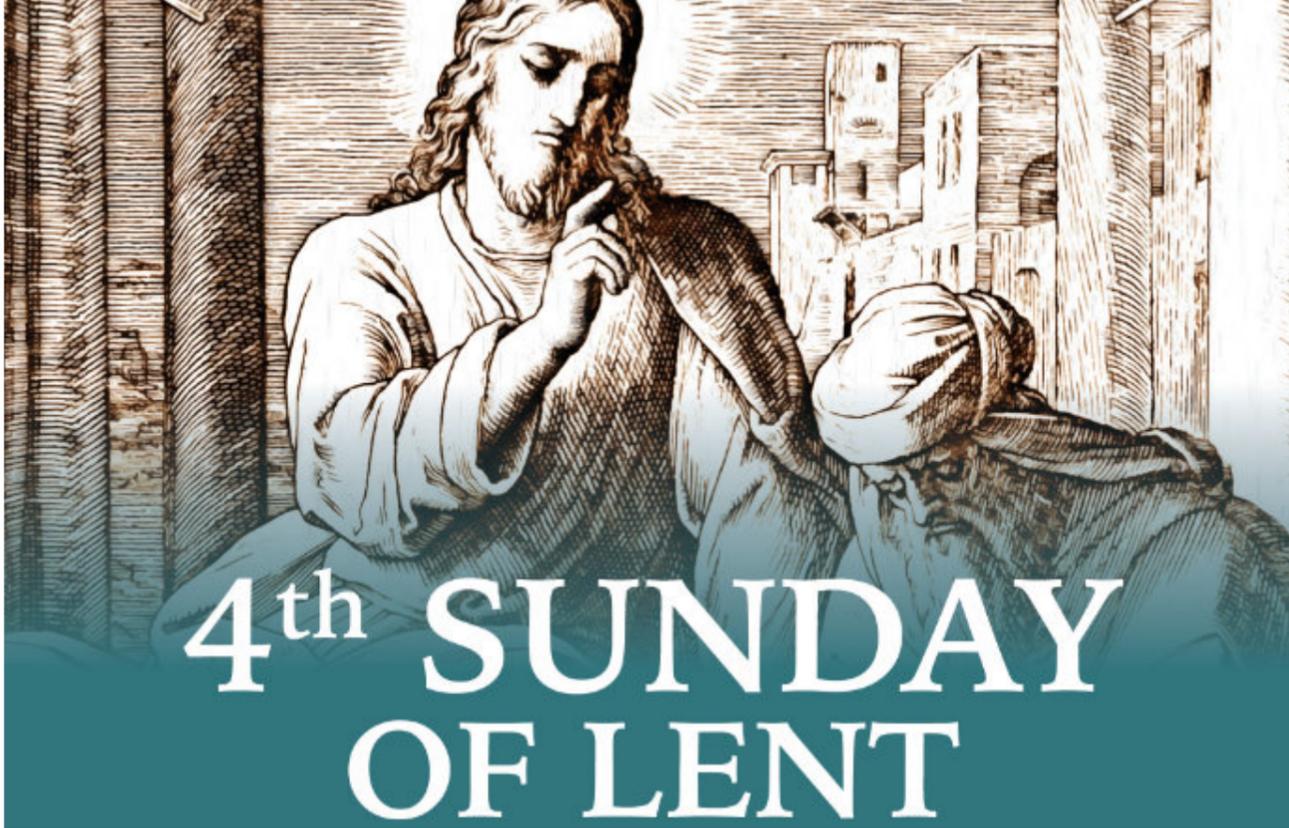




parish newsletter

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Year B) | 14 March 2021

Reflecting on the Gospel



doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed, what gospel is that?" When we listen to those descriptive and provocative words, do they resonate with anything in our experience? As messengers of the Gospel, we are called to bring an unsettling message to the world. If our main concern is protecting our self-interests, then we are missing something huge! Many really struggle with being rejected, dismissed, or perceived as someone who is speaking out of turn. There is a counter cultural message that must be preached that clearly sides with the poor, marginalised, victimised, oppressed, neglected, disregarded, and lost souls throughout the world. There is a widespread misery among the peoples that is all too often allowed to fester with no one coming forward to offer a change or resolution. The Church can speak to the needed structural changes that will allow people to earn just wages, feed their families and share abundantly and equally in the gifts of God's good earth. Such a vision is not some optimistic fairy tale, but the vision of the Creator himself. Lent reminds us, as St. Oscar Romero also states, that, "we are workers, not master builder, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own." We are not called to labour simply for the benefit of the here and now but of the "what is to come." Our myopic vision can be replaced by a more far reaching Lenten vision that is much greater and deeper in scope. As long as we are carrying the right blueprints with us and our thoughts extend beyond ourselves, then even the little things we do and the simplest prayer we utter go a long way. They give witness to our preference for the light of Christ and not the darkness of error and sin.

Is there something to Lent that goes beyond our own spiritual house cleaning and spiritual refinement? Yes, there is! It has to do with listening and learning so that we can take up the task of the Gospel with

greater clarity and fortitude. While the spiritual refocusing of Lent is necessary, the fruit of this Lenten conversion has much more to do with learning how we can be a better Church than it does

about our eternal salvation. Salvation is a gift that flows out of God's unconditional Mercy and cannot be merited. The spiritual maturity we can experience as a result of our Lenten disciplines

serves to reduce the anxiety and apprehension we may experience as messengers of good, but very challenging, and unsettling, news.

St. Oscar Romero said that, "a church that

The Church can speak

Everyday Stewardship

Tracey Earl Welliver, MTS

This morning came a little earlier than I would have liked — Daylight Savings Time always does. Sometimes that morning sunlight seems more intrusive than illuminating. You're still half-lost in sleep, and that sun is demanding of you a lot more than you're ready to give.

I've said it, and I'm sure you've said it, too. "Just five more minutes." You hit the "snooze" button on your iPhone once (maybe twice? Show of hands?) and turn away from the window.

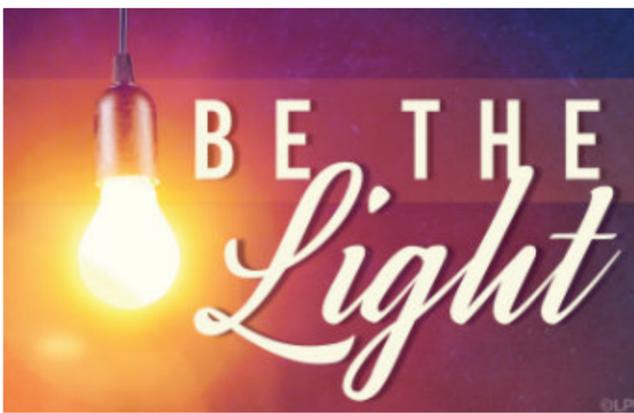
So many kings of the Old Testament were steadfast in their sleepy ways, rejecting the light their God tried to share with them. Likewise, John tells us that, though Light — Christ — was sent into the world, the world preferred darkness.

Sometimes it seems, when reading through Scrip-

ture, that all throughout salvation history, God has been trying to pull back the curtains, to rouse us from our defiant slumber. And we resist Him. Time and time again, we resist Him.

Light brings a certain responsibility with it. It seems to compel productivity. Furthermore, there's no hiding in the light. Any photographer worth his salt knows how to manipulate it, highlighting the good and casting some merciful shade on the bad.

As we enter into the fourth week of Lent, we're getting so close to the main event. Can we handle the light that will come on Easter morning, bursting into the tomb as the stone is rolled away? Can we keep ourselves from hitting the "snooze" button on our souls, and sit up to face the dawn of a new day?



Live the Liturgy

Inspiration for the Week

God's messengers always seem to get mocked. They speak a truth that some folks do not want to hear. While on the one hand we admire them, we also are quite happy keeping them at a distance. After all, they are not referring to me but someone else, aren't they? We often wrongly conclude that because we may be more avant-garde, contemporary, politically sensitive, and nontraditional, we are somehow more in the light than others. People tend to prefer darkness

more than light, even the most spiritually sensitive among us. The light always carries with it the richness of God's mercy and compassion which see beyond ideologies and concepts to relationships that cultivate life, earthly and eternal. Every hand of compassion and mercy extended to a human being must always point back to God. The call always involves ordering our lives in accord with our truth and essence of being. As God never forgets us, we must never forget God. Now is the time to take stock of our infidelity and return to the light, even though it is difficult to look at.



For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.



First Reading
Their enemies burnt the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious objects. (2 Chr 36:19)

Psalm
O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not! (Ps 136)

Second Reading
For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them. (Eph 2:10)

Gospel Acclamation
Glory and Praise to you! God Loved the world so much that he gave his only Son: everyone who believed in him has eternal life. Glory and praise to you!

Gospel
For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

Masses this Week

14	FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT	2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23/Ps 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6 [6ab]/Eph 2:4-10/Jn 3:14-21 10.30 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Anthony, Alice & Edward Wallis 17.00 Mass St Mary's Intentions of John Hepple
15	Monday	Is 65:17-21/Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b [2a]/Jn 4:43-54 12.05 Mass St Mary's Edmund Leonard (RIP)
16	Tuesday	Ez 47:1-9, 12/Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9 [8]/Jn 5:1-16 12.05 Mass St Mary's Flora Thompson (RIP)
17	St Patrick	Is 49:8-15/Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18 [8a]/Jn 5:17-30 12.05 Mass St Mary's Doris & Laurie Moore (RIP)
18	Thursday St Cyril of Jerusalem	Ex 32:7-14/Ps 106:19-20, 21-22, 23 [4a]/Jn 5:31-47 12.05 Mass St Mary's Tom Agnus (RIP)
19	ST JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF MARY	2 Sm 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16/Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29 [37]/Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22/Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Lk 2:41-51a 12.05 Mass St Mary's Leonora Conroy (RIP)
20	St Cuthbert, Diocesan Patron	Jer 11:18-20/Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12 [2a]/Jn 7:40-53 11.00 Mass St Mary's Sandra Wilson (RIP) 18:00 Vigil Mass St Cecilia's John Whelan (RIP)
21	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT	Jer 31:31-34/Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15 [12a]/Heb 5:7-9/Jn 12:20-33 10.30 Mass St Mary's John Smith & Norah Campbell (RIP) 17.00 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish

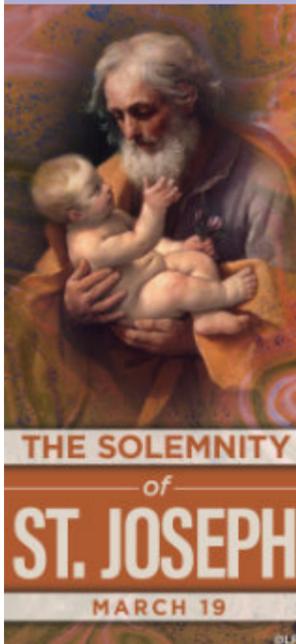
MINISTRY TO THE SICK

Christopher,
Paula, Liz



Sr M Cyril
Dora Tye
John Whelan
George Felton

If you would like a name added to our prayer list, please email or call the parish office.

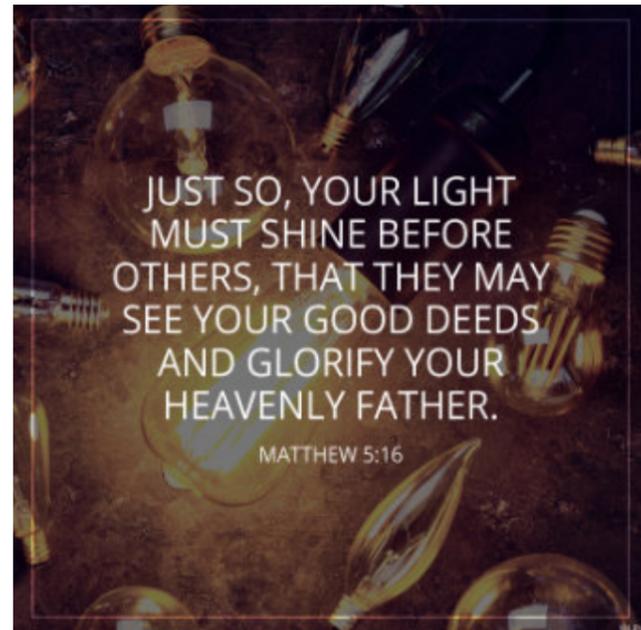


Questions for the Week

First Reading: The author of 2 Chronicles reflects on how historically God's fidelity and mercy was often met with Israel's disobedience and arrogance. How does the Lenten journey provoke an examination of conscience for you and your faith life?

Second Reading: Paul speaks of our faith and our salvation as "the gift of God" to us. In what ways do you show appreciation for God's grace?

Gospel: Jesus taught Nicodemus that God sent His only Son into the world to offer eternal life to believers. Who in your life needs to hear this message?



St Joseph, Pray for us.

Pope Saint John Paul II on St Joseph

Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as St Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus' upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, that is the Church of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model.

At a difficult time in the Church's history, Pope Pius IX, wishing to place her under the powerful patronage of the holy patriarch Joseph, declared him 'Patron the Universal Church.' For Pius IX this was no idle gesture, since by virtue of the sublime dignity which God had granted this most faithful servant Joseph, 'the Church, after the Blessed Virgin Mary, his spouse, has always held him in great honour and showered him with praise, having recourse to him amid tribulations.

Besides trusting in Joseph's sure protection, the Church also trusts in his noble example, which transcends all individual states of life and serves as a model for the entire Christian community, whatever the condition and duties of each of its members may be.

Pope Paul VI invited us to invoke Joseph's patronage 'as the Church has been wont to do in these recent times.'

Even today we have many reasons to pray in a similar way: 'Most beloved father, dispel the evil of falsehood and sin... graciously assist us from heaven in our struggle with the powers of darkness... and just as once you saved the Child Jesus from mortal danger, so now defend God's holy Church from the snares of her enemies and from all adversity.' Today we still have good reason to commend everyone to St Joseph.

May St Joseph obtain for the Church and for the world, as well as for each of us, the blessing of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Fr Christopher and Fr Emmanuel are members of St Joseph's Missionary Society, more commonly known as the Mill Hill Missionaries, named after the place in London where they were founded in 1866.

Herbert Vaughan, who later became the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, founded his missionary society and put it under the protection of St Joseph, whom he considered to be the first foreign missionary. Joseph took the child Jesus and Mary into Egypt to escape from Herod. In doing so he stands as the first of countless missionaries who have left their homes in order to proclaim Christ in foreign lands.

Every year Mill Hill Missionaries extend an invitation to pray a novena to St Joseph. In this year of St Joseph, we hope you can join us by praying along after Mass or by following the prayers on the parish website.

Please also pray for Fr Christopher and Fr Emmanuel and their new mission in Sunderland.

News & Announcements

Lent 2021

Join us online every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for the Rosary, Adoration and Stations of the Cross. See our parish website for details and to download the booklets so you can pray along with us.

Rewiring of St Mary's

Work has now begun on rewiring the St Mary's Church. You'll notice some disruption, especially on weekdays. Until the work is completed in about six weeks' time, all funerals will be held at St Cecilia's.

Additionally, because of the requirement to keep the church clean and COVID-safe for both worshippers and the electricians, certain areas might be blocked off and you may have to sit in different places. Please follow the guidance of the stewards when visiting the church.

Flock Notes

'God so loved the world, he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him many not be lost but may have eternal life.' Those words contain a brief but powerful summary of the whole of Jesus's ministry and the reason for his coming among us. God loves us and wants us to spend eternity with him in heaven! They tell us why God went through all the trouble of sending his Son even though he didn't need to: he did it out of love.

The story of the Bible is the story of how we humans have messed things up so much. Time and time again we have demonstrated our capacity to make crooked what God had made straight, to turn upside down what God had put the right

way up. Time and time again we demonstrate our unwillingness to listen to the prophets he sends us, to follow the laws he wrote for us: both the ones on stone tablets and the ones written in our hearts. We repeatedly demonstrate our capacity to hurt ourselves and others. Finally, despite revealing himself to us, we cling to our skewed images and flawed ideas of God.

Saint Augustine said, 'Only God could break through our deafness.' When we are so caught up in ourselves, only God can reach out to us and get our attention. Only God can bridge the divide we have put up between him and us. What's truly astounding is how God chose to do it: he took on flesh and blood and then died for us. 'No one has greater love than this,' he said, and

Holy Week 2021

Maundy Thursday

Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper: 6pm St Mary's

Good Friday

Celebration of the Lord's Passion: 3pm St Mary's
Celebration of the Lord's Passion: 3pm St Cecilia's
Stations of the Cross with Veneration: 7pm St Mary's

Holy Saturday

Easter Vigil: 8pm St Cecilia's

Easter Sunday

Holy Mass: 10.30am St Mary's
Holy Mass: 10.30am St Cecilia's
There is no 5pm Mass on Easter Sunday.

There are no tickets for any Holy Week Service; however, places are still limited. Please follow the instructions of the stewards at each service. Services will be live-streamed where possible.

then showed us by power of his example.

Today, the Lenten purple softens and becomes rose. We're invited to pause our journey for a moment and see how far God's grace has already brought us. God loves us, and despite our best efforts, nothing will frustrate his love for us or his plan for us to spend eternity with him. The proof of that is Jesus Christ, crucified, and our response is twofold: to be thankful and to love God back with all our heart, mind, body and soul.

Viktor Frankl said if we have a 'why' we can live any 'how'. Today we are given both the 'why' and the 'how'; they're the same, they're both love.



Our Lady of Mercy Parish • 27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ • (0191) 567 5354 • sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk
www.sunderlandcatholic.com

St Mary's Church • 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ • **St Cecilia's Church** • Ryhope Road • Sunderland • SR2 7TG

Fr Christopher Hancock MHM JCD, Parish Priest • christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com

Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHM, Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk

Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon

Canon Alexander Barrass, Priest in Residence



A parish of the Diocese of
Hexham and Newcastle
Reg Charity 1143450

