

# Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year B • 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 and metaphorically 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 judgement depends: it is not an act of God, but the result of the decision which each person makes for themselves which determines whether a person is condemned or not. Judgement 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.

Judgement 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.

**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,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** 2 Chronicles 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**

Psalm 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 up 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** Ephesians 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**

John 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 God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
(all bow during the next two lines)  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
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.

# ***Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon*** ***1 Radley Rd, Abingdon on Thames, Oxon, OX14 3PL***

We are a **LiveSimply** parish aiming to live Simply, Sustainably and in Solidarity with the Poor

Parish Priest: Fr. Jamie McGrath Tel: 01235 520375  
Parish Secretary: Lisa Paterson Tel: 01235 520375  
Office Hours: 10.30am-12.30pm Tuesday to Friday  
Office Email: abingdon@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

*We live stream all services*

Safeguarding Team: Tel. 07572 935 230  
Visits at JR Hospital: Priest/Chaplain 01865 221732  
Visits and Help: Society of Vincent de Paul Group, contact via Parish Office  
Parish Website: [www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk](http://www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk)  
Primary School: St. Edmund's School, Radley Road, Abingdon, OX14 3PP Tel 521558



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Reg. Charity No 246871

[www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

## **PARISH OFFICE OPENING HOURS:**

Please note that during this pandemic period, and until further notice, the Parish Office opening hours will be from **Tuesdays to Fridays from 10.30am to 12.30pm**. Outside of these times, Fr Jamie will respond to urgent phone messages as soon as he can.

## **PRIVATE PRAYER**

We are blessed that the church can be open, but for **private prayer only**, on the following days and times:

- ✠ **Tuesdays: 12pm to 1pm**
- ✠ **Fridays: 12pm to 1pm**

## **MASS BOOKINGS:**

***On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March you can book for Masses from Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> to Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March.***

**PLEASE** remember to give as many dates and times when you could attend, and book on the Monday – otherwise you may be disappointed. Also be clear on the number of people you are booking for and let us know if you would like to attend more than one Mass during the week.

## **HOW TO BOOK FOR MASS**

### **No Internet Access?**

Phone **07395 946827** **EACH MONDAY** between 10am and 11am **ONLY** to book a place for the **FOLLOWING** week

### **Have Internet Access?**

**DON'T** phone. Instead, email: **[contact@ourladyandstedmund.org.uk](mailto:contact@ourladyandstedmund.org.uk)**

**EACH MONDAY**, to book a place for the **FOLLOWING** week

## **CONFESSIONS**

By appointment only for now. Please contact the **parish office** to book an appointment.

## **NEWSLETTERS**

We are currently still not able to offer any printed material in church. Please bring your own newsletter with you if you would like to (you can download it from our website).

## **4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent (Year B)**

**Attendance through booking system only, but also available on our live stream**

### **Sunday 14 March**

10.15am Mass (Pat & Wendy Cox, RIP)  
2.00pm Mass in Polish  
6.30pm Mass (Mrs Willoughby, RIP)

### **Monday 15 March**

9am Mass (Rosemary Perron, RIP)

### **Tuesday 16 March**

NO Mass See: [www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/english-martyrs-vale-of-white-horse](http://www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/english-martyrs-vale-of-white-horse) for other masses

### **Wednesday 17 March**

**St Patrick**

7pm Mass (Pat Castle, special intentions)

### **Thursday 18 March**

9.30am Mass (Edward James Ryan, RIP)

### **Friday 19 March**

**St Joseph**

7pm Mass (Kristina Rapier, intentions)

### **Saturday 20 March**

12pm Mass (Eva Stott, intentions)



## **SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER:**

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot today receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.



### SECOND COLLECTION THIS WEEKEND

The second collection this Sunday (14<sup>th</sup> March) is for the **Clergy Assistance Fund**. This fund supports the invaluable work of the Clergy Support Team in our Diocese, who are responsible for looking after our clergy – from supporting newly ordained priests to settle into their ministry, to providing ongoing support and formation for those in active ministry, to caring for our clergy through illness or in a time of need. You can put your donation in an envelope clearly marked *Clergy Assistance Fund*, or you can donate online – the link is on the News page of our website.

### 'BLUE BOXES'

As the church is still currently not accessible in the normal way, we are going to endeavour to deliver the boxes that cannot be personally picked up when attending Mass. This will take place over the next several weeks. Please note that some monthly boxes may include weekly envelopes that you do not normally receive. This is due to a change in our supplier's collation routines. Please discard any unwanted envelopes.

### ADVANCED NOTICE FOR HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Please do **not** attempt to book for any of the services shown below right now. We will put reminders in the newsletter and on our website when the time is right to do so. Thank you for your understanding.

#### HOLY WEEK SERVICES

*(Physical attendance through our booking system only)*

- ✠ **Maundy Thursday (1st April):** Mass of the Lord's Supper **7pm**
- ✠ **Good Friday (2nd April):** Passion of the Lord **3pm**
- ✠ **Easter Vigil Saturday (3rd April):** 8pm
- ✠ **Easter Sunday (4th April):** **8.45am, 10.15am and 12 noon**

### DON'T FORGET THE ABINGDON FOODBANK

Still urgently needed are:

- Long life cow's milk - semi skimmed or whole
- Tinned meat for hot meals (mince, stews, meatballs)
- Dried chick peas and couscous
- Instant coffee
- Bottles of squash
- Small (500g) bags of sugar
- Cleaning spray
- J cloths (other brands are available)
- Bleach

Donations can be dropped off at the Foodbank on Northcourt Road.

### LENTEN REFLECTIONS

There is still time for you to join our parish *2021 Lenten 'Hope and Healing' Prayer and Reflections* by zoom.

The course will continue every Thursday throughout Lent and will include a variety of reflections, scripture, Sycamore films, and the opportunity for prayer. Everyone is welcome to join all or any of the sessions and people can choose whether to participate in various discussions and sharing or can simply listen and reflect if they prefer.

*Hope and Healing* will be hosted by the parish RCIA team and anyone interested should contact Pauline on [pehanley@hotmail.com](mailto:pehanley@hotmail.com) or call 07506 753085 to register for the zoom link.

### FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

At present it is not possible to prepare our children for their First Holy Communion and this may not be possible until 2022. However we would like to have an idea of how many children will wish to be prepared once we can get started again. To give us an indication, could you please tell us the name and age of your child/children and give us a contact phone and email address. We can then compile a list and be able to contact you with news about when we can re-start.

Please send this information to Errol Midwinter Phone 01235 522679 or email [errolm@btinternet.com](mailto:errolm@btinternet.com)

### LENTEN PROJECTS

Please do remember the two charities which we are supporting - *5<sup>th</sup> Gospel Christians*, a charity that works to support Christians in the Middle East, particularly the Iraqi Christian refugees currently in Jordan, and *BeSpace*, a small Oxfordshire based charity that works to provide reflective, interactive prayer spaces in all primary and secondary schools in Oxfordshire.

You are encouraged to find creative ways to fund raise, or to put money in a 'pot' during Lent. There will then be an opportunity at the end of Lent (information to be given later) to make your donation online *or* using the gift aid pink envelope if you have one, *or* simply putting it in any envelope clearly marked 'Lenten Projects'.



#### PRAYER TO ST JOSEPH

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.