

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent 2026

### Laetare Sunday

(1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41)

During a baptism service the **baptismal candle** is lit from the Pascal or Easter candle, this has significant symbolism. Firstly, we are recalling the events of the first Easter, which are commemorated at the Easter Vigil each year. The world was in darkness following the events of Good Friday. The first sign of light (the first signs of life come from the Easter fire) where the Light of Christ starts to bathe the world in light again. This is a new beginning, just like when the world was created and God said, *'let there be light'*. The world will never be the same again, because now Jesus has risen from the dead. In our baptism we go down into the grave with Jesus and are lifted up, cleansed by water; which gives life; and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The second symbol is the **flame of faith**. When the light is brought close to the newly baptised, the words spoken by the celebrant are *'receive the light of Christ'*. If it is a child being baptised, the parents are instructed to *'keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts'*. This has to be done by **words and deeds**. The parents and godparents are asked to be good role models, as would the sponsor of an adult being baptised.

In the Gospel we hear today, we have these symbols being lived out. The man born blind had lived in darkness, his world had no light. But when Jesus opened his eyes, his faith was born; just as we are reborn in baptism. He is transformed by his encounter with Jesus. He goes from being a beggar who people *'passed by'* to a man who told the temple officials the Good News, even though they did not want to hear it. The flame of faith was very much burning in this man's heart.

The temple officials, tried as best they could to discredit his testimony, but the more they probed, the more the man who was born blind, shared the Good News. Their motives were to protect their own lifestyles, they could not countenance Jesus being the Messiah, because He did not fit the Messiah they had in their minds -someone who would be a great warrior and destroy all of their enemies. This is very much linked with our first reading from the first book of Samuel. Here we have Samuel sent to Bethlehem to show the people who God was going to choose as the next King of Israel. Samuel's first thought was that Eliab would be the chosen one as he was the eldest and looked to be the most powerful. But God said to Samuel that *'the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.'*

#### **What does God see in our hearts today?**

For the people we encounter in the Bible, God was pivotal in their lives. Every action, every decision, every outcome was affected by the relationship the individual had with God.

#### **Could the same be said about us today?**

One of the most common challenges I hear from my wife when I am discouraged, or down beat is *'did you pray about it?'* It frustrates the life out of me that time and time again, I try to do things under my own power and fail to involve God by praying before I act. It frustrates me even more that she is right. Is it any wonder that I get discouraged because I am trying to do my will, without considering if it is also God's will.

We are now half way through Lent, it is a good time to review how our Lent is going. I often start off Lent full of good intentions and try to make too many changes. I have probably done

the same again this year. My hopes were to find more time to pray, which for the most part has worked, although I do find myself struggling occasionally. I have also tried to avoid eating between meals, this has been mostly successful. We are also called to look at our life and, today especially, shine the light into the darkest corners of our life.

**What areas of my life do I need to change? What areas of my life do I not want to shine the light on, because it is uncomfortable for me?**

When we do this and expose these elements of our life to ourselves, then we need to seek God's forgiveness and His help to prevent us from sinning again. There are opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at all of our churches. Please look at your local newsletter. In addition, the **Pastoral Area Reconciliation Service is on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March at 7:30 pm in St Bede's Church**. That way we can live out the words of the opening prayer [Collect] today – *'O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.'* Amen.

**Further Reading**

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Fourth Sunday of Lent

CCC 280, 529, 748, 1165, 2466, 2715: Christ the light of the nations

CCC 439, 496, 559, 2616: Jesus is the Son of David

CCC 1216: baptism is illumination

CCC 782, 1243, 2105: Christians are to be light of the world<sup>1</sup>

**Please remember in your prayers**

- All those who are sick, either at home or in hospital, especially those who have very few or no visitors.
- Those who have died and those who grieve for them.
- Those attending the RCIA programmes especially those preparing for Sacraments this Easter.
- The young people preparing for Confirmation in our Pastoral Area.
- The success of the Pastoral Area Mission Plan.
- The continued success of the Pastoral Area Lent course on Prayer.
- The children who began their Baptism Preparation last week.

Deacon Tony

13<sup>th</sup> March 2026

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<sup>1</sup> [Homiletic Directory, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments](#)