

## **Laetare Sunday—Rejoice During Lent?**

Is there any meaning to the saying that as we get older, time seems to go faster? It just seemed like we were distributing ashes a couple weeks ago and now we are over halfway through our Lenten journey. This Sunday, Laetare Sunday, the church takes a little break on the heaviness of our Lenten journey with some time for rejoicing. Yes, this is the Sunday that the “rose” or “pink” colored vestments come out once again, to symbolize the lightening up of the “purple” season.

This Sunday’s readings share a number of different thoughts and ideas, and a couple of rather unfamiliar people appear in the readings. In the book of Chronicles, which we rarely read from in the church’s liturgical year, there is a king named Cyrus that pledges to help rebuild the temple that was destroyed in the Babylonian exile. This promise shows that God’s grace was present, even though the people were not listening to the prophets that God was sending them. You might say that they were experiencing a darker time in their history, but the promise of a new temple brought a little light of hope to the people.

In the Gospel today, we hear one of the most famous bible verses that has been quoted and displayed by many different people. If you watch any sporting events, very often you will see a sign with the numbers on it 3:16. For those of you who frequent the bible, you will probably recognize that passage from John’s Gospel, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” What a great passage to reflect on and live by. Those words truly give a sense of light into this darkened world that we are living in.

So, who was Jesus talking to in the Gospel when he was sharing this message. A man named Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, the only named Pharisee who was on the Sanhedrin listed in the bible. You see Nicodemus was rather intrigued by this man Jesus and he was trying to understand more of who this Jesus really was.

The Gospel writer John sets the meeting with Nicodemus and Jesus at night in the dark. Nicodemus wanted to remain a little secretive of his belief in Jesus as the other Pharisees were working to have Jesus done away with. So, we understand another setting of someone being in the “dark” and wanting to approach the light of the world to try to get a better understanding and knowledge of Jesus. Nicodemus’ name will turn up a couple of more times in the Gospel of John, once at Jesus’s trial and the other when Jesus is taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb.

In these passages, and including the readings from St. Paul, we may come to the conclusion of a theme of being saved by the grace of God. We all have that opportunity to come to Jesus in our lives whether in darkness or in the light and be touched by his grace.

This week in our parish, we have the opportunities on Tuesday and Wednesday to spend time with Jesus in Adoration, walk with Him on the road to Calvary with the Stations of the Cross and on Thursday evening, participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation where Jesus wants to bestow the grace of forgiveness on all his people.

But how will we respond to the invitation? Will we consider stepping out of some of the darker areas in our life and come into the beautiful light of Christ?

The invitation is yours to accept this week. I challenge you to think about coming closer to the light of Christ as we now enter the final weeks of our Lenten journey. If you do choose to come closer to Christ, I can assure you that you too will experience the grace of God on a deeper level this Lenten season and will rejoice as we all do today on this Laetare Sunday.

God's Blessings,

Deacon Jim