



AMDG
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
YEAR B, 14TH MARCH 2021



**God loved the world
so much ...**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way,
grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.

God's love for humanity is proclaimed throughout the liturgy this Sunday. The readings shed light on our story of salvation, and reflect the depth of eternal love that God expresses for all people.

The *First Reading* describes how, for centuries, prophets had proclaimed the truth at the heart of God's covenant with Israel. The people turned away from this wisdom. They became captives, not only to hostile invaders, but also to their sinful ways. But even though the hearts of the people turned away from God, God's love remained. In time this love would become flesh in the person of Jesus.

The *Psalms* is a song of lament and of deep longing for freedom from slavery and captivity. Following the long months of restrictions from the virus, we, too, truly know the pain of this loss and yearn for freedom.

In the *Second Reading*, Paul describes the depth of God's love and his understanding of the suffering of humanity. Paul explains how the incarnation, life and death of Jesus restore us all to the life we were always meant to live. Today's *Gospel* links Israel's story of exile with the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus. The deep truth at the heart of God's covenant is revealed to Nicodemus, who represents the ancient knowledge and law of Israel. Jesus brings light and love to a meeting that takes place in darkness and ignorance.

Let us pray that our own hearts, and the hearts of all humanity, will turn towards the light of God's love. May we, in the way we live our lives, each make manifest God's love for the world.

SECOND READING EPHESIANS 2: 4–10

God loves 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.

As I come to pray today, I bring to mind an intention to deepen my awareness of God's love at work in my life.

With my focus on this intention, I adopt an alert, prayerful posture, and allow my body and mind to slow down and become still before God.

When I feel prepared, I slowly read through the passage.

What do I notice after this first reading through?

Once more, and remaining focused on my loving intention, I read and reread the text. I allow myself to pause prayerfully and dwell upon key words or phrases.

Why does my heart settle on these words?

Perhaps I imagine God looking upon me with eyes of wonder and joy; eyes that see me as a work of art, even when my own eyes and mind form a very different impression of myself.

Held in such a loving gaze, I turn towards God and share the deepest longing of my heart and the depth of my feelings as I would to a dear and trusted friend.

God listens ... I listen ...

God holds all my concerns ... I allow myself to be held.

I remain as long as I need within this loving gaze.

When I feel ready, I close my prayer with heartfelt words of thanks, and by making a slow prayerful sign of the cross.

GOSPEL JOHN 3: 14-21

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 or she 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 and women 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 their actions should be exposed;
but the one who lives by the truth comes out into the light,
so that it may be plainly seen that what that person does
is done in God.

I prepare myself to pray with the Gospel in whatever way suits me best.

When I have come to a point of stillness, I begin to read the passage.

It may help my prayer to imagine the scene of this secretive meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus. Earlier in the Gospel we are told it takes place under the cover of darkness. I ponder the significance of this detail.

Perhaps I picture myself hidden in the shadows of night, watching and listening in to this conversation.

What did Jesus need Nicodemus to hear ... and to understand?

What does Jesus need *me* to hear ... and to understand?

Do I have any questions for Jesus?

I imagine putting them to him, and in silence I listen.

I ask for the grace I need to turn back towards the light.

I draw my prayer to an end by saying *Our Father* ...

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

God loved us with so much love that he was generous
with his mercy.

Second Reading

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son:
everyone who believes in him has eternal life. *Gospel Acclamation*

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

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

2 Chron. 36: 14–16, 19–23; Ps. 136 (137); Eph. 2: 4–10; John 3: 14–21



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as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

Second Reading



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

JESUIT
Ministries



Prepared by St Beuno's Outreach in the Diocese of Wrexham

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