

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Whoever leads the prayer can say:

This morning, on this 4th Sunday of Lent, exceptional circumstances prevent us from participating in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is also *Laetare* Sunday. We still rejoice, therefore, knowing that when we come together in His Name, Christ Jesus is in our midst. And we remember that through the Scriptures the Word of God Himself speaks to us and consoles us. His word is food for our life. During this celebration, we will pray especially for an end to this pandemic that threatens the world, for sick people and those who died, for their friends and families, and for all those who work in the service of others by fighting against this scourge. Let's prepare now to open our hearts, by being silent.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

After a moment of silence, let everyone begin by making the Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN

Chose an appropriate song.

The following are the readings of this 4th Sunday of Lent.

A reading from the first Book of Samuel

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

THE LORD SAID TO Samuel: "Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons."

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is here before him." But the LORD said to Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart." In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any one of these." Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here." Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The LORD said, "There—anoint him, for this is the one!" Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

—• PSALM 23 •—

R (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul. **R**

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff
that give me courage. **R**

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. **R**

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come. **R**

**A reading from
the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians**

5:8-14

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says:

“Awake, O sleeper,/ and arise from the dead,/ and Christ will give you light.”
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;/ whoever follows me will have the light of life.

**A reading from
the holy Gospel according to John**

9:1-41

[For the shorter form (9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38), omit the text in brackets.]

AS JESUS PASSED BY he saw a man blind from birth. [His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through

him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this,] he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam”—which means Sent—. So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is,” but others said, “No, he just looks like him.” He said, “I am.” [So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He replied, “The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went there and washed and was able to see.” And they said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I don’t know.”]

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.” So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

[Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?” His parents answered and said, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, “He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner.” He replied, “If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.” So they said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?” They ridiculed him and said, “You are that man’s disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from.” The man answered and said to them, “This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.”] They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him. [Then

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind."

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains."]

The Gospel of the Lord.

Allow for a few minutes of silence and meditation. In a family, the leader could offer some words of consolation at this moment, such as: "With you, Jesus, eternal Shepherd, your Church lacks nothing: you revive us in the baptism waters; upon us you pour out your Holy Spirit; you lead us to everlasting life in your Father's house. Jesus, we trust in you. Open our eyes to see your goodness and your presence, even in this hour of great difficulty."

M E D I T A T I O N O F T H E D A Y

Healing Our Blindness

The Fathers see in this [healing] the direct continuation of the creation of Adam. In the beginning, they say, God formed a body from the earth and breathed the breath of life into it. Now, in the fullness of time, the Logos made man, the right hand of the Father and creator, comes to heal the man whom Satan's darkness has made blind. And, that there may be no doubt that here is nothing except the continuation of that initial work...Jesus takes a bit of "the earth's slime," makes clay of it, and puts it on the eye of the blind man. The incarnate God moistens the earth with his spittle. Things of heaven and things of earth, earth's matter and God's life, just come together to make man and to make him anew. But the third element, the real new creation, the purification from what is old, from the corruption of sin, the healing from the blindness of sin as it is given to us, is water, the image of baptism....

The water takes his sickness from man, his leprosy and blindness. The name of the pool points to the mystical character of this water. It is called *Misus*, the one sent. Christ himself, the Messiah whom the Father has sent, is the pool, as he is the living water which fills the well of his Church; his blood poured out on the cross is the healing water for man, made sick and blind through sin. The death of Christ is his baptism for the forgiveness of sin and the illumination of his mind. It gives health and light, purity from sin, and faith. "I went and washed and saw, and I found faith in God" is the joyful speech of the man born blind in the sin of Adam and now healed....

The Church could not express more immediately or spontaneously her deep belief in the presence of the saving action of the new creation, when she celebrates the Mass.... Christ is present, he holds the earth which heals in his hand: it is his sacred flesh, his human, earthly body. The mysterious pool of Siloe is represented by the chalice, with its precious water and blood from the wound in the side of the crucified. Everything is ready for healing and for illumination. And we who were born blind are there. Baptism has indeed given us sight.

SISTER AEMILIANA LÖHR, O.S.B.

Sister Aemiliana († 1972) was a German Benedictine nun who wrote about the liturgy.

INTERCESSIONS

The leader can begin with these words:

The blind man teaches us to open our eyes to the presence of the Lord, even in the midst of trial. Let us turn our hearts to our God:

℣ Lord, hear our prayer!

That the Church may be the place where everyone discovers the face of Christ. Let us pray to the Lord. ℣

So that our families are a place of learning of growing love. Let us pray to the Lord. ℣

So that researchers, doctors and nursing staff will find the strength to continue their work with dedication. Let us pray to the Lord. ℣

For the sick and their families, let them find the resources to get through this time of trial. Let us pray to the Lord. ℣

For those who have died, let them rest eternally in the peace of Christ. Let us pray to the Lord. ℣

So that on this Laetare Sunday, we can, despite the current trials, taste the beginnings of Easter joy to come. Let us pray to the Lord. ℣

Personal intentions

Our Father....

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and lead us to everlasting life. And may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

To conclude the celebration, we can sing one of the following songs, or any other known. Turn and face an image of Mary, if you have one.

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve.
To you do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, O most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us,
and after this our exile
show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

℣ Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,
℣ That we may be made worthy
of the promises of Christ.

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Or:

*Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ
Vita, dulcèdo, et spes nôstra, sâlve.
Ad te clamâmus, êxules, filii Hévæ.
Ad te suspirâmus, geméntes et flentes
in hac lacrimârum vâlle.
Eia ergo, Advocâta nôstra,
illos túos misericórdes óculos
ad nos convérte.
Et Jésum, benedíctum frúctum véntris túi,
nóbis post hoc exsílium osténde.
O clémens, O pía, O dúlcis Vírgo María.*

Or:

*Ave, Regina cælórum Ave,
Dómina Angelórum,
Sâlve rádix, sâlve, pórtâ,
Ex qua múnido lux est órta.
Gáude, Vírgo gloriósa,
Super ómnes speciósa ;
Vále, o valde decóra
Et pro nóbis Christum exóram
Ave, Dómina Angelórum,
Sâlve rádix, sâlve, pórtâ,
Ex qua múnido lux est órta.
Gáude, Vírgo gloriósa,
Super ómnes speciósa ;
Vále, o valde decóra
Et pro nóbis Christum exóra.*

Hail, O Queen of heaven enthroned.
Hail, by angels mistress owned.
Root of Jesse, Gate of morn
Whence the world's true light was born:

Glorious Virgin, joy to thee,
Loveliest whom in heaven they see;
Fairest thou, where all are fair,
Plead with Christ our souls to spare.

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