

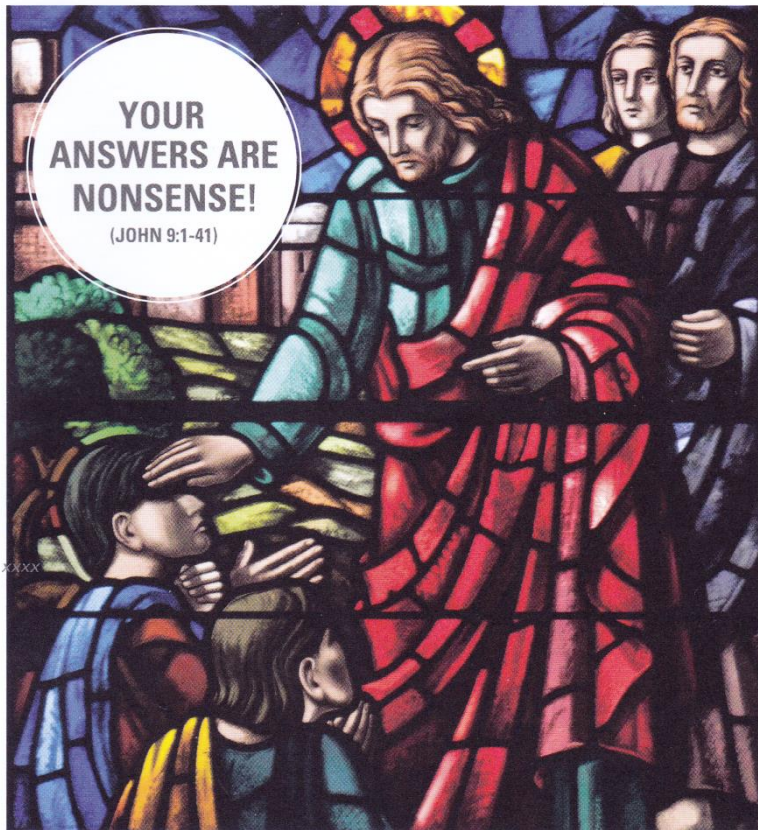
22 MARCH 2020

Sunday Message

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • Season Colour: Rose or Purple • Psalter Week 4



The story of the man born blind is regarded as one of the best-written narratives in the Scriptures.

The healing by Jesus leads to the person coming to faith in him by clinging to his own experience in the face of challenges from the highly educated religious authorities. All that the man in question knows that is Jesus has cured him, and so cannot be a sinner, whether he has acted on the Sabbath or not. By remaining true to his convictions, his appreciation of Jesus deepens, from being the man called Jesus, to a prophet and, finally, Lord, and worshipping him. The leaders remain true to their convictions, but these lead them deeper into unbelief. Their initial efforts to disprove the healing fail, so they argue from theology: because Jesus does not keep the Sabbath, he cannot be from God. They cannot match the arguments of their irrepressible opponent so end up resorting to insult and excommunication.

It is by remaining faithful to his own experience and rejecting seemingly logical arguments from the religious authorities that the former blind man finds himself in the presence of Jesus and makes his act of faith. This is the culmination of a gradual process in understanding, and an example of how a person can come to faith in Jesus. ■

DO

If you can see, thank the Lord for your ability. Give some of your Lenten alms to a charity for the blind.

SAY

I am the light of the world, says the Lord
(John 9:5)

REFLECT

Some people imagine that the Gospels simply relate historical events which have little bearing on the present day. This applies especially to those who imagine they understand fully how God operates, people who devise a theological system and feel that everything is now worked out: Jesus' criticism of the religious authorities of his day cannot possibly apply to those of our own. But the Bible warns us that this is a dangerous way of thinking. The Book of Job is the classic critique of conventional theological wisdom.

The Gospel passage today is a masterpiece, comical in places, of the (formally) uneducated person who defeats the theologically qualified simply by pointing out the flaws in their argument. The most telling comment about the religious authorities in the story (and sometimes in our own day) is that they simply will not listen to the story of other people whose experience does not fit with their well-worked-out abstract theories. They accuse the healed man – and, implicitly, his parents – of being in bad faith, instead of thinking, maybe we should look at this again.

It is by not accepting the easy answers but by remaining true to himself and his experience that the person in the story, who represents anyone in a similar position, comes to true belief in Jesus. Unless we examine what we believe, we will not grow in our faith and understanding of Jesus and our relationship with him. This is not to doubt the truth: it is saying that the way we understand it has to change as we do. Pope John XXIII famously said that the deposit of faith is one thing: the way it is presented is another. Yesterday's answers may not be sufficient for today's questions. ■

LEARN

The expression 'the Jews' in the Fourth Gospel usually applies to the religious leaders, not to the people as a whole.

The Pharisees feature in the story today: the term is interchangeable with the Jews.

Both groups are presented as being opposed to Jesus.

SWINFORD (F12 YH57) MEELICK (F12 AY23) MIDFIELD (F12 AX29)

Fr Dermot Meehan Phone: 094-9251790/Urgent Calls: 087-1338200

PARISH OFFICE- OPENING HOURS: Mon, Thurs, Fri: 9.00am-2.00pm; Phone: 094 - 9253607

Email: swinfordparish@gmail.com

22nd - 29th Mar 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday 22nd	12 noon	Swinford: Colum Lambe & his son Colum Tom Mackey, Rathúnas Matt Gallagher, Cullane & dec'd Gallagher & Brady Families Annabel Lynn, Dorothy O'Brien & Betty & George Hennessy Paddy Philbin & dec'd Philbin Family, Steeple Village & Tom & Kitty Durkin, Derryronane Bernie & Ann Devine & dec'd Family, Tullinahoo Paddy & Noreen Ryan & their grand-daughter Tara, Johnsfort
Monday 23rd	10.00am	Swinford: Human Life International Ireland
Tuesday 24th	10.00am	Swinford: No Intention
Wednesday 25th	10.00am	Swinford: James Devine, Tullinahoo/Luton
Thursday 26th	10.00am	Swinford: No Intention
Friday 27th	10.00am	Swinford: No Intention
Saturday 28th	10.00am	Swinford: Paddy Kneafsey, Sweetwell

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday 29th	12 noon	Swinford: Mona & Martin Tunney, Cloonacannana John & Mary Durkin, Cloonacannana & dec'd Durkin & Gavaghan Families Richard & Pat Gallagher, their parents & dec'd Family, Carrowreagh Michael McNulty, Carnacul Ann & William Murphy, Bothaul & dec'd Murphy, Roache & Killiea Families Frank Brennan & dec'd Family, Castleroyan
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While there will be no public Masses this week, the intentions above will be remembered at Mass on the designated day except for Sundays. On Sunday, the intentions for the Vigil Mass, 9a.m. Mass in Meelick, 10.30a.m. Mass in Midfield and the 12 noon Mass in Swinford will be remembered together at 12 noon Mass in Swinford. Though families will not be present, please be assured that your loved ones will be remembered at Mass.

All of the Masses above will be broadcast via live streaming on our webcam at www.Churchservices.tv. just click on the icon for Swinford Church.

Useful updates and resources available on our diocesan website:www.achonrydiocese.org

In conversations over the past week, so many people have said to me, 'We are in strange times.' That is certainly the case. The continuing spread of the Covid-19 virus in our world and particularly in our own country has created a strange atmosphere everywhere. Schools and colleges are closed. Sports and social events of all sorts have been cancelled. Some shelves in supermarkets are sparse or even bare. Visits and shows of affection across the generations in families are sadly curtailed. There are no public Masses on Sundays and weekdays in our churches.

We are indeed in strange times. A strange time like this can make us more conscious of our need of God. We certainly need to turn to him in these times, renewing our faith in him who remains our refuge and our strength. We pray for a strong sense of his presence with us, wherever we are and we put our faith in his power to protect us and keep us safe.

These strange times call us to pray for one another and to care for one another - by following the guidelines given to us to insure the good health of all, by checking on neighbours, especially the elderly and the vulnerable to see they are provided with information and their daily needs. Our thoughts and prayers are very much with those who are ill with the Covid-19 virus, with healthcare workers and with all who work to keep essential services running. We are very conscious of those whose jobs and livelihoods are affected by the crisis. Strange times can call out the best in people and, please God, that will be the case in the days and weeks ahead.

In these strange times, God continues to care for us and may we continue to care for one another.

Praying as a family: Since for the moment it is not possible to come to church for Sunday Mass, families are encouraged to pray together at home. Consider praying familiar prayers – saying the Angelus together or saying the Rosary (even one decade) as a family. There are also resources for praying at home on our diocesan website –

www.achonrydiocese.org/homeprayer. Praying together in our homes will help sustain us in these strange times and assure us that, through it all, God is with us.

Mass: Mass will continue to be broadcast daily by live streaming from Swinford Church. Mass will be broadcast at 12 noon and Mass on weekdays will be at 10.00 a.m. You can find us on www.churchservices.tv. There will be a daily broadcast of Mass on RTE NEWS NOW (SKY 521, SAORVIEW 21, VM 200 and EIR 500) each day at 10.30am. It will also be available on RTE PLAYER. The Mass will be broadcasted from St Eunan's Cathedral, Letterkenny.

Churches: All churches in the parish will be open every day for anyone who wishes to call in for personal prayer or to light a candle. Swinford Church will be open on Sunday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and on weekdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Ordination of our new Bishop: During the week the difficult decision was made to postpone the ordination of our Bishop-elect, Paul Dempsey, which was to have taken place in the Cathedral of the Annunciation and St Nathy in Ballaghaderreen on Sunday, April 19th. A new date will be set for the ordination as soon as it is possible to do so. Please keep Fr Paul in your prayers at this time.

Please pray for Pete Durkan, Ardhoome and Tower View, Meelick. May he rest in the peace of Christ.

We welcome into the Christian community Daithí Joe Prendergast and Paul Matthew Ruane, Killasser who was baptised recently in Swinford Church.

Community Notice: I am available and offering my services to bring food, collect prescriptions, deliver shopping to anyone in our community who has an underlying illness or does not wish to go out due to the Corona Virus. Contact Kevin Murtagh on 086-8448337. It is in all of our interests to protect the most vulnerable in our community.