Son's descent and lifting for humanity's rescue.

Psalm 68 depicts God as the daily bearer of burdens and shatterer of foes, ascending in triumph—a motif of exaltation that aligns with the Son of Man's heavenly origin and salvific mission.

"Blessed be the Lord, who **daily bears us up**; **God is our salvation**... Our God is a **God of salvation**... You **ascended** the high mount."

The procession to the sanctuary evokes Christ's drawing all to himself when he is lifted.

Additional layers emerge from patristic insights: **Psalm 108** affirms a steadfast heart in praising God's love and faithfulness, with the plea "Be exalted... above the heavens" evoking Christ's crucifixion as an act of exaltation for deliverance. Similarly, **Psalm 21** speaks of glory in salvation and heavenly enthronement. Aquinas' prologue to the Psalms frames them as lifting the soul to God through faith, hope, charity, and justice—core responses to John's call to believe.

Psalm 62:2-13

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

*God alone is my rock and salvation, my fortress; I shall never fall.
How long will you set yourself against a man? You shall all be destroyed,
Like a sagging wall or a tumbled down fence!*

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

*Even highly placed people plot to overthrow him.
They delight in lies; they bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse.
My soul, be at rest in God alone, from whom comes my hope.*

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

*God alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not fall.
My deliverance and honor are with God, my strong rock; my refuge is with God.*

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

*Trust God at all times, my people! Pour out your hearts to God our refuge!
Mortals are a mere breath, the sons of man but an illusion;
On a balance they rise; together they weigh nothing.*

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

*Do not trust in extortion; in plunder put no empty hope.
On wealth that increases, do not set your heart.*

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

*One thing God has said; two things I have heard:
Strength belongs to God; so too, my Lord, does mercy,
For you repay each man according to his deeds.*

Response: *My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.*

CONCLUSION OF PRAYER TIME:

Prayer for Married Couples about Service

ALL:

Heavenly Father, who so loved the world that You gave Your only Son, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man who descended from heaven and was lifted on the Cross like the serpent in the wilderness, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life—grant this same merciful love to us, Your married children.

As You sent Your Son not to condemn the world, but that it might be saved through Him, pour out Your healing grace upon our union. Help us to lift one another in times of trial, forgiving weaknesses and infidelity as Christ forgives from the Cross, renewing our commitment with the strength of Your mercy. May our faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord draw us ever closer, conquering sin and discouragement, so that our love mirrors Your self-giving gift—faithful, enduring, and life-giving.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all holy spouses, unite us in the sacrament of marriage and guide us to eternal life together. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

DEEP POOLING:

This is a time to share on more serious matters or when the input of the group is requested. This will not necessarily happen at all meetings.

SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS:

We join teams in order to enlist the help of others in growing closer to God. The “endeavors” are practices which we voluntarily assume. They have been found to be a means of drawing us closer as a couple and in furthering our spiritual growth. By sharing on the endeavors at the team meeting we seek help and encouragement from our teammates in our journey.