

Laetare Sunday, Rejoice!— from the Introit psalm, note of the last message of Isaiah, of the 66 chapters. **Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her.** Jerusalem, on the other side of the world, points to this place. Laetare, rejoice, the prophet's call to rejoice woven together with King David's great psalm to the New Jerusalem (the Church in heaven and earth), the eternal Zion, (Zion where God and man dwell together) of Psalm 122, which was sung with several other key psalms of ascent, as the people of God walked to a building! The House of God to worship. Isaiah brings God's Word to His people, the promise their time in exile will end, and blessings of eternity, as a New Jerusalem, an Eternal Zion, God and man dwell together is coming, the Messiah is coming. And He comes not to punish sin, but rather to pay for it with blood, to forgive.

**Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her. All you who love Her.** Early Church father Cyprian said, "if the Church is not your mother, then Jesus is not your brother and God is not your father. Love her, your mother the Church, the bride of Christ."

It's a great tragedy of our times, Church is reduced to a symbolic role, not an earthly necessity. I wish I knew where people got this idea: that the essential of faith is simply believe and try to live Christian. Even then I cannot imagine -the faith from Scripture, does not drive a person into the presence of God to receive His gifts. I've heard many times from non-members, maybe people want to tell me this because of this beautiful house, they say, "the Church is not a building, it's a people, the body of Christ." They're wrong. Yes, of course, the Church is the body of Christ and has an invisible dimension of all over the world, but the Church is located in a place that is not optional, how did Jesus worship? We know! God still uses a House, a place. And He has great compassion for sheep without a pastor; He insists, commands, for pastors to feed His people, to receive the eternal treasures of His kingdom, and that happens in a building.

Even more, God builds this for us to be gathered by the Spirit around the Word and Sacraments. It's why this place looks like it does, different from many modern houses of worship, is that we believe, as you see throughout Scripture, we believe our God is transcendent. He comes in a divine, supernatural, incomprehensible, real flesh and blood Jesus to be with His people in a place. More real than anything in your life. We need to do away with any notion God is far off and we need to be moved through emotions to connect in a relationship to Him.

What's the relevance of the feeding of the 1000s. They couldn't journey any further without food; couldn't make it back home without fainting. Why does Jesus let them follow Him for days, so caught up in His Word, they forget about the very necessities of life? The answer, He drew them out -on purpose. Neither the suffering, the hunger, nor the fear of survival come from Him. But He uses it, to their advantage in His mercy. There, in the hopeless situation, He provided. He taught them, there's only one place to look for sustenance. Thus in want, hardship, suffering, to learn faith.

We prioritize in our day, what we think we need, prioritizing the material or temporary to feed us, make us happy, to take away our pain, to satisfy. Where does Jesus fit in this? To our fallen flesh it seems Jesus is holding out on us or not as helpful. Repent, for you can't take a breath, take a step unless He is upholding you.

You're no different from them, you worry as they worry about family and life, concerns over your health, issues with loved ones, depression, brokenness, uncertainty of life, and for you to realize you can't even provide food for yourself, you can't take care of you.

The Lord says, **have the people sit down.** Sit down and listen. Sit down and wait. You will be provided for in His own way, in His own time. He will provide. He came to save you, but also take care of you here and now. He took care of them in abundance. You no less. You're even given far greater, even greater than Moses and the people. For that OT lesson, the Gospel are all pointing to a greater meal, what you have.

His death is sufficient, covers all your sins. There is no solace, no comfort, no healing, no peace anywhere else. So, sit down. He answers your prayers. Not the bare minimum, but neither does He always satisfy the cravings of your flesh. He knows what's best. He works everything together for your good, to bring you to where you really and fully belong, to keep you safely in His scarred hand.

Laetare, rejoice, get your head up. Even in the midst of your sorrows and burdens, a world riddled by sin, a church torn by schisms, a planet ablaze in conflict, vain politics of man, media lies, our bodies plagued by disease and death, and a life always suffering the effects of sin. Rejoice. You know what lies ahead at the end of Lent. Rejoice, you know your future is secure, prepared for you; rejoice, you know what comes to you this day from the house of God, this new Jerusalem, eternal Zion, right here, joined to your God in the Sacrament. Rejoice, He will take care of you, see to your good. Rejoice, how can you not? All that's yours.