

AFRICA

Living with Christ

GROWING UP DAILY WITH THE GOOD NEWS

Weekly LWCA

4th Week
of Lent

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Liturgical texts:

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On our cover: Jesus healing a blind.

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Editorial

March 2023



Rev. Fr. François Nzanzu, a.a. Nairobi-Kenya

Jesus enhances our physical and spiritual eyesight

Dear brethren, we are stepping in the second half of our Lenten season. Jesus is journeying with us. After encountering Jesus, the man born blind is healed, his sight is restored and his conversion to discipleship begins. He gradually comes to a greater understanding about who Jesus is and what it means to be his disciple. Indeed, Jesus comes to the world to heal our spiritual blindness so that we can recognize him as the way, the truth and the life!

Let us then pray for those who are still walking in the darkness of sin so that the holy light of Christ may guide them in their discipleship. The Church is reminding us once again that God loves us so deeply that he hopes we will follow the true light of his beloved Son. Let us thank the Lord Jesus for his kindness and pray that he will continue to enhance our physical and spiritual eyesight so that we can see more who he is and walk with others towards Easter.



The Pope's Prayer Intention

For victims of abuse: We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering.

Other papal intentions and videos can be found on: <http://apostleshipofprayer.org/>

The Holy Mass: Introduction

The Holy Mass begins with the sign of the cross during the initial rites and ends with the sign of the cross during the concluding rites. However, before the first sign of the cross, the faithful already prepare for Holy Mass from their respective homes, and at the end of the Mass, the celebrant sends the faithful on mission. In this regard, the faithful are invited to live according to the Word of God that they have heard and to be the living sacrifice that they have participated in. That is the reason why the prayer after communion often creates a link between the Eucharistic celebration and real life. As an example, the prayer after communion of the fifth Sunday in the Ordinary Time, Year A says this: *O God, who have willed that we be partakers in the one Bread and the one Chalice, grant us, we pray, so to live that, made one in Christ, we may joyfully bear fruit for the salvation of the world.*

The Holy Mass is composed of two parts: The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The two parts are linked. In fact, the Word that the faithful hear in the first part is the same Word that becomes flesh in

the second part. For this reason, the faithful are invited to participate in the entire Mass. It is worth saying that the second part of Holy Mass can never be celebrated without the first. In other words, the Liturgy of the Eucharist cannot stand on its own. It is the continuation of the first part. On the contrary, the first part can be celebrated without the second. This is the case of the celebration of the Word without a priest.

As in every liturgical celebration, during Holy Mass, it is God who speaks to us. He is the one who takes the initiative. We just respond to his call. The Holy Mass should not, therefore, be reduced to a mere external ceremony. But it is, as Pope Francis likes to say, the encounter between God and his people. In fact, the two major liturgical actors are Christ and the Church.

The Eucharist brings us together as one people. All our differences (tribes, races, preferences, etc.) disappear because we are all children of God. Indeed, the purpose of the Eucharist is unity as stated in the Missal: *“Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit”*. In this perspective, the faithful who participate in Holy Mass

should be aware that they belong to one people: The People of God.

In a Eucharistic celebration, it is necessary to use the official texts. The Church always provides liturgical books for the people celebrating to use. To invent personal texts and use them in the Eucharistic celebration is to go against the Church's prescriptions. Although we are one people, in the celebration of the Eucharist each of us plays his own role. In fact, there are different ministers: the priest, the deacon, the altar servers, the readers, the choir, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the assembly, etc.

In traditional African cultures, people made sacrifices for various reasons: recognition of the greatness of the gods, request for a good harvest, request for health, protection against evil spirits and bad weather, etc. When the missionaries arrived, they christianized some of the traditional practices. African Christians understand that the Mass is a sacrifice offered to God to glorify him and for their own sanctification.

Rev. Fr. Jérôme K. M. Kombi,
Kinshasa, D.R. Congo



Sunday March 19

4th Sunday of Lent

*1 Samuel 16:1b.6-7.10-13a / Psalm 23:1-3a.3b-4.5.6 /
Ephesians 5:8-14 / John 9:1-41*



“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”
(Jn. 9, 2)



The Blind Man, Jesus and the Rest of Us

When bad things happen, we remember God and when we don't get immediate answers, we start assuming God doesn't exist or He simply wants to punish us. This was the position of the disciples of Jesus when they asked Jesus about the man born blind. *God Has a Purpose for Everything*. God alone knows why He allows certain things to happen to us. Jesus said: "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that God might be made manifest." Sometimes calamities come our way to remind us of what God is capable of doing.

Jesus is More Than Just a Miracle Worker. Did Jesus work miracles? Yes. Did Jesus come only to work miracles? No. Every miracle Jesus worked was a sign, a pointer to some deeper reality. Jesus was never content with just being a miracle worker. Jesus even disappointed those who came seeking for a sign to believe. He called them an evil and adulterous generation. (Matthew 12:39). In our Gospel passage, we see that Jesus was not merely interested in curing this man's blindness, his principal mission was to open the eyes of the Scribes and Pharisees who were blind



Sunday March 19

to His Divinity. A true Christian does not depend on miracle to believe.

To Live in Sin is to be in Darkness. If Christ is the Light of the world, then we who claim to be Christ-like should also shine as bright stars in the world. We should have no business with the works of darkness. St. Paul tells us in our second reading today: “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them”.

You Have a Calling to Evangelize. Despite seeing that an obvious miracle had happened, the Scribes and Pharisees in their blindness were determined by all means to tarnish the image of Jesus Christ. This is a time for us to encounter the Scribes and Pharisees of our world and share our story. This is a time for us to proclaim like the blind man: “One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” (John 9:25). Like the Samaritan woman who ran into the village to proclaim Jesus, we who can see must go out and proclaim Christ to the world.

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



Entrance Antiphon (*Is 66:10-11*)

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 towards the solemn celebrations to come. Through Christ our Lord... **Amen.**

First Reading (*1 Samuel 16:1b.6.7.10-13a*) —————

A reading from the first Book of Samuel

In those days: The Lord said to Samuel, “Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.” But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

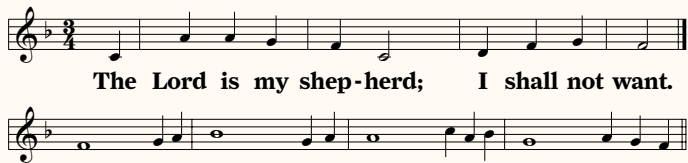


Sunday March 19

And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he comes here.” And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm —————
(Psalm (22) 23:1-3a.3b-4.5.6.)



R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.



Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me;
he revives my soul. R.

He guides me along the right path, the sake of his name.
Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
no evil would I fear, for you are with me.
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort. R.

You have prepared a table before me in the sight of my
foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is
overflowing. R.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
of life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for length of
days unending. R.

Second Reading (Ephesians 5:8-14) —————

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the
Ephesians**

Brethren: Once you were darkness, but now you are
light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the
fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and
true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.



Sunday March 19

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Acclamation (*John 8:12*)

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. I am the light of the world, says the Lord; he who follows me will have the light of life. **Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel (*John 9:1-41*)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

*At that time: As Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. * And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” As he said this, *he spat on the ground and made



clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." *

They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

*They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clary on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some 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?" There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." *

The 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, and asked them, "Is this



your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but 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.” His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age, ask him.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?” And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered, “Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been



heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” They answered him, *”You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.” “He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshipped him. * Jesus said, “For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.” *The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Shorter form: John 9:1.6-9.13-17.34-38. Read between*



Sunday March 19

Prayer of the Faithful

The following intentions are suggestions only.

R. Lord, listen to our prayer!

For religious, political and traditional leaders in Africa and in other parts of the world, let us pray to the Lord our God. R.

For a closer relationship and personal experience with Christ, let us pray to the Lord our God. R.

For those who still do not believe in Christ, for our salvation and the salvation of the world, let us pray to the Lord our God. R.

Prayer over the Offerings

We bring 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 (*Jn 9:11.38*)

The Lord anointed my eyes: I went away and I washed, and I could see; and I believed in God.

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.**



Monday March 20

4th Week of Lent

Solemnity

Saint Joseph, Husband of Mary

Entrance Antiphon

(Lk 12:42) Behold, a faithful and prudent steward, whom the Lord set over his household.

Collect

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that by saint Joseph's intercession your Church may constantly watch over the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation, whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading —————

(2 Samuel 7:4-5a.12-14a.16)

A reading from the second Book of Samuel

In those days: The word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from the body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I



will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm——
(Psalm (88) 89:2-3.4-5.27 and 29)

R. His descendants shall continue forever.

I will sing forever of your mercies, O Lord; through all ages my mouth will proclaim your fidelity. I have declared your mercy is established forever; your fidelity stands firm as the heavens. R.

“With my chosen one I have made a covenant; I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your descendants forever, and set up your throne through all ages.” R.

“He will call out to me, ‘You are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation.’ I will keep my faithful love for him my covenant shall last. R.

Second Reading——
(Romans 4:13.16-18.22)

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brethren: The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through

the law but though the righteousness of faith. That is why all depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations” – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, “So shall your descendants be.” That is why his faith was “reckoned to him as righteousness.” The word

of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Acclamation

(PS (83) 84:4)

Glorify and praise to you, O Christ. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O Lord, ever singing your praise! **Glorify and praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel —————

(Matthew 1:16.18-21.24a)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother

Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer over the Offerings

We pray, O Lord, that just as Saint Joseph served with loving care your Only Begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary, so we may be worthy to minister with a pure heart at your altar. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Communion Antiphon

(Mt 25:21) **Well done, good and faithful servant. Come, share your master's joy.**

Prayer after Communion

Defend with unflinching protection, O Lord, we

pray, the family you have nourished with food from this altar as they rejoice at the Solemnity of Saint

Joseph, and graciously keep safe your gifts among them. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Saint Joseph: Perfect Example of a Just Man

Commentary

Matthew 1:16-24

Whenever we take a closer look at the person of Joseph, the husband of Mary, we soon realize that we tend to take Saint Joseph for granted. There are a lot of lessons to learn from this great man, Joseph; Saint Joseph was a just man; He did not take joy in seeing the Pain of others. He was unwilling to put Mary to shame despite learning of her pregnancy. He was Obedient and had faith in God. It takes great faith to agree to do all what Joseph did for Jesus and Mary. Do I really believe that with God, all things are possible?

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



Tuesday March 21

4th Week of Lent

Entrance Antiphon

(Is 55:1) **All who are thirsty, come to the waters, says the Lord. Though you have no money, come and drink with joy.**

Collect

May the venerable exercises of the holy devotion shape the hearts of your faithful, O Lord, to welcome worthily the paschal mystery and proclaim the praises of the salvation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading

(Ezekiel 47:1-9.12)

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

In those days: [The angel] brought me back to the door of the temple; and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the right side of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar towards the east. Then he brought me out by the way of the north gate, and let me round on the outside to

the outer gate, that faces towards the east; and the water was coming out on the right side. Going on eastward with a line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the loins. Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. And he said to men "Son of man, have, have you seen this?" Then he led me back along the bank of the river. As I went back, I saw upon the bank of the river very

many trees on the one side and on the other. And he said to me, "This waters flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when, it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish; for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. "And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows

from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

***Responsorial Psalm —
(Psalm (45) 46:2-3.5-6.8-9)***

R. The Lord hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

God is for us a refuge and strength, an ever-present help in time of distress: so we shall not fear though the earth should rock, though the mountains quake to the heart of the sea. R.

The waters of a river give joy to God’s city, the

holy place, the dwelling of the Most High. God is within, it cannot be shaken; God will help it at the dawning of the day. R.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Come and behold the works of the Lord, the awesome deeds he has done on the earth. R.

Acclamation

(Psalm (50) 51:10a.12a)

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. Create in me a clean heart, O God; restore to me the joy of your salvation.
Glory and praise to you, O Christ.

Gospel _____
(John 5:1-16)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrews called Bethzatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed. One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down

before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet and walk'". They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that

nothing worse befall you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. At this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the Sabbath. The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Prayer over the Offerings

We offer to you, O Lord, these gifts which you yourself have bestowed; may they attest to your care as creator for this our

mortal life, and effect in us the healing that brings us immortality. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Antiphon

(Ps (22) 23: 1-2) **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose, near restful waters he leads me.**

Prayer after Communion

Purify our minds, O Lord, we pray, and renew them

with this heavenly sacrament, that we may find help for our bodies now

and likewise in times to come. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Stop Complaining;
Every Challenge is an
Opportunity.**

Commentary

John 5:1-16

There are three categories of people in this world; thinkers, talkers and doers. Thinkers understand the problem, talkers broadcast the problem but only doers apply solutions to eliminate the problem. Talkers don't listen; they just want to be heard. Jesus asked this man a simple question: "Do you want to be healed?" He burst into complaints. How often do you narrate your problems to the world? Maybe it is time you repent, maybe it is time you stopped complaining and start looking at Jesus standing in front of you.

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



Wednesday March 22

4th Week of Lent

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps (68) 69: 14) I pray to you, O Lord, for a time of your favour. In your great mercy, answer me, O God, with your salvation that never fails.

Collect

O God, who reward the merits of the just and offer pardon to sinners who do penance, have mercy, we pray, on those who call upon you, that the admission of our guilt may serve to obtain your pardon for our sins. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

(Isaiah 49:8-15)

A reading from the Book of Isaiah

Thus says the Lord: “In a time of favour I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, ‘Come forth,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways, on all bear heights shall be

their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene.” Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.” “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion

on the son of her womb?” Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. The word of Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm —
(Psalm (144) 145)

R. The Lord is kind and full of compassion

The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in mercy. How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures. R.

The Lord is faithful in all his words, and holy in all his deeds. The Lord supports all who are bowed down. R.

The Lord is just in all his ways, and holy in all his



deeds. The Lord is close to all who call him, who call on him in truth. R

Acclamation

(John 11:25-26)

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; he who believes in me shall never die. **Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel

(John 5:17-30)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

At that time: Jesus answered the Jews, “My Father is working still, and I am working.” This was why the Jews sought all the more

to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour

the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgement, but has passed from the death to life. “Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of the life. “I can do nothing on my own

authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer over the Offerings

May the power of the sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, O Lord, mercifully wipe away what is old in us, and increase in us grace of salvation and newness of life. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Antiphon

(John 3:17) **God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.**

**Prayer after Communion**

May your heavenly gifts,
O Lord, we pray, which
you bestow as a heavenly

remedy on your people, not
bring judgement to those
who receive them. Through
Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Commentary**What if I am Wrong?**

Isaiah 49:8-15

John 5:17-30

In seeking to kill Jesus, the Jews felt they were doing something right. In their eyes, Jesus was a lawbreaker, a man who had no respect for God's Day of rest. No matter how many miracles and signs Jesus worked, the Jews were not convinced and they ended up fulfilling all the Messianic promises about Jesus by killing him. What lesson does this teach us? The truth is that you cannot always be right. There is always going to be something you can learn from those who hold different opinions with you. The key thing is humility.

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



Thursday March 23

4th Week of Lent

Ferial

or **St Turibius de Mogrovejo, bishop**, *optional Memorial*

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps (104) 105: 3-4) **Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice; turn to the Lord and his strengthened; constantly seek his face.**

Collect

We invoke your mercy in humble prayer, O Lord, that you may cause us, your servants, corrected by penance and schooled by good works, to persevere sincerely in your commands and come safely to the paschal festivities. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading ————— *(Exodus 32:7-14)*

A reading from the Book of Exodus

In those days: The Lord said to Moses, “Go down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and

said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation.” But Moses begged the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent he

brought them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you did swear by your own self, and did say to them ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.’” And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm —
(Psalm (105) 106:19-20.21-22.23)

R. O Lord, remember us
with the favour you show
to your people

They fashioned a calf at Horeb, and worshipped an image of metal, they ex-changed their glory for the image of a bull that eats grass. **R.**

They forgot the God who was their saviour, who had done such great things in Egypt, such wonders in the land of Ham, such marvels at the Red Sea. **R.**

For this he said he would destroy them, but Moses, the man he had chosen, stood in the breach before him, to

turn back his anger from destruction. **R.**

Acclamation

(John 3:16)

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son; that whoever believes in him should have eternal life. **Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel —————
(John 5:31-47)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

At that time: Jesus said to the Jews, “If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true; there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the

testimony which he bears to me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony which I received is from man; but I say that you may be saved. He was a burning and a shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do

not believe him whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men. But I know that you have not the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed

Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer over the Offerings

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that what we offer in sacrifice may cleanse us in our frailty from every evil, and always grant us your

protection. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Antiphon

(Jer 31:33) **I will place my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, says the Lord.**

Prayer after Communion

May this Sacrament we have received purify us, we pray, O Lord; and



grant your servants in fullness of heavenly freedom from all blame, remedy. Through Christ that those bound by a our Lord. **Amen.** guilty conscience, a glory

Seek God's Applause, not Human Approval.

Commentary

Exodus 32:7-14

John 5:31-47

If we are only concerned about human approval, we could end up like Aaron who bowed to the people's pressure and went ahead to build for them a molten calf which they took as their god. This is what becomes of us when we bow to human pressure instead of putting God first. When God saw that the people had apostatized under Aaron's leadership, he became so angry that he almost destroyed the entire nation. Moses intervened for the people. In Jesus Christ, we see another Moses in that Jesus by his blood intercedes on our behalf before God.

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



Friday March 24

4th Week of Lent

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps (53) 54:3-4) **O God, save me by your name; by your power, defend my cause. O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.**

Collect

O God, who have prepared fitting helps for us in our weakness, grant, we pray, that we may receive their healing effects with joy, and reflect them in a holy way of life. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading

(Wisdom 2:1a.12-22)

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

Ungodly men reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, “Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us for sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us

a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says,

he will be protected." Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hope for the wages of holiness, nor discern the prize for blameless souls. The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm —
(Psalm ⁽³³⁾ 34:17-18.19-20.21 and 23)

R. The Lord is close to the broken-hearted

The Lord turns his face against the wicked to destroy their remembrance from the earth. When the just cry out, the Lord hears,

and rescues them in all their distress. R

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; those whose spirit is crushed he will save. Many are the trials of the just man, but from them all the Lord will rescue him. R

He will keep guard over all his bones; not one of this bones shall be broken. The Lord ransoms the souls of his servants. All who trust in him shall not be condemned. R

Acclamation *(Matthew 4:4b)*

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from

the mouth of God. **Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel ————— *(John 7:1-2.10.25-30)*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

At that time: Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand. But after his brethren had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that authorities really know that this is the

Christ? Yet we know where this man comes from; and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.” So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from; but I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.” So they sought to arrest him; but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer over the Offerings

May this sacrifice, almighty God, cleanse us by its mighty power, and lead us to approach its source with ever greater purity. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Antiphon

(Eph 1:7) **In Christ, we have redemption by his blood, and forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.**

Prayer after Communion

Grant, we pray, O Lord, that as we pass from old to new so, with former

ways left behind, we may be renewed in holiness of mind. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Christian Life Is a Cross.

Commentary

Wisdom 2:1-22
John 7:1-30

Being a Christian is an invitation to a road less travelled; it is standing for what is right and having to face the ridicule, insults, oppression, pain and humiliation. Those who wanted Jesus dead had an image of the Christ in their minds but Jesus did not fit their expectations. Even today, the greatest persecutions we face come from those who claim to know God but do not know Him. One lesson we learn from Jesus' action today is that even when our life is under threat, we should not drop the cross. Be faithful to the end.

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



Saturday March 25

4th Week of Lent

Solemnity

Annunciation of The Lord

Entrance Antiphon

(Hebrew 10:5:7) **The Lord said, as he entered the world: Behold, I come to do your will, O God.**

Collect

O God, who willed that your word should take on the reality of human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, that we, who confess our Redeemer to be God and man, may merit to become partakers even in his divine nature. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

First Reading ————— *(Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10)*

A reading from the Book of Isaiah

In those days: The Lord spoke to Ahaz, “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! It is too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself

will give you sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Take counsel together, but it will come to nought; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm —
(Psalm (39) 40:7-8a.8b-9.10.11)

℟. See, I have come, Lord, to do your will.

You delight not in sacrifice and offerings, but in an open ear. You do not ask for holocaust and victim. Then I said, "See, I have come." ℟

In the scroll of the book it stands written of me: "I delight to do your will, O my God; your instruction lies deep within me." ℟

Your justice I have proclaimed in the great assembly. My lips I have not sealed; you know it, O Lord. ℟

Your saving help I have not hidden in my heart; of your faithfulness and salvation I have spoken. I made no secret of your merciful love and your faithfulness to the great assembly. ℟

Second Reading —————
(Hebrews 10:4-10)

**A reading from the Letter
to the Hebrews**

Brethren: It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,’ as it is written of me in the roll of the book.” When he said above “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings

and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Acclamation (*John 1:14ab*)

Glory and praise to you, O Christ. The word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we have beheld his glory. **Glory and praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel _____
(Luke 1:26-38)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

At that time: The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a Virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you

shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I know not man?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will

be impossible.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer over the Offerings

Be pleased, almighty God, to accept your Church’s offering, so that she, who is aware that her beginnings lie in the Incarnation of

your Only Begotten Son, may rejoice to celebrate his mysteries on this Solemnity. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Communion Antiphon

(Is 7:14) **Behold, a Virgin will conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.**

Prayer after Communion

Confirm in our minds the mysteries of the true faith, we pray, O Lord, so that,

confessing that he who was conceived of the Virgin Mary is true God and true man, we may, through the saving power of his Resurrection, merit to attain eternal joy. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Powerful Things Happen
when we Say
“YES” to God**

Commentary

Luke 1:26-38

Today is exactly 9 months before Christmas. On this day, Mary gave her consent, her *fiat*, her “I do” to God’s Divine Proposal. On this day, through the powerful overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, the baby Jesus, the word of God, became flesh right inside Mary’s womb. Today’s feast is a reminder that God does not force his way in our lives.

Mary’s acceptance became the beginning of the fulfilment of God’s promises to the people of Israel which the prophets all spoke about. God needs you to say “Yes.” Yes to the will of God.

Rev. Fr. Abu Evaristus, Benin City-Nigeria



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