

## Homily 3/25/07 St. James' Church

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in your sight, oh Lord my strength and redeemer.

Good morning. The church teaches us that Lent is the time for repentance and redemption. There is no "alleluia" after the dismissal. On Good Friday we are reminded that we are created out of the dust of the earth and we pray that the ashes maybe a sign to us of our mortality and penitence. Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent and we are headed towards the joys of Easter.

Many of us have been taught to "give up" something for Lent as part of our repentance. In recent years it has been suggested that instead of or in addition to giving up something, we add something positive such as a good work. Perhaps you have added out reach in the community or Bible study or helping your neighbor shovel snow!.

Today's First Lesson from Isaiah and Psalm 126 tell us of another important way we can participate in Lent. "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? .....I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise." Declare my praise sounds like pretty precise instructions.

The psalm says, "then our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among nations, The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us and we are glad indeed." Doesn't that sound like God wants our happiness?

My spiritual advisor is Sister Pamela at the Convent of St. John Baptist. Sometimes she asks me "why are you so happy?" And I reply that I can't help myself. I recently had a birthday and I am so glad to still be on Earth. I wake up most days happy to be alive and able to get up and participate in God's world. OK. There are a few grumpy days too." Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy".

Think about your life and offer up to God your joy! Perhaps being alive or your family or your dog or pleasure in a good book gives you happiness. Share the joy with God. Certainly the family of St. James has much to praise and give thanks for in the new building project of a Parish House accessible to everyone and for our rector and vestry who are helping us to accomplish this. We can look around in church and see a dog being carefully trained to provide a better life for a blind person. We can look around and see the new beautiful babies who have been baptized and joined us in God's family. We can look around and see dear familiar faces and some new ones we hope will become familiar. We can look and see a skilled professional interpreter providing inclusion for a deaf deacon.

The collect for today says “Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what your promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where the true joys are to be found.”

I ask you to consider your God given happiness during this Lenten season and “let your mouth be filled with laughter and your tongue with shouts of joy”. Join with me and praise the Lord!

Amen