

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Traditionally, our Fourth Sunday in Lent celebrates “*Laetare Sunday*”. In our Entrance Antiphon this weekend, we are told ‘*Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her,*’ so must we joyfully take up our journey with renewed eagerness! Our readings clearly reveal a God who is looking forward to a reunion with our fallen humanity. The first reading suggests the celebration of the Passover, St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians celebrates the “new creation.” This new creation becomes apparent with the great return of the prodigal son.

As if God is welcoming them home, in our First Reading we find a new beginning for the Israelites when Joshua invites them to celebrate, for the first time in their own land, using new wheat harvested in the Promised Land. Like Joshua, St. Paul also celebrates with great tenderness to Christ as he invites the Corinthian Christian community to rejoice; Jesus has reconciled us with God by his suffering and death on the cross.

Our Gospel narrative is one of the most cherished and celebrated parables of Jesus; celebrating the love and forgiveness of a ‘prodigal father’ for the ‘prodigal (albeit wayward) son’ on his “homecoming.” By throwing a big party in his honor, all would have been glorious but for the grumbling self-righteous elder brother. Let us admit these truths – that we can see ourselves from the angle of the older brother and wouldn’t we deserve a “homecoming” too? Or even the younger son who in his irresponsibility renounced his loving Father.

This could be called the ‘Parable of the Merciful Father,’ He who is always waiting for us to take our rightful place at His table. As prodigal children, we are facing a spiritual famine, ‘acedia’ all around us as our culture sometimes fails to recognize the presence and joy of God. This type of starvation may lead to various forms of addiction, fraud and theft, excessive self-indulgence, abortions, euthanasia, terrorism, racism, worldliness and even lukewarm Catholics who think they can do without God. Many Catholics unfortunately have been squandering God’s abundant blessings; hence, pray that we continue to receive help towards contrition and repentance.

Thanks be to God for the Holy Mass. Do we realize that every Mass is a return to our loving Father’s house?! Are we ready to receive God’s forgiveness and to experience Jesus’ personal presence in the Holy Eucharist as loving mercy? During our Penitential Rite, when we acknowledge our sins, in the Offertory as we surrender our sinful lives to God our Father, at the Consecration, when the priest in the person of Christ says, “this is my body.... this is my blood,” it is because we can reenter our rightful home with our heavenly Father. May we never allow pride to keep us from returning to the Father. Amen!

Lenten Blessings!