

Homily for the 4th Sunday of Lent

Muldoon lived alone in the Irish countryside with only a pet dog for company. One day the dog died, and Muldoon went to the parish priest and asked, “Father, my dog is dead. Could ya be sayin’ a mass for the poor creature?” Father Patrick replied, “I’m afraid not, we cannot have service for an animal in the church. But there is a new denomination down the lane and there’s no tellin’ what they believe. Maybe they’ll do something for the creature.” To which Muldoon replied: “I’ll go right away, Father. Do ya think \$5,000 is enough to donate for the service?” Father Patrick exclaimed, “Sweet Mary, Mother of Jesus! Why didn’t ya tell me the dog was Catholic?”

Yesterday (today is) was not Saturday it was St. Patrick’s Day. It was a day filled with the rich gift of Irish mirth and the joyous celebration of the Apostle of Ireland.

Zeppole are a special sweets created especially for the feast of St. Joseph. The legend says that this tradition began in Sicily during the Middle Ages during a severe drought, in which people prayed to St. Joseph to bring rain.

The drought ended and along the streets, the Sicilians offered gifts, as a sign of gratitude to St. Joseph...including a special food for the

poor. Zeppoles were prepared in huge quantities and given to the poor and those who were hungry.

Tomorrow is not Monday. Tomorrow is St. Joseph's Day. It is the day we celebrate the man chosen by God to be the guardian of his beloved Son, Husband of Mary, patron of the Church and center of devotion for those of Italian heritage.

Today is no ordinary Sunday. Today is the 4th Sunday of Lent. And today offers us the connective thread that weaves the great feasts of Joseph and Patrick together. For the gospel today proclaims "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."

Jesus taught Nicodemus that the power of God's love would be raised high above the people. It would be an image not like that in the first reading that was cast in metal. Rather, it would be the flesh and blood of the Son of God. It will be God's love made real.

It is this love of God that empowered Joseph and Patrick to pour their lives out in service of God. It is their example that cries out to us to form on lives on the total gift of Jesus Christ who is God made flesh.

This is why we keep Lent. This is why we prepare for Easter. So that we will never take this great gift of God's love for granted and like Joseph and Patrick we will learn to base our whole lives on the great

mystery of God's unending love poured out so that we might have life and have it for all eternity.