

4th. Sunday of Lent B John 3:14-21

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.

Reflection

On three occasions Jesus speaks about himself being 'lifted up'. The Greek word behind this can mean a literal or physical lifting and also an exaltation, a being raised up or glorified. By means of this deliberate play on words the evangelist explains to us that the passion, for all its injustice and brutality, is a glorious revelation of God's love.

In our day-to-day struggle just to get on with the business of living it is unlikely that we go around with the image of ourselves as 'God's work of art'. There are many forces at work both within us and outside us which tend to pull us down and to leave us with negative feelings about ourselves and those around us. By contrast, at the heart of the gospel message is the wonderful assertion that we are the handiwork of a God who does not make mistakes. This is the God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son not to bully us

into obedience or to threaten us with hellfire but to bring us to life in its fullness. This is terrific news indeed, so let us take steps to ensure that other messages do not drown it out.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank you for the journey to grace that many of us are making during this Lent.

For many years you were calling us, inviting us to look honestly on our addictions, our vanity, our envy.

We hated the light, avoided it for fear that the truth about ourselves should be exposed.

During these days we were brought to look at ourselves and come out into the light, feeling inner peace because we knew that what we were doing we were doing in you.

Shaddai, God of the mountain, You who make of our fragile life the rock of your dwelling place,
lead our mind to strike the rock of the desert,
so that water may gush to quench our thirst.
May the poverty of our feelings
cover us as with a mantle in the darkness of the night
and may it open our heart to hear the echo of silence
until the dawn, wrapping us with the light of the new morning, may bring us, with the spent embers of the fire of the shepherds of the Absolute who have kept vigil for us close to the divine Master, the flavour of the holy memory.

