

## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A**

**18<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

**First Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-17, 19-23**

**Second reading: Ephesians 2:4-10**

**Gospel Reading: John 3:14-21**

### **Themes: Darkness and the grace of Christ**

About seven years ago, a group of men in Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi –Kenya, were drinking an illicit brew called chang'a. After some time, one was heard saying to the friends "hey who has turned off the lights"? Can you switch on the light please! Another also said, hey, is it dark already? No one had switched off the light and it was not dark. It was broad day light. However, these men could not see the light because their eyes had become blind due to the effect of the alcohol they had consumed. Because of chang'a, they now lived in darkness. Unfortunately, others in that group died. Could they have avoided the blindness and the death of their friends?

In the gospel today, John announces that the light has come into the world but people do not love the light. They instead love the darkness. Only in darkness does evil become sweet. No one wants to commit evil in the light "for all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed" (Jn2:20).

Our country today is covered with a lot of darkness. One such form of darkness is child defilement. In February, a 12 year-old girl, in Chibombo, was raped and strangled to death by an unsuspecting 33 year-old man. We all know that this is not the first or the only story of defilement reported in our country. It is one among the many that in fact go un-reported. The family of this innocent girl is still in shock and disbelief. A dark cloud still hovers not only over their home but also in their minds and hearts. The only light that can dispel this darkness is the light from Christ. At the time of the burial, the father of the girl was so downcast that the only words he could say were "only God will deal with the man who has done this to my child".

During this lent, Jesus wants to dispel such kind of darkness. But will Jesus do this alone? Will Jesus dispel this darkness apart from us? Jesus needs you and I first to receive his light in our hearts so that once we are illumined, then we can clearly see the darkness in our hearts, families and communities. The light of Christ should help us protect all vulnerable children from men who prey on innocent children. The light of Christ should open our hearts so that we begin to understand issues surrounding child defilement in our society. The light of Christ will shine in our communities and country when we build a just society that ensures that those who defile innocent children are brought to justice. Only with Christ as light in our lives and communities will we know how to protect our children from such evils as child defilement. So, we need God to support us in our efforts.

It is for that reason that in the second reading of today, Paul tells us that the salvation which we get from Jesus Christ is not because of our own efforts. It is rather a gift from Christ Jesus himself. When we were dead in our own sins, God made us alive in Christ. This was done by grace. God raised us up and sat us next to Christ. During this lent, through our faith, Christ saves us by grace. This is not our own doing. It is a gift from God. When God does all this for us, we cannot boast about it as if we did it ourselves. In the words of Paul, "for we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph2:10).

Christ, especially this lent, by his passion and death, comes to restore our dignity. Made in God's image, our lives should reflect God's image and our dignity as persons illumined by Christ the light

of the world. As such all forms of abuses especially child defilement, which is so close to our communities, should be dispelled by the light and grace of Christ Jesus.

So during this lent, let us be receptive to the grace that Christ brings into our lives. Christ brings us the light so that we can walk through the darkness that covers all the evil that this world presents before us. All we need to do is to receive the light and believe in the one who is the true light. He is God's true gift to us because God loves us. He is given to us so that we may not perish but have eternal life. Let us heed the words of John "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" (Jn3:21).

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

- Our faith as Christians calls us to live life in the light. We cannot stop living just because of the darkness around us. How can we be active in our life and be the light to those who are lost and abused.
- The world around us can be scary at times but we cannot hide or isolate ourselves from it. How can we live the words of Jesus when he says that "we are in the world but not of the world?"
- What can we do in our community to protect the vulnerable especially the children?

### **COMMUNITY PRAYERS**

- Lord Jesus, we ask that you help us stop the pattern of abuse and protect our children. Lord hear us! Lord graciously hear us.
- Lord Jesus, may your wisdom help to heal the families of all the abuse children. Place in their hearts the desire and discernment to search for your guidance. Lord hear us! Lord graciously hear us.
- Lord we pray that you guide and direct those who enforce the law in our communities that they investigate these crimes and that the courts of law may dispense fair judgment. Lord hear us! Lord graciously hear us.