Fourth Sunday of Lent (B) 2018

It is easy to get impatient with history - all this dwelling on the past. It is easy to get impatient, not to say puzzled, when we have slabs of history from the Old Testament, as we do in our first reading today - the book of Chronicles reminding us of the way the priests and people drifted away from the true way of the Lord, taking up shameful practices and ridiculing the prophets. To borrow words from the Gospel - they showed ‘they preferred darkness to the light, because their deeds were evil’.

But we need to recall the past - not least because it holds up a mirror to the present - it speaks of our life as a people, and our lives as individuals. Drifting away; allowing ourselves to accept things that are clearly unacceptable; growing deaf to voices that are trying to recall us to a proper path of life - these are the things that we humans do - whether we live a thousand years BC or two thousand years AD. This is why have Lent very year - if you like Lent is a prophet crying out to us - ‘return to the ways of the Lord!’. Or to put it another way Lent is a light turned on our lives driving away the darkness.

Jesus offers himself to be our light and our guide - because people living in the dark are only partly living - so many possibilities, so many joys are shut out.

St Paul has used that lovely phrase today ‘We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life, as from the beginning he had meant us to live it’. Perhaps one of our Lenten penances could be to give up phrases like ‘I can’t do that; too hard for me that.’ Stop saying ‘No’ to the Lord and start saying ‘Yes!’ Asking Him to take us so much further than we think we can go.

King Cyrus, whom we heard of in the first reading, somehow breathed in the Holy Spirit, and though he was not Jewish ordered the building of a temple in Jerusalem for the Jewish people - a seemingly impossible turn of events. We should never hesitate to pray for the Holy Spirit to come on us, to shed His light in our hearts and create in us God’s perfect work of art - a temple fit for the Lord.