

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT; Cycle – B; March 10<sup>th</sup> 2024**  
**2Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

On the fourth Sunday of Lent the priests wear Rose vestment at Mass as the symbol of joy. The faithful are asked to rejoice for the very reason that the celebration of the glorification of Jesus is very close. And also it is the foretaste of our future glorification. Hence the theme of this Sunday is the immense *LOVE of GOD for man*. The three readings confirm this truth. The love of God started with the people of Israel and the same was extended to mankind through Incarnation of Jesus.

Out of love God gave the Commandments to the people of Israel so that through the observance of them they should remain faithful to God and attain prosperity in the Promised Land. Unfortunately, they forgot their God who brought them out of Egypt and went after foreign gods and even the great King Solomon went astray towards the end of his reign. People paid heavy price for their infidelity being exiled to Babylon. But today's reading from the 2 Chronicles shows how God still loved his people and saved them through King Cyrus, the Persian King. By the command of God he conquered Babylon and freed the people of Israel. Amazingly, God chose a pagan king to free His people from captivity.

Finally the climax of God's love is demonstrated in the person and mission of Jesus. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of St. John is the most beautiful passage among the four gospels and it is *known as the gospel of everybody*. No other Evangelist has ever described the love of God as beautifully as John did in his gospel. John begins the gospel with the *theme of love* and concludes the long farewell discourse of Jesus with his *command of love*, '*Love one another as I have loved you.*' In today's gospel Jesus says to Nicodemus who came to him, "**God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.**" In the following verse Jesus makes it very clear, "**God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.**" In the Old Testament the love of God was mainly concentrated in Israel alone. But in the New Testament Jesus says that God loved the world as a whole.

It is very clear from the words of Jesus that *salvation is universal* and no one is denied of it. But Jesus places a condition here for salvation. Jesus says, "**Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**" Belief in the *name* of Jesus Christ is the prime requirement for our salvation. In today's

passage Jesus uses the word *'believe'* five times. In the Acts of the Apostles chapter 4:12 Peter, speaking about the salvation through Jesus Christ, declares, **“There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”**

Those who do not believe in the name of Jesus go away from the true light and they remain in darkness. Faith is a gift from God; but due to our freedom of will we can refuse to accept it. So it is not God who condemns them; rather they themselves bring the condemnation against them by their denial of light. **It is said that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and John gives us dual meaning for ‘night.’ Perhaps he came at night or till meeting Jesus, the true light, Nicodemus’ life was filled with darkness. So he came to Jesus at night and went back in the light.** Again John says about the departure of Judas from the Last Supper in these words, **“So he took the morsel and left at once. And it was night.”** Yes, by that time Judas had gone far away from the true Light and hereafter his life would be night. This is an eye opening insight from John. **Once we leave Jesus, our life will be filled with darkness and we will not be able to see things around.** It is then, night in our lives. So whatever we do in that state of life, will never bear any fruit. Once we come to the light we are exposed; not only do we see others, but also we see ourselves and our works better. Remaining in that true light we cannot go wrong or stumble. Jesus laments in today’s gospel, **“That the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil.”** This is the typical condition of the modern world. People don’t want to remain in light for being afraid that their evil works will be exposed and they have to change the course of their lives. Let us keep the true light with us always and avoid darkness.