

Homily for Fourth Sunday of Lent – March 2023 (Year A)

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By Deacon Richard Hay

When I was growing up with five brothers and sisters near Louisville, Kentucky in the 70's, my maternal grandparents lived in the southwest corner of Kansas in a city called Syracuse – roughly a 1,000 mile trip in one direction.

Back then my parents had this massive station wagon that we called the Brown Bomber because it was so big and well – brown. It made that trip multiple times and there was always drama including losing a wheel once coming off at an exit for lunch and having to push the car home at the end of one trip for about a mile because we ran out of gas.

The very back of this station wagon wasn't used for luggage – it had two seats back there which faced to the rear of the vehicle so you would see where you had been rather than where you were going. I loved sitting back there on these trips.

No matter what type of car any of us have made these types of trips in, there are a couple of common aspects to these journeys.

First is the ever-persistent question – “Are we there yet?”

Second is that the trip to our destination always seemed to take much longer than the trip home.

That is why some of you might be thinking – “Has it really already been four weeks since Lent started?” and others are thinking “Has it really only been four weeks since Lent began?”

While we are all considering our progress for this forty-day period of Lent and how fast it is coming or going, there is another group in our midst that has been on a journey towards Easter that has been much longer – the catechumens and candidates – now the elect – who will receive the sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil. Many of them have been on this journey for the last year or even longer.

This weekend, they will participate in the second of the three scrutiny’s as they continue this long journey to join us in full communion with the Church. We should all continue to offer our prayers of support for each one of them and you can see all their names out in the Narthex.

For all of the elect and all of us, the answer to this journey's "Are we there yet?" question is – almost.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Lent, also known as Laetare Sunday, just past the midway point in our journey to Easter. With three more weeks to go, it is a good time to evaluate how our own experience of Lent has gone so far – to evaluate how fruitful our season of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting has been so far.

If it has gone well – then give thanks to God for that and of course, also ask for continued blessings in these final weeks of Lent.

If things have been a bit more challenging, then give thanks for that too because that usually means growth is happening. Offer prayers of thanksgiving for that as well.

If necessary, anyone of us can also change your plans for Lent – that is OK too.

In the first reading, we hear the story of Samuel anointing David as the new king of Israel. We are reminded that God sees beyond our outward appearance and peers deep into our hearts. David was the youngest and smallest of his brothers, but God chose him to be king

because of his great faith. It wasn't about his size or looks. This is a reminder that God can use anyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that we were once in darkness but are now called to live as children of light. He encourages us to live in that light, which means living in the truth and avoiding sin. This can be difficult at times, especially when we are tempted to give in to our desires or when we are faced with challenges and struggles. But St. Paul reminds us that we are not alone in this journey because Christ has redeemed us and has given us His grace and strength which we receive through the sacraments.

In the Gospel reading, we hear the familiar story of the blind man who is healed by Jesus. While there are multiple layers to this story – the bottom line is that Jesus's healing power has the ability to transform our lives. The blind man represents all of us who are spiritually blind, who are unable to see the full truth and beauty of God's love. But when we turn to Jesus and ask for His help, He can open our eyes and help us to see.

As we reflect on these readings, we are encouraged to examine our own lives. Are we living in the truth and avoiding sin?

Are we seeking God's plan for our lives, even if it means going against the norms of society?

Are we asking Jesus to heal our spiritual blindness and to help us see the full truth and beauty of His love?

As we pause and think about our relationship with God and approach these final weeks of Lent, remember that this is a time of repentance, renewal, and preparation. A time for us to turn away from sin and to turn toward God's mercy and grace, while making changes that will bring us closer to Christ – changes that will hopefully last beyond Lent.

Remember – we are called to be like David, who was chosen by God to do great things even though he was the youngest and smallest of his brothers.

We are called to be like St. Paul, who lived as a child of light and who encouraged others to do the same.

We are called to be like the blind man, who had the courage to ask Jesus for help, was healed and later professed Him as Lord.

As we continue our journey through Lent, remember that God loves each one of us and that He is always there for us, no matter what.

However, It is up to us, just like it was to the blind man, to profess -
“I do believe, Lord.”