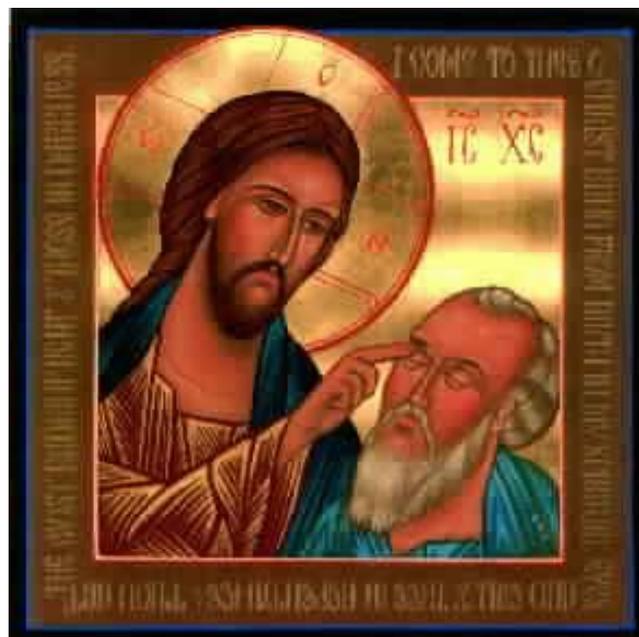


PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS

30 – 31 MARCH 2019

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C) LAETARE SUNDAY (Rose)



## **SUNDAY REFLECTION**

### **Cycle C**

Our reception of the Lord in the Eucharist is, among other things, a sign of our readiness to live in the pattern of those who are reconciled to God's way in all of our relationships. We have already commenced with this journey, but it will not always be easy or successful. Let us draw upon this great sacrament to provide us with the strength to maintain our spirit of reconciliation with all others.

The father in today's parable welcomed his son back with open arms and immediately called for a meal celebration. A meal is the most powerful expression of unity and good will. In this Eucharist we share the Bread of Life. The Body of Christ Himself. This signifies our deep union with Him and with each other. But, no celebration of the eucharist will be authentic unless it means what it says. It is important that we come to the Eucharist as a reconciled people so that every time we approach the altar we do so as a united family, neighborhood and community who express our unity, our belonging together, at the table of the Lord.

### **SUNDAY REFLECTION A CYCLE 8:30 a.m. MASS**

In today's Gospel we experience Jesus healing a man born blind. It is God in Jesus Christ who gives us the eyes of faith to see more fully the mystery of divine love. St. Francis de Sales explains how God entices us to on-going conversion:

Only God can enlighten us and open our blind eyes. When God gives us faith, God enters us and incites our mind through inspirations. So pleasantly does God propose the mysteries of faith to us that, without doubt or opposition, we consent to them.

Faith, the best friend of our spirit, brings us to love the beauty of the truths of the mystery of God. When we are exposed to the rays of the noonday sun, we scarcely see its light before we quickly feel its heat. So it is with the light of faith. As soon as the light of faith casts its light on us, we feel the heat of heavenly love. Faith makes us know with certitude that God exists and that God is infinite goodness. When temptations against faith start raising questions, we have to answer with our heart, not reason. Reason admits its limitations. It tells us that while the mystery of God transcends our ability to reason, our faith in God is eminently reasonable. Like St. Augustine, let us affirm our faith by crying out, "Lord I do believe, but help me in my unbelief!"

Let us faithfully concentrate on nourishing God's gift of on-going conversion with awe and confidence. Let us make God's love effective in our lives by remaining steady and persevering in our good desires and holy resolutions. Without forcing or doing any violence to us, Jesus draws us to Himself by bonds of love and gentleness so that we begin to do all things through holy love. Then let us not be afraid of Our Lord who wants to take full possession of our hearts. Rather, let us surrender ourselves lovingly into the hands of Our Savior, who desires to do great things in us, if we let Him open our eyes.

## READINGS FIFTH SUNDAY

7 APR '19

**C Cycle 5:00 Vigil Mass 7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m.**

**Is. 43:16-21:** God open up a way through the wilderness, He offers a 'new way' for His Chosen People's salvation, providing water for refreshment and a renewed praise on their lips.

**Phil. 3:8-14:** Paul acclaims Christ as the ultimate prize. All else, especially sin, must be renounced for the sake of Him who saves us.

**Jn. 8:1-11:** In Christ we have been forgiven, and yet the woman caught in adultery is an appropriate image for all of us who are unfaithful to Christ. Christ does not condemn us, but He expects us not to sin again. He calls us on to freedom in Him, the freedom gained by His passion and resurrection.

**A Cycle 11:30 a.m.**

**Ez. 37:12-14:** God will open the graves and restore the people of Israel.

When Israel was exiled in Babylon, Exekiel had to tell them that things were going to get even worse, that they would become like a desert valley filled with dried bones. But after that, the Lord would revive them and breathe the Spirit into them again. This is the hopeful conclusion of that dire prophecy.

**Rom. 8:8-11:** The Spirit of God dwells in you.

Saint Paul teaches that to be "in the flesh" is to try to earn God's grace by our own merits, while being "in the spirit" means letting God give us that undeserved grace.

**Jn.11:1-45:** Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

In St. John's gospel, the raising of Lazarus starts the chain of events leading to Jesus' death and resurrection. John uses the story to remind early converts of the life-and-death consequences of choosing to follow Jesus.

**UNIVERSAL INTENTION FOR APRIL;** Doctors and their Collaborators in War Zones. For doctors and their humanitarian collaborators in war zones, who risk their lives to save the lives of others.

### **APRIL MONTH DEDICATED TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:**

With this month dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament and the fact that we will be receiving new members into the Church at the Holy Saturday Vigil Mass and First Communion are just around the corner in the beginning of May, perhaps now would be an appropriated time to begin exploring what we as Roman Catholics actually believe about the Eucharist.

Holy Thursday, the day on which Catholics celebrate the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion at the Last Supper, falls most often in April, and so it is no surprise that the Catholic Church dedicates the month of April to the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

#### **The Real Presence?**

As Catholics, we firmly believe that the real presence of Christ is in the Holy Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council's *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* asserts, "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up

with the Eucharist and are directed towards it. For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ Himself, our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to men through His flesh— that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit” (#5). For this reason, the Council referred to the Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of the whole Christian life (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, #11).

Our belief in the Holy Eucharist is rooted in Christ Himself. Recall the beautiful words of our Lord in the Bread of Life Discourse in the Gospel of St. John: “I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world. Let Me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood real drink. The man who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the Father who has life sent Me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on Me will have life because of Me” (John 6:51, 53-57). Note that none of this language is symbolic— Jesus meant what He said. Moreover, even when there is grumbling and objections, and even after some disciples abandon our Lord because of this teaching, Jesus nowhere says, “Oh please, stop. I really meant this symbolically.” Our Lord stood by His teaching. The meaning of Bread of Life Discourse becomes more clear at the Last Supper on the first Holy Thursday. There Jesus gathered His apostles around Himself. According to the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus took unleavened bread and wine— two sources of basic nourishment. He took bread, blessed it, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the apostles, saying, “Take this and eat it; this is my body.” He took the cup of wine, gave thanks, gave it to His apostles and said, “All of you must drink from it for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” If we extracted the words of consecration recorded in the Last Supper accounts of the gospels and distilled them, we would have our words of consecration used at Mass. (Confer Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; and Luke 22:14-20.) Think of those words! Jesus was not just giving to the apostles blessed bread and wine. He was giving His whole life— Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. He was giving His very self. How true that was! The next day, Jesus’ body hung upon the altar of the cross. His blood was spilled to wash away our sins. As priest, He offered the perfect sacrifice for the remission of sin. However, this sacrifice was not death rendering but life giving, for three days later our Lord rose from the dead conquering both sin and death. Yes, the perfect, everlasting covenant of life and love with God was made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

This whole mystery is preserved in the Most Holy Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass. We too take unleavened bread and wine, two sources of nourishment. By the will of the Father, the work of the Holy Spirit, and priesthood of Jesus entrusted to His ordained priests, and through the words of consecration, that bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Yes, the bread and wine do not change in characteristics— they still look the same, taste the same, and hold the same shape. However, the reality, “the what it is,” the substance does change. We do not receive bread and wine; we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. We call this *transubstantiation*, a term used at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Therefore, each time we celebrate Mass, we are plunged into the whole ever present, everlasting mystery of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, and share intimately in life of our Lord through the Holy Eucharist.

The Catholic Church has always cherished this treasure. St. Paul wrote, "I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and after He had given thanks, broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way, after the supper, He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' Every time then you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes!" (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

During the days of Roman persecution, to clearly distinguish the Eucharist from the cultic rite of Mithra and to dispel Roman charges of cannibalism, St. Justin Martyr (d. 165) wrote in his *First Apology*, "We do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilate of its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of His own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving."

Later, the Council of Trent in 1551 addressed the heretical views of the Reformers. Remember Zwingli and Calvin believed that Christ was present only "in sign"; Luther believed in consubstantiation whereby the Eucharist is both body and blood, and bread and wine; and Melancthon believed that the Eucharist reverts back to just bread and wine after communion. Trent's *Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist* specified, "In the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the appearances of those perceptible realities. For there is no contradiction in the fact that our Savior always sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to His natural way of existing and that, nevertheless, in His substance He is sacramentally present to us in many other places."

Therefore, no faithful, knowledgeable Catholic would say that the Holy Eucharist "symbolizes" the Body and Blood of Christ. Yes, we pray for grace that we may believe more strongly each day in this precious gift of Christ Himself. Perhaps we should dwell on the words of Thomas Aquinas in *Adoro Te Devote* "Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore; masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more. See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart: Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art." (To be continued)

## **LAETARE SUNDAY    FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT:**

The fourth Sunday of Lent is rather unique; like the third Sunday of Advent ("Gaudete Sunday"), the fourth Sunday is a break in an otherwise penitential season. The vestments for this day will be rose, as they are on Gaudete Sunday of Advent, and flowers may adorn the Altar. This day is called "Laetare Sunday" (also "Rose Sunday" ), and takes its name from the opening words of the Mass, the Introit's "Laetare, Jerusalem":

Laetare Jerusalem: et conventum facite omnes qui diligitis eam: gaudete cum laetitia, qui in tristitia fuistis: ut exsultetis, et satiemi ab uberibus consolationis vestrae. (Psalm) Laetatus sum in his, quae dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus. Gloria Patri.

Rejoice, O Jerusalem: and come together all you that love her: rejoice with joy, you that have been in sorrow: that you may exult, and be filled from the breasts of your consolation. (Psalm) I

rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord. Glory be to the Father

Rose is the liturgical color of rejoicing. *Laetare* is a Latin word that indicates rejoicing. Liturgically, the joy expressed is that of the salvation gained for us by the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection, resulting in victory over death.

Before 1970, our next Sunday, the Fifth Sunday of Lent, would have been called Passion Sunday. It was the formal beginning of Passiontide, with Palm Sunday following a week later. Today, the focus of the two Sundays is combined into one, flowing immediately one into the other; so that we now call the sixth Sunday of Lent "Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion."

After *Laetare* Sunday, we move into the more solemn levels of Lent. The focus of our readings turns more clearly toward the coming Passion of Jesus, and we will hear about the death of Lazarus or the woman caught in adultery and saved from stoning, depending on which readings your parish uses for next Sunday. On Palm Sunday, we will hear of Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem — and of his final exit, to Golgotha.

The message throughout is of salvation. And we are to rejoice in it, even as we mark the sorrows of Passiontide. It is as Paul wrote to the residents of Philippi, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!" (Phil 4:4). So on this Sunday we will wear rose and rejoice in resurrection.

While the origin of the rose color of the vestments is unclear, there may be a connection to the tradition of "the Golden Rose," a gift sent by the pope on *Laetare* Sunday to religious shrines, to Catholic kings and queens, and to other Catholic individuals. These people include Isabella I, Queen of Spain, in 1492 and Mary, Queen of England and daughter of Henry VIII, in 1533. The custom dates back to about the 8th century, but golden roses are still given by the pope. In recent times, this gift has been to various Marian shrines. For example, when Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States in 2008, he presented a gold rose to the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent



**Scrutinies**  
of the Rite of  
Christian Initiation  
of Adults

This week, our community will pray for the Elect, those in our community preparing for Baptism. We ask God to protect and heal them as they journey toward full communion with Jesus Christ at Easter.

## **SECOND SCRUTINY SUNDAY 31 MARCH 8:30 A.M. MASS:**

When we hear the word exorcism, our mind thinks immediately to what we know about this rite. We can't help but think of the movies that we have seen. In them was depicted all sorts of oddities, a young girl's head turning around and around on her neck, objects flying across a room, vulgarities and condemnations being slung from a person's mouth. Strange as all of this is, it is a film maker's attempt at capturing in the film, the ultimate horror of evil, the degrading of sin, in short, the ugliness of being without love. This being without love is the cruelest torment of all. It is the fate of all who live lives that care for no one but themselves, who seek to take advantage of anyone or any moment to satisfy their own needs. Such is a life without love. It has sought no love, it has given no love, and so, in the end it receives no love.

When we hear the word exorcism, our mind thinks immediately to what we know about this rite. We can't help but think of the movies that we have seen. In them was depicted all sorts of oddities, a young girl's head turning around and around on her neck, objects flying across a room, vulgarities and condemnations being slung from a person's mouth. Strange as all of this is, it is a film maker's attempt at capturing in the film, the ultimate horror of evil, the degrading of sin, in short, the ugliness of being without love. This being without love is the cruelest torment of all. It is the fate of all who live lives that care for no one but themselves, who seek to take advantage of anyone or any moment to satisfy their own needs. Such is a life without love. It has sought no love, it has given no love, and so, in the end it receives no love. The Church in her wisdom holds up a scrutiny for us to consider. Last week we addressed the Creed, the articles of faith that we believe. If we haven't read through the Creed and tried to, at least, attempt an understanding of its contents, we are wasting precious time. Your Baptism declares that you do believe these articles of faith, even if you don't understand how they can be. It is not something that we can prove with philosophy, or logic, but that which our heart knows to be true, but doesn't fully comprehend. This is really what faith is.

So, this Sunday, the Church speaks to us of exorcism. Why? Why the jump from Creed to Exorcism. All that we believe everything that is contained in the Creed, brings us to love. In the Creed we speak of God, a God who loves and creates, of Jesus and what He said and did for us, and the love He has shown us. In it we pray to the Holy Spirit to surround us in love. We speak of the Church which is the gathering of all who love. Why is the Creed so important to us? Because, it leads us to all that is loving and beautiful in this world. Without this Creed, without this belief structure, we would be nothing but plotting, conniving individuals seeking only our own good and not caring for anyone else around us. So the horrors of exorcism, or rather the horrors, that necessitate exorcism, would be rampant without the Creed and a belief structure that the Church teaches and reminds us to follow.

Baptism brings us into the peace and love of God; we become adopted sons of God. We become part of the mystical Body of Christ, a group of loving individuals. The purpose of Christ, of Christianity, is to bring peace and concern for others into this world. Catholicism is not a club. It isn't something that we have in our back pocket and pull it out when necessary. It is a living of life. It is an attempt to show God our love, by living lives that reflect His goodness, His love.

And so, the Fourth Sunday of Lent, the scrutiny speaks about exorcism. It does this, not for us to focus our attention on it, but to help us realize the horrible lengths that living without the

church will take us. We live Catholic Christian lives not out of fear of what may happen, of what condemnation we might endure. No, nothing like that. We live these lives because Christ, who we follow, who we believe in, has shown us how to live. Can we honestly call ourselves Catholic Christians if we don't live lives that reflect the joy, the happiness, the love that comes with being at peace with ourselves? This is what we are called to do, this Sunday and every day of our lives. We must recognize that Jesus is beside us, always. And with Him, through Him, and in Him, we can live a life that presents joy and love to a world that needs it.

## **WEEKDAY LENTEN REFLECTIONS**

### **MONDAY 1 APRIL**

May the Lord continue to strengthen you along your way so that you may keep your focus on where you are going and on those with whom you travel.

It is interesting talking to people about excursions they take. Some people buy fancy RVs in which to travel, or cruise on luxury liners. Others put backpacks on their shoulders and go hiking with only the provisions that they can carry in their packs. Some people have mapped out where they are going and hope to get to certain destinations, others just move along and see what they can find as they journey somewhat haphazardly. Some live to travel. Others travel to live and some individuals do not want to go anywhere and just stay put. Some enjoy traveling with many friends, others enjoy going it alone.

These different types of attitudes are reflected in the spiritual journey that all of us are on. We are reminded today that what is most important is not the means and items which we use, but our destination. We must focus on where we are headed and upon those who travel with us. We must realize that we are being called to go to the home of our brother Jesus and His Abba-Father and that we must assist those who travel along the way. What awaits us is more than we can ever imagine.

### **TUESDAY 2 APRIL**

May you continue to appreciate the gift of life which comes through water and the Holy Spirit. In chemistry we know how atoms come together to form molecules. One such molecule is the combination of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. This molecule is essential for life. It is water. Water has some fascinating properties. It is the most dense at 4 degrees Celsius (40 degrees Fahrenheit). That characteristic makes it possible for ice to float in liquid water. If ice were more dense than cold water, ice would form at the bottom of lakes and eventually kill all fish. Water also is able to change between the frozen state and liquid state and be warmed up to the boiling state. Water is a solvent which can dissolve other chemicals. Water can both foster life in plants and animals, and be a source of destruction of life through flooding.

God has chosen to remind us of this gift of life and use water throughout scriptures. It is an important sign of God's relationship with us.

### **WEDNESDAY 3 APRIL**

May you always be aware of God's great love for you!

If you asked a group of people which person during their life time showed the greatest love and care for them, a great majority of the people would respond that it was their mother. They would recall how their mother loved them from the womb and cared for them. Their minds might flash back to times when they were in pain or sad, and when they would be comforted by their mother's holding them with care. People might also recall how their mothers always wanted the very best for them.

We are reminded today, that God loves us and cares for us more than any mother loves her child. God wants the very best for us and has given us the very best – Jesus.

#### **THURSDAY 4 APRIL**

May you continue to be open to God's revelation in and through Jesus.

A member of a Bible Study group mentioned how blessed he felt because he had the advantage of living at a time in history when he could reflect on the revelation of God through scripture and the reflections of others over the centuries. This came as the group discussed how sad it was that more of the people of Jesus' day, especially more of the religious leaders, did not accept Who Jesus is. It was mentioned that in some ways they were too narrow minded in their understanding of their faith and of God. They wanted God to act in a way which they wanted rather than trying to discern God's action in the life and ministry of Jesus.

There are many people today, including those who call themselves "Christians," who still refuse to be open to the movement of God in their lives. They either deny God or they try to pigeon-hole God into their image. If we really want to grow in our relationship with God, we must be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the lives of others and see how the Lord Jesus is still very active and helping us to come to a better "knowledge" of Who God is. This "knowledge" implies that we must be in relationship with the Lord Jesus and His Abba-Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

#### **FRIDAY 5 APRIL**

May the Lord Jesus give you the strength and courage to live your faith boldly.

During His time on earth, it was not easy for Jesus to live a life which was faithful to His Abba-Father's will. He was challenged and persecuted for proclaiming the Truth and helping bring people to the Light, Who He was and still is. Being a disciple of the Lord Jesus is not easy either. It means we will face opposition and belittlement. Yet we can be reassured that Lord Jesus is with us, strengthening us so that we can give witness to the Light and the Truth – be witnesses (martyroi) for the Lord Jesus.

#### **SATURDAY 6 APRIL**

May you continue to grow in your relationship with the Lord Jesus, becoming more willing to proudly profess your faith in the Light of the World.

How is your journey through Lent going? Do you sense growth in your relationship with the Lord Jesus and His Abba-Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit? Is it obvious to others where your commitment to the Lord Jesus is? Sometimes, as we develop in our faith, we are called to manifest how close we are to Jesus. We may be cautious in revealing that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus. At other times, we may be more open in our declaration of allegiance to being a follower of Jesus. Continue to pray for the strength to be willing to give witness to the One Who has called you out of darkness into the Light!

## PRAYERS

### **Faith in the Eucharist**

*O, my God, I firmly believe that Thou art really and corporally present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I adore Thee here present from the very depths of my heart, and I worship Thy sacred presence with all possible humility. O my soul, what joy to have Jesus Christ always with us, and to be able to speak to Him, heart to heart, with all confidence. Grant, O Lord, that I, having adored Thy divine Majesty here on earth in this wonderful Sacrament, may be able to adore it eternally in heaven. Amen.*

### **An Explanation of the Act of Faith in the Eucharist**

Our eyes still see bread, but our faith tells us that the Host that is consecrated during the Mass has become the Body of Christ. In this Act of Faith in the Eucharist, we acknowledge Christ's Presence in the Blessed Sacrament and look forward to the day when we will not only believe but see Him in Heaven.

### **An Offering of Oneself to Christ in the Eucharist**

*My Lord, I offer Thee myself in turn as a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Thou hast died for me, and I in turn make myself over to Thee. I am not my own. Thou hast bought me; I will by my own act and deed complete the purchase. My wish is to be separated from everything of this world; to cleanse myself simply from sin; to put away from me even what is innocent, if used for its own sake, and not for Thine. I put away reputation and honor, and influence, and power, for my praise and strength shall be in Thee. Enable me to carry on what I profess. Amen.*

### **An Explanation of An Offering of Oneself to Christ in the Eucharist**

We should leave each visit to the Blessed Sacrament renewed in our commitment to live a Christian life. This Offering of Oneself to Christ in the Eucharist, written by John Henry Cardinal Newman, reminds us of the sacrifice that Christ made for us, in dying on the Cross, and asks Christ in the Blessed Sacrament to help us to dedicate our lives to Him. It is the perfect prayer to end a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Loving Father of mine,  
I feel the pace quicken, the time draw near.  
I am filled with joy as I move toward Easter  
and the promised reconciliation with you.  
Teach me to follow the example of your Son,  
to be worthy of being called one his people: a Christ-ian.  
Help me to live each day as he did  
turning hatred to love and conflict to peace.  
I await the new life with eagerness, faith  
and a deep gratitude.