

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

YEAR B

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Saving God,
you sent Jesus
to wash away our sins
and help us
to see things your way.
Do not let our hearts go blind
by not loving other people
as much as we love ourselves.
We make this prayer to you
through Jesus, your Son.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

We live in a world broken by a false sense of worth based on the work ethic and personal accomplishment. Our new life in Christ is God's free gift to us.

In our first reading, Paul assures us that our salvation is not a commodity we have earned or worked for. We have been taken out of darkness into the light—freely. We choose to live a life of good deeds, not to earn salvation, but as a fitting thanksgiving because we have been saved. The Gospel reminds us that this free gift was given through the ultimate act of love; the giving of one's life—freely. Christ, "lifted up" on the cross, is our reminder that we have been saved, gratuitously, by him.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

The mystery of the cross, the cause of our redemption, will not be easily explained to children. But our readings provide plenty of material for reflection on the love of God that initiates our redemption.

FIRST READING: *Ephesians 2:4-10*

*This is a reading
from a letter Paul wrote to the Ephesians.*

Because of God's great love for us,
we have a new life with Christ.
Even while we were sinners,
God raised us up with Jesus
and gave us a place in heaven.

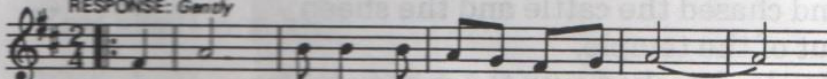
It is God's gift that saves us.
We did not work for our salvation,
or earn it by doing anything special.
It is God's gift to us.

Through Christ Jesus,
God has made us new
so that we may live our lives doing good.

This is the Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 27*

RESPONSE: Gently

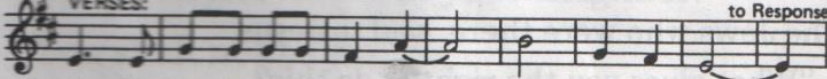


O God, noth-ing can take us from your love, _____



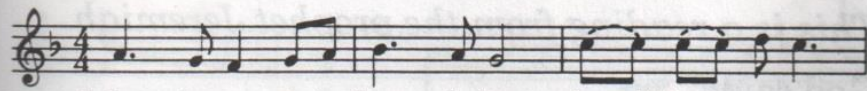
noth - ing can take us from your love. _____

VERSES: to Response

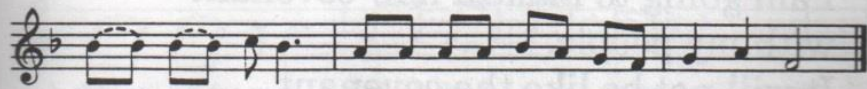


1. I be-lieve that I will see you. _____ Keep my heart strong. _____
2. And when e-vil is a-round me, _____ I have no fear. _____

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



1. Ev - 'ry - one who be - lies in him, they will live for ev - er,
2. Ev - 'ry - one who be - lies in him, Al - le - lu - ia,



1. they will live for ev - er, they will live for ev - er as the Lord has said.
2. al - le - lu - ia, they will live for ev - er as the Lord has said.

GOSPEL: *John 3: 14-21*

This is a reading from the Gospel of John.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

God's Chosen One must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him will live forever.

Yes, God loved the world so much that God sent the only Son into the world. Everyone who believes in him will live forever.

God did not send the Son to judge the world, but to save it.

And everyone who believes in him is saved.

But those who refuse to believe in him are already being judged.

And this is how they are judged: when the light came into the world, they chose to stay in the dark instead of coming into the light.

They liked to stay in the dark, because the things they are doing are very evil.

In the dark, no one can see the evil things they are doing.

But those who do good things love to come into the light.

In the light, everyone can see they do good things because they believe in God.

This is the Good News of the Lord.

After the first reading, ask the children what they remember of the reading. Since this reading is neither story nor dialogue, it may not be easily retained by children. The following questions may help to concretize it for them:

- Do you earn money?
- Do you pay for your food at home?
- Do you pay to have a room in your home?
- Do you buy and pay for your own clothes?
- Why not?
- Who takes care of these things? Why?

Explain to the children that we do not have to earn God's love. God always loves us and takes care of us. Our parents don't stop loving us and taking care of us even when we do things that are wrong. God doesn't stop loving us and doing things for us even when we sin. Jesus showed how much he loves us by dying for sinners. He did this freely, it was God's gift to all of us. We didn't have to earn it or work for it. Jesus saved us because he loves us.

Ask the children if they help with the things that need to be done at home.

- Do you help your parents?
- Do you clean up your room?
- Do you help with the table for dinner?
- Do you run errands for your parents?
- Why?

Explain to the children that we do good things for others because they love us and we love them. We don't help at home so that our parents will love us, but because they already love us. We do good things for others, like Jesus did, because he loves us and saved us.

NOTE: Unfortunately not all children live in the loving situation assumed in the above reflections. The catechists will know better than I what image is appropriate in those cases.

After the Gospel, ask the children:

- Do robbers break in when all the lights are on in the house?
- Why not?
- When do they break in?

Help the children understand that this is what Jesus meant when he said that people who do evil things like to be in the dark, but people who do good things like to come into the light. People who do bad things have to hide. People who do good things don't have to hide.

Jesus is the light of the world. People who are evil stay away from Jesus. But people who do good things like to be with him. They know that he is happy with the things they do.

We don't ever have to be afraid. We know God loves us. God loves us very much and sent Jesus to tell us that. Anyone who believes in Jesus will live forever with him. It is because we are loved so much that we do good things.