

Laetare Sunday (Live-stream)
Detroit, March 22nd 2020

« Rejoice with joy, you who have been in sorrow. »

Very Dear Faithful,

Rejoice with joy, you who have been in sorrow. O how these words of today's introit ring true! They offer us such a timely consolation. Such are the marvels of Sacred Scripture, inspired by God, they never cease to speak to us, to inspire us, and to educate us in the mysterious ways of the Lord.

To this spirit of joy which permeates the liturgical texts of today's Mass, Holy Mother Church enjoins a profound lesson on Divine Providence, again a most timely instruction. Let us turn our regard to the Gospel scene and the miraculous multiplication of loaves. Let us meditate upon the qualities of these good people who followed Our Lord for three days without provision. Their trust in His paternal solicitude was rewarded and rewarded beyond any reasonable expectation.

St. Francis de Sales, our patron and great teacher of confident abandonment to Providence, writes: *There were many who saw the Savior while He was going about instructing and healing people, but who did not follow Him. There were others who, thus seeing Him, did follow Him -- but only as far as the foot of the mountain, content to accompany Him in the plain and through pleasant and easy paths. But a thousand times happier were those who saw Him and followed Him not only to the foot of the mountain, but, carried on by the love they bore Him, ascended with Him, divested of every care except to please Him. Thus they merited that the Divine Goodness should take care of them and even provide for them a miraculous banquet, lest they faint on the way from hunger.*

It seems, indeed, that many might have been on the verge of collapse after having followed our dear Master three days and three nights without eating or drinking [Cf. Matt. 15:32], distracted from such activity by the wonderful delight they found in listening to His divine words. Though their needs were very great, they did not think of them. Oh! how loving these throngs were in so perfect a practice of total abandonment into the arms of Divine Providence! We need not fear that God will neglect them. He will take care of them and will have compassion on them.

Dear friends, this beautiful lesson is to be applied in both a general and a particular way. Firstly, we see the different manners in which one may follow Our Lord: indifferently, somewhat, or entirely. Those who simply witnessed the preaching and the doings of the Lord, but without following, are like so many in today's world; deaf to the message of Christ, blind to His marvelous doings. Those who followed Jesus, but only to the base of the mountain, only to the point of their own lasting provisions are the calculating souls. These calculating souls, if you will, are they who want to juggle the ways of the Lord and their own personal wants. They seek the consolation of His Word without allowing it to develop into an embracing the Cross. Their faith is simply out of convenience and thus desperately incomplete. God leaves these souls to their own confined decisions. God leaves these souls to their own petty short-sighted plans. They will never see the prodigious care of God working in their lives because they only care for themselves. What a sad state for a Christian soul.

But the third kind of followers, those who followed for days without personal provision, without knowing how or when they would be nourished, they exemplify the total abandonment to God's Loving Providence to which we are all called. These are the souls who are equally happy on the Mount of the Transfiguration and on the Mount of the Crucifixion. These are the Christians

who embrace and love the cross God places on their shoulders, trusting that their reward will be far greater than anything they could imagine. These are the faithful who advance in the face of seemingly unsurmountable obstacles trusting solely in the unfailing care of the Lord. These are the ones chosen to see the glory of God.

Souls of 2020, is it too ambitious to want to draw a similar parallel to all of us now? Dare we make the same analogy to our own history? May it be a fruitful effort to do so, because precious lessons of the ways of God lie therein.

There are indeed the throngs of “passer-byers”. Those who see the efforts of faithful clergy and religious to bring sacraments to all, but who remain indifferent. They see a potential threat to their mortal health, but do not turn to the good of their immortal soul.

There are also souls intrigued by the earnest zeal of the parishioners to practice their Faith at all times, but they remain distant. While they too would be happy should society become better after this trial, they personally invest neither time nor effort to reform their personal lives.

God sends this viral trial to the impious and just alike. The souls who want to be in Church seemingly cannot. The souls who hunger for the Lord seem to be deprived of the Eucharist. The souls who frequent the sacraments experience more difficulty in accessing them. Then the unimagineable... not a single public Mass today in the United States of America.

Do we not see that our situation is similar to the courageous souls of today's Gospel? They followed Our Lord for three days without a miracle, then they were told to sit on the grass in expectation of being nourished by food they did not have. And here we are in a similar situation, we've had but one week without the public distribution of Communion. But shall will still persist in

doubting that the next miracle will happen too... the restoration of Public Mass and devotions for the nourishment of souls. God has answered our prayers time and time again. No, we shall not doubt. We shall be confident children of Faith.

The same loving God who cared for us yesterday, cares for us today and will care for us tomorrow. We are confident that the Lord will multiply those spiritual loaves once again in fervent nourishment of the Eucharist. Today's Gospel miracle is indeed a pre-figuring of the Eucharistic multiplication. We know that we will continue to see His glory. Christ has poured so much grace into our lives already. He has taught us so many lessons of Providence. He has granted us so many consolations that we may advance with a good heart in our next hardships.

Here then is the true reason to rejoice on this Laetare Sunday: we are in the hands of God. We are in the hands of God Almighty. We are in the hands of God all-loving. *Let us rejoice in God our Savior... because He that is mighty hath done great things and holy is His Name. Amen!*