

From the Pastor
March 14, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Lent

On this Fourth Sunday in Lent, we keep what has been kept throughout the centuries of the Christian era, Laetare Sunday. It means the Sunday of rejoicing and takes its name from the first word of the Introit Antiphon, *Laetare Ierusalem* (Rejoice O Jerusalem). For today we have arrived at mid-Lent and we take a brief pause to continue our Lenten journey. It is, as it were, an intermission.

ST. JOSPEH AND ST. PATRICK

For our meditation of today I would like to depart from our Lenten meditations and consider two saints whose feast will occur this week St. Joseph and St. Patrick. The Feast of St. Patrick is kept on **Wednesday, March 17th**.

The Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary is kept on **Friday 19th of March**. Although it occurs in Lent the priest puts away the somber violet of this season and wears the joyful white vesture. The Gloria, absent since Ash Wednesday, is prayed at the Mass.

As we all know St. Joseph was chosen from all eternity to be the guardian of the Redeemer. Although he was not physically the father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in every other way he was a father to Our Lord. As he was the protector of the Holy Family on earth, so is he the patron of the Universal Church. We should pray to St. Joseph each day to help us in every need both in the spiritual order and the material order.

Very often we may see paintings and images of St. Joseph which depict him as elderly. This depiction, while well intentioned, is very far from accurate. At the time of Our Lord's birth St. Joseph would have been about 19 years old, in the full vigor of manhood and strength. After all, God Our Lord would never have entrusted His Divine Son to the care of one who would not have been physically capable of fulfilling his mission as Guardian of the Redeemer. We understand why pious artists would have depicted St. Joseph as elderly – it would have been to emphasize the perpetual virginity of Our Blessed Mother. But we must always remember that Holy Purity is not a virtue not only for the elderly, but for the young also. Holy Purity in fact leads to one always being young of heart and filled with physical strength and strength of will. *I will go unto the altar of God; the God who gives joy to my youth!*

St. Joseph was not physically the father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but in every way, other than the physical, he was a father to Our Lord. The way Our Lord held the hammer, the way he planed the wood, the way he finished off a cabinet – these all reflected the influence of St. Joseph. I once remember asking a contractor why he hammered the crown molding in a certain way that I had never seen before. He did not give me a lengthy or complicated answer. He simply said,

because that is the way my master taught me. And Our Lord would have done his work as his master and guardian, St. Joseph, taught Him.

St. Joseph has always been the intercessor and protector of Christians. Blessed Pope Pius IX proclaimed him the Protector of the Universal Church. Pope Saint John XXIII placed his name in the Roman Canon and the present Holy Father, Pope Francis, placed his name in all the Eucharistic prayers of the Church. Pope Francis has a particular and tender devotion to St. Joseph and has made this year a Holy Year in honor of St. Joseph. The Little Sitters of the Poor, with whom I lived for 13 years, had such confidence in St. Joseph that they would simply write on a piece of paper what it was they needed to care for their dear old people, and place the note under the statue of St. Joseph, and he would always grant their prayer, whether it was a spiritual need, or a material need. Whenever storms approached, they placed the statue of St. Joseph in the window looking out. We now follow that custom at the rectory, and I would recommend that practice to all of you.

To many of the saints God has given the grace to assist us in various ways. But St. Joseph assists and protects us in every way. In my 40 years as a priest, he has helped me in innumerable ways, particularly at the time of his feast day, March 19th. Each Wednesday is dedicated to St. Joseph and the entire month of March is dedicated to him.

As everyone is well aware on Friday we will celebrate the Feast of St. Patrick a saint very dear to us. I have always had a special veneration for St. Patrick and have visited many places associated with his life both in France and in Ireland.

Many think of St. Patrick as a mythic figure, but he was a true and living person. St. Patrick was born and raised in a Christian family on the west coast of Britain in what is today Wales. He was a citizen of the Roman Empire and his first language was Latin. At a young age he was captured in a raid upon his beloved British coast and taken to Ireland. At the time Ireland was not a part of the Roman Empire and had not embraced the faith. St. Patrick was treated in a cruel manner by those who had captured him. However, this did not fill him with bitterness and hatred but brought him closer to God. He learned the language of the people and vowed to God that he would work for the conversion of the Irish peoples if ever he had the opportunity to do so. He understood that much of their cruelty was borne of the fact that they had not come under the Mercy of God and of His Beloved Son.

Patrick eventually escaped from Ireland and made his way to the island of Lerins off the coast of Marseilles in France. There he remained for two years praying and studying at a Cistercian Abbey. He was ordained a Bishop there. I have visited that abbey which is still in existence and there is a beautiful memorial plaque to St. Patrick on the island declaring, *From hence did Blessed Patrick depart to convert the Irish People.*

After returning to Ireland, Patrick did great penances on the island of Lough Derg. I have visited the island. The custom even to this day is to remain there for three days doing penance. The pilgrims are barefoot and fasting for three days. The first night is spent in vigil but one is permitted to sleep during the second night.

Finally. St. Patrick, seeing his wonderful work of bringing the grace of the redemption to the people of Ireland fell asleep in the Lord in 461 in Downpatrick in what is now Northern Ireland. I have prayed at his tomb which is on the grounds of the Protestant Cathedral. *Dear St. Patrick, pray for us and give to us the grace never to become bitter in the hardships of life, but rather ever to rejoice in the gift of the redemption.*

During Lent we will have the Stations of the Cross on each Friday at 7.00pm. Please make every effort to walk with Our Lord as he carried the Cross.

Please make a Holy Lent and try to instill into your children the importance of doing penance. How pleased is Our Lord when the little ones give up candy or cookies for love of Him.

For next week I will write about how St. Paul's will observe Holy Week. Naturally, in these days of pandemic, it will be shorter with many mitigations and adjustments. But, nonetheless, we will keep the holy and great Week.

May I encourage all to prepare to make Easter confession.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda