

REFLECTION - FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

"The Healing of the Man born Blind" - 2 Questions

Some reflections on this morning's Gospel from the Orthodox Churches:

When Christ spat on the ground, and made a paste out of the clay and anointed the blind man's "eyes", He actually created eyes for him. The Orthodox services mention this wondrous detail:

Along the way, our Saviour found / a man who lacked both sight and eyes. / And making clay with His spittle, / the Lord anointed him therewith. / He sent the man to Siloam, that he might go and wash therein. / And having washed as he was told, / O Christ, he came away seeing, / and he beheld Thy divine light.

(Expostilarion, Matins for the Sunday of the Blind Man)

Having, like an abundance of wealth, the form and members which comprise this our mortal flesh, the man who was blind from birth could neither imagine nor think what the form or nature of this world could be; for he also was endowed with a genuine lack of eyes ... (Vespers, Sunday of the Blind man, Lord I have cried, sticheron 2)

The blind man not only had no eyes and had seen no man; he also did not know Christ. Jesus first healed his eyes, and upon meeting him again, healed the eyes of his soul. He who was formerly blind both in his physical eyes and those of his soul now could clearly see out of both. The services for the Sunday of the Blind Man are replete with references to spiritual blindness, and supplication to be delivered from it.

"O Christ God, Thou spiritual Sun of Righteousness, / Who by Thine immaculate touch / didst bestow a two-fold enlightenment upon him / who from his mother's womb was deprived of sight, / illumine Thou the eyes of our souls also, / and prove us to be sons of the day, / that we may cry to Thee with faith. / Great and ineffable is Thy compassion toward us, O Friend of man; // Glory be to Thee."

Aposticha, Vespers for the Blind Man)

"Who can tell of Thy mighty acts, O Christ, / or who can number the multitudes of Thy wonders? / For even as Thou, in Thy goodness, didst appear on earth twofold of nature, / so didst Thou grant twofold healings to the sick; / for Thou didst open not only the bodily eyes of the man / who was blind from the womb, / but those of his soul also. / Wherefore, he confessed Thee, the hidden God, // Who grantest great mercy unto all."

(Glory from the Praises, Matins for the Sunday of the Blind Man)



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Arrangements for Banns, Holy Matrimony & Baptisms:
May be made by contacting Fr Ross on 01908 562148

Confessions: May be made after Masses or by appointment.

Parish Website: www.parishstonystratfordcalverton.com

To Hire the Parish Hall: 'phone Lesley Salter on 01908 567404



St Mary & St Giles, Stony Stratford with All Saints, Calverton

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE)

26th March AD 2017

"Rejoice, Jerusalem! Be glad for her, you who love her; rejoice with her, you who mourned for her, and you will find contentment at her consoling breasts."

This Sunday is known as Laetare Sunday and is a Sunday of joy. Lent is half over, and Easter is enticingly near. The Church's liturgy, on this the fourth Sunday of Lent, invites us to retrace one of the fundamental dynamics of our baptismal rebirth through the Gospel account of the healing of the 'man born blind'. It is the passage from the darkness of sin and error to the Light of God, who is the Risen Christ, even though there are those who would prevent it.

This Sunday is called "Laetare Sunday" since its mood and theme is one of hope and rejoicing that Easter was near. This Sunday is not different from the other Sundays of Lent though the entrance antiphon for the day still begins with the Latin word "laetare" and the vestments worn by the celebrant are rose-coloured, not violet.



Welcome to the Parish Church where, after the example of the early church, we celebrate the Eucharist: the "apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42)

INFORMATION

The Order of Mass is on the laminated card. The references to the Scripture Readings, which may be either listened to or followed in the Bibles provided, along with the Psalm and the Prayer of the Faithful are also included in this Sheet. Hymns are unannounced but are indicated on the boards towards the front of the Nave.

AA Large Print Orders of Service are available at St Mary & St Giles. Please ask a Sidesman for a copy.



A Loop System is in operation at St Mary & St Giles - please set hearing aids to the "T" position.



Access for the Disabled at St Mary & St Giles is via the path on the north side of the church. At All Saints it is via the South Porch.



Gluten-Free Hosts: if you are on a Gluten-Free diet and would like a Gluten-Free Host when you receive Holy Communion please mention this before Mass to one of the Sidesmen who will arrange this for you. Please make yourself known to the Parish Priest so that he is aware of your need.



Collections: for the continuing mission of Christ are taken while the altar and gifts of bread and wine are being prepared. If you are a visitor and a taxpayer and would like to make a donation please use the Gift Aid envelopes provided at the end of each row - please fill in your details. This enables us to reclaim, from the Inland Revenue, 25p for every £1 donated.



We observe a period of quiet prayer and reflection before the celebration of Mass, between the end of the Organ Voluntary and the Sacristy Bell being rung, in order that we may be better prepared to worship almighty God.

Reception of Holy Communion: All Baptised and Confirmed Christians are encouraged to receive Holy Communion. If you are unwell or uncertain about receiving the Precious Blood please do still receive the Host. Our Chalice Assistants are not authorised to permit the intincting (dipping) of the Host.



Please join us at the back of church for tea or coffee after Mass. A priest will be near the main door, shortly after the end of Mass, should you need to talk with one.

Please take this Service Sheet home with you and use as part of your devotions during the week.

At St Mary & St Giles this week:

Sidesmen	Team 4
Serving Team:	Team 3
Offertory bearers:	Gary & Claire Stilton
Church Gardeners:	Team 3
Church Cleaners	Team 4

Worshipping Numbers Last Sunday: 142

Worshipping Numbers on the weekdays prior: 91

Prayer Thought: Today's liturgy is in fact a summons to examine the new horizon opened up for us by the grace of God. It is by God's amazing gift that we have been enlightened but at the same time we have been called to an awesome responsibility. 'Your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father'.

The Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD (SIT)

The First Reading

1 Samuel 16:1b,6-7,10-13a

Reader at SMSG: Pat Eales

Reader at All Saints: Eilish Friedman

(Old Testament Page 213 in the Bibles) tells of the call of David, the youngest of his family, to be king of Israel. God does not go by appearances but looks to the heart of a man.

The Responsorial Psalm (from Psalm 23)

**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,
to revive my drooping spirit. ®

He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort. ®

You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.

he could take care of his slowly dying wife. He went through practically all of his savings, fully realizing that he would not have much left for himself in his golden years. But that didn't matter. He lovingly poured his life out for her in her remaining years, serving her, feeding her, bathing her and dressing her. Every day he'd take his wife outside for walks in the neighbourhood. He constantly read to her and talked to her, telling her about the weather, their friends and family, what was happening in the world and her favourite baseball team — even though she could not say a single word back.

For years, he never had even one conversation with the love of his life. But he was always by her side, all the way to the end.

Hero of Your Life

The tale of these two couples encapsulates the main contrasts between the classical and relativistic worldviews. Both husbands saw their life story take an unanticipated turn. And at that pivotal moment, one revealed himself to be a hero, while the other walked away from love and his responsibility to his family. One lived a kind of life we might expect an individualistic, relativistic culture to produce. The other rose above the mainstream and reminds us of what true greatness is all about.

His life was not about him — it was about giving himself to others, most especially his wife.

Relativism allows people to justify selfish acts that hurt other people. If there is no right or wrong, then I am free to do whatever I want with my life — no matter what consequences there might be for the poor, the unborn and the people God has placed in my life, whether friends, co-workers, family or, in this case, a dying wife and the kids who will be left behind.

But when we fail to give people a moral compass for their lives and instead train them in the relativistic view of freedom, we shouldn't be surprised when selfish acts like this occur and people get hurt in our culture. For relativism isn't just a bad idea. It wounds people.

*Edward Sri, Professor of theology
at the Augustine Institute.*

THIS WEEK IN OUR PARISH

TODAY: 4th Sunday of Lent Laetare Sunday/Mothering Sunday

8:30am Morning Prayer at St Mary & St Giles
9:30am PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles
11:00am FAMILY MASS at All Saints
Intention: Our Parish

Monday: Feria

9:30am 'Squeals on Wheels' in the Parish Hall
8:00pm Bellingring Practice
Pray for: the Sick, Housebound & Handicapped

Tuesday: Feria

10:30am Mass + Eleveses at All Saints
Intention: Our Nation's Security Services

Wednesday: Feria

7:15pm Devotional Presentation in Parish Hall prior to Mass
7:30pm Mass at St Mary & St Giles
Intention: All those affected by last Wednesday's atrocities in Westminster

Thursday: Feria

10:30am Mass at St Mary & St Giles
11:15am Calverton Almshouses Charity
1:45pm SMSG School South Site Visit to St Mary & St Giles for Lenten Devotions
7:00pm Stations of the Cross
Intention: The Emergency Services

Friday: Feria

9:30am School Mass at St Mary & St Giles
7:30pm Parish Singers Rehearsal
Intention: That our Young People will receive protection from evil

Saturday: Feria

10:00am Coffee Morning, Stall and Line of Pennies by Young Christians
12:00n Lent Lunch in Parish Hall
2:30pm Duck Race: Venue TBC
Pray for: Visitors to our Parish Churches

Next Sunday: 5th Sunday of Lent

8:30am Morning Prayer at St Mary & St Giles
9:30am PARISH MASS at St Mary & St Giles
11:00am FAMILY MASS at All Saints
Intention: Our Parish

Readings next Sunday: 5th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading:	Ezekiel 37: 12 -14
Psalm:	130 (part)
2nd Reading:	Romans 8: 8-11
Gospel:	John 11: 1-45

St Mary & St Giles School (North Site) - Mid-day Supervisor: Do you enjoy spending time with children? A permanent post is available for a Mid-day Supervisor starting 18th April 2017. We are ideally looking for a person experienced with looking after children and able to provide the highest standards of care and support for all our pupils.

Monday to Friday Term-time only 12:00pm to 1:30pm, Grade A Level 1, FTE Salary £16491, Actual salary £2777.07 (includes 5.2 weeks paid holiday). We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of all our children. All applicants will be subject to a DBS (previously CRB) Check.

If you are interested in this post, please contact the school office (01908 562186) for an application form.

St Mary & St Giles School (South Site) - General Handyman: A general handyman is sought for the south site of our Church School. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, or know of someone who might be interested, then please have a word with Kieran Salter. Thank you.

The Culture of Relativism:

Relativism isn't just a bad idea. It's ruining people's lives. And if we're going to be successful in motivating others to rise above the relativistic culture, we need to help them see what Pope Francis has observed: "Relativism wounds people."

The ideas at the centre of a relativistic outlook are dangerous. Just as bad math can lead to faulty engineering and unsafe buildings and bridges, moral relativism can cause harmful effects in people's lives, encouraging people to do things that will hurt themselves and others.

We can see this especially in the relativistic culture's view of freedom.

Authentic freedom is the ability to perform actions of high quality. It's for something. If I possess the skills of violin playing, I'm free to play the violin with excellence. If I possess the skills of race-car driving, I'm free to race the car around the track at high speeds.

And if I possess the life skills known as the virtues, I am free to give the best of myself in my relationships and thus find happiness. Virtue gives me the freedom to love other people.

But the modern notion of freedom supporting the relativistic outlook is self-centred. It's simply the ability to make choices. It's merely about being free from anyone controlling me. How one chooses to use his freedom, however, doesn't matter. There are no good or bad choices. It doesn't matter what one chooses; all that matters is that one chooses: "It's my life. I'm free to do whatever I want to do with my life. Don't tell me what to do."

A Tale of Two Marriages

A true story about two married couples who lived in the same neighbourhood at the same time can highlight the world of difference between these two views of freedom. One young couple had been happily married for several years with two children when the wife was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She quickly lost the ability to walk and knew she'd be in a wheelchair for the remainder of her life. This wasn't what her husband was expecting when they got married. The emotional and financial pressure was too much.

He wanted a different kind of life. So, in the middle of her battle with cancer, he left his wife and kids for another woman.

According to the modern view of freedom, we can't say what he did was wrong because that's his choice. There are no right or wrong choices, this mindset says. Maybe you wouldn't do that, but we all should celebrate his freedom: He's free to do whatever he wants. And if he wants to leave his dying wife and kids, that's his free choice.

Just streets away was another couple. The wife was diagnosed with an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis. She also quickly lost mobility and had to be pushed in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. But her situation was more incapacitating. She couldn't bathe herself, clothe herself or feed herself. She couldn't even speak.

Her husband was just hitting his stride in his business, but decided to retire early so that

My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. ®

Surely goodness and kindness
shall follow me
all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. ®

The Second Reading Ephesians 5:8-14
Reader at SMSG: Eilish Friedman

(New Testament Page 163 in the Bibles) reminds us that, as Christians; we must live like Christians. We must avoid sin and try to live good lives.

Gospel Acclamation

Praise to you O Christ, king of eternal glory! I am the light of the world, says the Lord; he who follows me will have the light of life. **Praise to you O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

The Gospel John 9: 1-41

(New Testament Page 87 in the Bibles) we hear of Jesus giving sight to a blind man. We should ask our Lord to open our eyes that we may really know who he is.

The Prayer of the Faithful

(Intercessor at SMSG: John Hickman)

Priest: My brothers and sisters, we should pray at all times, but especially during this season of Lent: we should faithfully keep watch with Christ, so let us pray to our heavenly Father.

Intercessor: That Christians everywhere may be responsive to the word of God during this holy season....., let us pray to the Lord:

V/. Lord, hear us.

R/. Lord, graciously hear us.

That people everywhere may work for peace to make these days the acceptable time of God's help and salvation....., let us pray to the Lord:

That all who have sinned or grown lukewarm may turn to God again during this time of reconciliation....., let us pray to

the Lord:

That we ourselves may learn to repent and turn from sin with all our hearts....., let us pray to the Lord:

That the sick and suffering may be given grace and strength, especially...*Fiddy Abraham, Polly Barclay, Gerry Bonner, Shirley Brown, Steve Cooper, Larry Francis, Russell Herbert, Jane Holman, Terry Mason, Sue Maton, Pete, Ron Smart, Tony Oakley, Wendy...* let us pray to the Lord:

That the faithful departed, especially...*Rory, Tony Finnegan, Bob Gray...* and for those whose anniversaries of death occur during this week...**26th** Mary Wallis, Malcolm Bodley; **27th** Harry Prendergast, Charles Britton, Own Bull, William King; **28th** Kathleen Saggars, Dorothy Gillman, David Eales; **29th** Frederick Taylor, Rose-Marie Gaskin; **30th** Stan Jones; **31st** Francis Pratt, Joan Lockett, Eva Fowler, Louis Foolkes, Alice Halliwell, George Griffith; **1st** Francis Poulter, Joan Zastawny... that they may enjoy the blessed vision of divine glory for ever, let us pray to the Lord:

✠ Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.

And let light perpetual shine upon them.

Priest: Lord, may your people turn again to you and serve you with all their hearts. With confidence we have asked your help: may we now know your mercy and love in our lives. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Communion Reflection:

In much the same way as so many ordinary characters in the Scriptures, the circumstances of our lives may seem quite simple and ordinary but God has spoken to us and his grace has come upon us today. We are now enabled to see the world in a new light through the power of that grace. From here on it is our mission to be witnesses of that transformation. We are called to be sharers with Jesus in being the light of the world

PARISH NEWS & NOTICES

Vestry Meetings: The *Vestry Meetings* for the election of Churchwardens take place THIS MORNING at the end of each of our Parish Churches Principal Acts of Worship. Nominations for the Office of Churchwarden require the agreement of the Rector and must have been received prior to the Vestry Meeting. We are permitted to elect two Churchwardens for each of our Parish Churches, all of whom serve as Churchwardens for the whole Parish for the next twelve months.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting: takes place at 12:00noon NEXT Sunday (2nd April) at All Saints Church (this meeting alternates between our two Parish Churches on a bi-annual basis). The Agenda for this year's meeting, along with the Minutes of last year's meeting and the 2015 Annual Report and Accounts will be available following the March Parochial Church Council Meeting - as the PCC has to 'receive' the accounts before the Annual Report and Accounts can be published.

Nomination Forms for election to the Deanery Synod and/or Parochial Church Council are available from the Rector.

The revision of the Electoral Roll: for the Parish is now COMPLETE. The good news is that despite a number of names having to be removed from the Roll due to death or because of moving to other parts of the country we have actually seen an increase in the number on the Roll. There have been new people join us regularly for worship in both churches, but the growth at All Saints has seen the numbers at worship increase three-fold.

Planned Giving - Envelope Scheme: the new sets of envelopes for the next financial year are now available for collection in each of our Parish Church for those who regularly use them. If anyone not

currently giving through the envelope scheme would like to do so please see David Williams, Our Treasurer for further details. Similarly, if anyone would prefer to give by Standing Order, David would be happy to talk this through with you.

The Rector, Churchwardens and PCC are very grateful to everyone who gives to the continuing mission of the Church within our parish. While the amount asked of the Parish by the Diocese continues to rise, it is good to be able to report that in 2016 we were able send £1000 more to the Diocese than we had in 2015. There are leaflets (Giving in Grace) recommended by the Archdeacon in both of our churches to enable us all to prayerfully consider our giving to the mission of the Church *Thank you.*

Coffee morning: to be held on Saturday, 1st April - the from 10am - noon. This will include the Young Christians Stall and Line of Pennies. Donations of any items for sale would be much appreciated. This will be followed by Lent Lunches until 1.30pm and the Duck Race (location to be announced).

An Appeal by our Young People: Following a discussion some of our young people are keen to help a Parish in Coventry Diocese raise funds to enable their participation in the Youth Pilgrimage to continue. They are keen to sell homemade Easter cards which Ray Rowson is printing for them They are also going to make and sell homemade biscuits and cakes on the same stall after the Mass on a Sunday. They write:

"Last year at Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage Tile Hill's marquee blew away. Also last year at the youth pilgrimage the theme was acts of mercy. So we decided that as our act of mercy we would raise some money towards Tile Hill's new marquee. We are going to be selling Easter cards and cakes. Please bring

along a little money to help with this worthwhile cause. *Jamie and Rosie"*

WEDNESDAY - A Journey to the Cross: starting this Wednesday evening at 7:15pm during Lent there there will be a short DVD presentation of one of a series of images of Christ's journey to the Cross. Each one includes reflective words, scripture references, a short prayer and concludes with one verse of a hymn. Mass will then following church at 7:30pm. The same pattern will be followed with the evening Masses on the first three days of Holy Week.

Lent Lunches: are served on the Saturdays of Lent. Thank you to all those who have volunteered to host these. The lunch held at All Saints on Ash Wednesday raised over £80 for our Lent Appeal and was well attended with tables and chairs being set up down the aisle in the Nave.

Tea Dance in SMSG School Hall: Sunday, 23rd April 3-5pm. Popular sequence and ballroom dancing accompanied by SMSG Church Band with an interval tea. £5 each in advance from Lesley Salter or any Band member.

Children's Activity Morning: All children are invited to come to the Parish Hall for an Activity Morning on Tuesday, 11th April. We will start at 9.30am and finish at 1.30pm, after a shared lunch. There is no charge for this event and nothing to bring, but booking is essential! Please see Ray, Jenny, Andrea, Richard, Sue or Lesley for more details and to book a place.

Parish Weekend Pilgrimage to The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham 2017: Thank you to all those who have booked places so far. Please could all completed booking forms along with deposits of £30 per person be given to Fr Ross as

soon as possible, so that we can give the Shrine an early indication of numbers and secure rooms. If you have not been to Walsingham before this is an ideal introduction to the wonderful ministry of the Shrine. Fr Ross or any previous pilgrims will be only to pleased to tell you more.

Sainsbury's Active Kids Vouchers: It's that time of year again when our Church School is collecting Sainsbury's Active Kids Vouchers 2017. If you, family members or friends shop in Sainsbury's and receive any vouchers, then please pass them to Kieran or Fr Ross We are collecting vouchers until 2nd May. Once all the vouchers are in and collated they will be used to get equipment for P.E. Thank you.

Bible Reading at home: During the Confirmation Course this year, as I always do, I mentioned that the Bible is not a volume to be read from cover to cover because it is not written chronologically.

This year the obvious question was asked: "Is it possible to obtain a Bible that is laid out chronologically?"

The answer is that there is. It is called 'Cover to Cover Complete: Through the Bible as It Happened.' It is available on Amazon at £24.99 and can also be ordered through bookshops. However, I have discovered that bulk buying of the NIV Version from the publisher is cheaper, so if at least ten people would like a copy I can order them at a discounted price. Would all those interested please let me know if they would like to be included in such a group order.

This edition is designed to be read over the course of the year for about 15 minutes each day. It includes illustrations, maps, charts, diagrams, a timeline, and devotional articles; which are very useful aids to study and prayer.