



4th Sunday of Lent (Year B)



John 3: 14 – 21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned; but the one who does not believe is condemned already, for not having believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

“And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

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Reflection:

Most names have meaning; others are given for their uniqueness or beauty. When the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he instructed her to name him Jesus (a word meaning “God saves”). When speaking about those who do not believe in God’s ability or willingness to save his people from death, not believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus speaks about a state of condemnation; by their disbelief in God’s power to save, they have cut themselves off from God. These people prefer to carry on with their lives as if God does not exist or that God does not care for their well-being.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

“What’s in a name?” Ask your parents about the story behind your name. Ask them about the meaning behind their own name (for more information on the meaning of names, check the internet).

What is Seen in the Light – A Parable (a bedtime story):

Imagine a young couple on their very first meal together at a fancy restaurant. The lights are low, a candle is lit, a violinist moves from table to table and plays a sweet love song. The food is simply exquisite.

Imagine how happy they are as the food is presented, each dish a marvelous new discovery of tantalizing taste and savoury smell.

Imagine the momentary letdown when, suddenly, without any warning, a piece of food falls on your nice white shirt. You hide your embarrassment with a brief chuckle. “How foolish of me,” you say. And taking your cloth serviette, you begin to dab it in your water glass and rub the little stain. As if by magic, the stain disappears.

What a relief, what seemed to be a momentary embarrassment is now quickly forgotten. The rest of the evening proceeds as planned. The stories you share, the laughs you have and the dessert you share; everything is picture perfect.

Then comes the time to leave, and the moment to step outside, where the bright lights of the city and the noise of the traffic will lead you home. Imagine looking down at your shirt at the stain that you spread. Under the dim light of a candle, it had disappeared like magic, but under the glare of the light it jumps out like a blotch.

“What’s wrong?” Your friend asks. Then stops and sees the stain. Though your friend says it’s okay and the night had been good, you can’t help but be embarrassed and back away from the light.



St. Patrick (Bedtime story):

Patrick showed little interest in Jesus when he was young. If asked why, he would probably tell you that he had very little need of him. After all, Patrick grew up in a very nice home with loving parents and a good teacher; he had everything you could possibly ask for. Until, one day, it was all taken away from him.

When Patrick was sixteen, and playing with some friends, a group of pirates captured them and brought them back to Ireland. For the next six years Patrick spent his time in slavery, looking after sheep and goats, unable to escape. If you would ask him whereabouts in Ireland, he wouldn’t know. He didn’t even know what direction to run, if he could.

It was during those six lonely years of being a slave that Patrick began to pray to God. He prayed for guidance and protection. He prayed for help and support. But, most of all, Patrick prayed for freedom, that, one day, he could go back to his family.

In his diary, Patrick tells the story of a dream he had. He was now a young man of 22. In his dream he heard a voice, “Patrick, a boat is waiting for you; it’s time for you go home.”

It is hard to say how Patrick avoided getting captured. There was no one he could turn to, now that he decided to make a run for it. Days went by, with news of his escape spreading fast. It was only a matter of time before he would be captured.

But God looked after Patrick and guided his steps to the Eastern coast. And, as he reached it, he saw a boat. A boat that was ready to sail for England.

“Not so fast,” the captain said. “Who will pay your fare?” It was as if the door of escape was slammed shut. Patrick had no money; he didn’t have a cent to his name.

“But I must go home to England,” Patrick pleaded. “My family is waiting for me.” Yet, no matter how much Patrick begged, the captain remained unmoved. “No money, no passage.” That’s all he said.

God moves hearts when all is lost. Just as Patrick was ready to give up and find some other way, a voice was heard. “I’ll pay his fare. How much?”

You can well imagine the joy of his parents when Patrick came home. Imagine the surprise of seeing him alive and well. “Patrick,” they shouted in jubilation. They repeated his name again and again.

Many hugs later, he told them his story. It was hard to believe it had all happened to him. How God had been close to him through all his pain and suffering. How God had led his footsteps on his way back home..

It came as no surprise, therefore, that when Patrick had spent some time at home, he began talking about the priesthood. “Now that I know God’s goodness to me, I want to spend my life serving him.”

Patrick spent the next few years in France, learning everything there is to know to become a priest. One night, shortly after he was ordained a priest, Patrick had a dream. He tells of a vision received in the night of a messenger, dressed in Irish robes, with a letter: “We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us.”

“I want to go to Ireland,” Patrick told his bishop. “I want to go to Ireland and share the faith.” The request seemed strange and somewhat shocking, considering the slavery that he had endured. First his bishop, then his parents, everyone needed to be convinced. But Patrick insisted, God was calling him back to Ireland, back to the people who didn’t know God.

Despite his dream, Patrick did not receive a warm welcome in his return to Ireland. After all, the Irish people lived in fear of their gods and were afraid to offend them. Though they welcomed the idea of a loving God, who was willing to lay down his life for their sake, they would need to be convinced that he was powerful enough to counteract the harm that might come if they abandoned their own gods.

Patrick also had to deal with the druids, the priests in charge of sacrificing to the Irish gods. They worked hard to oppose Patrick’s teaching and even tried to kill him. Only when several attempts on his life were unsuccessful, and Patrick’s belief in Jesus Christ proved to be more powerful than their belief in the Irish gods, that some of the clans were baptized as Christians. Over the course of Patrick’s ministry to the Irish, whole areas became Christian.

Patrick was appointed as Bishop of Ireland. It was his job to make sure that churches and places to train new priests were built. Many young men and women came forward to serve the church in Ireland. Many men became priests and many of the women entered religious communities that served the poor, took care of the sick or taught those who had not heard of God. Soon the Church took on a life of its own.

Patrick did not live to see the total conversion of Ireland to the Christian faith. This would still take many years to complete. Yet, most people will admit, he played a big role. Even today, St. Patrick is known as the Apostle to Ireland, the one who brought Christ to the land of the Irish.

More daily suggestions for Lent:

(One item is picked each day. Add another link to your Easter garland that stretches across your room.)

- No video games for a day.
- Go to bed and get up in the morning on time.
- Read Jesus' Story of the Sower (Matthew 13: 1-9).
- Write or draw in your prayer journal.
- Spend five minutes in silent prayer.
- No text messaging for a day.
- Show someone how much you care.
- Offer to help someone.
- Learn about a Saint's life on-line.
- Pray the Hail Mary five times and ask Mary to pray for you.
- Pray to your Guardian Angel and make a snow angel outside.
- Donate some food items to the food bank.
- Make an Easter card and send it to someone.
- Go to church.
- Help your mom at supper time.
- Write your own mealtime prayer.
- Read Psalm 63.