

Weekly Message from Fr William for the Fourth Sunday of Lent 2023

Dear People of St Mary's, it's the Fourth Sunday of Lent, which means several things.

For many centuries this Fourth Sunday of Lent has been known as Laetare Sunday, meaning 'Rejoice'. This is because the Introit (Entrance Antiphon) begins with this Latin imperative *Laetare* – Rejoice! It's straight from Isaiah 66, foretelling the end of sadness and the dawn of unending joy. Laetare Sunday has come to be seen as a day of relaxation from normal Lenten rigours and a day of hope with Easter on the horizon. So take the day off.

Since the Middle Ages this Fourth Sunday of Lent has also been known as Mothering Sunday. (For Mother's Day see next paragraph!). Since medieval times Christians undertook the practice on this Fourth Sunday of visiting their 'mother church', meaning the church where they had been baptized. They may have been inspired to undertake this annual devotion by the words of that same *Laetare* antiphon from Isaiah 66, full of maternal metaphors, that foretold how our mother the Church would be the source of all our unending joys.

It's also Mother's Day, at least in the UK, honouring all mothers and celebrating their importance in our lives. The practice of honouring our mothers in this way is to be found in almost every human society and in some cases goes back thousands of years. Mother's Day is celebrated on different days in different parts of the world, but in the UK and some other countries it is tied to Mothering Sunday on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, and even identified with it. We'll be praying especially for all mothers this Sunday in our Bidding Prayers, that they may be given strength and joy and blessings.

It's also an opportunity to honour Mary under her title Mother of God, and mother of the Church.

And, on this Fourth Sunday of Lent, we have our annual appeal from Catholic Care, another opportunity for almsgiving this Lent. Bishop Marcus is the Chair of the Trustees for Catholic Care Leeds. In his Pastoral Letter this Sunday he quotes Pope Benedict XVI: There is 'an unbreakable bond between the love of God and the love of neighbour,' such that 'closing our eyes to our neighbour also blinds us to God.' (*Deus Caritas Est* § 25). Bishop Marcus reports in his Pastoral Letter this Sunday on the work Catholic Care did during the course of 2022 exercising, with our financial support, this Christian love of neighbour. See the link on this Sunday's bulletin to the full text of the Pastoral Letter. Also on the bulletin five options for donating if you would like to make a donation to the ongoing work of Catholic Care.

And on the bulletin this Sunday a call from me to anyone who thinks they might be able to put on a fundraising event or social event for the parish during the Easter Season. I'd love to hear from you.



Fourth Sunday of Lent 19th March 2023