



# The Meditation

## Laetare Sunday -A.D. 2016

Fourth Sunday in Lent



**The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes**  
6<sup>th</sup> Cent. Mosaic by an unknown artist  
St. Appollinare, Nuovo-Ravenna, Italy

## The Collect for Laetare Sunday, the Fourth Sunday in Lent

**G**rant we beseech thee, Almighty God: that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved. Through our Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is known as “*Laetare Sunday*”; (*Laetare* being the first word in the old Latin Introit Prayer at the start of the day’s Mass). The keynote for the Church’s liturgy today is a kind of subdued joy. Yes, we are still in the penitential season of Lent, but the austerity of the time is slightly modified. Rose-colored vestments may, for once, replace the dull purple, or in some parishes or monasteries, a deep red often referred to as ‘*Oxblood*’ of the past few weeks, and the *Introit* Prayer actually invites us to rejoice: “*Rejoice ye with Jerusalem: and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice with joy, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suckle, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations.*” (*Isaiah: Ch. 66*) The Collect for today is of the same spirit. Our sorrow and penance are to be tempered by the consolation and joy that we hope to be given by God.

This idea of combining penance with joy and consolation is, at first appearance, somewhat of an incompatible pairing. There are some vestiges still prevalent, of the puritanical spirit of days gone by, which would exclude all joy from religion, most especially in the penitential seasons. That spirit asks: what place has joy in a soul which is immersed with the spirit of mortification and penance? If we are to think of our sins, and do penance for them, surely, the argument goes, we are not doing our work properly unless we succeed in making ourselves and perhaps others as well, thoroughly miserable. *Hmmm...really?*

Well no! That is *not* the true Christian and Catholic attitude towards penance. Yes, we should indeed be sad at the thought of our sins, which have crucified our loving Savior Jesus Christ but, if those sins have been forgiven us through His Precious Blood lovingly applied to our souls in the *Sacrament of Penance*, we should not be too sorrowful, but rather, the fact that we are once more in a state of grace should fill us with gratitude and joy.

It’s true that we must still make satisfaction for our sins which have been forgiven us. We can make full use of the hardships which we are sent in this life to this end, and we can even supplement these hardships by works of penance voluntarily chosen. Even so, we’re not supposed to be miserable in our mortifications. Our Lord Himself instructs us in the Holy Gospel: “*Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*” (*Matt. Ch. 6, Vss 16-18*).

If “*God loveth a cheerful giver*” (*II Cor. Ch. 9, Vs. 7*) how much more does He love us when we give when under hardship and burden, and still do it with a smile?!

No true Christian should ever complain of the cross which God sends them, but cheerfully accept it. Yes...cheerfully! Now, that may be a difficult thing for us to perform due to our human natures being what they are, but it is not difficult for one who has the assistance through God’s Grace. Sometimes, we come across a person who may not be religious at all, but

### 3.

displays amazing courage and cheerfulness, in spite of the fact that they are suffering great pain or some disability. What a contrast there is between such people and some professing Christians, who are constantly whining and complaining when they are called upon to suffer even a small inconvenience or trial!

Even when we make allowances for the difference of natural temperaments, there is clearly something wrong here. It would seem that these Christians have never properly assimilated or even accepted the doctrines and principles of their Faith. They believe what the Catholic Faith teaches, but somehow, these beliefs have remained almost external to them, and have not fully become part of their very being. They would realize, if they had received and accepted Catholic doctrine in its fullness, that the opportunity to suffer something is a grace sent to us by God, and they would joyfully welcome the chance of showing that they can not only serve God, but suffer for Him. The lives of so many of the Saints of the Church are open books for our instruction and example of this.

Christians should welcome suffering because it gives them some slight opportunity to make satisfaction for their sins. They would, above all, welcome it because it enables them to imitate our Divine Master in a closer way. Could anyone who really loves Jesus take any pleasure in the thought that our sins cost Him everything, but have cost us nothing? Would we not rather thank our Lord for the honor of being allowed to participate in His pain?

This “Refreshment Sunday”, let’s give a little thought as to how our Lenten journey of Faith is progressing. Are we on track? Have we faltered? Are we examining our consciences in preparation for our Lenten Confession? Are we bearing the cross (or crosses) we have been given with joy and gratitude? Have we taken on something in our Lenten fast that we can continue after Lent is over? Please take time to pause and think. Adjust accordingly, if need be.

It’s never too late to embark on a program for Lent no matter what form you decide it should take. May our Blessed Lord, St. Joseph, and Holy Mother Mary be with you all in your journey!

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## From the Fathers of the Church

### St. Augustine of Hippo

#### ***The grandeur of God’s Mercy:***

“Who so patient, who so abundant in mercy? We sin and yet we live; sins grow and our life is prolonged ; there are blasphemies every day, yet the sun still shines on the good and the evil. On all sides He calls us to repentance, shouting to us through the benefits of His creatures, giving us time to live, calling us through the preachers, through our intimate thoughts, through His chastisements, through the mercy of His comfort.”

#### ***The way of the just:***

“This is the road followed by the just and the saints, who had God for their Father and the Church for their Mother and were faithful to both; rather, they went on steadily

4.

towards the eternal reward in the love of both parents . . . Because two parents gave us birth to death; and two brought us forth to life ; Adam and Eve to death : Christ and His Church to life.”

*Serm. 22. 9-10; PL 38, 159*

**The Meditation** is an on-line apostolate of **Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory** in Raymond, Maine. We are Anglo-Catholic Benedictine contemplative community that follows the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, the Father of Western monasticism. We are affiliated within the Diocese of the Northeast of the Anglican Church in America (ACA), a member of the worldwide Traditional Anglican Communion.

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**Fr. Prior Kevin is always available to hear Lenten confessions by appointment.**

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## Priory Kalendar

For the week of March 6<sup>th</sup> to March 13<sup>th</sup> A.D. 2016

### In Lent

**Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup> . . . . Fourth Sunday in Lent: Laetare/Rose/Refreshment Sunday** **note 1**

**Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup> . . . St. Thomas Aquinas; C. & D. 13<sup>th</sup> cent.** . . . . .fast

**Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> . . . comm. St. John of God; Founder Brothers of the Order of St. John (Hospitaliers . . . . .fast**

**Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> St. Francis of Rome; W. & N. O.S.B. - 14<sup>th</sup> cent.** . . . . .fast & Abstinence

**Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup> . . .Forty Holy Martyrs of Armenia, 4<sup>th</sup> cent.** . . . . .fast

**Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> . . . . .Lenten feria . . . . .Keys of Easter . . . . .fast & abstinence**

**Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup> . . .St. Gregory the Great; Po.C.D. 6<sup>th</sup> cent. Rome . . . . .fast**

**Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup> . . . . PASSION SUNDAY, (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent)** . . . . .**note 2**

**Note 1:** **Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup> is Laetare Sunday;** also called Rose, Refreshment, & Mothering Sunday.

*We are half-way through Lent, and today Holy Mother Church allows us to take a break from our fasting and mortifications. We can eat “refreshingly” . . .enjoy those little things that will according to our consciences allow us to resume our Lenten Fast and Abstinences with renewed ardor the following day and set our sights on joining the great Celebration that comes on Easter Day!*

*Sts. Perpetua and Felicity; M.M. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. are also commemorated on this day.*

**Note 2 :** **Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup> - Passion Sunday:** Crosses are veiled until Veneration on Good Friday, statues and images until *Gloria* at Easter Vigil .

*Also, today is the last Day for Lent to begin in any year*

## CALENDAR KEY

Ab. = Abbot, Abs. = Abbess, Abp. = Archbishop, Anc. = Anchorite, Ancs. = anchoress, Ap. = Apostle, Bl. = Blessed, Br. = Brother, Bp. = Bishop, Card. = Cardinal, C. or Conf. = Confessor, Comm. = Commemoration, Dcn. = Deacon, Doct. = Doctor of the Church, Ev. = Evangelist, H. = Hermit, LBr. = Laybrother, LSr. = Laysister, K. = King, Mat. = Matron, M. = Monk, **M.M. = Month's Mind ( 30 day requiem for the recently departed )**, Myr. = Martyr, N. – Nun, Obl. = Oblate, P. = Priest, Po. = Pope, Pr. = Prior, Prs. = Prioress, R. = Recluse, **RM = Requiem Mortorum, ( monthly requiem of the departed )**, Q. = Queen, Ven. = Venerable, Vir. = Virgin, W. = Widow.

**FASTING Key:** ..... A = Abstinence, F = Fast, F & A = Fast and Abstinence

**RELIGIOUS ORDERS:** C.O. = Congregation of the Oratory –Oratorians, C.P = Congregation of the Passion – Passionists, C.S.J. = Congregation of the Society of Jesus – Jesuits, Er. Cam. = Camaldolese Hermits, F.P.O. = Franciscans of the Primitive Observance, O. Car. = Carmelite Order, O. Cart. = Carthusian Order, O.C.D. = Order of Discalced Friars = Carmelites, O.F.A. = Augustinian Order, O.F.M. = Order of Friars Minor – Franciscans, O.F.M. Cap. = Capuchins, O.P. = Order of Preachers = Dominicans (Blackfriars), O. Praem. = Order of Canons Regular – Norbertines ( White Monks), OS.B. = Order of St. Benedict – Benedictines, O.S.U = Ursulines, O.C.O. = Order of the Cistercian Observance – Trappists, O.C.S.O. = Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance = Trappists.

**BR. CHIP IS BACK !**



**Feasts, Fasts, and Other Things**

**March 7th**

**Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas**

**Dumb ox . . . or thorough Theologian ?**

-by Br. Chip

This week we celebrate the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas on Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup> to be exact. St. Thomas was given the title of “Angelic Doctor” by the Church . . . a title richly deserved, but one that St. Thomas in his deep humility would have ignored or even laughed at. He was born at Roccasecca, near Aquino, Naples, Italy around 1226. He was educated as an oblate in the Benedictine Order at Montecassino. He didn’t feel compelled to join the order, but rather joined the newly-formed Dominican Order and there he studied and received his doctorate of theology at the University of Paris. An interesting facet of his life at that time is worth telling:

*“Thomas gave all his time which was not employed in devotion and other duties, to his studies, retrenching part of that which was allowed for his meals and sleep, not out of a vain passion, or the desire of applause, but for the advancement of God’s honor and the interests of religion, according to what he himself teaches. His humility made him conceal his progress and*

## 6.

*deep penetration, insomuch that his school-fellows thought he learned nothing, and on account of his silence called him the 'Dumb Ox', and the 'Great Sicilian Ox'. One of them even offered to explain his lessons to him, whom he thankfully listened to without speaking, though he was then most capable of teaching him. Those who know how much scholars and masters usually seek to distinguish themselves, and display their science, will give to so uncommon a humility its due praise. But the brightness of his genius, his quick and deep penetration and learning were at last discovered, in spite of all his endeavors to conceal them: for his master Albertus (Albert the Great), having propounded to him several questions on the most knotty and obscure points, his answers, which under the duty of obedience were given, astonished the audience ; and Albertus, not able to contain his joy and admiration, said, "We call him the 'Dumb Ox', but he will give such a bellow in learning as will be heard all over the world." This applause made no impression on the humble saint. He continued along in the same humble simplicity, modesty, silence, and recollection, because his heart was the same ; equally insensible to praises and humiliations, full of nothing but of God and his own insufficiency, never reflecting on his own qualifications, or on what was the opinion of others concerning him."*

*Excerpted from: The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints- Vol. I, p. 286.  
by Rev. Alban Butler St. Bonaventure Publications (reprint)*

St. Thomas went on to teach Theology at Paris (1252-1260), Orvieto (1261—64), Rome (1265-67), Viterbo (1268), Paris (1269-1271), and Naples (1272-74). He died in 1274 on his way to the Council of Lyons. He was canonized by the Church in 1323 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1567. He was declared patron Saint of Catholic Universities and centers of study in 1880.

St. Thomas Aquinas is the acknowledged prince of Theologians, and his *Summa Theologica* is unrivalled as an authority on the science of Sacred Learning. He was also a gifted poet and his hymns composed for the feast of Corpus Christi are still favorites in the liturgy. Taken at face value, the *Summa Theologica* or 'Summa' as it is often referred to, can be a very daunting work for one to get through. However, it is one work that anyone desiring to deepen their understanding of Christian Theology cannot pass by. Thankfully, there are many versions of the "Summa" which have been simplified by very competent theologians, and are today available in various 'degrees' of 'readability' shall we say, so this great work is no longer above anyone's reach.

## From the pen of St. Thomas Aquinas, Theologian

### The Eucharist: Bread of Life

#### ***I am the living bread:***

*"The flesh of the Lord is living bread because it is the flesh of the Word of God. He does not possess life eternal who does not eat this Flesh, and drink this Blood, because without it man can have mortal life, but not that which is eternal. This food is not taken to sustain mortal life. He who takes this bread, drinking of the flesh and blood of the Lord, has life, and that eternal.*

## 7.

*To eat that flesh and to drink that blood is to remain in Christ and to possess Christ in oneself. Therefore, he who does not remain in Christ and in whom Christ does not dwell neither eats His Flesh nor drinks His Blood; rather he eats and drinks such a great sacramental sign for his own judgement and condemnation.”* (Catena Aurea, tome 2, p. 466)

### ***The Theology of the Eucharist as food: The mystery of faith:***

*“Neither the senses nor the understanding can detect the presence of the true Body and Blood of Christ in this Sacrament, but only faith, which rests on divine authority. And this is convenient:*

***For the Perfection of the New Law:*** *because the sacrifices of the Old Law contained in figure only that true sacrifice of the Passion and Death of Christ ...therefore it is convenient that the sacrifice of the New Law instituted by Christ should have something more, namely, that it should actually contain Christ Himself, Who suffered for us, and that not only in significance or figure, but in reality.*

***This is fitting because of the charity of Christ:*** *by which He took a true body of the same nature as ours for our salvation. And since it is proper to friendship to live with one's friends, He did not deprive us of His presence during His earthly pilgrimage, but instead he united us to Him in this sacrament by His true Body and Blood. Therefore He says: he that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him, wherefore this sacrament is a sign of charity and excites our hope, through such a familiar union with Christ.*

***It is fitting for the perfection of the faith:*** *which just as it is concerned with the divinity of Christ, is also concerned with His humanity, according to that saying: You believe in God, believe also in me (John 14.1). And since faith is of things which are invisible, so, Christ shows us invisibly His divinity, in this sacrament He shows us His flesh in an invisible manner.”*

A closing word is in order. Here at the Priory, we know a little about oxen. We've had 'em and we've trained them. They are neither stupid nor dumb creatures, contrary to what most people believe. True, they take more time to train than many other types of draft animal but when they are trained properly, they give their best in their work. A good description of oxen is that they are *thorough*. They are just trying to figure things out if they balk at something. God in his great wisdom gave the ox (and cattle) the ability to *'multitask'* ... no, really! When just standing there, chewing their cud, they are *'ruminating'* and that's what we do when we are meditating on some portion of Scripture or Sacred Reading. It's a good bet that as they chew they are thinking about what they will be doing...and how best to do it. Perhaps the nickname of *"Dumb Ox"* given to St. Thomas Aquinas was a back-handed compliment, for while he listened in silence, he was ruminating on some very great and sacred thoughts, and when his time arrived to perform his duties of vocation, this Great Ox did so with a greater roar than even St. Albert his professor, or even the Church could imagine!

8.



### **Ox-pull at the Cumberland Fair 2015**

Those big fellows would stand there all day and night; not because they are stupid, but because they are *ready* and *steady*. They know at some point it will be their turn to work, and they'll work their hearts out exerting great power and energy through those willing hearts. ( *Photo by Fr. Kevin* )

**Feasts, Fasts, and Other Things:** from: **The Chipmunks Nutshell Library**  
is presented by Br. A. Chip Monk, O.S.B. a munk of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory in Raymond, Maine, USA



**Br. Chip**  
(*Our little resident theologian!*)

## Animal News from the Priory



Oliver will be 19 this year. One of his favorite things is to make a “nest” out of his food (hay) and then lay in it with the sun shining on him. He and the others take advantage of every moment that seems “springlike” to bake their old bones and joints and upgrade their tans, and by the amount of shedding going on with horses and dogs alike, we are all expecting an early spring.

