

THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT – A

March 15 – 21, 2026

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Sunday

Come to Siloam

A Commentary by St. Ambrose

You have heard that story in the gospel where we are told that the Lord Jesus, as he was passing by, caught sight of a man who had been blind from birth. Since the Lord did not overlook him, neither ought we to overlook this story of a man whom the Lord considered worthy of his attention. In particular, we should notice the fact that he had been blind from birth. This is an important point.

There is, indeed, a kind of blindness, usually brought on by serious illness, which obscures one's vision, but which can be cured, given time; and there is another sort of blindness, caused by cataract, that can be remedied by a surgeon: he can remove the cause, and so the blindness is dispelled. Draw your own conclusion: this man, who was actually born blind, was not cured by surgical skill, but by the power of God.

When nature is defective, the Creator, who is the author of nature, has the power to restore it. This is why Jesus also said, *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*, meaning: all who are blind are able to see, so long as I am the light they are looking for. Come, then, and receive the light, so that you may be able to see.

What is he trying to tell us, he who brought human beings back to life, who restored them to health by a word of command, who said to a corpse, *Come out!* And Lazarus came out from the tomb; who said to a paralytic, *Arise and pick up your stretcher*, and the sick man rose and picked up the very bed on which he used to be carried as a helpless cripple? Again, I ask you, what is he trying to convey to us by spitting on the ground, mixing his spittle with clay, and putting it on the eyes of a blind man, saying: *Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam (a name that means "sent")*? What is the meaning of the Lord's action in this? Surely one of great significance, since the person whom Jesus touches receives more than just his sight.

In one instant, we see both the power of his divinity and the strength of his holiness. As the divine light, he touched this man and enlightened him; as a priest, by an action symbolizing baptism, he wrought in him his work of redemption. The only reason for his mixing clay with the spittle and smearing it on the eyes of the blind man was to remind you that he who restored the man to health by anointing his eyes with clay is the very one who fashioned the first man out of clay, and that this clay that is our flesh can receive the light of eternal life through the sacrament of baptism.

You, too, should come to Siloam, that is, to him who was sent by the Father (as he says in the gospel, *My teaching is not my own, it comes from him who sent me*). Let Christ wash you, and you will then see. Come and be baptized, it is time; come quickly, and you too will be able to say, *I went and washed*; you will be able to say, *I was blind, and now I can see*, and as the blind man said when his eyes began to receive the light, *The night is almost over, and the day is at hand*.

Monday

LORD, GRANT US TRUSTING FAITH

A Reflection adapted from a text by Anselm Romb

Do you take Isaiah's prophecies literally, or do you think of them as just hyperbolic ways of calling us to trust in God's love? "Lo, I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth." What will it be like? It appears that no infant will die without growing up, and adults who die without reaching 100 will be thought accursed. People will live in peace in their homes and eat the produce they raise because there will be no war to destroy homes, and exile people, and make their lives miserable. It will be a kind of paradise.

Some very optimistic people think that the behavioral and natural sciences, combined with technology, will bring in a Golden Age. Our new ability to engineer the genetic codes and manipulate biological processes and the endless energy from fusion power will, they think, make a life god physically, while psychologists heal our emotional and mental wounds so we can love one another and eliminate crime, and so on. Unfortunately, these powers seem to be taking us farther from paradise rather than bringing us closer to it.

In the Gospel, we hear about a royal official, in other Gospels said to be a centurion, whose son is mortally ill. The man has come a good distance to ask Jesus to heal his son. Jesus simply tells him: "Go home. Your son is well." He believes Jesus! He turns around and begins the journey home, believing that all is as Jesus said. What has been missing in our planning for an earthly paradise is the invitation to Jesus to become part of our lives. The royal official didn't make fancy requests or construct arguments. He only pleaded for the life and health of his child. He sought out Jesus and asked him to become part of his life by sharing his concern for the sick child. When Jesus did, the man accepted the fact and headed home. He was met on the road and told that his child was well.

When we become concerned about the sick state of our world, to whom do we turn? If we turn to Jesus, what is our response when he tells us: I'm taking care of it. It will all be well. Do we take him literally, or do we interpret him like many do Isaiah's prophecies, as hyperbole? The royal official whose story we heard took Jesus' statement literally and went back to his home and work sure that he would find all was well.

We believe that Isaiah prophesied in the name of God and that what he says will prove true – even if we're not sure just how to understand the process by which God will set things right, or the part we have to play in it. God has given us our orders: "Go about the work of your vocation. I have given it to you. Live your work in faith and do it in compassion and love. I will deal with what is too great for you." Is that what we're doing? We aren't to stop caring but only to stop trying. We believe that Isaiah prophesied in the name of God and that what he says will prove true – even if we're not sure just how to understand the process by which God will set things right, or the part we have to play in it. God has given us our orders: "Go about the work of your vocation. I have given it to you. Live your work in faith and do it in compassion and love. I will deal with what is too great for you." Is that what we're doing? We aren't to stop caring, but only to stop trying to make the good things happen in our human way rather than relying on God.

Tuesday

HOW THE LORD LEADS US TO HEALING

A Reflection excerpted from a homily by St. Bede the Venerable

Jesus had come to the pool named Probatika, and he saw there a person who had been sick for 38 years. The pool had five porticoes, reminding one of the five books of Torah and so of the Law of Moses, intended to protect people from sinning. He had not been protected. It was likely also a pool where priests washed sacrificial offerings before burning them on the altar. In such a holy place of cleansing, it was believed, an angel came at times to stir the water, and the first to enter after that stirring would be healed. But all the ill lying in the porticoes had been unable to get healed, just as they had failed to find the strength to avoid sin. They recognized their sin, and Jesus had come to give the grace of forgiveness and inner healing. This applies to us as well.

Jesus came to one who had lain for 38 years, unable to get the help needed to enter the waters and find healing. The number 38 is two short of 40, which is the symbol for an entire lifetime, tells us how long it felt. How many of us are in this situation? Listen to the Lord, *"Get up, take your pallet and leave."* If one has been waiting so long, then it is time to listen to the Lord and do penance and find healing. What is the cure? One must help others as one needs others' help. No one had helped that poor man, but now Jesus makes him able to help others. In doing this, all the sins of his lifetime will be gradually healed.

Jesus' words mean we should renew our love for God. Love God with all your heart and soul and strength, and so make daily strides by good works. Never desert brothers or sisters in faith, but try to help them toward the love of God and neighbor. *"Take up your pallet"* indicates that we should leave behind earlier sins and come to the aid of those who need our help. Be filled with hope for the coming of the glory of our Great God.

Yet some didn't help but only criticized. It was the Sabbath, and they thought the healed one shouldn't "carry his pallet" on that day. They couldn't see a spiritual way of keeping the Law. By what he did, the Lord suggested that whoever has been wasting away from a long-lasting habit of sin should take up the love of God and of neighbor. If you have suffered in this way, the gift of the Holy Spirit will enable you to rise up, especially on the Sabbath. Sin is what is most forbidden on the Sabbath; virtue is a path toward the healing of sinful ways.

Notice that later the Lord came into the Temple and saw the person who had been healed. Listen to his words, *"Look, you are healed! Sin no more lest something worse happen to you."* He is not threatening or suggesting his illness was punishment for sin; Jesus points out that there are much worse things than physical infirmity. Sin leads to them. Do not torment yourself out of fear that every physical infirmity convicts you of sin. The Lord has forgiven your sin. He asks only that you cease to be paralyzed and unable to love God and neighbor. Do that, and indeed you will live.

Wednesday

THE DAILY DEMAND OF BELIEVING

A Teaching by Symeon the New Theologian

Many often say: If only we had lived in the days of the apostles and been counted worthy to gaze upon Christ as they did, we should have become holy like them. Such people do not realize that the Christ who spoke then and the Christ who speaks now, throughout the whole world, is one and the same Christ. If he were not the same then and now, God in every respect, in his operations as in the sacraments, how would it be seen that the Father is always in the Son and the Son in the Father, according to the words Christ himself spoke through the Spirit: "My Father is still working and so am I"?

No doubt someone will say that merely to hear his words now and to be taught about him and his kingdom is not the same thing as to have seen him then in the body. I answer that indeed the position now is not the same as it was then, but that our situation now, in the present day, is very much better. It leads us more easily to a deeper faith and conviction than seeing and hearing him in the flesh would have done.

Then he appeared to the uncomprehending people of Nazareth as a man of lowly station. Now he is proclaimed to us as true God. Then he associated with tax collectors and sinners and ate with them. Now he is seated at the right hand of God the Father and is never in any way separated from Him. Now we are firmly persuaded that it is he who feeds the entire world, and we declare – at least if we are believers – that without Him nothing came into being. Then even the lowliest held him in contempt, saying: "Isn't this the son of Mary and of Joseph the carpenter?" Now, kings and rulers worship him as Son of the True God, and himself as True God. Now, he has glorified, and continues to glorify, those who worship him in spirit and in truth – although he often punishes them when they sin.

Now he transforms us, more than could all the nations under heaven, from clay into iron. Then he was thought to be mortal and corruptible like the rest of humankind, for he was no different in appearance from others. The formless and invisible God, without change or alteration, assumed a human form and showed himself a normal human being. He ate, he drank, he slept, he sweated, and he grew weary; he did everything other people do except that he did not sin. So for anyone to recognize him and to believe that he was the God who made heaven and earth and everything in them, that was very exceptional.

It is certain that anyone who now hears Christ cry out daily through the Holy Gospels to proclaim the will of his blessed Father, but does not obey him with fear and trembling and keep his commandments, such a person might have refused to believe in him then. If that person had been present and seen him and heard him teach, there is indeed reason to fear that he would have regarded Christ not as true God but as an enemy of God. Indeed, we are blessed! Let us walk daily in this blessing and so in faith.

Thursday

WHAT IS FAITH LIKE WHEN IT IS MATURE?

A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Even before Jesus was born, Joseph was a believer and mature in faith. The events surrounding the conception and birth of Jesus reveal how differently he behaved and struggled when he had to move toward a greater knowledge of God and a deeper faith in God's will, for him and for us. The Gospel uses two keywords to help us understand: "Her husband Joseph, being a man of honor and wanting to spare her publicly, decided to divorce her informally".

The exegetes have devoted much time to the meaning of this statement since the text and its translations are not as clear as they might be. For our purposes, it is enough to say that even persons of honor, or in New Testament language, believers who are mature in faith and act out of charity, find themselves caught in anxious and difficult situations.

It seems, first, that Joseph's integrity led him to want to withhold his own name from a baby whose father he did not know. This was a matter of legal honor; Joseph couldn't give his name to a child that wasn't his own. But, second, Joseph's integrity also insists on Mary's virtue, and so he refuses to expose to the rigor of the Law a mystery he did not understand; this is goodness. Naturally, this conflict of conscience caused him pain and distress. Joseph was well aware of the Law, but at that moment, his mature faith and charity overcame it. He chooses the person, Mary, rather than the Law.

Can you think of how often Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their way of interpreting the Law? It was a form of hardness of heart. He doesn't criticize their attachment to the Law but their approach to justice; it lacked charity. Joseph, however, had struggled to reach a balance. He wasn't exempt from anxiety, but took upon himself the decision to do the honorable thing, as he saw the matter. It was the fruit of charity. It was the fruit of his maturity in faith.

Joseph was open to the power of Divine grace and its illumination. An angel of the Lord came to resolve the situation in the end. Joseph had been afraid he wouldn't be faithful to God, and the angel tells him not to fear. Then he reveals the deeper meaning of the event that so puzzled Joseph. He was probably filled with pure joy.

The figure of Joseph allows us to grasp a fundamental teaching. We need a patient hope that can wait, as Joseph did. We need a hope that knows how to suffer through difficult situations with a humble spirit. We need a hope that is sure. God will answer our genuine needs. That is trusting faith. That is mature faith.

Friday

THE GIFT OF WAITING FOR GOD

A Reflection developed from The Virtue of Patience by St. Cyprian

Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, said that he had come to earth to do the Heavenly Father's will. Among the virtues that best revealed his divine majesty was that of waiting upon the Father's will. We call it "patience" or "endurance". We human beings have to wait patiently for the times and circumstances that the Heavenly Father has appointed to come, though we find it hard not to have him grant our petitions immediately. The Eternal Son became human and bore with these, as well as all the other frustrating and difficult aspects of being human.

Think of how Christ bore reviling and reproach, insult and mockery, and even crucifixion and the shedding of his blood, and all for offenses he was not guilty of committing. Tormentors spat in his face and scourged him and denied the truth of almost all he had taught. He, the innocent one, the just one, was treated as an evil-doer, was slandered, and treated as of no worth because he would not defend himself immediately, as would most humans if they could. In short, he acted as though he were powerless and helpless because that is what human beings are like.

Every act that Jesus performed, from the moment of his appearing among us, bore the stamp of human endurance and patience, as though he were not capable of putting to confusion and defeat those who wronged him. He did not disdain the human condition but showed all human beings that it is possible to please and trust God utterly, no matter what may happen to one or to one's loved ones. He saved us by doing what the Heavenly Father asks all of us to do. It is, after all, an especially wonderful way to show one's utter dependence upon God. It is a particularly marvelous way of entrusting oneself and one's future to the loving providence of God.

Jesus fasted for forty days precisely to show that we live primarily by the Word of God and have it most richly when it seems human to be wholly absent. He went to John the Baptist to show us all how to turn wholly to God and how to renounce everything that doesn't turn us to God from the depths of our hearts. When he had to contend with the devil, he did it with mere words, as we humans have to do. And in all these things, he conquered. Thus, most of all, he showed us the path to victory in all things.

Christ didn't treat his disciples as masters treat their slaves, but was kind and gentle, and even declared us his friends. He showed how we should deal with both peers and those of lesser station. He bore with people like Judas, even though he knew Judas would betray him, and with a kiss. He gave us a wonderful example of how to wait upon the times determined by our God and to do it with love. We have only to follow his example.

Saturday

OUR DECISION ABOUT JESUS

A Reflection by Laurin Wenig

Who is Jesus? In the long run of life, this is the question everyone must answer. What role is Jesus to play in my life? What does Jesus have to do with me? In the many encounters with Jesus described in the Gospels, people have to decide who Jesus can be for them, how they will accept and respond to him.

John's Gospel shows us a group of people, an angry one, making decisions about Jesus. They are talking about who he is, where he comes from, and whether he is a prophet or the messiah. John also shows us the religious leaders, the ones who should have recognized Jesus, but who opposed him. Did he threaten them? Was it because he was not "properly" educated, yet had incredible knowledge about God? Was it because he came from rural Galilee and not from the aristocratic Jerusalem nobility? Was it because his charismatic leadership outshone that of the religious establishment? Was it all of these reasons?

Only one of the leaders seems to have defended Jesus, Nicodemus. He alone spoke up for an honest evaluation of Jesus. The others were so convinced that Jesus had to fit into their categories of religion and theology that there was no room in them for change.

There's a keyword! Change! It's a Lenten word. It calls us to be open to the new initiatives God is making in our lives, as well as in our community, in our church, and in our world. There are many who will always oppose change due to their vested interests in what already is. Good theology will always demand openness to new understandings of truth, of what God is doing. What a pity if a group feels so threatened that it must insult others and close itself off to the very grace God seeks to shower upon them by the new thing God is doing.

Our Lenten fasting may empty our stomachs, but we need as well to empty ourselves of any sort of narrow-mindedness or smug security about our own interpretations, our own understandings, of our faith. The temple guards in John's story tell more truth than their educated bosses: "No one has ever spoken like this before!" That is their response, and they speak the truth, God's truth.

We need Lent to hear this truth all over again. It is needed before we can decide who Jesus is for us in our lives. Lent causes change in my life in surprising ways – sometimes despite myself. Lent thus shows that I can grow. I can let Jesus challenge my understanding of my faith, and so challenge me. The readings at our Eucharists tell us how close-minded people can be. That is an appeal to open our minds to God's revelation. We have to believe no matter what others think or may think, then we persevere in faithfulness to what we have learned. This is what Jesus asks of us. We can't decide rightly who Jesus is without letting this happen. We can't follow Jesus if we are closed to the changes he has been sent to bring us.