

March 22, 2020

Sunday Homily Lent Week 4 (“Laetare” Sunday)

Good evening everyone. I hope you and your loved ones are all doing well and staying healthy and safe during this challenging time.

If nothing else, what this terrible recent situation we are in because of the Corona virus has reminded us of is that sometimes we fail to truly appreciate what we have, especially when it comes to the bare necessities of life. But when we’re forced to go without-like we are now-we quickly learn how important it is to be grateful.

Apart from what we’ve already experienced throughout the last week, let’s consider another example. Take light, for instance. Light is a basic human need. WE need light to see, to move, to avoid danger, and to grow crops for food, but most of us live most of our lives without ever really thinking about it very much. Yet if we were to get trapped in a cave, stranded deep out in the forest overnight, or locked in a dungeon, the fact that we are without light would rivet our undivided attention, we would long for it, and, if we were to get even just a little bit of it, we would highly value it.

Faith in Jesus Christ is spiritual light. With Him, we can see reality for what it is. With Him, we have perfect personal fulfillment and an eternal destiny awaits us. With Him, we’re headed for perfect joy, peace, and happiness. Without Him-that is, by ourselves-we are in darkness. Of their own accord, human beings are blind to ultimate reality, to the reason they exist at all. Without Jesus Christ, human life is pretty meaningless-we live a few years and then we die, just trying to make the most of an otherwise futile existence. We meander around life lost, feeling and grasping for some sort of stability while bumping into things, and we vainly cry out to the abyss for help, hoping against hope that someone will hear us.

This is why converts-people who come to faith in Christ after being without and after searching-appreciate it so much. They know what they have and they treasure it. But is that attitude true of me? Do I have that kind of appreciation for Jesus? What about you? Does your faith in Christ really matter to you?

Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift; but it’s also a virtue, a good habit. This means that it is contingent upon making certain choices. So, at the end of the day, it’s really up to each person to choose for himself or herself whether they will have it and to what degree they will have it. Truly having faith-real faith-means believing in Christ and following Him, day in and day out, from hour to hour and from moment to moment. Faith is about the kind of life we choose to live-whether loving to the death, completely pouring ourselves out, giving to the point where we don’t have anything left to give, showing mercy to the degree that it is impossible to offer any more, and sacrificing for the well-being of others to the point where we’ve completely laid down our lives for their well-being are the defining characteristics of our lives. Faith in Jesus Christ means giving up and abandoning everything in order to follow Jesus and have Him-the pearl of great price-at the center of our lives.

This Sunday-the 4th Sunday of Lent-is what is known as Laetare or Rejoice Sunday. It is a special celebration that was instituted by the Church in order to give those who are engaged in penitential

practices and focused on repentance during this season a chance to stop and recall what all of the penance and efforts to reform their lives is for. We do what we do during Lent because our faith calls us to believe that God is the center of our lives and of everything. Having faith means living our lives this way. If we do, this is a great moment for rejoicing as we approach and even greater precedent for and moment of rejoicing. But, if we allow everything else to consume us-if material possessions, forms of entertainment, sports, professional success, popularity, prestige, power, and, or, any of the goods of the world are more important to us than God, we have no reason to celebrate or rejoice.

It's up to us to choose.