

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2020

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, grant that we, who for our evil deeds worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of your grace, may mercifully be relieved; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 42:14-21

¹⁴For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. ¹⁵I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. ¹⁶And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. ¹⁷They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, "You are our gods." ¹⁸Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! ¹⁹Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the Lord? ²⁰He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear. ²¹The Lord was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious.

Psalm 142

¹I cry to the Lord | with my voice;*

to the Lord I make loud | supplication.

²**I pour out my com- | plaint before him***
and tell him | all my trouble.

³When my spirit languishes within me, you | know my path;*

in the way wherein I walk they have hidden a | trap for me.

⁴**I look to my right hand and find no | one who knows me;***

I have no place to flee to, and no one | cares for me.

⁵I cry out to | you, O Lord;*

I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land | of the living."

⁶**Listen to my cry for help, for I have been brought | very low;***

save me from those who pursue me, for they are too | strong for me.

⁷Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks | to your name;*

when you have dealt bountifully with me, the righteous will gath- | er around me.

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸... {F}or at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Gospel: John 9:1-41

¹As {Jesus} passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹²They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." ¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." ¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²²(His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." ²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. ³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees

near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

Thoughts on the Readings

The Common Thread

There are sighted people with no insight. And there are the blind who see. “Look, you blind, that you may see!” This insightful vision involves being led, “looking to the right,” and going in a new, previously unknown way. This is how “children of the light” walk: they follow Jesus. In following that glorious pool of brilliance, the Light of the World shines upon them.

First Reading - Isaiah 42:14–21

This is the life of the faithful: though blind, being led by God. We do not know the way we are going. We do know, however, that he is the Way (John 14:6). He will not and cannot forsake us as we go, because he is the path itself. As such, he is always there, guiding us, leading us into the light. We may understand from this that, because God is both the Way and the Light, he cannot abandon us. This is how the blind receive sight: They walk in the Light who leads them in the Way.

Psalm - Psalm 142:1–7

When our spirits fail us and we do not know which way to turn, we need not despair altogether. God knows our way. He knows — not only our feelings of hopelessness, but also how to lead us out of troubles and back on the right path. He is our refuge; he is all we need in difficult times.

Second Reading - Ephesians 5:8–14

Not only are we led in the light — we also reflect that light. In a real sense, we become light to others. We “walk as children of light” because it brings glory to God, and also because it pleases him to use us as beacons for others. Where there is darkness, we are to expose, enlighten, and awaken by reflecting the Light.

Gospel - John 9:1–41

Go and wash in the pool called “Sent.” One may as well say, go and wash in the pool of the One sent into the world. Go and wash in Christ. How else will our darkness of spirit be lifted than by bathing in the Light? Go to Jesus and wash, and receive your sight.

Lessons for Next Week:

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:1-11; John 11:1-45 [46-53]