On this 4th Sunday of Lent we rejoice that our Lenten Journey is more than half way through. It is Laetere Sunday and our Entrance Antiphon sets the tone for the Lord’s Liturgy: “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast” (Is 66:10-11).

The world has been turned upside down and inside out in the span of a month. Alaskan school children are home until the 1st of May. Dental offices are closed for 3 weeks. Villages have enacted travel bans to prevent the spread of the virus. Public Mass has been canceled. Over 11,000 have died worldwide. We have no idea when things will return to normal. And we are supposed to rejoice?

The world of the Israelites was turned upside down and inside. They had strayed from the practice of their faith. They had broken the covenant through idolatry and disobedience. Jerusalem was conquered and many were taken to Babylon to live in exile. And this lasted for 70 years. God was not blind to their suffering. He sent the prophet Isaiah to guide them.

“For Isaiah, the vision of God’s majesty was so overwhelming that military and political power faded into insignificance. He constantly called his people back to a reliance on God’s promises and away from vain attempts to find security in human plans and intrigues. This vision also led him to insist on the ethical behavior that was required of human beings who wished to live in the presence of such a holy God” (NAB Introduction to Isaiah).

Our present-day situation is deadly serious. The Coronavirus will be with us for some time and we like the Exiles must put our faith and trust in the Lord. Christ died to set us free from sin, let us never forget this perpetual gift. Saint Paul explains it well:

“Whoever observes the day, observes it for the Lord…None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:6-8).

With faith and confidence that the Lord will see us through this current trial, let us echo the words of the prophet Isaiah. “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast” (Is 66:10-11).