

14 MARCH 2021

Sunday Message

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year B • Season Colour: Violet • Psalter Week 4



In the Fourth Gospel (John), Jesus encounters individuals who represent a specific type of person. Nicodemus is a Jewish scholar who is, literally, in the dark about Jesus. He is an honest individual, one with well-formed beliefs, whose attitude to Jesus is positive, but limited by his own understanding of God.

He is impressed by the signs that Jesus has worked, but these do not, and cannot, bring him to a true appreciation of who Jesus really is. He seems to want to fit Jesus into his present system of belief, but Jesus challenges him to expand his vision beyond a narrowly Jewish way of thinking to one which is universal.

Jesus appeals to their common Jewish heritage by invoking the memory of Moses' fashioning the bronze serpent and curing the Israelites who had been bitten by snakes as punishment for their complaining during the Exodus journey through the wilderness. By a play on the verb 'to lift up', he presents his own being exalted on the cross as a similar healing for all those who will look at him and believe. Jesus speaks of this concern of God as being due to God's love for the world, that is, for all human beings. It is on the response which the person makes to the revealing of God's self in Jesus that judgment depends: it is not an act of God, but the result of the decision which each one makes for themselves which determines whether a person is condemned or not. Judgment is in the here and now, based on whether we accept or reject Jesus and his message. ■

LEARN

In the Gospel according to John, the crucifixion is 'the exaltation' ('lifting up') of Jesus as King and Priest.

Light and darkness/night are symbols of belief and unbelief in the Fourth Gospel.

Judgment in John is the decision the person makes to accept or reject Jesus and his message: it is something which the individual does, not an external, divine action.

SAY

The Son of Man must be lifted up... so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

(John 3:14-15)

REFLECT

Nicodemus is an interesting character. We first encounter him as a furtive figure, coming to Jesus under the cover of darkness: later he speaks up against the religious authorities' attempt to convict Jesus without giving him the benefit of due legal process; finally, he emerges as a courageous person, risking his reputation, and perhaps more, to bury the body of the crucified Jesus. We can see in him an example of developing faith and commitment.

It is in this dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish scholar that we find perhaps the most concise summary of the Christian faith. Sometimes, we can see displayed at sporting events posters proclaiming 'John 3:16': this is the four-line verse which says: "God loved the world so much/ that he gave his only Son,/ so that whoever believes in him may not be lost/ but may have eternal life." Some people have said that if we were to lose the whole of the Christian Scriptures except for this one verse, then we would still have the essence of the Gospel.

Nicodemus sincerely believed in the teachings he had received: Jesus did not tell him that he was wrong, but encouraged him to think more deeply about how God viewed the world, not just Nicodemus' part of it. Perhaps we might put ourselves in Nicodemus' shoes and broaden our understanding of Jesus and his message as well. ■

DO

Memorise the text of John 3:16, given in the 'Reflect' section.

SWINFORD (F12 YH57) MEELICK (F12 AY23) MIDFIELD (F12 AX29)
Fr Dermot Meehan Phone: 094-9251790/Urgent Calls: 087-1338200

PARISH OFFICE- OPENING HOURS: Fridays: 9.00am-2.00pm; Phone: 094 - 9253607
Email: swinfordparish@gmail.com 14th – 21st Mar 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday 14th	12 noon	Swinford: Eddie Ruane, Kilkelly Road Michael & Delia McNicohlas, their son Tommy & their daughter Helen, Carracanada & Mary & Martin Furey, & their daughter Angela, Manchester Peter & Chris Bredican & Paddy Kelly, Kilbride & dec'd Bredican & Leonard Families Paddy Doyle, Tullinacurra & his daughter-in-law Veronica & Owen & Delia O'Brien & dec'd Family Paddy Kneafsey, Sweetwell Mary & Vincent Roughneen, Clooninshin Winnie & Martin Gorman, Woods & dec'd Family Bernie & Ann Devine & dec'd Family, Tullinahoo
Monday 15th	10.00am	Swinford: Frances Howley, Dublin Road Sr Enda O'Donnell, Mercy Sisters
Tuesday 16th	10.00am	Swinford: Margaret McGrath, Newpark/London Special Intention
ST PATRICK'S DAY		
Wednesday 17th	12 noon	Swinford: Delia Gallagher, Cullane Michael & Freda Loftus, Ballydrum & dec'd Family Eddie Molloy & his son Michael, Dromada Joyce Pete Durkan, Tower View (1 st anniv) Jack & Nora Geraghty, Ardhoome John & Margaret O'Brien & their son Michael, Ballymote Ellen & Tone Kelly, their sons Andy & Tony & dec'd Kelly & Moran Families
Thursday 18th	10.00am	Swinford: Elizabeth & Patrick McGuinness & their son John, Culmore
Friday 19th	10.00am	Swinford: Ann, John & Helen (Nellie) Jennings & dec'd Family, Tavnaglass, Midfield May & James Connell & dec'd Family
Saturday 20th	10.00am	Swinford: Sr Phyl (Consilio) Clancy, (MM)
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT		
Sunday 21st	12 noon	Swinford: Bill & Eileen Orsmy & dec'd Clarke & Orsmy Families Thomas Mackey, Rathunas Colm Lambe & his son Colm Kathleen & Paddy Campbell, Cloonfinaun & Anne & Thomas Dunne, Birmingham Bridget & Michael Callaghan & dec'd Family, Tullinacurra & Sheila & Paddy Higgins & dec'd Family, Kiltimagh Martin Ryder, Dublin Road & his daughter Elizabeth

Please pray for Andy Foley, Derryronane. May he rest in the peace of Christ.

Lá Fhéile Phadraig: On Wednesday next, we mark the Solemnity of St Patrick, Patron of Ireland. Once again this year, we will not be able to gather in our churches to celebrate the faith St Patrick brought to our land, a faith that has sustained generations of Irish people across the centuries both here in Ireland and wherever they have settled around our world. Mass will be live-streamed from Swinford Church on St Patrick's Day at 12 noon and all will be most welcome to join in praying the Mass as we ask the prayers and protection of Patrick, our Patron, for Irish people everywhere in these times.

Celebrating St Joseph: On 19 March 2021, the Church will celebrate five years since the publication of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)* on the beauty and joy of love in the family. On that day, Pope Francis will launch a year dedicated to the family which will conclude on 26 June 2022 on the occasion of the Tenth World Meeting of Families in Rome. The Irish Bishops have welcomed the Holy Father's 'Amoris Laetitia Family Year' and invite us to mark its beginning with a Week of Prayer from 13 March to 19 March (the Feast of Saint Joseph). Resources for this Week of Prayer are available on our diocesan website, www.achonrydiocese.org. This resource comprises a page for each day of the Week of Prayer which can be easily followed in parish, school and at home. Each day has a theme reflecting on family life through the lens of Saint Joseph. The resource has at its centre the prayer from Pope Francis which he wrote for the **Year of St Joseph** (and some inspiring reflections from *The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)*).

Pope Francis's Prayer to St Joseph: Pope Francis has composed a prayer to St Joseph which he invites us to pray with him, particularly this week leading up to the Solemnity of St Joseph on March 19th:

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.
Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

Holy Week and Easter: It seems very likely that, for the second year in a row, we will have to celebrate the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter on-line only. These liturgies mark the high point of the Christian calendar as we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus and all are encouraged to join in praying them on-line this year. Details will be published in the parish newsletter.

Living with Addiction in the Family with Mick Devine, March 27th, 10.00-12.30 (via Zoom). Families that live with addiction experience shame, guilt and anxiety and feel it is 'all my fault.' The pressures of the past year have made this even harder. Recovery is possible. This workshop will offer positive tools for managing addiction in the family so that all family members can work towards greater wellbeing. Cost €10 or €20 per family. Register and link: info@galilee.ie. Everyone is welcome.

GAA 50/50: The club 50/50 draw was held in Horkans and Peter Geraghty & Aida Killeen won €228. Envelopes are available in business premises in town and online through www.swinfordgaa.ie. The next draw will be in Eurospar on the 16th of March.

Swinford Community Lotto Results for 8th March Numbers 4, 8, 14, 24; €70 Voucher Winners Paulette & Tony Lynskey, Fraunhill; James Fahey, Swinford; 3 Number Winners; Eileen Kavanagh, Killasser; Kieran Ward, Kiltimagh Road; Althea & Grace, Rathdubh; Ciara Sheedy & Martin McManus, Callow; Jimmie Muldowney, Carnacull; Seamus Tierney, Ardgullen Swinford; Jackpot €17,200.

St Joseph's N.S Midfield is now accepting enrolments for the school year 2021/2022. Enrolment forms are available on our school website www.midfieldns.ie, by ringing the school on 085 - 1614798 or by emailing principal@midfieldns.ie

Covid-19 Collect and Deliver Service: Helping people to stay at home is the new role of Local Link Mayo rural transport services. Local Link Mayo is offering a collect and deliver service in existing Local Link routes throughout Mayo from pharmacies and local shops, delivering shopping and critical medical supplies to the elderly, the vulnerable and sick. If your need of such support or know someone who does, contact Local Link Mayo on 094-9005150 between 9:00am and 5:00pm (M-F) or email mayo@locallink.ie

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

COLLECT

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

FIRST READING 2 Chron 36:14-16. 19-23

A reading from the second book of Chronicles.

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.

Their enemies 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.

PSALM

Ps 136

Response:

**O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not!**

1. By the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept, remembering Zion: on the poplars that grew there we hung our harps. (R.)
2. 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.)

3. O how could we sing the song of the Lord on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! (R.)
4. 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 Eph 2:4-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

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 Jn 3:14-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

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.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**
**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Jerusalem is built as a city bonded as one
together.
It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of
the Lord,
to praise the name of the Lord.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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.
Amen.