

Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Lent,

also known as *Laetare Sunday*.

*Laetare* means *rejoice!*

We *rejoice* because we're just a *little* more than *halfway* to *Easter*.

We've experienced a *long*, and *deeply* cold and *dark* winter –

*Anyone* who's paid attention *knows*: winter's not *over* – not *yet!*

But a *shift* is *happening!*

We've *set* our clocks to daylight *savings* time –

Our time in the *daylight* is *lengthening* –

The birds are building their *nests*.

We *rejoice* because – even from the *winter* –

We can *see* that *growing* light of *Easter!*

*Hope* in the light of the *Resurrection*

*Brightens* our hearts, even from *winter* and *darkness*.

*Jesus* is the light that *no* darkness can overcome.

And so, the darkness of the *violet* or *purple* vestment,

*Lightens* into this *rose-colored* vestment even while it's still *Lent*.

Our hope is in *Christ* as the Light of the World!

It's *funny* –

Did you *know*... that the *earth* is at its *farthest* distance from the sun in... *July*!?

At the *height* of summer?!

And in the *dead* of winter – in *January* –

Earth is actually *closest* to the sun!

It's *not* about sheer *distance* –

But about the *tilt* of the earth.

The earth *tilts* on its North/South axis all the *time*.

But in the *winter* – *our* home – in the *northern* hemisphere –

Is found tilted most fully *away* from the sunlight;

While in *summer* – that tilt is most fully *into* that light.

It's all about the *tilt*!

Today's *Gospel* is all about the *tilt*!

*Not* the tilt of our home in this northern *hemisphere* –

But the tilt of the homes of our *hearts*.

The man born *blind* represents *every* human being –

*Born* in the darkness of original *sin*.

But 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.”

*As in the first reading,*

God chooses *unlikely* characters to *shine* His light in the world.

*David* was chosen to lead God’s people –

But he was the *least* among his brothers.

We’d do well *not* to judge a book by its *cover* –

By outward *appearances* –

But by the eyes of *God* – who *sees* into the *depths* of the human *heart*.

*Jesus* was just passing *by* when He came upon the man born *blind*.

*Another unlikely* character who – from *blindness* – showed *everyone* how to see Jesus.

Even under the cover of *darkness* – the *blind* man’s heart is *tilting* toward *Jesus’* light.

While the *Pharisees*, who are supposed to be *closest* to God – are tilted *away* from Jesus.

The great *irony* is that the *blind* man is the one who truly *sees* –

While *know-it-all’s* who *seem* to shine over others –

*They* are the *blind* ones – *rejecting* Christ’s light.

And the *more* Jesus tries to *interact* with these stubborn, self-important men –

The *more blind* they become –

While the man *born* blind – who *knows* he’s a poor beggar –

*He's* the one who really *sees* –

Sees *Jesus* as our light and our salvation.

May *we* be *humble* enough to *realize* that *Christ* is our light –

And *not* our *own* powers or egos.

And may we not *hide* in the dark – *afraid* to stand in the light.

May we realize that *we* are the blind beggars –

*Ready* to receive *Jesus'* healing.

*Molded* like that *mud* of the *earth* *Jesus* used –

He used it to *remake* us (a *new* creation) into *His* earthen vessels –

*Human* – but containing the *divine*.

The *unlikely* one – *chosen* and *sent* from the waters of baptism –

to bring the light of *Christ* to *others*.

Others who *still* struggle to truly *see*.

John purposely has the blind man answer the community's question

About being the one healed by *Jesus*.

He replies, "I AM".

*JESUS* is the great I AM –

The *personal* name of God revealed to *Moses* at the burning bush – I AM WHO AM.

In John, Jesus *repeatedly* reveals himself as God made *visible – personal*:

*I AM the light of the world –*

*I AM the resurrection and the life –*

*I AM the good shepherd –*

*I AM the bread of life – ...*

In *baptism* at Siloam,

The blind man is *washed* in Christ –

Being *reborn* in the great I AM.

*Each* of us baptized are *sent* – to *be* the face of Christ in the world.

*Receive* Jesus in the *Gospel* –

*Receive* Jesus in the *sacrament* of His *healing* light – *Reconciliation*.

*Receive* Jesus in His most sacred body and blood at Holy *Communion*.

But *also* be ready to receive Him in *unlikely* – *lowly* characters –

Those we've *misjudged* by their outward *appearances* –

Those who've come *through* dark places – only to let *Christ's* light *shine*.

Jesus was just passing *by* the man born *blind*.

And the *blind* man *saw* Him.

The blind man *became* Jesus' light for *others*.

May we see Christ's light Through those *unlikely* souls –

The one we *condemn* or *overlook* or *avoid*.

May we let Jesus *open* the eyes of our *hearts* –

Hearts which –

Even from the *darkness* –

Are *tilting* toward the light.

*Incline* our hearts, O God, to thy most *wondrous* light.