

4th SUNDAY OF LENT

St. Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

This, the fourth Sunday of Lent, is called “Laetare Sunday.” The word “laetare” from the Latin meaning “to rejoice” as is said in the introit or entrance antiphon: “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.” The Mass expresses this in the rose-coloured vestments—a change from the dark violet colour, the purple of bruises, to the lighter colour of rose.

It may seem out of place in this holy season of Lent which is marked with fasting and penance to rejoice but it is a reminder to us not only of the orientation of all our penances but also that true joy does not lie in anything human but only in God. It may be ironic to rejoice in Lent but then the genius of the Catholic faith is that it is filled with irony. For example, in the darkness of sin we see the light of mercy, in the death of those we love we see the hope of resurrection, in the penances we perform we see the treasure of heaven, in the fasting we undertake we await the heavenly banquet, in the death of our Lord we see our eternal life. It is why St. Paul would write to the Corinthians: “we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to the Gentiles... For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (I Cor. 1:23, 25). It is why the world so often ridicules us; because they fail to see that we cannot rely on ourselves apart from God and that we cannot give to ourselves everything that we need. But such a recognition demands an abandonment of pride and an act of humility, and in a world that professes the primacy of conscience and the relativism of truth, there can be no such humility. So, the grace of God that is so freely given, is left untouched and people cling desperately to that which is passing away.

We don't hold on to a passing world but instead we hold onto what Christ has given to us—what He lived and died for. And in Lent we publicly and personally make that commitment so that we don't abandon him at the Cross and let the Resurrection pass us by.