

Today we celebrate Laetare Sunday, named for the first word in the opening antiphon: “Rejoice.” Lent can seem burdensome with its emphasis on penitence and sacrifice. But today we look with anticipation to its end in the Easter miracle. Jesus’ resurrection is the light at the end of the tunnel. Let us give thanks for the light he gives to our lives.

As we gather together let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith: Page 20

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (bow as we say) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed be God for ever.

Penitential Rite:

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, you healed the man who had been born blind: **Lord, have mercy**

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, you summon the sinner to repentance: **Christ, have mercy**

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, you call us out of darkness into your wonderful light: **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading Page 80

A reading from the first Book of Samuel

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

The Lord said to Samuel: “Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons.” As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is here before him.” But the Lord said to Samuel: “Do not judge from his appearance of from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.” In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any one of these.” Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons

you have?" Jesse replied, "There is till the youngest, who is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here." Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The Lord said, "There – anoint him, for this is the one!" Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm Page 82

Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R/. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. **R/. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. / In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; / he refreshes my soul. **R/.**

He guides me in right paths / for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley / I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff / that give me courage. **R/.**

You spread the table before me / in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; / my cup overflows. **R/.**

Only goodness and kindness follow me / all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord / for years to come. **R/.**

Second Reading Page 82

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Ephesians 5:8-14

Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says: "Awake, O sleeper, and arose from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Page 83

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

John 9:1-41

Glory to you, O Lord

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" – which means Sent -. So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am." So they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see." And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know."

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a Sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.” So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?” His parents answered and said, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, “He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner.” He replied, “If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.” So they said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?”

Do you want to become his disciples, too?” They ridiculed him and said, “You are that man’s disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from.” The man answered and said to them, “This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.” They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him. Then Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.” Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

Samuel was one of the great leaders of ancient Israel. Called by God while he was still young, he was recognized as a prophet and a seer before becoming a military and political leader. Yet he expected that God would select one of Jesse’s older sons as the new king. If not even this eminently wise and capable leader has the insight required to choose his successor, how much more must we depend on God for the decisions we must make. If nothing else, we must resist the urge to make a snap judgment based on appearances alone.

“Like night and day,” we say when speaking of two things that are completely different. Paul would approve of that idiom, for he contrasts light and darkness in the reading we hear today: “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8). While in darkness (whose “fruitless works” can still tempt them) the Ephesians were unable or unwilling to realize goodness, righteousness, or truth. With the light of Christ they gained insight. In the early Christian era, one of the traditional names for baptism was “illumination.” As baptized Christians, let us shine forth the light of Christ to illuminate our world.

The intellectual laziness of the Pharisees is exposed today. Rather than take the time to use good judgment, they immediately dismiss Jesus as a sinner. He did not keep the Sabbath! It did not matter that he cured a blind man. It wouldn't matter if he had conquered death; keeping the law was more important. If nothing else, judging exclusively by the letter of the law made life easier for them. Illuminated by Christ's light, we are called to make the effort to shine a light on all aspects of a person, event, or issue, so we can make a good and true judgment.

Question - When have I judged someone unkindly without taking the time to look deeper? What can I do to remember to allow Christ to illuminate my way?

Prayer of the Faithful:

We are children of light and so we strive to make the needs of the world visible. Let us pray now for all those in need.

- For the Church, that we may bring to light whatever is hidden in darkness and heal the wounds that have gone unnoticed, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For government leaders, that they may continually work to ensure the well-being of the most vulnerable in their care, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For victims of extreme human rights violations—those who have been abducted, tortured, or executed—and for their families and loved ones, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those preparing for the Easter sacraments, especially those in our parish, that they may walk in the light of Christ and radiate that light to others, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For all of us, that we may resolve look beyond appearances and attempt to see the face of Christ in all whom we meet, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For what else should we pray? _____ let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Luminous God, on the first day you created light and allowed it to shine over all creation. Help us to magnify that light and share that light and follow that light as we struggle through the darkness of sin and death. Grant this and all our prayers through Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: Page 152

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

O god, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world, illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendor of your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty and love you in all sincerity.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite:Final Blessing:

May the Lord bless us,  protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ! **Thanks be to God.**