



4th Sunday of Lent – Laetare Sunday  
(Second Scrutiny – OCIA)  
March 15, 2026  
Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

*Laetare* Sunday is the Church's moment of encouragement in the middle of Lent. The word *Laetare* means Rejoice. In the middle of penance, in the middle of struggle, the Church tells us to rejoice. At first that might sound strange. Rejoice... in the middle of suffering?

Earlier this week I had an experience that helped me think about this. One morning the weather was beautiful, so I decided to take the kayak out on the lake. The air was calm, the morning light was beautiful, and I paddled around for about an hour feeling as though I were young again. You can probably see where this is going. When I finished paddling, I pulled up to the shore and bent down to drag the kayak out of the water, and at that exact moment my back decided to remind me that I was not, in fact, as young as I thought I was. Suddenly I found myself flat on the ground, staring straight up at the sky with my back muscles spasming in protest. I got an unexpected opportunity to gaze at the clouds for a while. I also got a close look at the grass, the kind of close look I probably haven't had since I was a kid. And as I lay there, there really wasn't much else I could do except pray.

So I started doing what many of us have been taught to do. I began offering up the suffering. I started praying for people I know who are carrying crosses — people who are sick, people who are struggling, people who are grieving. And lying there with my aching back, I couldn't help but think about Christ carrying the Cross. The weight. The exhaustion. The pain. What I was experiencing was small, but it helped me appreciate in a new way the price of our salvation. It moved me to gratitude. And strangely enough, that painful moment turned into some of the best prayer I've had in a long time.

As I lay there, I also remembered a line from the playwright Oscar Wilde who once said, "We are all lying in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." That line stayed with me. Because that is what faith does. Faith changes our perspective. Sometimes we only begin to see clearly when life knocks us down. When we are forced to slow down. When we are humbled. When we can no longer stand tall in our own strength. Lying flat on the ground in humility, suddenly you start to notice things you had stopped seeing. The sky. The beauty around you. The presence of God. And this is exactly what today's Gospel is about.

The man born blind has lived his entire life unable to see. Then Jesus comes to him. Jesus touches him. Jesus heals him. And suddenly everything is different. The man does not claim to understand everything. In fact he says something very simple: "I was blind, and now I see." His whole perspective has changed, and he knows it is because of Jesus. But the Pharisees, the ones who believe they see clearly, cannot recognize the miracle standing right in front of them. Because pride can create a kind of blindness. When we think we already understand everything, when we are certain that we are right, we can miss what God is doing right in front of us.

This Gospel is especially important for our catechumens today as they celebrate the Second Scrutiny. These scrutinies are not meant to embarrass or judge anyone. They are meant to heal. They are moments when we allow Christ to open the eyes of the soul. Each of us has areas of blindness. Places where sin has darkened our vision. Places where pride has narrowed our perspective. Places where we struggle to see God's presence. But Christ desires to heal that blindness. He wants to give us new sight. And often the very crosses we carry in life become the place where that healing begins. Because suffering can do something remarkable. It humbles us. It opens our hearts. It teaches us to look upward again. And suddenly the very place where we thought we were only lying in the gutter becomes the place where we begin to see the stars.



This is the joy of *Laetare* Sunday. Not a superficial happiness, but the deep joy that comes from seeing with the eyes of faith. Seeing Christ in the middle of suffering. Seeing grace where we once saw only struggle. Seeing the Cross as the place where salvation is won. So today I invite you, especially our catechumens, to allow Christ to open your eyes. Bring him your blindness. Bring him your struggles. Bring him even the crosses and sufferings of your life. Ask him to give you the vision he wants you to have. Because when Christ opens our eyes, everything changes. Even in the midst of suffering, a deep joy begins to rise from within — the joy of knowing that we are finally beginning to see. And we can even do the miraculous thing of giving thanks for our suffering that was the gateway to the fuller vision of God's goodness. . . Though I probably won't be kayaking again anytime soon. . . :-)