

## **Fourth Sunday of Lent B - Whoever Lives the Truth Comes to the Light**

March 10, 2024

There is often a time in a long journey when we find the going hard. At this stage in our Lenten journey we may be inclined to identify with Nicodemus of this Sunday's gospel (John 3:14-21) – not daring, as a well known Pharisee, to consult Jesus openly, he came 'by night', weighed down in his heart, by an interior darkness of confusion and embarrassment. The first reading of this Sunday (2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23), telling the story of old Israel – a story of unfaithfulness, stubborn selfishness, destruction and exile – reminds us how often human history has been filled with darkness, right down to our own day. If we are inclined to feel demoralized at this point in our Lenten journey, we are invited by this Sunday's readings to find again the source of new energy and encouragement. Old Israel finds that God's designs will not be frustrated by their foolishness and selfishness - the conqueror of the Babylonians sends them back to rebuild the temple. Paul announces to those who are in danger of losing their way the astounding truth at the centre of our faith - God's free gift of new life in Christ to a lost world: our redeemed humanity is God's 'work of art', we each have our part to play in the realization of God's great designs. But it is especially in climax of this Sunday's readings, the words spoken to Nicodemus, by Jesus (John 3:14-21) - the Light of the World - that all our darkness is dispelled! Let us not take them for granted, but take them to heart and rejoice in the new life they bring: 'God loved the world so much that he gave his own Son, so that everyone who believes in him ... may have eternal life'. A world weighed down by the darkness of failure and selfishness must know, Jesus says, that he came from the Father, not 'to condemn' but to bring reconciliation and life. As we take our bearings in the middle of a long journey, we often find new purpose and energy. Reflecting at this point in our journey of Lent, on the burdens we carry, can bring us to find again, in a more personal way, the essential truth of our Christian faith, the great truth we celebrate at the end of our journey.

The stories of the Samaritan woman at the well, man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead are a set of readings that must always be proclaimed whenever we celebrate the Scrutinies (Year A readings John 4:5-42, 9:1-41 and 11:1-45). The story of the Samaritan woman at the well from last week is not so much about the woman believing in Christ but about the woman fulfilling her role in proclaiming the Gospel. Likewise, the story of Lazarus is not so much about Jesus raising him from the dead but about having faith in Christ even when it looks like death has won. This story reminds us that we are committed to a life of faith and trust. And the story of the man born blind is not so much about the man being healed, but about seeing as God sees. Today's Gospel reminds us that we are committed to a life that reveals God's vision, to a life of constant conversion. If we are sincere about asking God to "open our eyes," to see as God sees, then we must also be willing to change the way we live our lives so that our lives reflect God's point of view, and not ours.

Here's an example of how life changes once you're given a new perspective. There's one thing about getting my glasses for the first time when I was in junior high that I will never forget. When I saw that tree and I saw how beautiful it was, all I could do was be amazed and give praise for the awesome wonder of God's creation. Now, I had never in my life seen a tree like that. I could see leaves and bark and such. But after I saw them through my new glasses, I realized that a tree was more than just leaves and bark. There were bird nests and birds in the trees that I could see. There were cracks and grooves in the bark, lady bugs, spiders weaving webs that I had missed before. Finally being able to see the detail, the intricacies of nature, and its true beauty is like how God sees each of us. When we see as God sees, all we can do is stand and praise God for showing us a glimpse of heaven. In the first reading, God told Samuel that God doesn't see as humans see. We can only see part of the picture, what's on the outside of a person. But God sees deeper, into the heart of that person. God sees the fullness of that person's potential. God sees that person's intricate and detailed beauty. Jesus tells the blind man "you have seen the Son of Man, you have seen the Christ; the one speaking with you is he." What if each of us could put on some glasses—"God glasses"—that allow us to see that intricate and detailed beauty of each person? Imagine how differently we would act if we remembered Jesus' words ("you have seen Christ, he is speaking with you now"). How differently we would act if each time we encountered our co-workers, we saw Christ. How differently we would treat the people who sit around us in church, the people we see here every week but to whom we never talk, the people who don't speak our language, the people who don't look, act, or think the way we do. How differently we would treat the beggar, the homeless, the people we label as failure, as sinner, the people we label as conservative, liberal, gay, straight, too old, too young, too dark, too light, too smart, too dumb, too much of

something that doesn't fit our point of view. Imagine if each time we encounter each other, each time we speak with one another, we "see" Christ, we "hear" Jesus. How different our world would be.

In three weeks the elect will be baptized with the Holy water. They will be anointed with oil as priest, prophet and king in Christ. And they will stand with us at this table to give thanks and break bread and drink wine, becoming with us what they eat, the Body and Blood of Christ. When the Elect stand in our midst along with their godparents during the liturgy, we will pray for them that God's light may heal the dark places of their lives and strengthen each of them. It will change the way they "see" the world, and thus, it will change the way they act within the world. For this is the duty of the baptized: to be imitators of Christ and to see as God sees. We will ask God to help us all see those moments of failure and weakness as God sees them - not as reasons to condemn us, but as opportunities to love us with an even greater love. Seeing ourselves as God sees us, we give thanks, for we are a sign to each other that God is still making all things new.

Brothers and sisters, the Lenten journey challenges us to live as "children of light", offering penance and seeking reconciliation with the "light of the world", asking ourselves if our lives are joyful responses to God's love. Is his love finding expression in the way we live? What are we doing to bring the love of God into the lives of our family, our friends? Lent is a call to step out of the ways of darkness into the light of Christ. And, when we are in Christ's light, we will see more clearly the way we should live our life. Jesus had not come into our world, we would still be lost in the darkness of sin. We would have remained in hopeless blindness. But Jesus is "the light of the world." He is the one who comes to us in our darkness and leads us into his glorious light. He shows us the way out of hopeless darkness and continues to guide us by the light of God's mercy. "Whoever follows me," he promised, "will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Into the darkness a light has shined. That light is the light of life and the light of the world. Do not walk in darkness; follow Jesus' radiant light.

**Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world. Yet many people walk in darkness. Help us all to seek and to see your light. Help us to walk in your light faithfully, that we may live with you always. Amen.**