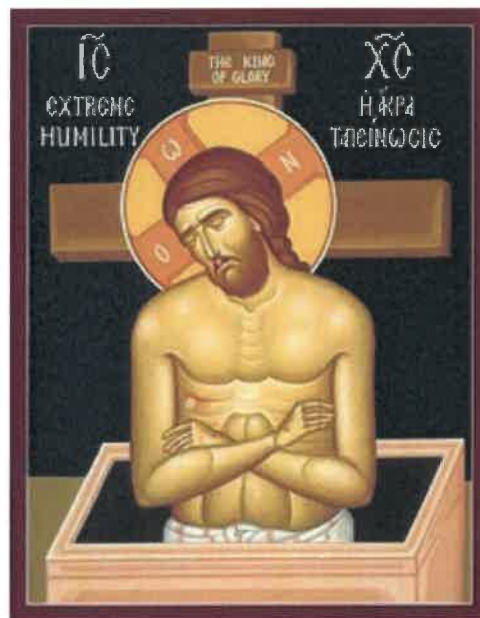
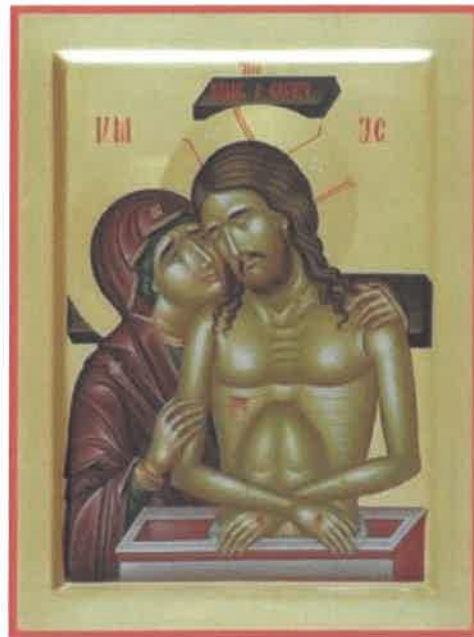


**PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**

13 – 14 MARCH 2021

LAETARE SUNDAY



In this icon, the nakedness of the body, the closed eyes, the open sarcophagus, the Cross, the instruments of the Passion, the wounds in the hands and the ribs and the hair down, consist the inclusion of the Holy Passion and forewarn the Resurrection. The Cross comprises the symbol of triumph of the Extreme Humility, the victory of immortality and life, and hope and salvation for the faithful Christian.

The Theological Interpretation: The composition, while it is connected with the element of glory in a way that one illumines and completes the other one. The Humility of Christ is not

meant in pietistic, psychological or moral terms. Christ is not humbled to reach a moral perfection or for His own benefit. His humility is emptiness, it is the pouring out of Himself and it is understood under the existential terms. He freely takes the human nature, except sin, and reaches the edge of death to heal it and deify it.

The icon of The Extreme Humility is the symbol of the Passion, which leads to the ultimate humility of Christ, with the ignominious death on the Cross, which He endured for the sake of human kind. He thus reaches at perfect condescension, into the absolute self-denial. Death is the ultimate enemy, who entered the life of man because of sin, because of his separation from God. Therefore, Christ comes as the Savior and gives His battle on the Cross as a King. His rule can only be nothing but servitude, since the king has become a servant out of love: "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mt. 20:28)

SUNDAY REFLECTION

How do people in our society perceive the relation between words and deeds, between teaching and example? On the one hand, some leaders and other teachers seem to advocate 'freedom' and 'rights' of the individual without any mention of duty or responsibility for the person's actions. Yet the same people – or those who follow their lead – are shocked by the evidence of crass selfishness and the disdain for property and life itself in our society. Somehow the tragedies that flow from immaturity and self-centeredness seem to be anomalies. But what else would follow from lawlessness?

The vision of life portrayed in the Bible stresses, among other things, the necessary link between words and deeds, instruction and example. In fact, the same Hebrew term '*dabhar*' can mean word, thing and event.

God's plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of humanity is made clear to us in Christ, who is the Mediator and at the same time the fullness of all revelation. (Vatican Council II, *Divine Revelation* n. 2).

From the time of Solomon, the Temple in Jerusalem and its priests always held a central role in the mediation of Israel's experience of God and the elucidation of the divine will. However, because the Jewish people were scattered far and wide during the centuries before the time of Jesus, the synagogue was instituted as a context for prayer and teaching. There was no competition between synagogue and Temple, because the latter was the exclusive place for sacrificial worship.

As was the custom for Jewish men, Jesus frequented the synagogue on the Sabbath, so when He settled in Caphernaum 'He entered the synagogue and taught', undoubtedly after taking His turn at reading the texts prescribed for that Sabbath. The people often heard teachers of the day present their message, probably based on the texts of the given Sabbath or feast; with due humility, these scribes quoted their predecessors and set their instruction within the context of tradition. Jesus, however, spoke with the authority of one who communed directly with God,

as did Moses and the other prophets of old. Listeners were astonished because they considered prophecy to be in abeyance until the final days.

Mark does not indicate the content of Jesus' teaching but immediately records a deed of mercy toward a man afflicted with an unclean spirit. Thus the Gospel emphasizes that divine revelation does two things: the message inspires, uplifts and challenges the community and it becomes the basis for healing those who are in need of wholeness so that they may exercise their human dignity in the service of God and neighbor. The promise of a prophet like Moses was followed by a command: 'To him you shall listen' (Deut. 18:15). Jesus not only inspired His audience, but also showed them deeds that overthrew the power of sin and Satan. This is the foundation for restoration of God's law and order to all segments of human society. Today we must recognize the demons that are enslaving us and our contemporaries so that people can be brought to Christ for healing. Then the privileges of our human dignity will be appreciated in their relation to our call to imitate Christ in His revelation of divine love.

STEWARDSHIP FOR B READINGS

All that we have and all that we are comes from the Lord> "We are truly His handiwork," says St. Paul in the second reading, "created in Christ Jesus to lead a life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance."

STEWARDSHIP FOR A READINGS Ephesians 2:10

The blind man in today's Gospel was willing to let Jesus minister to him and willingly did all Jesus asked of him. The Pharisees were more resistant to His message, spending their time and energy to disprove the miracle. Which am I more like, the man born blind or the Pharisees?

READINGS FOR FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

21 MAR '21

B READINGS 5:00 P.M. 7:00 A.M. 8:30 A.M.

Jer. 31:31-34: The prophet sees beyond the devastation of Jerusalem under threat; he promises a New Covenant, where God becomes the interior teacher of His people.

Heb. 5:7-9: Jesus as high priest, being both human and divine, prays earnestly. In His reverent obedience His prayer is answered and He becomes the source of life for all people.

Jn. 12:20-33: In the death of Jesus is sown the life of the resurrection because both spring from God's great love for humanity, like a stalk and the bloom of a flower which share the same life sap.

A READINGS 11:30 A.M.

Ez. 37:12-14:

Rom. 8:8-11:

Jn. 11:1-45

INTENTION FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH

Sacrament of Reconciliation Let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.

DEVOTIONS THIS FRIDAY EVENING 19 MARCH

SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

5:00 P.M. ADORATION HOLY HOUR IN HONOR OF ST. JOSEPH

6:30 P.M. Mass

7:00 P.M. STATIONS OF THE CROSS REFLECTING ON ST. JOSEPH

RCIA SCRUTINIES

The ancient rite of the Catechumenate for Adults, comprising several distinct steps leading towards a person's new life of grace by Baptism, was restored by Pope Paul VI. The period of the catechumenate, which is intended as a time of suitable instruction in the faith and the living out of the Christian life, is thus sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals. It is important that these rites be celebrated within the entire parish community as we come together to accept and encourage our new brothers and sisters into our ecclesial family.

What are the Scrutinies?

On the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent, the newly named "Elect" participate in three successive rites called "the Scrutinies." These rites, with roots dating back to the early Church, take place during the Sunday Mass, and each is thematically linked to the Gospel reading for that Mass. The three passages from St. John's Gospel for these Sundays were selected around 500 AD as powerful depictions of the hidden transformation God effects in the Elect through each Scrutiny. Each proclamation emphasizes repentance and conversion as the Light of Christ comes to pierce the darkness of sin and to bring life where there is death.

The "Elect" along with their sponsors, if available, stand before the celebrant and the assembly, who pray for them silently and with a series of intercessions. Culminating in a prayer of cleansing and protection (exorcism) with the laying-on-of-hands, each Scrutiny is a step in preparing the Elect for the celebration and initiation soon to come.

The Scrutinies are God's way of taking a close, loving look at the Elect. God does not scrutinize the Catechumens in order to find everything that's wrong with them, but to celebrate all that is beautiful and good and true in them. Jesus "scrutinizes" us with Divine Light, revealing all that is valuable within us. He also reveals to us the ways in which we are hurting, or sick, or sinful. This is not to reject us, but to call us to new life and to healing. These prayers are simply ways of calling on God and trusting in God's power, not only to affirm what is good within us, but to dispel whatever holds us back or causes us to resist grace and goodness in our lives.

Second Scrutiny Held today at the 8:30 a.m. Mass

Readings from Year A – 1 Sam. 16:6-7, 10-13; Eph. 5:8-14; Jn. 9:1-41

A thought on John 9: John's account is rich in the imagery of light and darkness, of the 'sight-giving' water of baptism for the Christian, and the possibility of real spiritual blindness.

Through the story of the man born blind, John shows that Jesus is the light from God that has broken through the darkness of this world, and thus is the Christ, the revelation of God. The man born blind becomes the model of the path of the new believer: growing in understanding and commitment to Jesus, and often facing opposition from the community. In heavy irony, in their stubborn rejection of Jesus, the Pharisees in John's Gospel are shown to be the ones who

are truly blind. The harsh treatment of the Pharisees reflects the tensions in the communities John was written for. It also serves as a reminder of how easy it can be for us today to be that much closer to this negative image of the Pharisees than we realize. In John, only those who claim to see but are blind to God's work are truly sinners. Sometimes in our inability to listen to those around us, our stubbornness born of pride or fear, do we risk also missing the light of the right path?

YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH

The Year of St. Joseph + + +

December 8, 2020 through December 8, 2021

Some Basic Facts...

Pope Francis announced a "Year of St. Joseph" on Tuesday, December 8, 2020 – the *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception* – in honor of the 150th anniversary of Pope Pius IX's proclamation in 1870 of St. Joseph as "Patron of the Universal Church" (*Quemadmodum Deus*). The "Year of St. Joseph" began on December 8, 2020, and will conclude on December 8, 2021, according to the Decree authorized by the Pope.

The Decree states that Pope Francis established a "Year of St. Joseph" so that "every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfillment of God's will." The Decree adds that the Pope has granted special Indulgences to mark the year. The December 8, 2020 Decree was issued by the Apostolic Penitentiary, which is the dicastery of the Roman Curia that oversees the practice of Indulgences.

In addition to the Decree, Pope Francis also issued an Apostolic Letter on December 8, 2020 dedicated to the Foster Father of Jesus Christ. The Pope explained in the Letter, titled *Patris corde* ("With a father's heart") that he wanted to share some "personal reflections" on the *holy* and *just* Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Holy Father said, "My desire to do so increased during these months of (the) pandemic," noting that many people had made hidden sacrifices during the crisis in order to protect others (just as St. Joseph did with the Holy Family). Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes *unnoticed*, a *daily*, *discreet* and *hidden presence* – an *intercessor*, a *support*, and a *guide* in times of trouble," he wrote. "St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

In its Decree, the Apostolic Penitentiary said that, "to reaffirm the universality of St. Joseph's patronage in the Church," it would grant a Plenary Indulgence to Catholics who recite any approved prayer or act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, especially on **March 19**, the Saint's solemnity as "Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary," and on **May 1**, the Memorial of "St. Joseph the Worker."

Other notable days for the Plenary Indulgence are the "Feast of the Holy Family" on **December 27** and "**St. Joseph's Sunday**" in the Byzantine tradition, as well as the **19th of each month** during the Year and **every Wednesday** throughout the year, which is a day traditionally dedicated to the memory of St. Joseph in the Latin Church.

The Decree further states: "In the current context of the health emergency (of the pandemic), the gift of the Plenary Indulgence is particularly extended to the elderly, the sick, the dying and all those who for legitimate reasons are unable to leave the house, who, with a soul detached from any sin and with the intention of fulfilling, as soon as possible, the *three usual conditions*, in

their own home or where the impediment keeps them, recite an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, *Comfort of the Sick* and *Patron of a Happy Death*, offering with trust in God the pains and discomforts of their life.”

The *three usual conditions* for receiving a Plenary Indulgence are Sacramental Confession (which, under the “usual conditions,” means going to Confession within 20 days *before* or within 20 days *after* the day the Plenary Indulgence is sought); also, the reception of Eucharistic Communion on the day the Plenary Indulgence is sought; and prayer for the Pope’s needs and intentions on the day the Plenary Indulgence is sought (which, under the “usual conditions” is understood to be an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*; or, one may also recite the *Creed*). As stated above, a sincere and willed detachment from sin, both mortal and venial, is also required.

According to the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, an Indulgence is “the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sin whose guilt has already been forgiven. A properly disposed member of the Christian faithful can obtain an Indulgence under prescribed conditions through the help of the Church, which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. An Indulgence is Partial if it removes part of the temporal punishment due to sin, or Plenary if it removes all punishment.” (CCC, 1471)

In his Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde* (“*With a father’s heart*”) Pope Francis reflected on the fatherly qualities of St. Joseph, describing him as *beloved, tender and loving, obedient, accepting,* and “creatively courageous.” He also underlined that St. Joseph was a “working father.”

The Pope referred to St. Joseph as “a father in the shadows” and stated that, “In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the Heavenly Father: he watched over Him and protected Him, never leaving Him to go His own way,” the Pope wrote.

Pope Francis also said that the contemporary world requires examples of true fatherhood: “Our world today needs fathers. It has no use for tyrants who would domineer others as a means of compensating for their own needs,” he wrote. “It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, (and) power with destruction.”

The Holy Father went on: “Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of *mature* sacrifice (St. Joseph did just this). The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfillment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration.”

The Holy Father continued, “Every child is the bearer of a unique mystery that can only be brought to light with the help of a father who respects that child’s freedom. (That is,) A father who realizes that he is most a father and educator at the point when he... sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied. (In other words,) When he becomes like (St.) Joseph, who always knew that his child was *not* his own but had merely been entrusted to his care.”

The Pope added: “In every exercise of our fatherhood, we should always keep in mind that it has nothing to do with possession, but (that fatherhood) is rather a ‘sign’ pointing to a greater Fatherhood (that of God the Father). In a way, we are all like Joseph: a shadow of the Heavenly Father... a shadow that follows his Son.”

It is worth noting that Pope Francis has promoted devotion to St. Joseph throughout his pontificate.

He began his Petrine ministry on March 19, 2013, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and dedicated the homily at his inauguration Mass to St. Joseph. In that homily, he said: “In the Gospels, St. Joseph appears as a *strong* and *courageous* man, a *working* man, yet in his heart we see *great tenderness*, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a *sign of strength of spirit* and a *capacity for concern*, for *compassion*, for *genuine openness to others*, for *love*.”

Also, Pope Francis’ *Coat of Arms* features a spikenard, which is associated with St. Joseph in Hispanic iconographic tradition, and on May 1, 2013, the Pope authorized a Decree instructing that St. Joseph’s name be inserted into Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV.

And, during an Apostolic Visit to the Philippines in 2015, the Pope explained why he kept an image of the Saint on his desk. He said: “I would also like to tell you something very personal. I have great love for St. Joseph, because he is a man of *silence* and *strength*. On my table I have an image of St. Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church! Yes! We know that he can do that. (He is the Patron of the Universal Church!) So, when I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath St. Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words I tell him: *‘Pray for this problem!’*”

At his general audience on March 18, 2020, Pope Francis urged Catholics to turn to St. Joseph in times of adversity. He said, “In life, at work, and within the family, through joys and sorrows, St. Joseph always sought and loved the Lord, deserving the Scriptures’ eulogy that described him as a *‘just’* and *‘wise’* man,” he said. “Always invoke him, especially in difficult times and entrust your life to this great Saint.”

The Pope concluded his new Apostolic Letter by urging Catholics to pray to St. Joseph for “the grace of graces: *our conversion*.” He ended the text with this prayer:

“Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God entrusted His only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.”

ST. JOSEPH TABLE

The Feast of St. Joseph, which always falls in the middle of Lent, is especially commemorated and celebrated in Italy in general, and Sicily in particular, where St. Joseph has been long-regarded as the island’s Patron saint. It is there, among Sicilians, that the tradition of the “Tavola di San Giuseppe” or “St. Joseph’s Table” has its origins.

March 19th is, in Italy, also Father’s Day—which isn’t at all surprising, as St. Joseph was, of course, the foster father of Jesus. This celebration is a symbolic “thank you” and a renewal of the Sicilian people’s devotion to Saint Joseph.

It is a *shared* celebration with the entire community where the riches of food are given as alms to the poor: traditional etiquette is that *no one* can be turned away from this table.

Origins

Legends from the Middle Ages attributed the end of a devastating drought to a prayer-devotion that the Sicilian people made to St. Joseph.

During a time of drought and famine, no rain fell on Medieval Sicily. Food crops for both people and livestock withered and died. The people prayed to St. Joseph for help.

When the clouds opened, the desperately-needed rain poured down, and there was much rejoicing! After the harvest, to show their gratitude, they prepared a table with special foods to honor St. Joseph and to share with the poor. After thanking and honoring the saint, they distributed the food to the less fortunate.

This celebration became an annual tradition. Each year, wealthy families prepared huge buffets. The less fortunate people of the community, especially the homeless and sick, were invited, and all the remaining food and proceeds were given to the poor.

Through the years, the tradition has remained throughout Italy, and is also prevalent in Poland, Malta, Spain, the Phillipines, and, with the influx of Sicilian immigrants to the US, here in our own country.

Three-Fold Purpose

The heart of this tradition can be found in these three aspects:

Veneration—special recognition of St. Joseph during Mass and at the “table.”

The Table—both a kind of “altar of reverence”, and a communal celebration.

The Poor—The intention of all the gifts is to help those in need.

Once again, as has been done in previous years here at St. Stephen’s you are invited to bring commercially packaged breads and rolls to the parish which in turn will be distributed on your behalf to Food Banks in the area. This year there are two ways that you can contribute. If you are attending one of the Masses on the weekend of the 20th-21st March there will be a table in the Commons where you can place your contribution. If you are still relying on Live Stream Mass participation you can drive through the bell tower circle between 11:00 – 1:00 and youth of the parish will accept your donation. The same applies to the drive for canned foods.

USE OF THE TITLE “FATHER”

Last week we read from the Gospel of St. Matthew in which we heard Jesus warn His followers to not be like the Pharisees and to avoid using titles such as teacher, master, and “Do not call anyone on earth your father. Only one is your father, the One in heaven” (23:9). This generated What gives? Why do we call our priests “Father”?

Taken literally, yes we would have to shake our heads in wonder of why do we use the title “Father” when Jesus seems to be so explicit in warning us away from it. First, remember the context of the passage. Jesus is addressing the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, those learned members of the religious leadership of the Jewish people. Our Lord castigates them for not providing good example; for creating onerous spiritual burdens for others with their various rules and regulations; for being haughty in exercising their offices and for promoting themselves by looking for places of honor, seeking marks of respect and wearing

ostentatious symbols. Basically, the scribes and Pharisees had forgotten that they were called to serve the Lord through their service of the community entrusted to their care with humility and generous spirit.

Given that context, Jesus says not to call anyone on earth by the title, "Rabbi," "Father" or "Teacher," in the sense of arrogating to oneself an authority which rests with God as well as forgetting the responsibility embraced by the title. Yes, without question, as Jesus said, only the heavenly Father is the true Father, and the Messiah, the true teacher and rabbi.

However, we do use these titles in common parlance: we call those who instruct us and others "teacher", our male parent "father", and Jewish religious leaders "rabbi." Especially in a religious sense, those who serve the Lord and represent His authority, as a teacher, parent and especially in this specific instance, a priest, must be mindful of exercising it diligently, humbly and courageously. To use this authority for self-aggrandizement is pure hypocrisy. Jesus said at the end of this passage, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

Since the earliest times of our Church, we have used the title "Father" for religious leaders. Bishops, who are the shepherds of the local Church community and the authentic teachers of the faith, were given the title "Father." Actually, until about the year 400, a bishop was called "papa" for Father, this title was then restricted solely to addressing the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, and in English was rendered "pope."

In an early form of his rule, St. Benedict (d. c. 547) designated the title to spiritual confessors, since they were the guardians of souls. Moreover, the word "abbot," denoting the leader in faith of the monastic community, is derived from the word abba, the Aramaic Hebrew word for father, but in the very familiar sense of "daddy."

Later, in the Middle Ages, the term "father" was used to address the mendicant friars, like the Franciscans and Dominicans, since by their preaching, teaching and charitable works they cared for the spiritual and physical needs of all of God's children. In more modern times, the heads of male religious communities, or even those who participate in ecumenical councils such as Vatican II, are given the title "father." In the English-speaking world, addressing all priests as "Father" has become customary.

For the individual priest the title should be very humbling. The term "Father" should be a reminder that he has been entrusted by our Lord at the time of his ordination with the grave responsibility in regards to His faithful people. Just as a father must nourish, instruct, challenge, correct, forgive, listen and sustain, the priest must meet the spiritual needs of those entrusted to his care, providing them with the nourishment of our Lord through the sacraments. He must preach the Gospel with fervor and conviction in accord with the mind of the Church, challenging all to continue on that path of conversion which leads to holiness. He must correct those who have erred but with mercy and compassion.

In the same spirit as the father with his prodigal son, the priest must reconcile sinners who have gone astray but seek a way back to God. As a father listens to his child, so must a priest listen to his spiritual children providing counsel and consolation.

A priest must also be mindful of the "physical" needs of his flock such as food, housing, clothing and education. While priests may be celibate, the words of our Lord to His Apostles still ring true: "I give you My word, there is not one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property for Me and for the Gospel who will not receive in this present

age an hundred times as many homes, brothers and sisters, mothers, children and property, and persecution besides, and in the age to come, everlasting life" (Mk. 10:29-30).



REFLECTIONS ON THE DAILY READINGS THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT 15 – 20 MARCH

From now to the Wednesday of Holy Week the Gospel every day is a *lectio continua* of the Gospel of Joh, from chapter 4 to the Last Supper, omitting chapter 6. In these passages we can see Jesus teaching the people about His true nature and performing works that demonstrate He comes from God. We see also the gradual build-up of opposition to Him, leading eventually to His betrayal.

This *lectio continua* probably indicates that these two weeks before Holy Week were the original Roman Lent.

MONDAY 15 MAR Lenten Weekday

Is. 65:17-21: When the Jews returned from Exile in Babylon they encountered great difficulties in settling back into their land. At the beginning of Lent we read in Isaiah 58 about one aspect of the prophet's response to the situation. Repentance was required and a new effort at righteous living. Today's reading offers a hope which ought to encourage the dispirited new settlers. For the Christian, now beyond half way in the Lenten battle, this great prophetic vision of creation restored through the Paschal Mystery is presented to help them continue their ascetic preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Jn. 4:43-54: This miracle is presented by John in parallel with the provision of wine from water at the wedding feast. Both take place in Cana after Jesus has returned to Galilee. The observation that this is the second sign prompts comparison with the first sign. In both miracles there is a sense of hesitancy about Jesus' response. The Cana miracles are

the only ones in John, which are followed by a long discourse. The healing of the royal official's son alludes to two great themes in John: faith and life. Jesus has constantly evoked faith from the people He met. In the following chapters, sections of which will be read over the coming weeks, the gift of life is central. The Christian journeys in Lent towards faith in the celebration of new life at Easter.

Unlike other miracles, here Jesus doesn't even see the boy whom He heals. It shows that even the words of Jesus bring life and more – eternal life. The words of Jesus require a response from the person, and that response is belief. The official did seek Jesus out and did leave when he was told his boy would live. He didn't continue to ask Jesus to come just to make sure. He believed what Jesus said was true.

TUESDAY 16 MAR Lenten Weekday

Ez. 47:1-9, 12: The prophet describes the restored Temple as the Jews expected it at the end of time. The sanctuary is the place where the people worship the Lord and where the Lord is present among them. There is a cosmic context to the scene described. The life-giving water transforms creation and restores the vegetation to a state of great abundance, like Paradise. Even the lethal waters of the Dead Sea teem with new life. The Christian sees this hope fulfilled in the Spirit flowing from the side of the crucified Christ and given through baptismal rebirth.

Jn. 5:1-6: We come to the section of John's Gospel where Jesus is in Jerusalem at the feasts of the Jews. This feast is not named, but the focus is on the continuing celebration of Sabbath. There are curious elements in the description. The man does not answer Jesus' question about whether he wishes to be cured but he does as bidden. Doing what he is told, carrying his mat, brings him into conflict with the authorities. But he has an answer for them: the word of Jesus is what motivates him. Jesus is rejected because He transcends the observance of the Sabbath and does so with patent authority.

The man who was healed had been by the pool a long time. It was believed that an angel stirred the water and whoever got in the pool first was healed. By healing the man there on the Sabbath, Jesus shows His power is not only over the Sabbath but also over the angels. As in yesterday's Gospel, it is His words that bring healing. His command to take up your mat and walk requires a response from the man: he can believe and walk or he could choose not to believe and stay on his mat. It was the man's belief in Jesus that gave him the courage to take up his mat and walk.

WEDNESDAY 17 MAR St. Patrick Lenten Weekday

Is. 49:8-15: This section is taken from the anonymous prophet called Second Isaiah and it promises a glorious future for the exiles even while they still await release. They will have abundance of food and comfort because the Lord consoles them. The Lord will never forget His people. His justice demands that He be faithful to His covenant partner.

Jn. 5:17-30: The narrative introduces the deep cause for the rejection of Jesus – that He is the Son of the Father. From this mutual intimacy of life in God comes a common mode of acting in the world. This action is defined more closely as life-giving. To be a father is to

engender life; Jesus as Son resembles His Father by offering true life to those who believe. Jesus is the Word who is to be accepted in faith, the Word in whom is the fullness of life and grace. Thus His intervention is not one of condemnation, but of giving life.

THURSDAY 18 MAR St. Cyril of Jerusalem Bishop, Doctor Lenten Weekday

Ex. 32:7-14: During Moses' absence on the mountain of God the people who have just made a covenant with God abandon their commitment. The Lord proposes developing His plan through Moses alone. Moses would become the unique ancestor of the Chosen People, but he pleads with the Lord to remember the patriarchs of old, especially Abraham.

Jn. 5:31-47: Jesus accuses the Jewish people of not accepting the evidence of His presence. The Baptist has borne witness to Jesus, but real testimony springs from the signs Jesus enacts, signs through which the Father offers His affirmation. The Scriptures also confirm Him. Purity of heart – being pleasing to God alone – is the trait which allows people to perceive the mystery of God's work in Jesus.

Jesus is speaking as if He is on trial. This is after the healing on the Sabbath. He calls on three things to point to His authority: John the Baptist, what He has been called to do, and His Father. Yet He knows the Pharisees won't listen and haven't listened. They read the Scriptures, believing they have eternal life, but don't see that they are talking about Jesus. Moses will accuse them because if they believed him they should believe Jesus.

FRIDAY 19 MAR Live Streamed

Solemnity St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

2 Sm. 7:4-5, 12-14, 16: King David consolidated the position of the Jewish people, bringing the tribes into unity and giving them a capital. Now, through the prophet God promises that what David meant for the people will be preserved to them in God blessing and guiding his descendants. Christian tradition sees this promise fulfilled in Jesus, born into the family of David. In its account of the birth of Jesus, the Gospel of Matthew shows His descent from David as coming through Joseph.

Rom. 4:13, 16-18, 22: St. Paul presents Abraham as the example *par excellence* of a person of faith, fully trusting in God. This attitude made him our father in faith, and the father of many nations. From the little we know of Joseph, he stands four-square in the tradition of Abraham, as some-one who put all his trust in God. He is an exemplary inheritor of the promises made to Abraham.

Mt. 1:16, 18-21, 24: Joseph is put before us as an example of the just man, committed to God's covenant. Rather than allow his fear and uncertainty be impediments to God's plans for Mary, he was willing to step aside. God assures him that there is no need to remove himself. He too has a part to play in presenting the world with its Savior.

Lk. 2:41-51: Joseph's duties in rearing the Child Jesus were wide-ranging. He had to introduce Jesus to the worship of God's people; he had to provide for Him and for all the family. These tasks involved worry as much as they brought him joy. They meant that he had to deal sensitively, as all parents do, with the complicated process of seeing children

grow into independence and into a sense of their own role in life.

Except at Christmas, St. Joseph doesn't come to mind when we think of the story of Jesus. Yet on this day the readings link him with two great figures of the Old Testament, David and Abraham. They point to two things about Joseph; one, that he was of the line of David and that in his lifetime the promise God made to David comes true; and, second, that he was a man of faith just like Abraham. At a point when it was hardest to have faith, they both put their trust in God. It is by their faith that they are justified. The promises that God makes are fulfilled.

SATURDAY 20 MAR Lenten Weekday

Jer. 11:18-20: Jeremiah's passionate commitment to his mission leads to his being rejected by the people and his intense personal suffering. But he is supported by his conviction that the Lord will vindicate his loyalty.

Jn. 7:40-53: John uses irony often in his theology. Indeed, prophets do not come from Galilee, because Jesus is more than a prophet. The anonymous others mention that Christ also should not come from Galilee, but from Bethlehem. Was John playing on a well-known element in Christian catechesis, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem? The Jewish authorities condemn Jesus in connection with the Law, as Nicodemus mentions. They are inconsistent with their apparent principles. Nicodemus is the one who is emerging from darkness since he has approached Jesus in Chapter 3, moving from the ambit of the Law to that of the living Word.

What Jesus says and does is still causing debate with the people, and they can't agree on who Jesus really is. The Pharisees who see Him as dangerous, want Him arrested. The only person to stand up for Him is Nicodemus. Yet he is knocked down with the comment that prophets don't come from Galilee. Again preconceived ideas of how things are prevent them from seeing what is in front of them.

PRAYERS

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH BEFORE MASS AND HOLY COMMUNION

Happy and blessed art thou, O Joseph, to whom it was given not only to see and to hear that God whom many kings desired to see, and saw not, to hear, and heard not; but also to hold Him in thine arms, to embrace Him, to clothe Him, and to guard and defend Him.

Pray for us, O blessed Joseph,

that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray

O God, who hast given unto us a royal priesthood, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, that as Blessed Joseph was found worthy to touch with his hands, and bear within his arms, Thine Only-begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary, so may we be made fit, by cleanness of heart and purity of work, to serve at Thy holy altars; that we may worthily receive the Most Sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son, now in this present world, and deserve to attain an everlasting reward in the world to come. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Lenten Grace

Loving God,
During the sacred season of Lent, bring me closer to you.
Prepare a place in my home and heart for silence and solitude, so that I may re-discover the grace of a prayer-full life.
Help me to fast from those things that threaten the well-being of body and soul and remind me of the grace of simplicity.
Enlarge my heart so that I give to those in need and, in so doing, re-discover the grace of gratitude and generosity.
May this season be a grace-filled time to rekindle my love for and faith in you.
Amen.



SCHEDULE FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT SATURDAY 13 - SUNDAY 21 MARCH

Saturday 13 Mar Lenten Weekday

8:30 a.m. Mass (Lenten Preface II Eucharistic Prayer II

1:00 p.m.- 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Fourth Sunday of Lent

Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer III B Readings

Sunday 14 Mar Fourth Sunday of Lent

7:00 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II B Readings

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer III A Readings

Second Scrutiny

11:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer III B Readings

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

5:00 p.m. Youth Confessions

Monday 15 Mar Lenten Weekday Day Off

6:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 p.m. Meeting

Tuesday 16 Mar Lenten Weekday

6:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer III

6:00 p.m. Confirmation Rehearsal

Wednesday 17 Mar Lenten Weekday St. Patrick

6:30 a.m. Mass Collect of the Saint Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Collect of the Saint Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I

Thursday 18 Mar Lenten Weekday St. Cyril of Jerusalem

6:30 a.m. Mass Collect of the saint Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Collect of the saint Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass Collect of the saint Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

Friday 19 Mar Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

6:30 a.m. Mass Glory, Creed, Prop Preface, Eucharist Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Live Streamed Glory, Creed, Prop Preface, Eucharist Prayer III

1:00 p.m. Wedding Prep

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Adoration

7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross

Saturday 20 Mar Lenten Weekday

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II

10:00 – Noon First Reconciliation Prayer Service & Confessions

1:00 - 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Mass Vigil Fifth Sunday of Lent

Lenten Preface III Eucharistic Prayer III

Sunday 28 Feb Third Sunday of Lent

7:00 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer III

11:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer III

2:00 p.m. Brig Mass