

4th Sunday of Lent (Year C)

Overview

Laetare Sunday is a moment of joyful anticipation as we approach Easter. It reminds us that even amid suffering, we are called to rejoice because of Christ's victory over sin and death. This joy is not dependent on external circumstances but on our relationship with God, who carries us through life's trials.

Main Points

1. **True Joy Comes from Christ** – In a world full of struggles—rising costs, personal hardships, and global conflicts—our joy comes not from material security but from Jesus, who has already overcome the world. His resurrection is our ultimate source of hope.
2. **Suffering and Joy Can Coexist** – Many people who endure great hardships still radiate joy. Their secret is their closeness to God, who strengthens and sustains them. As the Footprints poem reminds us, when we see only one set of footprints, it is because God is carrying us.
3. **The Call to Transformation** – Heaven is perfect love, and we must be purified to enter. This life is about shaping our actions into acts of love for God and neighbor. Carrying our crosses with hope, not despair, leads us to eternal joy.
4. **Humility and Mercy** – The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that we need God's mercy, and no sin is too great for Him to forgive. However, we must also avoid the pride of the older brother, who looked down on others. Instead of judging others, we must focus on growing in self-giving love.
5. **Grace Sustains Us** – Everything we have—faith, strength, even our ability to love—is a gift from God. Recognizing this should lead us to greater humility and dependence on Him, especially through prayer and the Sacraments.
6. **Pilgrims of Hope** – As the Jubilee Year reminds us, we are pilgrims on the way to Heaven. While suffering exists, we can have joy because we know our ultimate destination. God walks with us, lifts us when we fall, and calls us to trust Him.
7. **Mary, Cause of Our Joy** – Mary, as the sinless Mother of God, was the most joyful of all people, despite her sufferings. She shows us that true joy comes from openness to God and union with Him, especially through the Eucharist.

Scripture References

- **John 16:33** – "In the world, you will have trouble. But take courage; I have conquered the world."
- **Luke 15:11-32** – The Parable of the Prodigal Son, which highlights God's mercy and the danger of pride.
- **Psalms 34:8** – "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him."
- **Revelation 21:5** – "Behold, I make all things new."
- **Isaiah 40:31** – "They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles."

Catechism References

- **CCC 1720** – "The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else."
- **CCC 1806** – On prudence: "It is not enough to know what is good, we must also do it."
- **CCC 2842** – On forgiveness: "It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion."
- **CCC 1024** – "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness."

Reflection Questions

1. What in my life is preventing me from experiencing the deep joy that Christ offers?
2. How can I shift my focus from material concerns to spiritual hope and trust in God?
3. Am I holding onto grudges or a judgmental attitude like the older brother in the Prodigal Son? How can I cultivate humility and mercy?
4. How can I better rely on God's grace in my daily life?
5. In what ways can I spread the joy of Christ to others, even in difficult circumstances?

Rhyme Summary

Rejoice, for Christ has won the fight, His love outshines our darkest night.

Not wealth nor power bring us peace, But grace leading us to Heaven, where all our burdens will cease.

Through trials fierce, through storm and tide, God walks with us, our hope, our guide.

So trust in Him, be free, be bold - for by following Jesus Christ, Heaven's joy will be ours to behold.

Reasons to come to Mass each weekend

Hebrews 10:24-25 - "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Exodus 20:8 - "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

Luke 22:19 - "Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

Acts 2:42 - "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

John 6:53-54 - "So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.'"

Psalms 122:1 - "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"

Matthew 18:20 - "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God."

Additional resources to learn more about God and the Catholic faith

- Check out the resource list available on www.frmerkley.com
- Catholic Answers: <https://www.catholic.com/>
- Word on Fire: <https://www.wordonfire.org/>
- Formed: <https://formed.org/>
- The Coming Home Network: <https://chnetwork.org/>
- Catholic Exchange: <https://catholicexchange.com/>
- Dynamic Catholic: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/>
- The Augustine Institute: <https://augustineinstitute.org/>
- Ascension Press: <https://ascensionpress.com/>
- EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/>
- The Catholic Company: <https://www.catholiccompany.com/>
- Busted Halo: <https://bustedhalo.com/>
- CatholicCulture.org: <https://www.catholicculture.org/>
- The Thomistic Institute: <https://thomisticinstitute.org/>
- Ignatius Press: <https://www.ignatius.com/>
- Catholic Education Resource Center (CERC): <https://www.catholiceducation.org/>