

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

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

The one who lives by the truth comes out into the light. *Gospel*

God our Father,
your Word, Jesus Christ, spoke peace to a sinful world
and brought humankind the gift of reconciliation
by the suffering and death he endured.

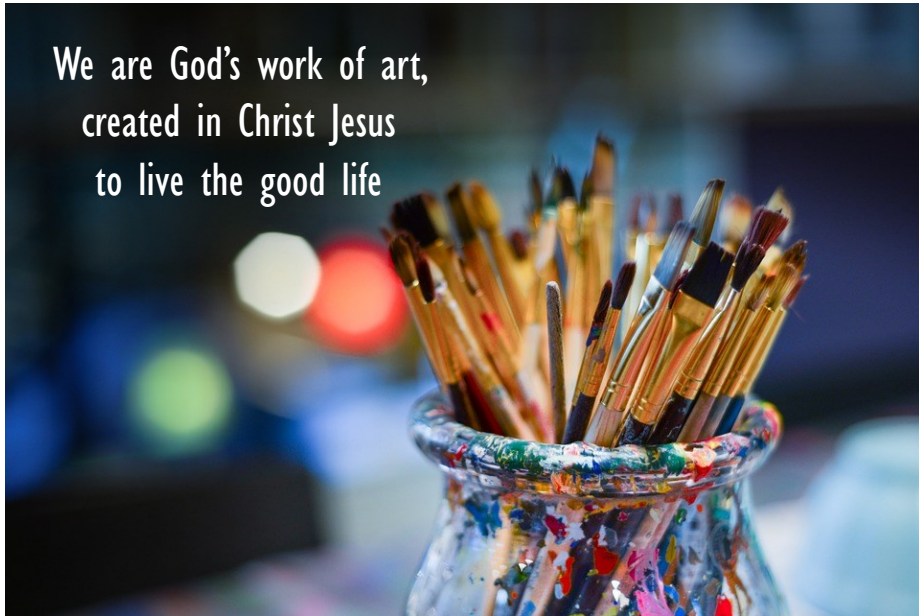
Teach us, the people who bear his name,
to follow the example he gave us:
may our faith, hope, and charity
turn hatred to love, conflict to peace, death to eternal life.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:

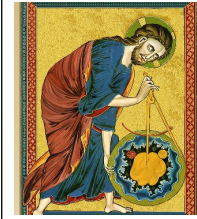
2 Chron. 36: 14–16, 19–23; Ps. 136 (137); Ephesians 2: 4–10; John 3: 14–21

We are God's work of art,
created in Christ Jesus
to live the good life



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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fourth Sunday of Lent
Year B, 10th March 2024

We are created in Christ Jesus
to live the good life

This fourth Sunday of Lent is traditionally known as 'Laetare (Rejoice!) Sunday', and our readings today suggest many reasons for rejoicing. The **First Reading** from Chronicles describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the days of exile. But God, working through the Persian king, Cyrus, not only brings the Jewish people home to where they belong but also helps them rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

St Paul (**Second Reading**) writes that God, whose nature is Universal Love, brought us back to life in and with Christ Jesus through the gift of his infinite grace. Our good works and our lives lived in all their fullness are a grateful and authentic response to all we have been given by God.

The **Gospel** tells us that the resurrection of Christ Jesus, who was 'lifted up and exalted' on the cross, brings salvation to all who believe in him and in his teachings. Christ's Passion, for all its injustice and brutality, is a glorious revelation of God's love for all of humankind, and the source of our healing. Jesus calls us to live by his truth and light, where we can dwell in the flow of God's energy and love.

The **Psalm** of lament recalls the bitter days of exile in Babylon. For us today, 'Babylon' can stand as a symbol for all that threatens the fullness of human living. Hatred, selfishness, greed, and pride can all take us away from wholeness of life and into exile.

This week, we pray for the personal faith and humility to be open to God's infinite grace and light. We pray, too, that all of humanity might be open and receptive to God's life-giving energy.



Opening Prayer

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.

Second Reading Ephesians 2: 4–10

God loves 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.

I find a quiet, private, comfortable place to sit. I allow myself time to slow down into the present moment ... offering Christ my alert attention. In my own way, I ask for the blessing of God's grace.

When ready, I read Paul's beautiful words, perhaps out loud to appreciate them more fully. I linger on particular phrases, savouring and absorbing. I sit in silence, allowing God's love to speak to my open heart.

As I read the passage again, I notice how Paul speaks from a place of great confidence in God. I ask the Holy Spirit to awaken me to that same confidence in the loving energy of God's grace in my daily life ... to help me be more trusting and open to God's mercy.

I ponder prayerfully the gifts that God, who knows me intimately, has given me. I invite the Lord to help me feel awe and wonder that I myself am 'God's work of art', like all those around me.

Perhaps I can see this as an antidote to the many discouraging messages and life-draining forces in the world that stop me feeling my true worth in Christ.

I open my heart to my Lord and my God.

As I prepare to close my prayer, I ask for the grace of inner freedom, and a deep humility to trust in God's generosity, and in his power and presence.

Glory be ...

Gospel 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 or she 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 and women 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 their actions should be exposed;

but the one who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what that person does is done in God.

Like Jesus himself, I withdraw, if I can, to a quiet place of solitude to pray. Perhaps this is outside, or even on a prayer walk. I ask the Holy Spirit to help still my inner being, so that I become aware of the loving presence of Jesus.

In my own time, I allow myself to be touched – and maybe challenged – by this profound Gospel. I notice any interior reactions and stay with them.

As I read of the transforming power of the cross and the gift of eternal life, I ask for greater faith in the Creator who loves the world, and who loves me personally. Perhaps I pray: 'Lord, I believe in you; help my unbelief', as I ask to surrender ever more deeply to Christ.

I ponder the light and darkness within the world ... and in my own heart. How can I be a child of light and truth in our troubled land ... in my local community? How can I help co-create a better future with Christ?

In silence, I take both the darkness and the light to our loving, powerful Father, to be held and healed in safety and love.

As I end my prayer, I ask that all peoples may follow Christ's Way of Light.