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4th Sunday of Lent - 19 March 2023

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19 March 2023

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Pastoral Note: Fourth Sunday of Lent – Second Scrutiny

Vincent Glynn

The second Scrutiny is celebrated after the homily in which the celebrant is encouraged to explain the meaning of the scrutiny in the light of the Lenten liturgy and in particular to encourage the elect that through the prayer of exorcism 'their spirit is filled with Christ the Redeemer, who is light of the world' as found in the gospel of the man born blind proclaimed on this Sunday (RCIA 130).

Introduction

Water. Light. Life. As we continue our journey with our elect, this Sunday, we read the second of the three great gospels of the Scrutinies – the story of a man-born-blind. Lord, we believe, help us to see!

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you heal our blindness to the Father's love. Lord have mercy.

You lead us out of darkness. Christ have mercy.

You are the Messiah. Lord have mercy.

Collect

Oration

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.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

With the penitential season past the half way mark, our Mass and collect reflect a lightened mood. The rubrics indicate that rose vestments may be used, instrumental music permitted and the altar decorated with flowers. In harmony with this, the opening prayer is replete with wonder, haste and eagerness. Already in view are the great celebrations of the Paschal Mystery, the solemn celebrations for which we are prepared by Lent. The invocation of God names in wonderment the central tenet of Christian belief: that through the Word all humanity is reconciled to God. The petition seeks the grace that we will respond. Corresponding to God's reconciling initiative, we ask that the Christian people may 'hasten' towards the celebration of humanity's redemption. The sense of forward and speedy movement mirrors the fairly constant liturgical vocabulary of 'running' towards what God has offered. It also has a sense of Peter's excited venturing to the empty tomb. But it is not careless haste. Rather we are seeking a heart that is keen for the Easter feast, and a faith that is lively to its promise. In part this eager commitment is not simply because the faithful are saved, but because together with everyone across the pages of history, all humanity has been reconciled to God. This is the wonder of the divine reconciliation. The prayer was especially created for the Missal of Paul VI to bring this sense to contemporary believers in that it is pieced together from two ancient sources: a petition from the writings of Pope Leo the Great grafted onto an invocation from an ancient Roman Lenten prayer.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Our first reading tells the story of the choice of David and his anointing. We learn that things are not always as they appear. The smallest and the least, so often rejected by the world, are almost always the ones chosen to fulfil God's plan of salvation.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 22(23)

The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.

This most famous of all the psalms reminds us that, with God as our shepherd, we are rested and renewed, banqueted and anointed. God's care for us is all that we will ever need.

Second Reading

Ephesians 5:8-14

The contrast between life in darkness and our new life in Christ, a life lived in the light, is highlighted by today's second reading.

Gospel Reading

John 9:1-41 or John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

The healing of the man-born-blind highlights the journey of faith of those believe – the man-born-blind moves towards the ‘sight’ of faith, while those opposed to Jesus move further into sightless, spiritual darkness.

Reflection

The pool of Siloam mentioned in today’s Gospel is quite an engineering feat, certainly for the time in which it was built. The tunnel which feeds it cuts through rock. It carried Jerusalem’s water supply up from the Kidron Valley. God, through the work of the engineers sent the waters from Kidron to Siloam, which means ‘sent.’

Jesus uses the incident of the man-born-blind to teach us about a tragedy far greater than physical blindness – spiritual blindness. The man-born-blind cannot see. It’s neither his fault nor his parents. Physical blindness was not uncommon among the contemporaries of Jesus. Lack of hygiene and a harsh, glaring climate contributed to this.

But Jesus is particularly grieved by the opposition of the Pharisees and their spiritual blindness in refusing to accept him as their Messiah. You see, the Pharisees knew better. Well, they thought they did. They were educated in the Law and the Prophets. They knew what the Messiah should look like. Or they thought they did. Truth be told, they probably did recognise Jesus as Messiah – deep down. But they rejected him. Because they did not like the message which he preached. Indeed, the great tragedy of the age of Jesus is that so many who were physically sighted were spiritually unsighted when it came to recognising the Messiah in their midst.

If we think about it, we might just come to realise how unnecessary spiritual blindness is in our own time, too. Most of us are not physically blind in this age of medical technology and better health. But we need not live in spiritual blindness either in this age of better education. None of us need to suffer the blindness of ignorance, bigotry, hatred, inhumanity, incivility. None of us are out in there in the Judaeon countryside of two thousand years ago, in blinding sun, working from pre-dawn until darkness, and too exhausted to spend time with God in prayer, or too busy to spend time at Mass more regularly. None of us is so educationally marginalised that we cannot read some pages of Sacred Scripture or a prayer card in order to nourish our spiritual lives.

For today, as always, the story of this man-born-blind in today’s Gospel is also very much our story and the story of our elect as they prepare for Baptism at Easter. Our elect, like all of us, is called to see Jesus. They are called to let the blindness which their old life has created be washed away by the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For those already baptised, we rejoice once again that our sinfulness has been washed away forever in our own Pool of Siloam in the Sacrament of Baptism. For our elect and all of us, we are challenged that once we have seen Jesus with our eyes, we will come then to see him and know him in our minds and love him with our hearts. Like the man-born-blind, to believe in Jesus as the One. With the man-born-blind, to say to Jesus: Lord, I believe and to bow down in awe and worship of Him.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we hasten towards Easter in this time of Lent, let us turn to God in prayer with complete trust that our petitions will be answered.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church, especially Pope Francis, as well as all the other clergy and lay leaders, that they will embrace in synodality, the journey towards the renewal.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the People of God that the words of St Paul may be fulfilled in us so that we may have the grace to become the children of light in a world of darkness.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the people in authority, especially for the leaders in Australia that they may work for unity and peace in our nation without the blindness of prejudice.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the people who are burdened with suffering. We pray especially today for those afflicted with a mental illness, that they find comfort through their family and health carers.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those gathered here today in God's name. May we have the grace to discover our blindness and call out to God for help, and through this receive insight and be able to be alive to the kingdom of God.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for parents, teachers and catechists and all who teach others the stories that draw them into the life of Christ. Give them strength to continue their ministry and bring others into the light of knowledge and truth.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Merciful Shepherd, look down on your flock and listen to our prayer as we turn to you in time of need. We make this prayer in the power of the Spirit, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year A (19 March 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
Amazing grace	29				450	437
Because the Lord is my shepherd	66					
Christ, be our light		3			540	404
Christ is the world's light				643	467	
Church of God				652	471	480
City of God	57				453	498
Come to me, all who labour				660	470	228
From ashes to the living font					289	
I want to walk as a child of the light					514	
Open my eyes	166				582	
Out of darkness	134					504
Praise the one who breaks the darkness					584	
Shepherd me, O God					597	
Rejoice in the Lord always			75			
Rejoice, the Lord is king				799	377	
The light of Christ				826		
The living God my shepherd is				827		
The Lord is my light		73		594	481	28
The Lord is my shepherd	26			830	619	506
The Lord is my shepherd, my shield				831		
The Lord my shepherd rules my life				829		
The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want	144			833	620	473
There's a wideness in God's mercy				838	624	
Tree of life					300	307
Word of God, come down on earth					644	

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Shepherd me, O God		59	
Jesus, bread of life	80		
Christ, be our light		105	
The Lord is my shepherd	127		250

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 22: *The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.*

	CWB	GA	JOBA	LPA	PM
Psalm 22	34a, 51, 589, 590	23, 25	pg. 34	pg.36	pg. 18

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Be with us (FWS) Based on Ps 90/91 [Gathering, Gifts]

Create a new heart (FWS) Based on Ps 50/51 [Gathering, Gifts, Recessional]

You are my shepherd (FWS) Based on Ps 22/23 [Gifts, Communion]

Live in the light (TWB) [Gifts]

The light of my life (TCS) [Gifts]

This is the time (TT) [Gathering, Recessional]

Lenten acclamation (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]

Lenten gospel acclamation – Mass Jubilee (MJC) [Gospel Acclamation]

Turn back to God (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]