

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Prayer for Conversion

Father of unfailing mercy,
you sent your only Son into the world to save us.
May we look to your Son, who was lifted up on the
tree of glory,
and not allow the powers of darkness to hold
us captive.

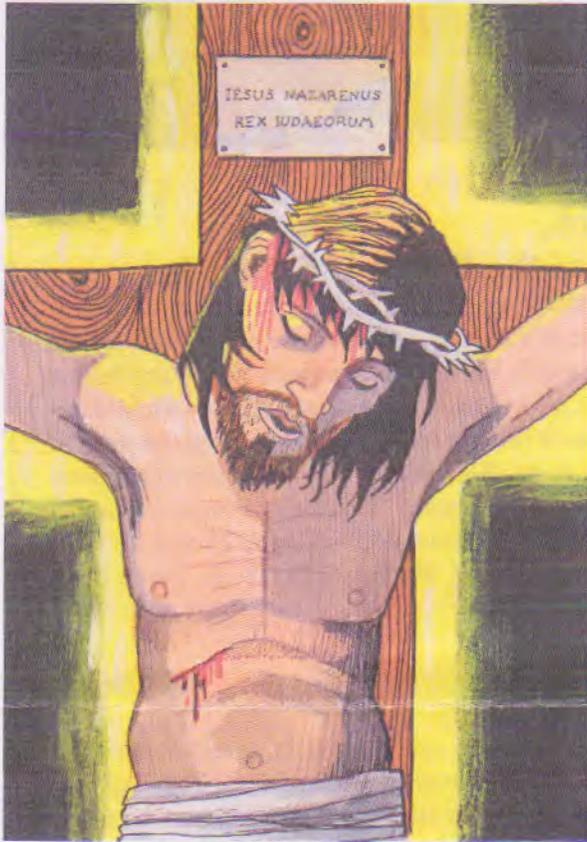
You are the God who gathers the tired and
the injured,
the refugee and sinners, embracing all with
immeasurable love and mercy.

May your Son accompany us on the road
to conversion
and may our works of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving
lead others

to be touched with your boundless love.
Entrust your holy people with a clear vision,
leading us to focus our eyes

on Christ, who is the Light of the World.
Grant us the strength to walk always as children
of the light,
with our sight on the One who was lifted high
on the Cross.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Sunday, March 15, 2015

The Cross of Christ

Today's Readings: 2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23; Psalm 137:1–2, 3, 4–5, 6 (6ab); Ephesians 2:4–10; John 3:14–21. Some might be surprised at the uplifting tone of the prayers and readings in today's Mass. We pray in the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice, Jerusalem," and in the Prayer over the Offerings, note that it is "with joy" that we place the offerings. It may not be widely understood that Lent has a joyful aspect. Today, on Laetare Sunday, when rose-colored vestments may be worn, we look past the seriousness of Lent and acknowledge our joy in Christ.

The readings provide the reason for our rejoicing. In the First Reading, we see that the Lord has compassion on his people, and in the Second Reading, that God is "rich in

mercy." St. Paul's words to the Ephesians underscore that all we have is a gift from God. "By grace you have been saved," he says. Our grace comes to us entirely without our merit. Just as the Lord sent messengers to his people while they were unfaithful, he provides us with grace even while we are in sin. That grace has made us alive in Christ.

In John's account of the Gospel, we are told why God is compassionate and merciful to us. It is because he loves us. He "so loved the world that he gave his only Son" so that all who believe may have eternal life. With this knowledge, how could we live anything but joyful lives? How might you acknowledge your joy in Christ?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 16, 2015

Bringing Others to Belief

The official in today's Gospel places his faith in Jesus even before he meets him. Because of that faith, Jesus healed the man's son. With that healing, others came to believe. Those new believers in Jesus came about because of the official's faith. In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis says that we are all to be missionary disciples. In other words, the joy of our faith should attract others to Christ. Could you be accused of bringing others to faith? Today's Readings: Isaiah 65:17–21; Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5–6, 11–12a and 13b (2a); John 4:43–54.

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

St. Patrick, Bishop

The many legends of St. Patrick are widely known. It cannot be confirmed, though, that this fifth-century saint either taught with a shamrock or drove out snakes. What can be known about his life is what he wrote in his old age in his *Confession*. There, he tells of his dependence on God in prayer and the faith that sustained him while in captivity. Though happy when he was able to return to his homeland, he followed God's call to evangelize in Ireland. Today's Readings: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12; Psalm 46:2–3, 5–6, 8–9 (8); John 5:1–16.

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

St. Cyril's *Catechetical Instructions* are still studied today. In those sermons, the bishop explained Church doctrine to catechumens preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil and the mysteries of the sacraments to the neophytes during the period after the initiation sacraments were received. This fourth-century saint also was known for the mercy he showed. When a famine struck, he sold church goods so that the poor could eat. Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:8–15; Psalm 145:8–9, 13cd–14, 17–18 (8a); John 5:17–30.

Thursday, March 19, 2015

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The few details about St. Joseph in the Gospel accounts provide a picture of a man of faith. Because of his faith, Joseph believed the angels who appeared to him, first telling him to take Mary as his wife and then to flee to Egypt with his family. Joseph was willing to follow God's lead, to go where God needed him to go. How willing are we to put our desires aside to follow God's path? Today's Readings: 2 Samuel 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27 and 29 (37); Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Luke 2:41–51a.

Friday, March 20, 2015

Lenten Weekday

During this Lent, you might want to spend some time becoming more acquainted with the psalms. You may find that they speak to your needs, fears, joys, and sorrows. Today's Psalm 34 tells of how God tends to those who are faithful. He hears them when they cry out and rescues them from their troubles. Perhaps you would like to meditate on a psalm that speaks to how you are feeling this Lent. Today's Readings: Wisdom 2:1a, 12–22; Psalm 34:17–18, 19–20, 21 and 23 (19a); John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30.

Saturday, March 21, 2015

Lenten Weekday

In today's Gospel, we hear that some regarded Jesus as a prophet and others as the Messiah, while still others had contempt for him. It is tempting to consider this reading as a record of the past. But you can use this retreat time during Lent to ask yourself who you think Jesus is. Has the time that you have spent this Lent with the daily readings provided you with an intimacy with Christ? Are you willing to continue daily practices after Lent to nurture your relationship with Christ? Today's Readings: Jeremiah 11:18–20; Psalm 7:2–3, 9bc–10, 11–12 (2a); John 7:40–53.



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Keeping the Seasons

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