

22 March 2020
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

OPENING HYMN

Our joy O Lord is in you, Our joy, O Lord, is in you.
You gather us around your table, You gather us around your table.
You make us one at heart, In peace and love.

Our light you are and our life. Our light you are and our life.
You guide your people to the kingdom. You guide your people to the kingdom.
Your share with us, O Lord, Your peace and love.

or

A lamp for our steps has been given, A light has been set on a hill;
God's Word in its truth may be trusted, By all who surrender their will.
To order the chaos of darkness, Give hope in the midst of despair,
To make of our lives new creations, And lighten the burdens we bear.

Lord, grant to us eyes ever watchful, And ears ever open to hear,
The Word that in love you are speaking, The Word that dispels all our fear.
Your death-resurrection has claimed us, But pardon our flesh that is weak;
You know that our spirits are willing, Give strength with the Word that you speak.

(or choose an appropriate alternate hymn)

OPENING PRAYER

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

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 16:1-13

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23

R: The Lord is my shepherd: there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit. **R/**

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff; with these you give me comfort. **R/**

You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. **R/**

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever. **R/**

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:8-14

GOSPEL

John 9:1-41

REFLECTION

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 (**Psalm**). 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!

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Leader: Healed of his blindness, the man born blind proclaims, "Lord, I believe!"
With that faith in Christ the light of the world, we come to the Father in prayer.

Our response is: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. That Christ the light of the world may ever shine through the unity and charity of his Church and her leaders, especially Pope Francis and Cardinal Oswald, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

2. That Christ the light of the world may cast out rivalry and the worship of power from the minds of the leaders of nations, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

3. That Christ the light of the world may kindle hope in the hearts of those who are seriously ill and know that death is near, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

4. That Christ the light of the world may renew our faith as we practice prayer, fasting, and generosity, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

5. That Christ the light of the world may raise the dead to eternal glory, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Father, your Son continues to reveal his saving truth. As we offer these prayers for others, deepen our response to his revelation. We ask this, through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

Leader: At the Saviour's command and formed by Divine teaching, we dare to say"
(All say the Lord's Prayer together) Our Father, ...

CLOSING PRAYER

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world, illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendour of your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty and love you in all sincerity. Through Christ our Lord.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF FROM THE CORONAVIRUS

Almighty and merciful God, who show Your love to all creation everywhere, hear graciously the prayers we make for all those affected by the Coronavirus in various parts of the world.

We come before You asking for a quick control of the outbreak, for a healing of those affected, for the victims and their families.

We pray for the doctors doing research that an effective vaccine to combat the sickness is speedily found.

We pray for the Government and health authorities that they take appropriate steps for the good of the people. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

God of mercy and compassion, Look with pity upon me,
Father, let me call thee Father, T'is thy child returns to Thee.

Jesus Lord, I ask for mercy, Let me not implore in vain;
All my sins I now detest them, Never will I sin again.