

Joy is a Choice, and its Color is Rose

Pink is not my favorite color. I'm one of those old stuck-in-the-mold wanna-be macho men who can't adjust to carnation and rose, fuchsia, mauve, and magenta. You won't catch me in feminine apparel. No way.

Many men I know have overcome this debilitating inhibition. They proudly sport bright pink shirts and ties, even faded red jackets. This is all very good. But so far, I haven't joined any twelve-step programs. In my opinion, pink has always, and will always, look just great on women.

On the fourth Sundays of Advent and Lent, priests are supposed to wear that most delicate of colors on their exterior garment, called a "*chasuble*".

The fourth, or middle, Sunday of Lent, takes its name from the *Introit* at Mass, "Laetare Jerusalem" – "*Rejoice, O Jerusalem*". As with "Gaudete Sunday" in Advent, the visible symbols, scripture readings, and prayers of this pivotal day all point to the joyful anticipation of our redemption.

In the opening prayer, the priest begins: "Father of peace, we are joyful in your Word, your Son Jesus Christ, who reconciles us to you. Let us hasten toward Easter with the eagerness of faith and love..." And in this we're reminded of the exhortation of St. Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice...The Lord is near." (*Philippians 4:4, 5b*)

Tomorrow is Laetare Sunday. That is, tomorrow, I'm supposed to wear a rose-colored chasuble. The only problem is, I don't like wearing pink.

So we don't have any rose-colored garments here in Lathrop. At least, not until yesterday. Around three in the afternoon, a young man called.

"I have an extra, brand-new chasuble for Laetare Sunday. I'd ordered one for the Good Shepherd Mission (in French Camp), but due to a fluke ended up with two. Do you need one at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish?"

He politely assured me that, even if I myself didn't feel the need for one, perhaps one day one of my successors here might. "Well, sure." I replied. "Sooner or later I'm certain we'll need that robe." And thus it was that this generous young gentleman arrived Friday afternoon just after three.

It was during the Hour of Divine Mercy that Joseph appeared, proudly presenting the brand-new garment. It was bright pink. It still is bright pink. I haven't touched it yet. But tomorrow, sure as the sun rises rose-red in the eastern sky, I'll be wearing that chasuble. It's the least I can do, considering the sufferings of our Lord on the cruel Cross of Calvary.

To be perfectly honest, the robe is actually very pretty. Embroidered on its breast is a large golden cross. This will take everyone's mind off the rosiness of the material. Then the ladies will spare me their comments.

Thinking this yesterday afternoon, as I concluded the article you're now reading, I walked out the office door to celebrate Mass. What I beheld blew me away. The western sky was completely drenched by the setting sun, brilliantly pink. It was as if God had spread my bright new chasuble across the horizon, illuminating it with the power of His Spirit. At that moment, I knew for certain not only that I must wear the brand-new robe on Laetare Sunday, but that I must also put on the attitude it portrays.

That attitude is one of Joy. Joy is not an option. Joy is a Christian duty.

As Mother Teresa often said, even in her darkest moments, "Accept everything Jesus gives, and give everything He takes, with a big smile."

I'm making a decision to be more joyful. And yes, I'm going to wear pink tomorrow. But don't buy me any other rose-colored clothing. I still haven't begun my twelve-step program. Twice a year is enough.

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