

# Laetare Sunday - Fourth Sunday of Lent

## Why is the Fourth Sunday of Lent called Laetare Sunday?

- ❖ The name comes from the first words of the Entrance Antiphon for Mass, "Laetare Jerusalem" — "Rejoice, O Jerusalem".
- ❖ The fourth Sunday marks the half-way point of the Lenten season, even though the Thursday before Laetare Sunday is the actual middle day of Lent.
- ❖ Signs of joy are allowed on this day, expressing our belief in the hope of the resurrection and to inspire us as we continue our Lenten commitments to prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- ❖ Symbolizing joy, rose-colored Mass vestments may be worn instead of purple, to indicate the contrast between Laetare and the other Sundays of Lent. According to the Roman Missal, instrumental music is permitted and the altar may be decorated with flowers.
- ❖ The tradition of using the color rose is thought to come from the tradition of the Golden Rose; at one time popes sent golden roses to Catholic heads of state in Europe on this Sunday.
- ❖ The Fourth Sunday of Lent was once called Refreshment Sunday, or the Sunday of the Five Loaves, for the miracle of the boy with loaves and fishes in the Gospel of John.
- ❖ The Fourth Sunday of Lent was also previously observed as Mothering Sunday, in reference to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, where the faithful are called "sons and daughters of God". Families visited the church where they were baptized, or made offerings to the cathedral, or mother-church, on this Sunday.

## How can we observe Laetare Sunday in our home?

- Surprise someone with a rose, or have roses on the dinner table.
- Plant a rose bush at home or for a friend.
- Share stories of where family members were baptized; take a drive to "your mother church".
- Go to Mass at your cathedral.



## Laetare Sunday Blessing

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is called Laetare Sunday. It is when the Church takes a bit of breather from Lenten practice and opens Mass with the Entrance Antiphon, “Rejoice, Jerusalem ... Be joyful, all who were in mourning!” – taken from Isaiah chapter 66.



**Latin:** Lætare Jerusalem: et conventum facite omnes qui diligitis eam: gaudete cum lætitia, qui in tristitia fuistis: ut exsultetis, et satiemini ab uberibus consolationis vestræ.

**English:** Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

Dom Prosper Gueranger’s beautiful blessing found in his work, *Liturgical Year*, brings together spiritual themes and highlights the joy that is to come in the Heavenly Jerusalem:

*O God, by whose word and power all things were created, and by whose will they are all governed. O Thou that art the joy and gladness of all Thy faithful people, we beseech Thy divine Majesty that Thou vouchsafe to bless and sanctify this rose, so lovely in its beauty and fragrance.*

*We are to bear it this day in our hands as a symbol of spiritual joy, that thus the people that is devoted to Thy service, being set free from the captivity of Babylon by the grace of Thine only begotten Son, who is the glory and the joy of Israel, may show forth with a sincere heart the joys of that Jerusalem, which is above and is our mother. And whereas Thy Church, seeing this symbol, exults with joy for the glory of Thy Name; Do Thou O Lord give her true and perfect happiness.*

*Accept her devotion, forgive us our sins, increase our faith, heal us by Thy word, protect us by Thy mercy, remove all obstacles, grant us all blessings that thus this same Thy Church may offer unto Thee, the fruit of good works and walking in the odor of the fragrance of that Flower, which sprang from the root of Jesse and is called the Flower of the field, and the Lily of the valley, may she deserve to enjoy an endless joy in the bosom of heavenly glory in the society of all the saints together with that divine Flower who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost world without end.*

*Amen*