

- Today, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is Laetare Sunday – the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent. “Laetare” is a Latin word which means “rejoice”, for in just three weeks the glories of Easter will be upon us.
- This Sunday is meant to be a brief reprieve from the rigors of our Lenten fasting. It’s like a ray of light shining in the darkness of this penitential season.
- Thus, the violet representing our penance is set aside for the day in lieu of a more festive rose color that symbolizes the lightening of our penance, and we are called to rejoice because of the redemption that Christ will procure for us at Easter!
- As is appropriate, our readings today build upon this theme of light and darkness. The second reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians encourages us to live in the light and avoid the darkness of sin, while the first reading tells the story of the young David moving from the obscurity of being a simple shepherd into the light of God by being anointed king.
- And the Gospel, which tells of the Jesus healing a man born blind, shows the healed man growing in the light of faith as he comes to grip with his new vision. It also paints a picture of Jesus as the light of the world, the source of true light in our dark and sinful world.
- Through this miracle the man born blind comes to see Jesus for who He truly is. He sees the gift of salvation that Christ is holding out to Him; He sees what Christ has done for him and he grabs on to it. And this is what separates him from the scribes and Pharisees who persist in their spiritual blindness.
- In presenting these readings to us today, the Church is inviting us to see as God sees, for it is only in seeing as God sees that we will ever see God as He truly is. It is only when we see as God sees that we will ever recognize the gift of salvation that He holds out to us.
- This is especially true in the situation we now find ourselves in with the Coronavirus. As we consider the suffering our country and our world have been plunged into because of the virus, some may wonder what it is that we have to rejoice about on this Laetare Sunday.
- While I don’t know of anyone in our parish who has yet contracted the virus, I do know that there is a lot of suffering in our parish at this time.
- Some of you have very genuine health concerns at this time. We also have lots of health care professionals in this parish who are already working long hours to care for the sick – and things are only going to get tougher for them.
- On the economic side of things, I know that some of you have lost your job or your hours have been cut back and you’re worried about feeding your families and paying your bills.
- Others of you are worried about keeping your business afloat in these trying times, or how the severe downturn of the stock market will affect your retirement plans.
- Of course, there’s the suffering that comes from the social and spiritual sacrifices we have to make and all of the inconveniences that have now become part of our daily lives.
- Perhaps the worst suffering of all is not knowing how much worse things are going to get before they get better – or how long this crisis is going to afflict us.
- As we think of all of this suffering, it’s easy to be discouraged. So this is exactly why we need to look for the light of Christ and strive to see things as God sees them.
- While there is much suffering in our world right now, there are also many blessings that we mustn’t lose sight of. God has not abandoned us.

- On the contrary, He is with us more than ever. God is purifying us and giving us a share in the Cross – and it's by His holy cross that He has redeemed the world.
- Whenever suffering comes upon us, it's an invitation from God to share more deeply, more intimately in His Paschal Mystery. It's an invitation to a greater share in the sufferings of Christ.
- And it's an invitation to exercise more vigorously the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.
- Truly, through this crisis God is holding out to us the gift of salvation, if we just have the eyes to see it, like the man born blind. So this is no time to lose our faith or our hope in God. This is no time for us to grow tepid in our love for Him.
- We are God's children, and we know that God always provides for His faithful ones. So let's be just that: faithful children of God who spread His light to those around us.
- Brothers and sisters, I do not know how long this crisis will last or how bad it will get. I don't even know for how long we will be offer to Mass in this limited way.
- But I do know this: God loves us, and He wants us to become holier people through all that we are suffering. So let us rejoice today in the gifts of grace that God is showering upon us. Let us be grateful for all the blessings of the past.
- And with hearts full of faith, hope, and charity, may we trust that God will one day deliver us from all pestilence, most especially the pestilence of sin. May we see things as God sees them, and rejoice in the gift of salvation He's offering to us all.