



Fourth Sunday of Lent

Authentic Catholic education for the flourishing of human and faith development

Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Through the Holy Spirit, give us the gifts of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Guide us in deepening our understanding of Christ and the Gospel message, and reveal in us our true identity. Make us bold in proclaiming this Truth with fidelity to your Word and your people. Help us to think, speak and live the Gospel in order to fulfil our evangelising mission of making disciples.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction



“There is a long tradition in our Church that values and promotes education and learning. Authentic Catholic education is an essential support for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

In this week’s Gospel passage Jesus

is revealing to Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, some marvellous truths about Himself, His identity as the Son of God, and why He came into the world. This message of the identity of Jesus and His Good News for the world is one that the Christian community today continues to share and make known through evangelisation, catechesis and witness.

Gospel Reading



Audio:
Week 4 Gospel Reading



John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

“And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and

people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

Reflection – Kelly Paget

Executive Officer
Office of the Bishop



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” This beloved scripture verse is one of the most widely recognised and used quotes from the Gospels; it encapsulates the meaning of Christ’s salvific action in the world. The quote, which is embedded in the Gospel reading for 4th Sunday of Lent, is part of an exchange between the Pharisee Nicodemus and Jesus. Earlier in the chapter, Nicodemus identifies Christ as Rabbi, a teacher who has come from God. He came to visit Jesus in the night, under the veil of darkness to begin a conversation. He appears as an inquisitive student, who seems

confused by the teaching of Jesus. Through the conversation, Christ reveals his nature and mission to him.

Jesus, through the Gospel writer John, explains very succinctly three key points; that He is the Son of God, that He was sent by God to give access to eternal life and that access will be given to those who believe in Him. Importantly this passage goes on to identify Christ as the Light of the World, and by this light, judgement of those who follow the Lord will be found. Those who sin remain in the darkness, but those who love the Lord will come into the light, despite the fact the light will illuminate their failings.

Is this not the call of Lent, or in fact the call of our whole Christian life? To step out of the darkness and into the light, even with the knowledge that our weaknesses and frailties will become known. What this passage points out to us, is that it is impossible to be a believer of Jesus and yet sit in the dark and do nothing. We are called to be in the light, with all our vulnerability, witnessing God’s love to all.

It is in this honest witnessing, exposed by the light of God’s merciful love, that others will come to know Christ’s love. So often we get caught up in the theory of teaching the facts and figures of life and faith. And yet, true faith, coming from a relationship with the loving and ever-present God, can only be learnt through experience. Nicodemus had the facts and figures, but it was only through his experience and

relationship with Jesus that he was ultimately able to be drawn to the light. J.R.R Tolkien, one of the modern world’s most famous authors, was often asked if his writings, in particular the epic trilogy of The Lord of The Rings, was a Christian allegory. Although a devout Catholic, Tolkien himself would comment on his dislike of allegory, or a “purposed domination of the author.” He instead noted the “applicability” of his stories to the Christian message, where the power resides with the reader. In this way his books were not written to shine the Light of Christ, but rather he allowed the Light to be refracted through them.

As the Body of Christ in the world today, Jesus gave the Church His mission. In doing so, we could rephrase the verse from John’s Gospel to: *Jesus did not send the Church into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.* This call to evangelisation, to teach, will only be fruitful if we are first witnesses to an authentic Christian Life. May we continue to recognise the Light in the world, then like a mirror reflect that Light, so others may also be drawn into its brilliant and saving power.

Reflection Questions for Discussion:



- 1. Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**

- 2. In our moments of darkness, what questions do we bring to Jesus?**
- 3. Who are the witnesses that have drawn us and continue to draw us, to the Light?**
- 4. How are we allowing the Light of Christ to be refracted through our lives, our work?**

A Personal Story



Audio:
Week 4 Personal Story – Veronica Smith



Veronica Smith offers us a personal reflection on the importance of Catholic education and formation in her life.

Veronica is a young adult, from the Diocese of Broken Bay, with a fire for God and a zeal for His holy Church on earth. She is a member of the Asquith Parish youth group, as well as President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society Asquith Youth Conference. Veronica is also a student of Law and Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. In her spare time, she works at Kmart and is a lover of Matcha Iced Lattes.

