**Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent Year B**

In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light Shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5-6)

“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men and women are afraid of the light” Plato. Today’s discourse by Jesus in the Gospel is to Nicodemus. Nicodemus appears three times only in the Gospel of John. He first visits Jesus during nights to discuss his teachings. (John 3:1–21) The second time Nicodemus becomes a mouthpiece of Christ where he reminds his colleagues in the Sanhedrin that the law requires that a person be heard before being judged (John 7:50–51). Finally, Nicodemus appears after the Crucifixion to provide 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes for the Jewish customary embalming the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:39–42). In his book Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week, Pope Benedict XVI observes that, “The quantity of the balm is extraordinary and exceeds all normal proportions. This is a royal burial.” Christian tradition believes that Nicodemus was martyred because of his belief in Christ sometime in the 1st century AD.

It is to this man Nicodemus that Christ tells today: “that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light.” This statement of Jesus teaches us three important Gospel realities: Firstly, it reminds us that we are not light neither darkness. Secondly, Christ is the light for he says “I am the light of the world.” What does this brings to our mind: The creation story where God says on the first day itself “Let there be light.” Remember God created Sun and Moon on the fourth day but on the first day he created light. Light is the symbol of life, goodness and virtue. This light is universally considered desirable. So Christ stands as the light in the new creation and our desire for light is fulfilled in Christ. Thirdly and finally it is up to us to choose light or darkness. It is out there. If we are to decide whether we creep into that cave of darkness where we can’t see ourselves as we really are or whether we walk into that open space where his light shines on us and we see ourselves as we are; we see the truth of ourselves. Seeing ourselves as we are is the most grace-filled moment in Lent. Because then we give the truth of our hearts to God. When we give the truth of our hearts, Christ creates each one of us as a new creation and we are born again.

The Greek word “ecclesia” used to refer to Church comes from the two the Greek words “ek”, meaning “out” and “kaleo”, meaning “to call.” So we are all as his possession “called out” called out of slavery to freedom, sin to salvation, despair to hope, an existence centred on death to an existence focused on life, darkness to light. May we all run to that light, that grace during this Lent.

Let me wind up this reflection by reflecting on a poem by Jesuit Priest John Foley.

Once there was a city built in the sunlight.

Warmth and laughter abounded.

Memories of day would remain every night

until the sun could return.

Fear one morning said light is too bright.

Too much truth can be seen.

How can we seem what we say we are

if light the intruder is here?

So walls went up and a ban on all windows

and nothing of day could remain.

The city said, you have left us, O sun.

In the darkness we have gone blind.

But the sun outside still shed its light,

and its warmth and its laughter and love.

It lightened the walls

and gave warmth to their chill,

while within, the soul bored a hole.

Into it poured a single beam,

a sunlight of laughter and care.

Softly, silently, almost like spring,

love opened and blossomed and grew.

Listen to the light during this Lent. Let love open and blossom and grow.