

## IV LENT 2020

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

#### FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

*GALATIANS 4.21-31 St. JOHN 6.1-14*



Welcome to “Time Out Sunday”...because of COVID-19 and the Governor’s Executive Order prohibiting public gatherings which now includes church services...we’re having a “time out” from attending Sunday Mass. We hope and pray this won’t last long. In the meantime...Sunday sermons will be delivered by e-mail or USPS.

The *Book of Common Prayer* designates today the Fourth Sunday in Lent without any other titles. Anglicanism also has some special names for today: Mothering Sunday, Refreshment Sunday, Rose Sunday and less commonly Laetare Sunday.

“Mothering Sunday” comes from the Epistle reading. Saint Paul is perplexed by the antics of the Galatians...especially a group within the Church called Judaizers. This group said in order to become a Christian one had to first become a Jew and keep all the ritual and dietary customs. Paul responded, “Lighten up, you are wrong!”

Paul tells the Galatians if they really understood the Law...they would see how they were hurting their relationship to God and each other. God promised he would set everyone right with himself through his Son, Jesus. Everyone! Not just one group of people. God keeps his promises just like he kept his promise to Abraham and Sarah in the birth of Isaac.

Paul also calls the Church “the present city of Jerusalem”. It’s the job of the Church, “the present city of Jerusalem”, to point the way to what Paul calls “the heavenly Jerusalem, our true mother.” The Church is the people...not a building...and we are all called to be witnesses to God’s promise. He restores us and set us free from sin and death through the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus. And mothers take care of their children. Holy Mother Church takes care of us...nourishing us and empowering us...even in times of turmoil and confusion.

“Refreshment Sunday” is a name that comes from the Gospel. Jesus knew the people who were following him around were hungry. He provided food for a huge crowd of people from two tiny fish and five loaves of bread.

Jesus knows food is part of what we need to enjoy life now. When he was tempted in the desert he trusted God to provide what he needed to survive. He asks us to trust God to provide the things we need. The crowd in today’s Gospel went home full and refreshed after a good meal.

We get spiritually refreshed every time we hear God’s Word and receive Holy Communion. While we are not able to receive Holy Communion today...we can meditate on the grace we receive from reading his Holy Word...it too can refresh us.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is about the midway point in the Lenten Season. It is also known as “Rose Sunday”...from the rose-colored vestments worn by the Celebrant at Mass. The Anglican Catholic Church follows the long tradition of not having flowers at the Altar during Lent. The exception is today...when pink roses or some other pink flowers decorate the High Altar...a relaxation in the rigors of the Lenten Season.

The less-common name for today is “Laetare Sunday”...a name it gets from the traditional Latin opening words to the Introit said by the Celebrant...*Laetare Jerusalem...Rejoice, O Jerusalem*. In this time of forced shelter-in-place and our inability to attend Sunday Mass...what do we have to rejoice about? Everything!

We can make this “Time Out Sunday” and the next few weeks we shelter-in-place a time for doing some extra Spiritual Spring House Cleaning...and maybe some house cleaning of the regular kind. God provides us with opportunities for spiritual growth even in the most adverse of situations.

Next week we begin the final two weeks of the Lenten Season called Passiontide. “Passion” means “suffering” or “endurance”. Jesus suffered and endured for us...perhaps we should see this as a time of sharing in his suffering and endurance.

Our faith and hope sustain us and will carry us through this “time out”...things will get better...Jesus promises us that too...and that is a very good reason to Rejoice!

