

IV LENT 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

GALATIANS 4.21 St. JOHN 6.1



It's time to lighten up a bit. We're still in Lent ...next Sunday Passiontide commences and things will start to heat up in a hurry. But today we get some breathing room.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is about the halfway point in the Season of Lent. It is known by several special names:

- *Laetare Sunday* from the Latin word for *Rejoice*...the opening word of the Introit
- *Mothering Sunday* from the custom in Europe of visiting the "mother" church or cathedral or parish church of one's baptism
- *Refreshment Sunday* from the Gospel where Jesus fed the crowd so they wouldn't go away hungry
- *Rose Sunday* from the rose-colored vestments worn by the Celebrant and pink flowers at the High Altar

Our friend Saint Paul doesn't hold back on words when he thinks he needs to get our attention. Appalled by the self-righteousness and self-centeredness of some members of the Galatian Church...Paul told the parishioners to "lighten up".

The point of today's Epistle is to reinforce the idea God always keeps his promises. Paul told the Galatians if they really understood this they would immediately stop their unkind and cruel behavior toward each other.

To make his point Paul tells the story of Abraham and Sarah and the birth of their "promised" son Isaac. The story is difficult for us to understand because we are 4000 years removed from the events described.

God sent three angels to tell Abraham his wife Sarah was going to have a baby. Both Abraham and Sarah were close to 100 years old and Sarah thought the idea she would have a child at her age was the funniest thing she had ever heard and burst out laughing. But...the three angels were delivering a message from God...God doesn't lie or promise he will do something and not carry through with his promise.

Paul calls the Church "the present city of Jerusalem". It's the Church's mission and the job of her priests to point the way to what Paul calls "the heavenly Jerusalem, our true mother." Jesus tells us he came so we might enjoy life to the fullest now...and look forward to seeing him in the place he has prepared for us in heaven.

Priests have a duty to take care of the people committed to them and that includes at times using strong words...always out of love and compassion...to get their attention. Saint Paul often employs a "tough love" approach to try to get people to stop and think.

Just before a man is ordained a priest, the bishop reads a long exhortation. He tells the priest he is to...

...“teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever.”

Mothers are supposed to love their children and take care of them and help them grow into mature adults who do the right thing. Through the Mass, Discussion Group and Lenten Study our minds, souls and bodies are nurtured...we learn what it means to be mature and responsible parishioners. We leave here today fully refreshed...not having received dead symbols...but the living Body and Blood of Jesus...knowing that the Church...our Mother...is taking care of us through Word and Sacrament.

Jesus promises those who die believing in him might one day enjoy life with him in heaven for all time. Do we believe his promise? God always keeps his promises.

Lent is a serious time and as we move toward Passiontide and Good Friday it's for all this and all of us Jesus was sent. We do know how the story turns out...Light overpowered darkness once and for all...Good Friday opens the way to Easter.

Isn't that a good reason to "lighten up"!

