

Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today, we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Lent, also known as Laetare Sunday. The word "Laetare" means "rejoice," and this Sunday is a moment of joy and hope in the midst of the penitential season of Lent. It reminds us that God's mercy is ever-present and His love draws us closer to the joy of Easter.

The Gospel reading for today presents us with one of the most beloved stories in the Bible: the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32). This parable, shared by Jesus, reveals the boundless mercy of God and His desire to reconcile with us, no matter how far we may have strayed.

In the story, the younger son asks for his share of the inheritance and leaves home to live a reckless and self-indulgent life. When he loses everything and faces desperation, he decides to return to his father, hoping to be received as a servant.

Yet, when the father sees him from afar, he runs to embrace him, welcoming him back as a beloved son. The father's joy is overwhelming, and he celebrates the return of his lost child.

This parable teaches us about God's incredible love for us. Like the father in the story, God is always waiting for us with open arms, ready to forgive and restore us. His mercy knows no bounds, and He rejoices when we turn back to Him. No matter how far we may have wandered, God's love remains steadfast, and His grace is sufficient to heal and renew us.

We also encounter the older son, who struggles to understand his father's joy. He is resentful, questioning why his brother's return is met with celebration despite his mistakes. This part of the parable invites us to examine our own hearts. Are we quick to judge others or slow to rejoice in their redemption? Are we willing to share in God's mercy and love, not only for ourselves but for all His children?

Laetare Sunday reminds us to rejoice in the light of God's mercy, even as we continue our Lenten journey of repentance and renewal. It is a time to recognize the joy of reconciliation and the hope that comes from returning to God's embrace. We are called to trust in His love, to extend that love to others, and to live with hearts filled with gratitude for the gift of His grace.

As we reflect on today's Gospel, let us remember that Lent is not simply a time of sacrifice and penitence. It is also a season of joy, a journey toward the light of Christ and the celebration of His resurrection. May we take comfort in the knowledge that God's mercy is abundant and His love is unending.

Let us go forth with hearts renewed, rejoicing in the grace of God and sharing that joy with others. Amen!