



## SUNDAY CONNECTION

### *Fourth Sunday of Lent*

Readings For Sunday, March 11, 2018 – Cycle B

#### **First Reading - 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23**

The causes for the Israelites' captivity in Babylon are described.

#### **Responsorial - Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6**

A lament from exile for the loss of Jerusalem.

#### **Second Reading - Ephesians 2:4-10**

In grace we have been saved, so that we may do the work of the Lord.

#### **Gospel Reading - John 3:14-21**

Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Son of Man will be raised up so that those who believe in him will have eternal life.

#### **Commentary On The Gospel**

The fourth Sunday of Lent is sometimes called *Laetare* Sunday, a Latin word that means “rejoice.” Traditionally, Sundays are named after the first word of the liturgy's opening antiphon. On this Sunday, the antiphon is taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Even as we observe our Lenten sacrifices, we rejoice in anticipation of the joy that will be ours at Easter.

Today's Gospel reading, taken from John, consists of two parts. The first part is the final sentence of Jesus' reply to Nicodemus, the Pharisee who approached Jesus at night and acknowledged Jesus as someone who had come from God. Jesus greeted Nicodemus with the observation that one must be born from above to see the Kingdom of God. The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus was about the meaning of this phrase. Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus at every point, but there was no animosity in the questions he posed to Jesus.

In the part of the conversation with Nicodemus in today's Gospel, Jesus referred to an incident reported in the Old Testament. When the Israelites grumbled against the Lord during their sojourn in the desert, God sent venomous serpents to punish them for their complaints. The Israelites repented and asked Moses to pray for them. The Lord heard Moses' prayer and instructed him to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. All who had been bitten by a serpent and then looked upon the bronze serpent were cured. By recalling this story, Jesus alludes to the salvation that would be accomplished through his death and Resurrection.

The second part of today's Gospel is a theological reflection on Jesus' words to Nicodemus. In these reflections, John elaborates on a number of themes that are found in his Gospel: light and darkness, belief and unbelief, good and evil, salvation and condemnation.

In John's reflection, we find an observation about human sinfulness. Jesus is the light that has come into the world, but people preferred the darkness. We wish to keep our sins hidden, even from God. Jesus has come into the world to reveal our sins so that they may be forgiven. This is the Good News; it is the reason for our rejoicing in this season of Lent and throughout our lives.