**Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

**March 11, 2018 – Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23 Psalm 137: 1-6 Ephesians 2: 4-10**

**John 3: 14-21**

 If you see your priest and deacon wearing rose-colored vestments this weekend, don’t be surprised! The Fourth Sunday of Lent, also known as *Laetare Sunday*, offers a brief respite from the penitential season of Lent. The word *“Laetare”* means, “Rejoice” in Latin and the name is taken from the words spoken (in the absence of an opening hymn) at the Entrance Antiphon: *“Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.”* These words are taken from the final chapter of the Book of the Isaiah, where the prophet foretells of the Judgment of God and the joy that awaits all who are faithful to him.

 The readings heard this Sunday reflect optimism for the future, even during times of trial and difficulty. In the first reading from the Second Book of Chronicles, the author shares the account of the release of the people and their invitation to return to Jerusalem from their exile to Babylon, which was inflicted due to their infidelities to the LORD.

 This optimism continues in the reading from the Gospel of Saint John. In a continuation of the theme from last week’s Gospel Acclamation, the reading recounts Jesus’ conversations with Nicodemus. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the council that governed Jewish matters. Nicodemus, educated in the Law of Moses, would approach Jesus at night, to avoid notice by other leaders, who were already apprehensive of the Lord. Jesus revealed his nature and mission to Nicodemus: *“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”* In words that have become so familiar to us, Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that he was the realization of God’s infinite love for us: *“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”*

 Those who believe in the name of the Son of God are saved provided that they live out their belief in their daily lives. Jesus is the light of the world. Those who believe in him must come to the light. And they come to the light by their search for the truth. *“Whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.”*

Although Nicodemus came to our Lord in the darkness of night, his search for the truth would lead him to the light, as we will discover when we once again experience the Passion of John’s Gospel on Good Friday. As we continue our preparation during the Season of Lent, let us remain optimistic as we follow the footsteps of the Lord. Although the journey initially leads to his suffering and death, it will culminate in his resurrection and our redemption.

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