

The Living Word

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B

14 March 2021

First Reading 2 Chr 36:14-16. 19-23

The wrath and the mercy of the Lord are revealed in the exile and liberation of his people.

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke: through Jeremiah, 'Until this land has enjoyed its Sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep Sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.'

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: 'Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up."'

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 136. R. v.6

**(R.) Let my tongue be silenced,
if ever I forget you!**

1. By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat and wept,
remembering Zion;
on the poplars that grew there
we hung our harps. (R.)
2. For it was there that they asked us,
our captors, for songs,
our oppressors, for joy.
'Sing to us,' they said,
'one of Zion's songs.' (R.)
3. O how could we sing
the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! (R.)
4. O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not,
if I prize not Jerusalem
above all my joys! (R.)

Second Reading Eph 2:4-10

When we were dead through sins, he brought us to life.

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved - and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 3:16

**Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
God loved the world so much, he gave us
his only Son,
that all who believe in him might have
eternal life.**

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Gospel Jn 3:14-21

God sent his Son into the world that we might be saved through him.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so that everyone who believes may have eternal
life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not
be lost
but may have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but so that through him the world might be
saved.

No one who believes in him will be condemned;
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned
already,

because he has refused to believe
in the name of God's only Son.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the world
men have shown they prefer
darkness to the light

because their deeds were evil.

And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it,
for fear his actions should be exposed;
but the man who lives by the truth
comes out into the light,

so that it may be plainly seen that what he does
is done in God.'



Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

How does God picture us? St Paul reveals one of God's favourite ways of regarding us.

'We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus, to live the good life as from the beginning He had intended us to live it.'

Just as an artist respects the medium he or she is working in, whether it be oils or crayon, so too God respects us as human beings with free will. Which is why His works of art don't always look the way He intended!

Now, if one has a work of art in the house, a picture or print that means a lot to you, or perhaps the first sketch by a child, do you put it in the darkest corner of the room? Or do you allow just enough light to fall on it so as to reveal how terrific it is, why it gives you pleasure? Of course, the latter.

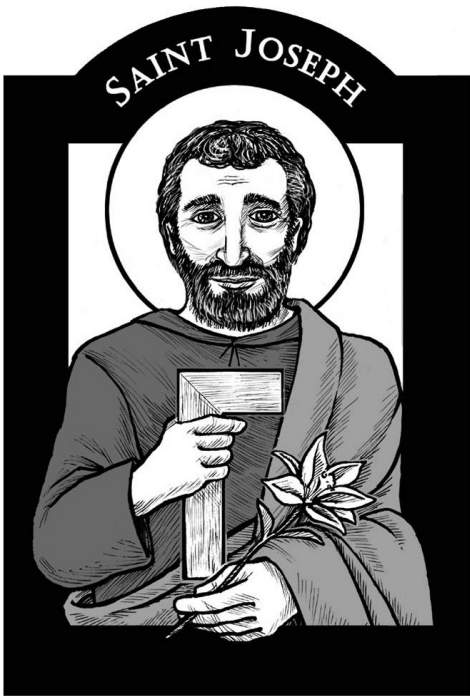
Now, if you and I are God's work of art, God wants exactly the same. He wants us to be revealed in the light. What sort of light? Christ our Light.

Of course, it might be necessary for the Light to dispel some darkness, some shadow dimension of our lives. In this regard Christ is a healing Light, but this is so that he might illuminate us in a way which more clearly reveals the love which the Divine Artist has for His creation.

We might take a moment to pray for the courage to expose ourselves to Christ's healing light this Lent to be more beautifully illuminated at Easter.

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Wordsearch

Try to find these words:

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------|
| condemn | love | save |
| eternal | never | send |
| everyone | Nicodemus | Son |
| faith | people | world |

N N C Q C K W H V P W U U J T F
 L M M J N U O T Q I N H R J S D
 Z F A R S E R O S T E N W Z E L
 A A L O S E L U H N C K H S N N
 S I Y F V R D X O Q X Z W Y D I
 E T B E E E Y Y C U Q U H T W C
 U H N C P S R X Z K M V R B B O
 D O A E X E V X T X O P J Y C D
 J D O I V R Q E M O P J S G N E
 H S C E Y F E F L L P I Y Y D M
 B A W O T X Q S A P X T N L P U
 X D M D N K S N C L O F N O W S
 B P F I A D R O X I L E E V O L
 D C O J F E E Z N N C X P Y U B
 I B I W T Q F M P Z G R C P Q I
 X K R E J K V O N B L J Q T P K
 J T E V A S X F L F U U F L X X

St Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary and adoptive father of Jesus, was a descendant of King David and a carpenter by trade. During his betrothal to Mary he became distressed when he heard that she was with child, but an angelic vision reassured him that this was all part of God's plan. After Jesus' birth he was warned in a dream to flee with his family to Egypt, in order to escape from King Herod. Joseph showed great faith in his willingness to do whatever God asked of him. St Joseph is the patron saint of many causes including families, expectant mothers, workers and people in doubt.

Crossword



Down

- 1: male offspring
- 2: humans
- 5: all people
- 7: to believe in something is to have this
- 9: to care about someone very much
- 11: rescue

Across

- 3: the opposite of always
- 4: God did not send his Son to c_____ people
- 6: those who have faith in God will have _____ life and never die
- 8: Earth is also called the _____
- 10: Jesus told this man about God's love for us
- 12: the opposite of receive

