

Friends,

Thank you for tuning in to this Sunday's Mass via our Facebook Livestream. While I wish we could all be together physically, we are blessed to be able to join each other virtually and spiritually to *keep holy the day of the Lord*.

Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Lent, also known as *Laetare Sunday*. *Laetare*, of course, comes from the Latin imperative "Rejoice!"

Now I know what many of you might be thinking: How can we rejoice in the midst of this pandemic we are experiencing as a society?

Fortunately, the readings for this Sunday remind us that there is always a reason to rejoice.

In today's First Reading from the Book of Samuel we hear how David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, has been hand-picked by God to lead the People of Israel.

We know from history that King David goes on to become one of the most beloved monarchs in the history of Israel. His courage and military might will forever be inscribed in the annals of history as two of his greatest virtues.

Yet it was neither his courage or military might that put him on the throne in the first place.

In fact, we hear how he was humbly tending sheep right before the "*spirit of the Lord rushed upon him*."

However, God, "*who judges the heart and not by appearances*", knew the type of man David could become.

This is not unusual for God. Throughout man's salvific history we see that God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

Think of our patron saint, St. Peter, and the many men and women after him, who despite being looked down upon by the world, were nonetheless exalted by God.

It was precisely David's humility that enamored God and inspired Him to work through him. This makes sense since humility is the mother of all virtues, and thereby constitutes a door by means of which God can enter man's heart and transform it.

We see signs of his great humility on David's utter dependence on God when confronted with the Herculean task of fighting against Goliath. It wasn't so much David's reliance on his own strength that gained him victory but rather his unwavering trust in the Lord.

However, we also know that David's humility comes to a screeching halt when he turns away from God and decides to follow his own designs. He falls off the precipice of his own ego and allows *pride* to take center stage, to the point of killing a fellow man to take his wife.

In a way we could say: "*Boy, how the mighty have fallen!*"

However, those words can also ring very true to us in the midst of this global crisis.

*Boy, how the mighty have fallen!* As a species many might say we have arrived at to the cusp of military and technological advancement.

We have relied so much on what *we can do* and how well *we can do it* that, whether aware of it or not, we have vanquished any sign of humility and allowed pride to settle into our hearts. We have usurped God and made ourselves kings of a kingdom that is not ours for the taking.

Yet, it only took a microscopic Goliath to shut the entire world down.

So, yeah, it might seem impossible to rejoice on this Laetare Sunday. However, as Christians, are we not called to make our own the words of today's Psalmist: *The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want?*

When did we stop believing that? No invisible giant is greater than our God. No global pandemic is mightier than the Lord.

We do well, however, in discerning what it is that God is trying to tell us.

Let's look at some of the positive effects of this current crisis:

1. Our common home has been able to breathe once more. There are dolphins swimming in the canals of Venice and record-low levels of contamination/pollution worldwide.
2. Families have once again gathered at table to share meals.
3. Catholics have come to a deeper appreciation, dare we hope, of the sacramental life of the Church.
4. Men and women of good will in the front lines of this crisis have become Goliath-defeating heroes and heroines.
5. Political leaders have put aside their own selfish interests, for the first time in a very long time, to work together for the common good.

Folks, there is plenty to rejoice about. But we must do so in humility. Knowing that if we are living through this it is not because we are the greatest generation the world has ever seen but rather because God knows what we are capable of accomplishing when we crawl out of our selfishness and look at the bigger picture, as a society, as a Church, as disciples of Jesus Christ.

That was precisely his criticism of the Pharisees in today's Gospel. Ironically enough, those who could physically see were the most blind. Their rigidity and incapacity to see beyond the letter of the Law impedes them from recognizing its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

I pray that once we have overcome this—because we will overcome it—our hearts may be softer, our smiles may be bigger, and our eyes be opened to the boundless love of God, who is calling us to live “*as children of light*”.

-Rev. Cesar D. Jaramillo, JCL