

**Possible Prayer of the Church 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent *Laetare* ✱ March 15, 2026**

*Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. [Possible brief silence]*

O God of mercy, although we merit only punishment, You give abundantly for every need. Through our Savior Jesus Christ provide us with every physical gift our bodies need in this earthly life, and every heavenly blessing our souls need in the life everlasting. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Lord God, after the holy example of Your Son, Jesus Christ, inspire all pastors to a devout care for their people and a continual desire to feed them with the bread of life. Awaken in the hearts of our congregations a mutual love for this faithful service in Your name. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Merciful Lord, You blessed barren Sarah with Isaac, the child of promise, and brought salvation to the world through Christ, born of the Virgin Mary. Watch over the families of Your Church and comfort those families yet without children, that all together may find joy in their heavenly inheritance. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Grant Your mercy, O Lord, to all our leaders: to our president; our governor; all legislators and civil servants; those who work for the common good; those who must render judgment and impose punishment upon lawbreakers; and all who work for peace among the nations. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Lord God, our Shepherd, protect, comfort and guide all who call upon You in need [*Look in kindness upon Our Savior & Faith Prayers*] ... *and all those we each keep in our personal hearts in prayer.* Grant healing and peace, that they may continue to serve You with joy in this life and finally come to that good land in Your eternal kingdom. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Heavenly Father, You provided food from heaven for the Israelites during their days of wandering in the wilderness. So give us also the true food of heaven, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that we may be sustained in our faith and in hope during our days of pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world until finally we behold Your glory with our own eyes. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Almighty God, You give daily bread to everyone without our prayer, even to all evil people. Bless the merciful works of Your Church for the poor and needy, that rooted in Christ's love for us, we may reflect and share that love with others. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**LAETARE LENT4B John 6:1-15 *JESUS Is YOUR FOOD SUPPLIER* 3.15.26 F.OS.L**

PRAYER *Come, LORD Jesus, be our Guest, and let this food to us be blessed. Amen.*

GREETING Dear Fellow Redeemed **by our True Food-Supplier,**

TABLE FELLOWSHIP **The highest form of fellowship is at the table,** to eat and drink together. Candlelight dinners. Power lunches. Wedding receptions. Funeral receptions. Thanksgiving dinner. Christmas dinner. Easter dinner. [Even,] *“Let’s do lunch.”* The early church always ate together as part of their gathering. Whether in work or play or worship, to eat together is to have fellowship with one another, to have something in common, a common meal together at a common table.

T.F. ...WITH US! And, **God’s desire is to have table fellowship with us,** that we might eat and drink in His presence. The Scriptures **begin and end with food.** They begin with a diet of fruits and nuts, with God freely dishing out life from the tree of life. And they end at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end. That’s God’s restless passion for you. To have you lie down in green pastures, to prepare a table for you in the face of your enemies, to have you eat and drink in His presence.

PASSOVER COMING... John tells us that the **Jewish feast of Passover was just around the corner.** Soon the Lambs would be slain, innocent one-year olds without spot or blemish. Their blood would be poured out, painted on the doorposts of houses. A sign of life through the death of another. It was a “sacrament” of the night in Egypt when death passed over the houses marked with the blood of the Lamb painted on the wood. All Israel would eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, reminding them of their pain and suffering, and the goodness of God. They would share four cups of wine with everyone at the table. **A little taste of joy in the midst of sorrow.** And in eating and drinking they would remember their freedom, and look forward to the greater Day when they would eat and drink with God forever.

TABLE IS SET The Passover was near, but here, on this anonymous mountain, God’s Lamb, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, settles in with His disciples. It is late in the day. The sun is going down. Soon it will be dark. And the **crowd of diseased and demonized and curious** is there. The place is set, the table is about to be prepared.

TEACHING MOMENT **“How are we going to feed all these people?”** Jesus asks His disciples. He **knows how, but He’s testing** them. They’ve seen Him make 180 gallons of **wine** from washing water at a wedding gone dry. They’ve seen Him heal the **blind**, the **lame**, the **demon possessed** with nothing more than a word from His mouth. He’s looking for some little sign of faith, some inkling that His words are food enough for these people.

PHILIP... **Philip** thinks in terms of **money.** He sees the problem economically. They don’t have enough money. “You’d have to work over eight months to feed this crowd, and even then they’d get barely more than a bite.” Philip sees the problem as a problem of the numbers - money and

resources. He knows how much bread costs, and he knows that there is no such thing as a free lunch. Someone will have to pay for it, and the disciples' wallets are too empty. Besides, Jesus had told them not to take their wallets with them.

ANDREW... **Andrew** is a man of **action**. He finds a little boy carrying his "lunch bag" - **five** barley loaves and a **couple** of dried fish. Perhaps he was bringing them home to his mother. And now some guys he's never seen before grab hold of him and are talking how they can feed this huge crowd of people with his bread and fish! It's not enough. You could barely feed one or two people, let alone 5,000 [or 10,000]. How far will these go among so many?

WE LIKE PHIL & ANDY... **We tend to see things in the way of Philip and Andrew. = Money and resources.** *"We don't have enough money to do that,"* we say. *"We don't have the resources, and what we have is way too little."* Five little barley cakes and a couple of fish. We would have told the crowd to leave, go to town before it gets too dark. Find a/nother place for dinner. **We can't help you.** Come back tomorrow. We'd be wondering in the back of our own minds where **we were going to eat**. But this is Jesus' mountain, and on His mountain **no one who is hungry is ever turned away**. He is the Lord - the Creator and Redeemer of all, **and this is a little picture of how He works**.

TAKE A LOAD OFF... He has the people sit down and rest. John tells us that there was much green grass in that place. **The Good Shepherd makes His sheep lie down in green pasture. He prepares a table for them, and the cup runs over.** (Ps.23) 5,000+ men sat down in that green pasture, along with women and children, the crowd could easily have been **ten thousand** or more. Jesus took the five little loaves and two small fish into his hands, He gave thanks, and He distributed them to those who were seated there. Sound familiar? Of course it does. Your ears are tuned to hear it. It's "a Lord's supper," isn't it? Not quite **THE LORD's Supper**, but certainly **A LORD's supper**. He's the **Provider**.

BREAD OF LIKE He takes a little boy's meager lunch, and turns it into a feast for 5000. **Not even Martha Stewart can pull that one off!** Notice how He works through **means - ordinary, humble means - a little boy's lunch**. (Earlier, in an/other wilderness) He didn't turn stones into bread. He was tempted once by the devil to do that when He was hungry in the wilderness. But that isn't Jesus' way to do things. He works through **His own creation - in, with, and under that creation**. Not around it or in spite of it. And so He takes these humble means - **five barley loaves and two fish** - and He multiplies them far beyond what they could accomplish. **When Jesus takes bread into His hands, gives thanks, and distributes it, watch out! Big things happen.**

?NO? FREE LUNCH And, this is truly bread **no one works for. Free, gracious bread**. In Genesis [ch.3], **bread is the food of affliction**. It is part of the punishment of our sin. Previously Adam and Eve ate the free food of fruits and nuts, food you didn't work for. **But bread you work for and sweat**

**over**. You work and sweat when you plant the grain, when you harvest it, when you mill it, when you knead the dough and bake it. There is sweat at every turn in making bread. And even though we have bread machines and a bread aisle in the grocery store, there is still a price to pay. There is no such thing as a free lunch. **Someone always has to pay.**

ON THIS MOUNTAIN **BUT this is Jesus' Mountain**, and on Jesus' mountain there **IS** such a thing as **a free lunch**. Bread without sweat. Fish without fishing. Even manna had to be gathered, there was work involved. But here all the people had to do was sit there on the nice, cool, green grass. This was free bread - to fill over 5000 growling bellies that day. I assume the little boy got his lunch back, and more. All of it with **No cost to the consumer**. And as if to underscore the point for the slow of heart to believe, a perfect **Israelite twelve** baskets of leftovers were gathered. One for each disciple. **A perfect twelve. They ate with God in the Flesh on His Mountain, and their baskets were filled to overflowing with the abundance of His grace.**

BREAD-KING The **people wanted to make Jesus king that day**, by force if necessary. And who wouldn't? Make Jesus king, they said. Put Him in charge of the food supply, and we'll never be hungry again. Set Jesus in charge and world hunger would disappear in a heartbeat. An endless supply of free bread for all. But **He is already in charge**, and He also said, *"You will always have the poor with you."* We need only share our daily bread with those who have none. **Jesus refuses to be made a bread King**. He refuses to put a patch on the old cloth. **He has a bigger Feast in mind.**

CHEF, WAITER & FOOD Luther once remarked that, **in** the LORD's Supper, Jesus is our **Chef**, our **Waiter**, and our **Food**. He is the **Bread of Life**, bread that you may eat and live forever. He is **living Bread come to us from Heaven**. He is Manna in our wilderness. Bread to fill the sin-starved heart hungry for forgiveness. Food to fill the emptiness that gnaws away at us, an emptiness that can't be filled by our fast foods of self-help and the junk food of religion. Jesus is a food that doesn't spoil. All other food is dead, which is why we have preservatives and refrigerators. All our food is dead, and in the end, we eat it **ultimately TO our death**. But the Food that Jesus gives is **filled with His death-defeating LIFE**, food that lasts to Resurrection Day and to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end.

LORD'S MTN./SUPPER You and I **can't afford this feast**, so don't even bother to reach for your credit card. And all our efforts to earn a spot at this table amount to little more than a little boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish in the face of 5000 hungry men. All you can do is rest in the rich green pastures of the church and be fed with a bread you didn't earn, a bread you can't buy or make for yourself. **This food is pure gift, from Jesus to you**. Take this Bread and eat it. It is the **Body of Christ** given for you. Take this Cup and drink it. It is the **Blood of Christ**, the Blood of the New Covenant, shed for you. This is the LORD's Mountain, His Supper, **and you are now His guest**. Here you eat and drink in the presence of God. And you are filled to overflowing with the death that brings you life. Taste and see that the LORD is good. **IJ'N, Amen. SDG**

*O Give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Amen.*