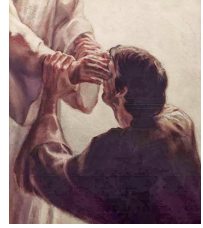




AMDG
FOURTH SUNDAY
IN LENT
YEAR A,
22ND MARCH 2020



**‘Wake up from your sleep
and Christ will shine on you!’**

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.

Each year, *Laetare* (‘Rejoice’) Sunday gives encouragement to all those travelling the Lenten road to Holy Week and Easter.

Today’s readings affirm that I do not make this journey alone. I am offered a helping hand by the Lord who is my shepherd and guide (*Psalms*). By leading me on the right path in goodness, he is being true to his name. I want for nothing. Though I may have been walking in darkness, even sometimes feeling as if I am trapped in the valley of the shadow of death, I am now exposed to the light of the Lord.

And the Lord, looking with love at my heart rather than at external appearances (*First Reading*), illuminates me, turning me into light (*Second Reading*).

Jesus curing the man born blind is a well-known piece of scripture (*Gospel*). Perhaps I am like the one without sight who can suddenly see. And finding myself looking at the Son of Man, I can come to believe and to trust in him even more deeply.

Reason, indeed, to rejoice today!

SECOND READING EPHESIANS 5: 8–14

You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth. Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast. The things which are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by the light will be illuminated and anything illuminated turns into light. That is why it is said: Wake up from your sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

I come to prayer noting how I am feeling at this stage of the Lenten journey. I may come joyfully ... or it may be that 'Rejoice' Sunday doesn't seem to be lifting my spirits today?

But however I am feeling, I try to become still, entrusting myself to the Lord.

I read the passage several times, simply allowing the words that seem significant to speak to me.

That word '*light*' – what does that signify?

Perhaps a shining brightness ...? Or maybe a lightness of touch, the opposite of something heavy or weighed down?

I ponder...

The phrase '*you were darkness once*' may also strike me.

What was that darkness like?

Perhaps I notice that some parts of my life remain hidden, or kept secret.

I ask Christ to help me trust him enough to expose my secret actions and thoughts to him.

I may ask myself what, for me, represents '*complete goodness*'.

Who, in my life, shows me '*right living and truth*', and how do they help me to respond to any difficulties I may be struggling with?

I ponder how I might '*discover*' and discern what the Lord wants of me.

I might like to end my prayer by imagining myself waking, standing up and stretching in the glow of Christ's light, so that by knowing him more deeply, I might fall in love with him more completely.

Glory be to the Father ...

GOSPEL JOHN 9: 1–41 (part)

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored. His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.' They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet,' replied the man. 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied, 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him.

After reading the text, I might like to approach this scene imaginatively.

I pay attention to what I notice about the blind man, about Jesus's response, about the man's neighbours, the crowds and the Pharisees.

Then, what do I sense going on within me?

As I pray the text again, I might imagine myself as the one needing healing.

Jesus touches the parts of me he knows need healing.

What is his touch like? How do I feel now?

When the man had been driven away, Jesus goes to find him.

In prayer, can I let myself be 'found' by Jesus? I look at him with my new sight, and I let myself be looked at, allowing my love for him to deepen.

Perhaps I feel 'sent', wanting to tell others about him ...

If I can, I end my prayer saying very slowly, '*Lord I believe*' ...

I worship him in whatever way that is comfortable for me.

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

People look at appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart.

First Reading

Near restful waters he leads me
to revive my drooping spirit.

Psalm

You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord.

Second Reading

'Lord, I believe!'

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to reflect further

1 Samuel 16: 1, 6–7, 10–13; Ps. 22 (23); Ephesians 5: 8–14; John 9: 1–41



Stanley Spencer
(1891–1959),
'Rising from sleep
in the morning'
(*Christ in the
Wilderness*, 1940)



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