

## HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is called, “Laetare Sunday” meaning to Rejoice!

It is near the midpoint of our Lenten fasting. It is also called, “Rose Sunday”, remembering the past practice of popes who blessed roses crafted from gold and sent them to sovereign leaders to encourage the princes and kings. As such, the colour for today can certainly be rose coloured, representing the whitening of the purple of Lent.

It is a ‘whitening’ because white is the colour for Easter and midway through our Lenten disciplines, we are invited to look beyond the cross to the joy of the resurrection. Hence, the flowers we have in the sanctuary.

We also remember that Sundays are not a part of Lent. They are Sundays within Lent. They are toned down in order to keep that sense of preparation but, if we have given up something for Lent, we can enjoy it on the Sunday. Giving up something in Lent is not an obligation but a spiritual practice. Some find it hard to take Sundays off and stay on track for the other forty days.

However, on Laetare Sunday, we are certainly encouraged to lighten anything that might seem a burden. In that way, we might more easily find the joy of our disciplines once again. We remembered that on Ash Wednesday, Jesus said not to be gloomy about fasting.

Of course, the only Fasting days in Lent which are obligatory are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. These are also days of abstinence for people over fourteen years and under sixty.

Laetare Sunday also presents us with other spiritual opportunities. Lent replicates something of the experience of Jesus when he fasted in the desert. However, Laetare Sunday reminds us that we are not Jesus, nor could we suffer for humanity like he has suffered for humanity. A full Lenten fast or deprivation can have us thinking that we have achieved something almost as much as Jesus but, we would have a long way to go. Laetare Sunday stops us in our pride. It may seem a failure of our Lenten disciplines but, then, we can have a deeper understanding of how Jesus took our failures upon himself.

Laetare Sunday also represents what Paul says in the second reading that we wake up from our sleep. We are not made for the darkness; we are made for the light. This Sunday reminds us to be happy about the choices we make out of our devotion to Jesus Christ.

It calls us to see ourselves anew – not simply as sinners but, as those loved and chosen by God to let faith direct our thoughts and actions. Similar to that of the man in the Gospel born blind, who was thought to be a great sinner – or at least his parents were.

He not only received a physical healing but, he was given a new perception of himself, his parents and of Jesus.

This man got to see Jesus. Thomas, the doubting disciple, would get to see Jesus after the resurrection and Jesus would say to him, “You believe because you see. How happy are those who have never seen and yet, believe.”

We who have been washed in Baptism, as the man born blind washed in the pool of Siloam, believe before we see. We perceive the significance of Jesus Christ and his presence and we act in accordance with who we will become.

So, on this Laetare Sunday, let us see Jesus, not as one who calls us into suffering although he comes into our suffering. Let us see Jesus not as placing burdens upon us but, as one who lightens our load and calls us to rejoice. Let us then progress onwards through Lent as a time for making some of the best choices of our lives.

*You will be reading this after Laetare Sunday. Why not allow yourselves a twenty-four hour break early this week to make up for missing the Sunday if you weren't aware.*