

Readings Exodus 20:1-17; Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25



Fr Michael says:

Accepting or Rejecting the Light

God remains faithful to His People despite rejections of Him: the Exile described in Chronicles is seen as a sign of compassion, to bring them back to their senses and mercy is seen in the return to the Promised Land after the Exile. Paul's words to the Church in Ephesus, underline one of the causes of this falling away: our over reliance on our own efforts and our need to trust in the love and mercy of God. God's supreme faithfulness is seen in the gift of His own Son, sent to bring us to New Life. He never condemns, it's we who turn away.

Nicodemus is quite a hero for John, he mentions him 3 times in his Gospel, and nobody else does! He is a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Council of the Jews. He is very open and is touched by Jesus at the meeting - and he wants to find out more, but fails to understand what Jesus is saying: light needs to banish darkness (he came at night). Later in the Gospel, he appears when opposition is growing against Jesus: the Sanhedrin was for killing him, even without a trial – something that Nicodemus rejects, the Law demands fair trials! (Jn 7/51) The final appearance is when he appears to give Jesus a decent burial, by providing expensive spices.

Nicodemus is open-minded and a genuine seeker after truth; he was a fair-minded man, as the second appearance shows and finally he is seen as a rich man, but with much compassion and generosity. However despite these qualities, he still chose to go and see Jesus at night, secretly – a decent man, but who could have been a great one! As we reflect on what we see of Nicodemus in John's Gospel, we see the need to get off the fence and proclaim Jesus wholeheartedly. It is not a question of simply believing, but of living according to that belief, if we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in this way, we can do great things. Have we seen it, in the light of the words of J K Rowling: “which parts are we promoting?”

In Christ, there is no darkness – His light shows up the darkness in us; His truth - our lies; His integrity our falseness; His generosity our selfishness; His peace our conflicts. His openness to others shows how closed we are. We should not be afraid of His light – we should rejoice in it. “Christ, radiant Light of the world, guide our steps in the way of truth and goodness and lead us through the gloom of this world to the Kingdom of unfailing light!” Amen!

Reflection for last Sunday

Fr. Tom says:



Reflection for the 3rd Sunday of Lent B, 2015

G K Chesterton, the master of paradox, once said “*Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.*” This week St Paul highlights the paradox of the Gospel when he says “*God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.*” (1Cor 1:25) So often in his preaching Jesus turned the accepted understanding of things on its head like: “give away your life and you will live.” But what gives true power to his preaching is that he lived fully the challenges he presents to his listeners.

Does the Gospel this week want to show us the fact that Jesus did get angry and had a violent streak? If we take that route, we will miss the point of the Gospel. Surely the Gospel wants to show us how easy it is to adopt practices and habits which appear to be good but obscure the very purpose for which they were introduced. So, we might well have adopted a fast this Lent in the secret hope that we will lose weight, a good in itself, but, if it makes us grumpy and difficult to be with, where is the value in that? The real value of fasting is that it is a sign of penance, of repentance and ultimately of our utter dependency on God and God’s mercy. And this kind of fasting will strengthen and enable us to show mercy and forgiveness to those whom we find difficult (even impossible) to be with. The very fact that we can choose to fast is a reason to be thankful to God when there are millions upon millions who do not have that choice; they fast for the whole of their lives! The paradox of fasting is that we feel healthier, stronger and more alert afterwards; likewise, true fasting for God will strengthen our faith and make us more aware (alert) to God’s presence in our lives, in the lives of others and in our world.

All spiritual writers encourage us to listen to God, to empty ourselves so as to let God in. Jesus shows us this truth in a rather vigorous and energetic way in the Gospel – clear the junk out of your lives! In being present to God we put the focus on God and away from ourselves. The ultimate paradox in this wisdom is that in emptying ourselves, we create a space for God and we come away from this encounter filled with God, with an enduring sense of God’s presence. Lent is an opportunity to clear the clutter out of our lives so as to allow space for God. John then helps us understand that, with Jesus, God is no longer the preserve of buildings for just as Jesus was/is the new Temple of God, we, his followers, have also become temples of God.

Gradually through all the self-discipline and prayer and action towards and for others we have committed to this Lent we are preparing a place within so that God can fill more and more of our lives. We are challenged this week to move the focus away from ourselves and more towards focusing on God and wanting more and more of God’s presence, which some of us know as true love!

Reflection 4TH Sunday of Lent B, 2015

Rejoice! Rejoice! Is the song this Sunday and there is much for us to rejoice.

I am sure Rejoicing is the reason why this middle Sunday of Lent is chosen to celebrate our mothers and all the goodness, love, sacrifice and so much more that they have given us. Even the readings promote, enhance and uplift the spirit of rejoicing.

It is as though, amidst all our Lenten resolutions and struggles, the Church wants to remind us today the reason for doing all this. God wants life for us, life to the full and is prepared to do anything, but anything, to fulfil his heart's desire that we discover the full truth of our lives that we live and love and move in the goodness, love and mercy of God. We are reminded that, whatever we have done in the past or however far we may have turned from God, God loves us so much that he will forgive us for anything and for everything. Living in God's love and in God's way is not an added burden to life; it is the only way for us to find true happiness and the real richness, beauty and wonder of ourselves as God's work of art; to be truly free.

Our readings this week remind us of what happened to the Israelites in the desert after their escape from Egypt led by Moses. When things became difficult and they struggled, they failed to trust, they looked for consolation elsewhere and turned away, and yet, despite all this, God still wanted to save them. Chronicles, and even more so the letter to the Ephesians, spells out the full mercy of God and the depth of a love expressed in his willingness to give us his beloved Son, Jesus, and even though we rejected him and treated him despicably, God accepted him as the instrument of our salvation. How much God must love us? No wonder that every Sunday is a day of celebration?

As you read Paul's message of God's love for us, we cannot but think of our Mothers, who have always wanted the best for us, have wanted our complete happiness and fulfilment. It is as though in them Jesus returned to show us how to realise this. Our mothers gave birth to us through suffering and pain and will love us through thick and thin. They never demand repayment or expect anything in return but their hope and love is that we will find fulfilment and happiness. Everything they give us is pure gift. Aren't they the ideal analogy of how much God loves us? They remind us that, as Paul says, our Faith is God's gift to us that neither demands nor expects repayment. We live our lives of love, generosity, kindness, goodness, service and compassion out of thanksgiving and out of a deep desire that others will share this gift of true life, who is Jesus Christ. We want others to experience the true freedom, beauty and goodness of life that Jesus has given us.

Jesus reminds us, in his encounter with Nicodemus, of the importance and value of light. Gardeners will tell you that all plants need light to grow and flourish. We are always more cheerful, more upbeat, and more spirited in good weather when the sun shines, while darkness breeds uncertainty and creates fears. In the light we want to share our lives with others. Darkness turns us in ourselves and is the breeding ground of all the terrible things that happen. So, why on earth do we choose darkness that stunts and isolates our lives?? Jesus came to save us from all the evils that darkness promises us. Let us be people of light!

You alone (Lord) are the life which never dies and the wisdom that needs no light besides itself, but illumines all who need to be enlightened, the wisdom that governs the world, down to the leaves that flutter on the trees.

(St Augustine. Confessions VII.6.1)