

Sunday Readings

10th March 2024

FIRST READING

A reading from the second book of
Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

They burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah, 'Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.'

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: 'Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, "the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up."' "

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 136. R/.v.6

R/. O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not!

By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat and wept,
remembering Zion;
on the poplars that grew there
we hung up our harps. **R/.**

For it was there that they asked us,
our captors, for songs,
our oppressors, for joy.
'Sing to us,' they said,
'one of Zion's songs.' **R/.**

O how could we sing
the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! **R/.**

O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not,
if I prize not Jerusalem
above all my joys! **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Ephesians 2:4-10

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel Acclamation

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!
God loved the world so much that he gave his only
Son; everyone who believes in him has eternal life.
Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

GOSPEL

John 3:14-21

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life
in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his
only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost
but may have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but so that through him the world might be saved.
No one who believes in him will be condemned;
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,
because he has refused to believe in the name of
God's only Son.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the world
men have shown they prefer darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it,
for fear his actions should be exposed;
but the man who lives by the truth comes out into
the light,
so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is
done in God.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Year B

The Word of God

Saint of the Week

"God loved the word so much that he gave his only Son..."

T rue love doesn't count the cost; it gives liberally. A true lover gives the best he has to offer and everything he has for the beloved. God *proved* his love for us by giving us the best he had to offer -- his only begotten Son who freely gave himself as an offering to God for our sake and as the atoning sacrifice for our sin and the sin of the world. Abraham's willing sacrifice of his only son, Isaac prefigures the perfect offering and sacrifice of God's beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage in the gospel of John tells us of the great breadth and width of God's love. Not an excluding love for just a few or for a single nation, but a redemptive love that embraces the whole world, and a personal love for each and every individual whom God has created. God is a loving Father who cannot rest until his wandering children have returned home to him. Saint Augustine says, *God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love.* God gives us the freedom to choose whom and what we will love. Jesus shows us the paradox of love and judgment. We can love the darkness of sin and unbelief or we can love the light of God's truth, beauty, and goodness. If our love is guided by what is true, and good and beautiful then we will choose for God and love him above all else. What we love shows what we prefer. Do love God above all else? Does he take first place in your life, in your thoughts, and actions?

Lord Jesus Christ, your love is better than life itself. May your love consume and transform my life that I may desire you above all else. Help me to love what you love, to desire what you desire, and to reject what you reject.



Liturgical colour: Rose

Rose is a lighter version of violet, because today the penitential violet is mixed with the white of the approaching festival.

It is part of human nature that we cannot go on being penitent for a long time, or we sink into a settled and insincere gloom rather than working at the definite and active spiritual exercise called penance. The Church knows human nature, and both in Advent and Lent there is a moment where the atmosphere of penance and preparation is brightened by a shaft of light from the glorious season we are preparing ourselves for.

The third Sunday of Advent tells us '*Gaudete, rejoice!*' because the Lord is near and the fourth Sunday of Lent says '*Lætare, Ierúsalem, be joyful, Jerusalem, and all who love her!*' because she herself is loved by the Lord. On Gaudete and Laetare Sundays, therefore, the dark penitential violet may be lightened to what the documents call 'rose' but most laymen would call 'pink'.



Prayer of the Week

The Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord,
we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union
as we seek to share your love
through the encouragement, strengthening
and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit,
may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service
reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.