

**Reflection on the Gospel-4th Sunday of Lent Year B
(John 3:14-21)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The gospel for today is the concluding section of Jesus' conversation with a Pharisee called Nicodemus, who comes to him "by night". It features a number of typically Johannine themes: life, eternal life, believing, seeing, God's love, salvation, judgment, light, darkness, the world, truth. John loves to play on words. Without losing sight of the material reality underlying each image, we need to keep asking: how is this word or expression to be understood in this particular context? In John's gospel, the characters often misunderstand and this gives Jesus the opportunity to lead his hearers to a deeper or different understanding of his words.

As 21st century readers, we operate out of a symbol system that belongs in a different time and a different place, hence the need to explore the traditions informing the stories. The first two verses of today's reading evoke the ancient Israelite tradition of the bronze serpent (Numbers 21:5-9). According to the story, the Israelites are unhappy with their lot in the desert. They complain about the food or lack thereof. They blame both God and Moses. Their situation worsens with the outbreak of a plague of poisonous snakes whose bite has killed a considerable number of them. The people interpret the plague as punishment for their sin of speaking against God. They ask Moses to intercede with God. God instructs Moses to make an image of a fiery serpent and set it on a pole: anyone affected by snakebite has only to look upon the image to find life and healing. And so it happens: the bronze serpent is lifted up and those who "see" or "look upon it" find life.

Life and death, seeing and believing in God's love and mercy are at the heart of the story of the bronze serpent. The gospel writer taps into the collective memory of the emerging Christian community: just as the serpent was lifted up and the people found life, so will Jesus be lifted up and those who believe in him will find life. In John's gospel, seeing is often equated with believing and believing leads to "life".

The bottom line is God's saving love for "the world", for the whole Earth community. Most of the themes in this passage have already been introduced in the prologue to the gospel. Here for the first time in the gospel, God's saving activity is expressed in terms of "love". God's love is explicitly related to the gift of Jesus, God's Son, for the salvation of the world. Salvation resides in acceptance of Jesus, judgment in the refusal to accept Jesus as the revelation of God. Later in this gospel (12:33), Jesus will again reference the bronze serpent story in an expansive embrace of all creation: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself."

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT—YEAR B



ST ALIPIUS PARISH, BALLARAT EAST

Including St Peter & Paul's, Buninyong

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**MASS TIMETABLE FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING
MONDAY, 12TH MARCH 2018**

MONDAY:	No Mass
TUESDAY:	No Mass
WEDNESDAY:	11.00 am in Mercy Centre
THURSDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church
FRIDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church

NEXT WEEKEND'S MASSES

ST. ALIPIUS	SAT	6.00 PM
	SUN	9.00 AM
BUNINYONG	SUN	10.30 AM

The FIFTH SUNDAY of LENT, YEAR B

READINGS	First: Jeremiah 31:31-34
	Second: Hebrews 5:7-9
	Gospel: John 12:20-33

ANNIVERSARIES: Barbara Gleeson, Elsie and Harry Lavery, Max Gilbert.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK: Nathan Cambell, Denise Learmonth, Cath Wheelahan, Terry McGarry, Kevin Walsh, Peter Clohesy, Frank Nolan (Buninyong), Mary Barnett, Fiona Dickinson, Carmel Doherty, Pauline Murphy, Maria Wilson, Aurora Ferrer, Patricia Harman, Leonie Sinnot.

COUNTING TEAMS:

This Week: Team 5: J. Moran ©, B. Forbes.

Next Week: Team 6: M. Stewart ©, M. Anderson, R. Reynolds.

COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:

PARISH:	Envelopes:	\$ 1,194.20
	Loose:	\$ 300.00
	Direct Debits:	\$ <u>1,060.00</u>
		\$ 2,554.20
PRESBYTERY:		\$ 852.00



LENTEN REFLECTIONS

On Thursdays during Lent the Parish offers an opportunity for Lenten Reflections on the Sunday Gospel. These will be held at 10.00 am in the Church meeting room.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF RECONCILIATION

A community celebration of Reconciliation will be celebrated in the context of the Parish Masses next weekend (March 17th & 18th), highlighting the 'Penitential Rite of the Mass, and celebrating Reconciliation in the context of the community.

FIRST RECONCILIATION

This week Emmaus and St Francis Xavier School communities are hosting celebrations of 1st Reconciliation for their students and families. Parishioners are welcome to come along and celebrate with the children.

Emmaus Community: Wed., 14th March at 6.30 pm.

St Francis Xavier: Thu, 15th March at 6.30 pm.

PREPARATION FOR SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

If you are seeking to have your child/children celebrating sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Eucharist and your child/children attend schools other than Catholic Parish schools, we are able to assist you. Please contact the Parish Office or your nearest Catholic school—Emmaus, St Alipius, St Francis Xavier, soon.

NAZARETH HOUSE MUSIC AFTERNOON

Nazareth House Auxiliary Irish Music Afternoon is to be held at **Nazareth House Hall on Friday, 16th March from 1:30 pm—3:00 pm**. Admission is \$5 per head. There will be an *entrance prize, afternoon tea, raffle and cake stall*. All welcome.

BISHOP'S VISIT

Thank you and appreciation to all who assisted with the visit of the Bishop last weekend - for accompanying, hospitality, for saying hello, for the liturgies and school visits.

PAINT JOB—THANK YOU

Have you noticed the paint job? Doesn't the former presbytery, parish administration place look good? Thanks to a philanthropist (a very kind person of the parish) this work has been undertaken. Also on the cards is repairing and cleaning of the glass foyer on the east side of the Church. We are very grateful. It shows a pride in our place.

A NAME

Can you think of an appropriate name for the presbytery, former presbytery, parish office, 84 Victoria Street? Write in a note, or email name with explanation, and we can see what emerges. Thank you.

REFLECTION LENT

These periods of dryness in prayer can be when God is closest to us and when we grow the most. In those times, our prayer is motivated by pure love, and we do not come to God for the comfort we receive. There will also be times of great consolation, when praying gives us peace, or joy or true sorrow for our sins. In Rudyard Kipling's words, when it comes to consolation and dryness in prayer, we must "treat these two imposters just the same". Prayer is about God, not about our feelings. If you keep yourself close to the Lord, you will experience "peace.... which passes all understanding". (Phil 4:7) (Aurora Griffin).

LENTEN CARDS

Lenten cards are available to feed you on your Lenten journey.

PARISH FINANCE MEETING SUMMARY, CONT'D

A new sign board is being prepared for St Alipius.

Kitchen Buninyong: Tenders are about to be called for installation of the kitchen in the former church.

Parish Stewardship: (Planned Giving Programme) After a meeting with representatives of the six parishes of Ballarat, and Mr Stephen Littleton from Parish Development, Archdiocese Melbourne, there is an in-principle agreement to run a stewardship renewal for the six parishes here in Ballarat next year prior to Easter 2019.

THRIVING WITH GRIT

Wed., 14th March from 7 to 8.30 pm at Damacus College. Visit www.damacus.vic.edu.au to book you free ticket. See Notice Board.

WALK FOR JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES 2018

Palm Sunday, 25th March, 2.00 pm, State Library. See Notice Board.