

Today in Focus

MARCH 22 » FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Receive God with joy!



Today's gospel is beautifully illustrated in Franco Zeffirelli's classic film *Jesus of Nazareth*. The actor who plays the blind man is very convincing: he's unkempt and not on the guest list to any rich dinner parties. His encounter with Jesus is life-changing.

By contrast, the Pharisees are presented as hostile and in darkness. Jesus reacts strongly to their ignorance of the truth. One striking aspect of the encounter is the blind man's lack of fear in answering the Pharisees' questions. The blind man saw Jesus and accepted him as the Messiah, the Light of the World, giving us all an example of receiving God with joy and enthusiasm.

We can imagine ourselves in the person of the blind man. Placing ourselves in the gospel, we can recognize our own resistance to the truth at times, as well as our profession of faith when our hearts are drawn to conversion. The deeper our relationship grows with Jesus, the more we can let go of those things in us that block the light. When Jesus opens our eyes, we see him in all things: in our neighbor, in ourselves, and in the landscape of our path home. And in the Eucharist, we see the blind man among the communion of saints, the Mystical Body of Christ. ● DENIS GRADY, OFS

Sunday, March 22

Parishes engaged in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) may celebrate the Second Scrutiny today (see page 170).

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

(Cf. Isaiah 66:10-11)

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

INTRODUCTORY RITES *(page 25)*

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

(1 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 splen-

did 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.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6)

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

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**

SECOND READING (*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.

VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

(*John 8:12*)

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ! I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life. **Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

GOSPEL (*John 9:1-41*)

For the shorter version, omit the indented parts in brackets.

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

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 sin-

ful 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 acknowl-

edged 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.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH (page 28)

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

PREPARATION OF GIFTS (page 30)

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.

PREFACE: THE MAN BORN BLIND

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to
give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty
and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.

By the mystery of the
Incarnation,
he has led the human race
that walked in darkness
into the radiance of the faith
and has brought those born
in slavery to ancient sin
through the waters of
regeneration

to make them your adopted
children.

Therefore, all creatures of
heaven and earth
sing a new song in adoration,
and we, with all the host of
Angels,
cry out, and without end
acclaim:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God
of hosts...** (page 33)

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

(Cf. Psalm 122 [121]:3-4)

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 splendor 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.

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

Look upon those who call
to you, O Lord,
and sustain the weak;
give life by your unfailing light
to those who walk in the
shadow of death,
and bring those rescued by
your mercy from every evil
to reach the highest good.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

DISMISSAL (page 50)



RESPONDING TO THE WORD

The blind man learns to recognize
Jesus through faith.

● **What would most help me
to “see” Jesus in a new way
today?**

Jesus, open my eyes...

SAYING AMEN

The Collect speaks of our “prompt
devotion and eager faith.”

● **How prompt is my devotion?
How eager is my faith?**

*Merciful God, in the remaining
weeks of Lent...*

« **A Christian Lent can never be entirely sad.**
With the fourth Sunday the pent-up spiritual joy
in the true member of Christ bursts forth
in anticipation of the Easter joy to come. »

VIRGIL MICHEL, OSB

*Mass Prayers for Christian
Initiation: Second Scrutiny*

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

(Cf. Psalm 25 [24]:15-16)

My eyes are always on the
Lord, for he rescues my feet
from the snare. Turn to me
and have mercy on me, for
I am alone and poor.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
give to your Church an
increase in spiritual joy,
so that those once born of earth
may be reborn as citizens
of heaven.

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.

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 those who seek salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PREFACE: THE MAN BORN BLIND

(See page 168)

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

(Cf. John 9:11, 38)

The Lord anointed my eyes;
I went, I washed, I saw and
I believed in God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Sustain your family always in
your kindness,
O Lord, we pray,
correct them, set them in order,
graciously protect them
under your rule,
and in your unfailing goodness

direct them along the way
of salvation.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

Look upon those who call
to you, O Lord,
and sustain the weak;

give life by your unfailling
light
to those who walk in the
shadow of death,
and bring those rescued by
your mercy from every evil
to reach the highest good.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Living with Christ **This Week**

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Sunday's readings invite us to see as God does. In the Old Testament readings, Ezekiel describes the temple as a source of salvation for all. In Isaiah, a mother's love is a sign of God's steadfast love for us. However, in the gospels, the plot to kill a "just" person—who calls for accountability to God—signals the depth of the authorities' hatred for Jesus. Through signs of healing, Jesus reveals his identity as the one sent by God. ●

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Use these intercessions with your prayers this week.

- When God does something new in our lives:
R. *Jesus, help us to see.*
- When God restores a hopeless situation: **R.**
- When their actions reveal who others are: **R.**
- When Jesus' teaching opens up new paths: **R.**

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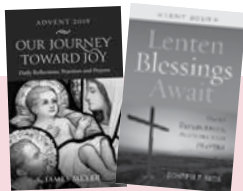
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*Sponsored by the Augustinians
of the Assumption*

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Christ and the Samaritan Woman
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Cathedral of St. Peter, Bologna, Italy
Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

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Liturgical texts: Published with the approval of the Committee on Divine Worship, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Excerpts from the English translation of the *Lectionary for Mass* ©1969, 1982, 1997 International Committee on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL); excerpts from the English translation of *The Liturgy of the Hours* ©1974 ICEL; excerpts from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* ©2010 ICEL. All rights reserved. Lectionary texts ©1970, 1997, 1998, 2001 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington DC. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner. The English translation of some Psalm Responses, Alleluia and Gospel verses, Gospel Acclamations, and Sequences from the *Lectionary for Mass* ©1968, 1981, 1997 ICEL. All rights reserved.

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Annual subscription: U.S.: \$25.95; Canada: \$35.95;
Other countries: \$45.95. Bulk rates available on request.

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Living with Christ (ISSN 1481-9252) is published monthly, with a special issue at Holy Week, by Bayard, Inc., One Montauk Avenue, Suite 200, New London, CT 06320. U.S. periodicals postage paid at New London, CT and at additional mailing offices. Printed in Canada.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Living with Christ, PO Box 293040, Kettering, OH 45429-9040