

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

FIRST READING

A reading from the second book of Chronicles
(36:14-16, 19-23)

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 through 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.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 136:1-6. R. v.6)

R. O let my tongue cleave to my mouth

if I remember you not!

By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat and wept,
remembering Zion;
on the poplars that grew there
we hung up our harps. **R.**

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.**

O how could we sing
the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! **R.**

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

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians (2:4-10)

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.

Gospel Acclamation (Jn 3:16)

R. 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.

R. Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to 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.’

The Gospel of the Lord.