

Did you know . . .

Laetare Sunday

Next week, is the fourth Sunday of Lent, marking the half-way point in the Lenten Season. We know it best as Laetare Sunday. But this Sunday has several other names as well.

In the United Kingdom and Ireland, it is called Mothering Sunday named because a person would visit his “mother church”, the church in which he was baptized. It was also so called because servants were released for the day to visit their mothers; others, too, would visit their biological mothers on this day. Often the day was celebrated in much the same way as our Mother’s Day.



Several customs developed on this Sunday, including the baking of “mother cakes”, called “simnel cakes” and thus the day came also to be known as Simnel Sunday. Simnel cakes are ornamental and rich cakes like those made at Christmas. Such cakes were stamped with the figure of Christ or the Virgin Mary. While today simnel cakes are often prepared for Easter in Great Britain, the simnel cake is still the most traditional recipe associated with Laetare Sunday.

This Sunday also goes by Refection Sunday or Refreshment Sunday, named because of the Scripture reading of Joseph feeding his brothers.

And, lastly, it is called Rose Sunday, either because of the golden rose, sent by Popes to Catholic sovereigns or because of the rose-colored vestments permitted to be worn for Mass on this day.

Historically, the day was also known as the Sunday of the Five Loaves from the miracle of the loaves and fishes which, before the adoption of the common lectionaries, was the traditional Gospel reading for this Sunday.

Whatever the name, this mid-point in Lent has a joyful tone...a day of relaxation from normal Lenten rigors, a day of hope with Easter at last within sight. Rejoice! Easter will soon be here!

Judy Pearson