

Fr. Rudy's Reflections

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 10, 2024

### For God So Loved the World

At one time or another, you might have spotted, in church, a fellow believer immersed in prayer, with eyes intensely focused on the Cross. Perhaps you did not mean to intentionally watch this person from across the aisle, but you were taken by the reverence of that sacred moment, nonetheless. The figure of Jesus, hanging from the Cross, somehow transported this person, and you knew, instinctively, the person was in a moment of inspiration. You could see it, you could feel it, and the scene inspired you in a most poignant way. Jesus, whose great sacrifice is depicted on that Cross, is a reminder of the profound love he has given to all mankind through the course of all our days.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Lent, also known as Laetare Sunday, when the priest dresses in vestments of rose. *Laetare* is a Latin word meaning “rejoice” and is exactly 21 days before Easter Sunday. But today is also special because we are able to hear the words of John’s Gospel and one of the most important lines of the Bible: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). Nicodemus, a Pharisee and an important leader of the Israelite tradition, meets with Jesus in the dark of night to find out, clandestinely, more about this man who was astonishing the Jewish community with his works. The darkness surrounding Nicodemus can be viewed to symbolize not just physical time but the spiritual doubts that shroud our own understanding. Like Nicodemus, we often approach Jesus in the shadows seeking answers in life, yet it is in the light of Christ we can receive clarity and inspiration to move forward in our journey. Belief and trust in the Lord is the cornerstone of every facet of our lives if we allow ourselves to be moved and transformed by the experience.

Our faith, and what we do with that faith, truly defines who we are and how our story on earth will unfold. How we embrace our relationship with our Lord and where we place it on our own scale of importance will either help or hinder us through the many problems, hardships, uncertainties, and sorrows we face in life. How we hold our faith in our hearts will also affect life’s moments of joy—these “Laetare” moments—whether they are fleeting or long lasting. How we follow and trust in Jesus Christ can change our lives if we let it. God’s great love for us during every moment of our lives is entirely expressed through his ministry and his passion, death, and resurrection. This sacrifice truly brings us from the darkness to the light. And “the Cross” serves as a powerful symbol of God’s love and mercy, offering redemption from our sins and the promise of eternal life. It bears the weight of mankind’s cruelty, injustice, and betrayals, yet it is a beacon always shining forth toward his love.

*“Do everything for God, uniting yourself to him in word and deed. Walk very simply with the Cross of the Lord and be at peace within yourself.”—St. Francis de Sales*

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Rudy