

*1*  
*Homily for Lent 4 Year B*  
*Father Civalier*  
*March 7, 2021*

For about the last 1,000 years,

this Sunday, the Sunday smack in the middle of Lent,  
has been considered special.

Our Gospel speaks of the miraculous feeding,

providing a natural association with taking “time out”  
for refreshment.

In the Middle Ages,

the penitential disciplines of Lent were,  
minimized somewhat on this day.

And some provisions were made for feasting and celebrating

(for instance, the Pope distributing bread for the poor).

And so this particular Sunday has offered pilgrims

through the ages a chance to lighten up,

to pause in the midst of Lent with a slight relaxing

of the rigors of Lent. It is called Laetare Sunday.

It is also a time to reflect and to gain perspective

on what is yet to come.

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At this midpoint in our preparations,

we begin to feel the pull toward Holy Week,

and the most concentrated remembering of the events

of our salvation.

These events all come to point

within the passion of our Lord Jesus

as we commemorate his triumphal procession

up to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday,

his intimate Last Supper

with his disciples on Maundy Thursday,

followed by the prayerful agony

of surrender at Gethsemane.

Then we revisit the painful ordeal of his trial

and condemnation by Pontius Pilate;

his death for us on the cross;

and the hours of waiting and expectation

before the glorious dawn of Resurrection

on Easter Morning.

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On this Mothering Sunday, another name for this Sunday,

on which we come for refreshment,

and to be nourished for the intense reliving

that is to follow,

we come wearied and fearful

from what we have been experiencing.

This is the Second Lent in which we have been unable to be present in Church,

because of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

There is hope that will soon change

with all the vaccinations that have taken place,

and with the lowering of the cases in our State and county.

We are still living in a time of great uncertainty.

Everyday brings new information about the virus,

along with all the people we have lost,

and the economic toll that we have endured.

We do need to be nourished by the Church,

we need to be refreshed,

and mothering is a good image as well.

We are wearied by the “changes and chances of this life”.

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Our emotions have been all over the place  
from fear and anger,  
to tears and foreboding.

We might wonder what good it will do us to put ourselves  
into the Church's remembrance and make present the time  
of Jesus' suffering and death,  
when we are experiencing it in our every day life.

Maybe we should "tune out" this year,  
come back at Easter when we can be joyful,  
and forget about what is happening in the world.

The last thing we need is to have to deal with death at Church as well.

I used the word pilgrims earlier,  
and that puts this journey that we have embarked on  
in the right light.

For this is our journey too,  
"a pageant of the events of the human soul."

We heard in the Epistle to the Romans this morning,

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“By grace you have been saved by faith. . .”

As we worship together in faith,

it is as though all of the events have already occurred for us

(though we continue to commemorate them in order,

with care, intentionally and reverently) . . .

since Christ has gone before us

and is making his way of life our own.

What we do as the Church is never hiding from the world,

and all of its problems,

rather it is bringing the problems of our world

to the feet of Jesus,

who intercedes for us with the Father.

And he is never unconcerned

about what we are suffering in our age,

he is always ready to refresh, nourish, and mother us,

so that we can go back out there.

The Church, our gathering together, even electronically

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gives us the opportunity to participate now  
in the ultimate destiny of human life.

And so we are, here, together,

granted a foretaste of the heavenly banquet

-now in Lent, and on every Sunday

we participate in the Eucharistic meal

even if in this lent it is spiritually,

the meal that bodies forth our salvation.

Now more than ever we need to gather

as often as possible for this nourishment,

for the refreshment of the soul,

that can remind us that we are loved by God.

What better time than in the middle of Lent

and in the midst of this pandemic,

to recall the truth we knew all along.

We are called to keep on doing whatever it is we have been called to do,

through faith.

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Whatever we do,

God is working in us,

in the midst of the physical stuff.

The Holy Spirit is translating, through us,

the faithfulness that Jesus lived.

We aren't earning anything in the way of points in heaven,

remember "by grace you have been saved through faith"

rather we are willingly participating in that life,

through the channel he provides,

so that the world may know that God in Christ

has made us for good works,

as our way of life..

The late poet Paul Zweig wrote ,

"If there is an Eden,

it is not past, but coming,"

and this gives me the confidence to say that as adults . . .

we might confront the mystery of our daily lives

by doing as Jesus suggests,

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and look to small children,  
who have a wondrous capacity  
for living in the present moment  
with an innocent hope in what they learn  
to call the future.

We are called,  
as we approach Holy Week in the midst of a this continuing pandemic,  
as Bishop Banyard used to say,  
to “keep on keeping on”  
so that the truth of Jesus’ Life  
will be seen in all we do,  
to all people everywhere.