

What's In A Name?



“Rejoice O Jerusalem, and gather round, all who love her...”

This is an excerpt from the Entrance Antiphon given to us today by the Church. It is quite different from the Antiphons from the previous three weeks, and rightly so. Today, the Church “looks forward” toward the glory of the Resurrection. We get a sort of “reprieve” from our Lenten penitence today. The priest wears rose vestments and we are allowed instrumental music (See Lent Rubric #4 in the Roman Missal). So why is this milestone in Lent called Laetare Sunday - or in English, Rejoice Sunday? If you guessed “Because the first word of the Entrance antiphon is rejoice”, you were right!

So why designate the name of a particular Mass after what is essentially the introduction to said Mass? Why not call it by the theme, like we do with Passion/Palm Sunday which is coming up? Well, in this case, the first word of the Entrance Antiphon IS the theme of the day. It is similar to how we tend to name songs. If you want to find the title of a song you know, you can generally reference the first words of the refrain or at least some repeated words in the refrain. Sometimes, the title is not blatantly evident or not even explicitly stated in the lyrics - such as “Bohemian Rhapsody” by Queen. In this case, making a title that references what the music is about is better than sticking with some words that don’t “roll off the tongue” or stick with your listener. Now take our current example. “Rejoice” or Laetare Sunday describes the theme of the day very well AND it “rolls off the tongue” in most languages. In the case of Passion/Palm Sunday, “Hosanna Sunday” rolls off the tongue, but does not quite grasp the fullness of the theme. Our other option, “Children of the Hebrews Sunday”, does not quite meet either criterion...

So on this Laetare Sunday, note the rejoicing nature of our prayers and readings at Mass. Just make sure you pay attention to the entirety of the First Reading - if you miss the last part you may be confused as to how exactly that selection can be considered “joyful”.

St. Cecilia, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity...Pray for us!

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