

## 4th Sunday of Lent

The first word of today's Entrance Antiphon is "**Rejoice**" – in Latin, **Laetare**; and so this Sunday has traditionally been known as "**Laetare Sunday**".

Every Mass is an invitation to rejoice, but that is especially true today when the readings speak to us of the endless mercy of our God.

### **2 Chronicles 36:14-16. 19-23**

Israel's sinfulness brings destruction on Jerusalem and years of exile; the Lord's intervention, though Persian king Cyrus, brings an end to exile and offers the possibility of homecoming.

### **Ephesians 4:2-10**

We are God's "work of art"; though marred by sin, we are restored as a new creation through God's loving goodness, shown in Christ.

### **John 3:14-21**

Jesus, hanging lifeless on a cross, is the supreme sign that he came into our world out of love and in order to save us.

## Reflection



**Nicodemus** is centre-stage in today's Gospel. Even though he appears only three times in the Gospel Story (all three appearances in **John's** Gospel), he is a very interesting character. He was a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin — the supreme court of the Jews.

The **first** time Nicodemus appears is in today's Gospel reading. We are told that he was impressed by the teaching and deeds of Jesus. It was clear to him that the hand of God was in them. So he came to see Jesus, but he did so under cover of darkness, which suggests that he didn't want to be seen. Jesus honoured him with a long interview.

By the time Nicodemus puts in his **second** appearance, opposition to Jesus had hardened. By now the Pharisees had made up their minds to kill him, and were ready to do so without even giving him a trial. But Nicodemus intervened, and declared that Jesus should at least be given a fair trial as the law demanded. This was a more public involvement with Jesus.

And the **third** and last time Nicodemus appears in the Gospel is at the burial of Jesus. It was Nicodemus who provided a large quantity of expensive spices for his burial.



What can we gather about Nicodemus from these three brief appearances? The first appearance shows that he was an open-minded man, and a genuine seeker

after truth. The second appearance, when he insisted that Jesus should not be condemned without a trial, shows that he was a fair-minded man,. And the third appearance shows that he was a wealthy man, but also a generous and compassionate one.

All in all, the best of the Pharisees. All his qualities we can admire and copy with profit. But Nicodemus does seem to be unable to come straight out and make a full and public act of faith in Jesus. He doesn't seem to have had the courage to come out of the darkness and choose decisively for the light. We are left with the picture of a decent man, who could have been a great man.



Reflecting on Nicodemus should challenge us to come out from the shadows, and not to be afraid or ashamed to profess openly our faith in Jesus, and to be ready to pay whatever price is required for doing so.

People who believe will not be lost, but will have eternal life. But we have to live according to our belief.

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During this Covid Virus Pandemic, people who are unable to attend Mass are encouraged to make an **Act of Spiritual Communion**

Here is one composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori:  
**My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all**

**things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.**

**Amen.**



**Patrick** was kidnapped from the British mainland around 16 years of age. He was shipped off to Ireland as a slave. After six years as a shepherd, he had a dream which he saw as a sign. He escaped and studied in various monasteries on the Continent. He was ordained a Priest, and consecrated as Bishop. Pope Celestine sent him to evangelise Ireland. Within 33 years he effectively converted Ireland. In the Middle Ages Ireland became known as the Land of Saints and Scholars, and during the Dark Ages its monasteries were the great repositories of learning in Europe. Some of the legends surrounding Saint Patrick includes the belief that he drove all the snakes from Ireland. But no snakes were, in fact, native to Ireland, and this may be a metaphor for the conversion of the pagans. One traditional image of the day is the shamrock. This stems from the story of how Patrick used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Trinity: how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity.

### **Saint Patrick' Breastplate:**

Christ shield me this day:  
Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me, Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,

Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of every person who thinks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in the ear that hears me.

*People celebrate St Patrick's Day with parades and the wearing of the green.  
You could say that it is the first green of spring.*

### **St JOSEPH: FRIDAY 19 March**



### **SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

"When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the power of the Holy Spirit" Luke's gospel narrates the nativity from Mary's perspective; however, Matthew recounts the infancy story from Joseph's point of view. When Joseph discovered that his betrothed wife, Mary, was with child, he decided to divorce her (betrothed couples were considered spouses). Joseph was a righteous man who followed the Mosaic Law, but he was

unwilling to subject Mary to the charge of adultery as she would be put to death. An Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and told him he should not fear to take Mary as his wife as she had conceived the child through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph accepted guardianship of the child who would be named Jesus (Hebrew, *Yeshua*) meaning "Yahweh saves." Jesus is also "Emmanuel," meaning "God is with us". Joseph responded with faithful obedience and took Mary as his wife.

**Memorare to Saint Joseph:**


*Remember, O most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who implored your help and sought your intercession was left unassisted.*

*Full of confidence in your power I fly unto you and beg your protection.*

*Despise not O Guardian of the Redeemer my humble supplication, but in your bounty, hear and answer me.*

*Amen.*

**WORDSEARCH**

N	A	C	E	T	D	E	V	A	S	NICODEMUS	SERPENT	DESERT
A	M	O	T	R	U	T	H	N	E	LIFE	CONDEMN	SAVED
E	A	N	N	E	E	F	I	L	S	REFUSES	SENTENCE	LIGHT
C	T	D	E	S	T	C	V	I	U	DARKNESS	EVIL	TRUTH
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E	G	M	R	D	E	M	U	S	E			
T	I	N	E	N	A	V	I	V	R			
N	L	M	S	N	A	L	I	V	A			
E	U	E	V	E	I	L	E	B	E			
S	S	E	N	K	R	A	D	B	F			

Amen, Amen!

**PRAYER**

“Come to strengthen the sick, the vulnerable, and comfort those who are grief stricken. And when the pandemic has passed, and this frightening crisis is resolved, teach us to know You more certainly as our dearest Friend and our only Hope.”