

**FOR THE WEEKEND OF MARCH 13 - 14, 2021**

Laetare Sunday

**Gospel reading (Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B)**

Jn 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:
“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

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.
For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved through him.
Whoever believes in him will not be condemned,
but whoever does not believe has already been condemned,
because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
And this is the verdict,
that the light came into the world,
but people preferred darkness to light,
because their works were evil.
For everyone who does wicked things hates the light
and does not come toward the light,
so that his works might not be exposed.
But whoever lives the truth comes to the light,
so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

**Homily helper / connection to stewardship / giving / charity / almsgiving**

* The verdict is in: the light came into the world!
* Confidence in God’s LOVE and SAVING POWER changes everything
	+ Just as the promise of Easter allows us to “rejoice” (the meaning of *laetare)* in the middle of the penance and self-denial of Lent…
	+ …Confidence that “the light came into the world” and that “God so loved the world” can help us to be joyful even in the midst of the hardship and uncertainties of life
* Being confident in God’s love allows us to love others as Christ did; *selflessly,* without counting the cost
	+ To give our time (‘walk another mile with him’), our treasure (if asked for your cloak, give your tunic, too), even our sense of security (turn the other cheek!)
	+ To love in a way beyond mere worldly calculations

**Intercession**

That, with renewed confidence in God’s love for us, we may each generously give of ourselves in support of the Annual Diocesan Appeal.

**Copy for bulletin announcement**

How’s your Lent going? Still hanging on? Well, hopefully you noticed the pink vestments at Mass today. They’re an indication that today is “Laetare Sunday,” a moment to stop, rejoice, and remember that the difficulties of Lent lead us to the joy of Easter. Today is a reminder that we don’t practice penance and self-denial so that we can “earn” or be rewarded with Easter. Instead, it’s our confidence that the Easter victory has already been won that allows us to joyfully embrace this penitential season as an opportunity to grow closer to God.

Something similar happens in today’s Gospel: Christ reminds us that God has given his only Son; that the light has come into the world; that the victory has already been won! We can live joyfully and love selflessly, even in the midst of life’s hardships and uncertainties, because God’s love has conquered all. Confidence in this truth has been a source of Christian charity throughout the ages, from the heroic sacrifices of the early martyrs to the selfless service of modern-day saints like Mother Teresa. And it needs to animate our lives today, too.

How might we love others if we were truly and completely convinced that God’s love is supreme—that it wipes away our sins, our failings, and even the sting of death? What would we be free to give that we currently hold back, out of fear or self-preservation? Opportunities to love selflessly, as Christ and the saints did, surround us—from reaching out to an elderly relative experiencing loneliness, to giving generously to our diocese’s the Annual Diocesan Appeal. Let’s ask God for the grace to be more confident in his love, so that we might love others more fully.

**Copy for pulpit announcement**

Remember to REJOICE today! Not just because we’re halfway through Lent, but because the light has come into the world. As you consider making a gift to the Annual Diocesan Appeal, ask God to help you be confident in his love, so you can give generously and embrace this season as an opportunity to draw closer to him.

**Social media post/content**

Photo: photo of a morning sunrise

Copy: Did you give up something for Lent and finding it hard to stay committed? Have you stumbled? Remember God is always with us, helping us pick ourselves up and try again.