

THURSDAY OF THE THIRTY-THIRD WEEK IN OT

November 19, 2020

The structure of most of the Gospel of Luke is that of a journey by Jesus and his disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem. In today's passage, found only in this Gospel, Jesus has just come close enough to Jerusalem to see its walls and towers on the heights in the distance. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, that sight causes Jesus to begin weeping. In John's Gospel we also see Jesus weeping when he learns of the death of his close friend, Lazarus. Sobbing in most humans is a sign of their deep and intense sadness. Jesus is saddened by his awareness of the sinfulness, both current and past, of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Perhaps he is greatly saddened as well by his knowledge that before the week is over some of the people there will conspire with the Romans to kill him. As Jesus laments, "the Jews did not recognize his presence among them." We know that Jesus is able to foresee what did happen in the year 70, when the Roman army would punish the rebellious Jews by destroying Jerusalem their capital, leaving as Jesus predicts, "not one stone upon another." To this day the Jews have no temple in which to offer bloody animal sacrifices, something which had been a mainstay of their religion. But throughout all recorded history, before Jesus and right down to the present moment, Jerusalem remains a place where much human blood has been and is even now being shed. Our First Reading is again from the Book of Revelation filled with much symbolism that many readers, even quite devout ones, may find more puzzling and confusing than inspiring and meaningful for them spiritually. The author sheds many tears, much as Jesus would do in today's Gospel. Yesterday in the United States was the feast day of what I like to call the "forgotten" American saint -- Rose Philippine Duchesne. She had to share it with the Dedication of the Basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul in Rome, so she probably went unnoticed in most parishes. Born in 1769 in Grenoble in the French Alps of a very wealthy and politically powerful family, sort of like the Kennedy's, she went to the very best schools, but when she wanted to become a Visitation Nun, as were her teachers, her father said no. He

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wanted to marry her to a man of equal rank and wealth. So, in 1788 she simply went to the Visitation Convent, told her companion to go home, and stayed.

Four years later French revolutionaries shut down that convent, so she returned to her family home. When Napoleon came to power she sought to restore that convent, but conditions were so harsh that even with her as the Superior only three nuns stayed. About the same time another nun, now St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, founded the Madams of the Sacred Heart. The two nuns became fast friends and merged their two communities. In 1817 the Bishop of New Orleans, Bishop Dubourg, a Frenchman, sought some nuns for his diocese. So the next year Sister Rose Philippine arrived there with four other sisters. But the Bishop had no convent for them, so they continued on the steamboat up to St. Louis in the Missouri Territory and eventually they settled in St. Charles the first capital of Missouri. They would establish the first parochial school west of the Mississippi. The Jesuits asked these nuns, known today as the Religious or the Society of the Sacred Heart, to help them evangelize the Potawatomi Indians in Kansas. Mother Rose went, but she never could learn the language and her health was soon broken. The Indians called her “the nun who always prays.” She would spend the last ten of her 83 years in St. Charles, praying in a tiny room under a stairwell, lonely, going blind, feeble, and missing her good friend, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat back in France. She would die in 1852 and be canonized in 1988. Her shine is in St. Charles. A patroness of the St. Louis Archdiocese, may Saint Rose Philippine continue to intercede both for her native France and for both the Archdiocese and the City of St. Louis. Finally, from our Scriptures today, may we recognize the value and even grace that human tears can often be. Another sign of how important the element of water so frequently is in so many ways.

