

Dear People of God,
Greetings of peace, joy and hope to all of you. My heart goes out to you in prayer and blessings as I offer each day the Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist on your behalf. Even though you are away from the church, the Lord is near to you as individuals and as Families. Let us make use of the limitations imposed by the unfortunate situation of the pandemic to deepen our sense of Family and Community and recapture the spirit of Family prayer and fellowship. Let me share with you my reflections on the Scripture assigned to us for the 4th Sunday of Lent, called Laetare Sunday when we use the rose color vestments along with the use of the Organ for church music.

The term “Laetare (Rejoice)” comes from the first word in Latin of the entrance antiphon for this Sunday. This word expresses the Church's joy in anticipation of the Resurrection of our Lord. Today’s readings both remind us that it is God who gives us proper vision in body as well as in soul and instruct us that we should be constantly on our guard against spiritual blindness.

Scripture lessons: By describing the anointing of David as the second king of Israel, the first reading, from the book of Samuel, illustrates how our inner blindness mislead us in judging people and how we are in need of God’s vision. In the second reading, St. Paul urges Christians of their added responsibility as disciples *to live as children of the light, producing every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.*” Presenting the miracle of Jesus’ giving sight to a man born blind, today’s Gospel, teaches us the necessity of opening the eyes of the mind by faith, and warns us that those who pretend to see the truth are often blind, while those who acknowledge their blindness are given clear vision. In this episode, the most unlikely person, namely the blind man, receives the light of faith in Jesus, while the religion-oriented, law-educated and self-righteous Pharisees remain spiritually blind. To live as a Christian is to see, to have clear vision about God, about ourselves and about others. Our Lenten prayers and sacrifices should serve to heal our spiritual blindness so that we can look into the hearts of others and love them as children of God, our own brothers and sisters.

Let us take a closer look at the Gospel of today. The paradox of blindness. The healing described in today’s Gospel occurred when Jesus came to Jerusalem with his Apostles to participate in the feast of Tabernacles or the festival of tents (*Sukkoth*). The healing of the blind man, told so dramatically in today’s Gospel, brings out the mercy and kindness of Jesus, "the light of the world." Isaiah prophesied, and the Jewish people of that era believed, that when the Messiah came, he would heal blindness and other diseases. The type of blindness which we now call ophthalmic conjunctivitis was very common in Biblical times. Jesus gave to the blind beggar not only his bodily eyesight but also the light of faith. This story also shows how the stubborn pride and prejudice of the Pharisees prevented them from seeing in the humble “*Son of Man*” the long-expected Messiah, and that made them incapable of recognizing a miracle. When the parents of the blind man convinced them that their son had been born blind, the Pharisees argued that the healer was a "sinner," because the miracle had been performed on the Sabbath. But the cured man insisted that Jesus, his healer, must be from God. The blind man was asked: "Who healed you?" First he answered, “A prophet healed me.” Then he answered, “The Son of Man healed me.” Finally, when he realized who Jesus was, he fell down on his knees and worshipped him. As a result, he was excommunicated. “The blind man’s progress in spiritual sight reminds us that we need God’s grace and revelation to move toward sharper spiritual vision.” (Fr. Harrington S.J.)

Blindness and Baptism: From earliest times, today's Gospel story has been associated with Baptism. Just as the blind man went down into the waters of Siloam and came up whole, so also believers who are immersed in the waters of Baptism come up spiritually whole, totally healed of the spiritual blindness with which all of us are born. Raymond Brown comments that in the lectionaries and liturgical books of the early Church, there developed the practice of three examinations before one's Baptism. These correspond to the three interrogations of the man born blind. When the catechumens had passed their examinations and were judged worthy of Baptism, the Gospel book was solemnly opened and the ninth chapter of John was read, with the confession of the blind man, "I do believe, Lord," serving as the climax of the service. Paintings on the walls of the catacombs of Rome portray Jesus healing the man born blind as a symbol of Holy Baptism. One of the writings from that time says: "*Happy is the Sac-*

rament of our water, in that, by washing away the sins of our earthly blindness, we are set free unto eternal life." The early Christians looked at their Baptism as leaving behind blindness and darkness and stepping into the glorious light of God. In other words, they realized that their becoming Christians and then continuing as followers of Christ, was indeed a miracle - as great as, if not greater than, the healing of the physical blindness of the man in the Gospel today.

The spiritual blindness of the Pharisees: The Pharisees suffered from spiritual blindness. They were blind to the Holy Spirit. They had religion but lacked the spirit of Jesus’ love. They were also blind to the suffering and pain right before their eyes. They refused to see pain and injustice. There was no compassion in their hearts. In short, they were truly blind both to the Holy Spirit *and* to the human misery around them. “The blind man’s progress in spiritual sight is paralleled by the opponents’ descent into spiritual blindness.” (Fr. Harrington). Here is a contrast between those who know they are blind and those who claim to see. According to these blind Pharisees, Jesus, by healing the blind man doubly broke the Sabbath law, which forbade works of healing, and also kneading which was involved in making clay of spittle and dust. Raymond Brown adds a third and fourth reason that increased the seriousness of what Jesus had done: in the Jewish tradition, "there was an opinion that it was not permitted to anoint an eye on the Sabbath," and "one may not put fasting spittle on the eyes on the Sabbath." So they concluded, "*The man who did this cannot be from God, because he does not obey the Sabbath law.*"

Spiritual blindness of modern Pharisees: Although the Pharisees have long since disappeared from history, there are still many among us who are blinded by the same pride and prejudice. Spiritual blindness is very common in modern times. Perhaps, the most awful disease in our country today is spiritual blindness. Such blindness refuses to see the truths of God's revelation. This blindness refuses even to admit that God or Christ exists. In their pride, the spiritually blind claim that everything ends with death and that there is no life after death. They propagate their errors and accuse believers of childish credulity and folly. They ignore the gifts of the intellect we possess. God's revelation through Christ informs us that there is a future life awaiting us in which our spiritual faculties and our transformed bodies will be fully and fittingly glorified. According to Pope Benedict XVI, the miracle of the healing of the blind man is a sign that Christ wants not only to give us sight, but also open our interior vision, so that our faith may become ever deeper and we may recognize Him as our only Savior. He illuminates all that is dark in life and leads men and women to live as "children of the light" (Lenten message-2011).

What kind of messages do we receive from the Lord today ?

1) We need to allow Jesus to heal our spiritual blindness. We all have blind-spots -- in our marriages, our parenting, our work habits, and our personalities. We often wish to remain in the dark, preferring darkness to light. Even practicing Christians are blind to the poverty, injustice and pain around them. Let us remember, however, that Jesus wants to heal our blind-spots. We need to ask Him to remove from us the root causes of our blindness: namely, self-centeredness, greed, anger, hatred, prejudice, jealousy, addiction to evil habits and hardness of heart. Let us pray with the Scottish Bible scholar William Barclay, “God our Father, help us see Christ more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly.”

2) We need to get rid of cultural blindness. Our culture also has blind-spots. Often it is blind to things like selfless love, happiness, fidelity and true, committed sexual love in marriage, and the value of human life from birth to natural death. Our culture has become anesthetized to the violence, to the sexual innuendo, and to the enormous suffering of the world around us. Let us counteract this cultural blindness by experiencing Jesus dwelling within us and within others through personal prayer, meditative reading of the Bible and a genuine Sacramental life.

3) Let us open our inner eyes to take a fresh look at the Corona virus and see how the Lord intend to use it as a means of bringing us closer to each other as God’s loving children. Let us cast off fear and a sense of hopelessness from our hearts and see the direction God is urging us to adopt. We are the Church, the Body of Christ. We have to be there as a powerful witness in a world of pain and confusion. God will not abandon us though he would lead us through the troubled waters of a new Red Sea to liberation and ultimate joy.

Welcome to

March 21 & 22, 2020

St. Joseph Catholic Church- Zwolle

St. Ann Chapel- Noble

**Father Joseph C. Ampatt,
Pastoral Administrator**

Parish Staff

Sandy Lovelady
**645-6845/ 315-5092 for after hours &
weekends ONLY**
Secretary

Luci Jo Parrie
Religious Education Coordinator

Diamond R. Adair
Bulletin Editor

Thelma Small
Matrimonial Tribunal Lay
Advocate

Gary Sepulvado
Maintenance

Parish Volunteers

Anna Garcie
Lee McCann
Parish Trustees– Finance Council

Cindy Ezernack
Pastoral Council Chairperson

Gatha Martinez
Ione Durr
St. Vincent de Paul Society

Colleen Britt
Council of Catholic Women

Andie Sepulvado
Candace Wilson
Altar Server Directors

Kelli Boydston
Liturgy Coordinator

MASSES are suspended until further notice.

Anticipated Mass: Saturday 4:00 PM (St. Joseph)
Sunday: 8:30 AM (St. Joseph)
11:00 AM (St. Joseph)
5:00 PM (St. Ann)
Tuesday-Friday: 7:30 AM (St. Joseph)
3rd Thursday: 10:00 AM at Toledo Nursing Center

Baptism: Children should be baptized within the first few months after birth. Baptism should take place in one's proper parish. Registered parishioners should contact the Office for information about scheduling a baptism class, regarding the selection of Godparents, any required preparations, and the date and time of Baptism.

Reconciliation: Confessions are normally heard on Saturdays before the mass from 3:15—3:40 PM. Other opportunities are possible by appointment by calling Father Ampatt.

Eucharistic Adoration: Spend a refreshing hour before the Lord in prayer in our daily chapel, from the conclusion of morning Mass until 3:00 PM on Thursdays.

Marriages: Either the bride or the groom must be a registered parishioner of St. Joseph/ St. Ann Parish. At least six months of preparation time is required in our Diocese. Weddings are never booked by phone or by third-parties; **a personal interview is required.** Call the office for an appointment.

Funerals: Contact the office to make necessary arrangements for the funeral liturgy.

New Parishioners: Welcome! To register, fill out one of the blue forms located at the church office or in the church foyer and return it to the church office or drop it in the weekly collection basket. Change of address or phone number? Please provide your updated information to the church office as soon as possible.

Parish Office Information
Hours: Monday 1:00 – 4:00 PM, Tuesday-Friday 8:00 AM- 4:00 PM,
Lunch 12:00-1:00 PM

P.O. Box 8/ 307 Hammond St. (Physical)
Zwolle, Louisiana 71486
Phone: 318-645-6155
Fax: 318-645-9852
Rectory: 318-645-9198
st_joseph_zwolle@bellsouth.net
Website: www.StJosephZwolle.org
Diocesan Web Site: www.dioshpt.org

March 21 & 22, 2020

****During the mandatory suspension of masses, Fr. Ampatt is continuing to say the mass intentions.**

Mass Intentions:

March 21, Saturday

St. Joseph
J.V. Martinez, Hazel Rivers Lustgraff, and
Fr. David Richter †
Glen and Casi Ebarb †
Anna Duyen †

March 22, Sunday

St. Joseph
Sr. Rebecca, Munoz, Sr. Elvia Gonzalez, and
Sr. Esmeralda Razo †
St. Joseph
For the Parishioners
St. Ann
Rodney Rutherford and Heather R. Sepulvado †

March 23, Monday

March 24, Tuesday

Benny R. Rivers †

March 25, Wednesday

Deceased Bell and Bowien families †
Doug Remedies †
Herman and Herman Joe Ferguson †

March 26, Thursday

Cleve and Theresa Sepulvado †

March 27, Friday

Fr. David Richter †

March 28, Saturday

St. Joseph
Catherine Santos †
Nancy Nimmo †
Jeff and Gloria Faircloth †
Mary Remedies †

March 29, Sunday

St. Joseph
Ted DeSoto †
St. Joseph
Maria Nhan †
St. Ann
For the Parishioners

Readings for this week:

† **Monday:** Lenten Weekday St. Turibius of Mogrovejo, Bihosop

Is 65:17-21/ Jn 4:43-54



† **Tuesday:** Lenten Weekday St. Oscar Romero, Bishop and Martyr

Ez 47:1-9, 12/ Jn 5:1-13

† **Wednesday:** The Annunciation of the Lord

Is 7:10-14, 8:10/ Heb 10:4-10/ Lk 1:26-38

† **Thursday:** Lenten Weekday

Ez 32:7-14/ Jn 5:31-47

† **Friday:** Lenten Weekday

Wis 2:1a, 12-22/ Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

† **Saturday:** Lenten Weekday

Jer 11:18-20/ Jn 7:40-53

† **Sunday:** Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ez 37:12-14/ Rom 8:8-11/ Jn 11:1-45

Please take a moment each day to read and reflect on these passages from Sacred Scripture. It is a wonderful way to join our personal prayer to the public prayer of the church.

We pray for:



Jackie Craig; K.C. Sepulvado; Lula Mae Sepulvado; Thomas "Tin Man" Foster; Maurice Martinez; Annie Rivers; Amanda David; Raymond L. Ebarb; Juanita Manshack; Delma Rivers; Linda Sepulvado; Paul L. Rivers; Martin Crooks; Greg Crooks; Kathy Ebarb; Elaine Martinez; Boyd Miles; Priscilla Walraven; JoAnna Presseau; Carolyn Cutright; Helen Laroux; Staci Anderson; Catherine Hammon; Marilyn Laroux; Mary Martinez; Benny Remedies; Frances Sepulvado; Gary Bozzell; John D. Ebarb; Elaine Henderson; Pedro Ebarb; Abra Lachaussee; Van Martinez; Elaine Henderson; Wanda J. Rivers; David Louis Moore; Joe Garcia; Doyle Hagieh; Linda Meshell; Draven T. Ebarb; Sue Ellen Remedies; Gerald L. Sepulvado, Jr.; Monica E. McManus; Pedro Ebarb; Derrick Jordan; Allen Ray Garcia; Fr. Williams; Jeanette Garcia; Dage Ebarb; Mattie B. Sepulvado; Kenneth McCormick; Billy Wayne Procell; Sammy Procell; Elsie Ezernack; Robbie Meshell; Tina L. Sepulvado; Phillip & Laura Jones; Vernon & Doris Ebarb; Cheryl Ebarb; Chandler Ebarb; Ann Rivers; Rose Meshell; Yvonne Maskai; Anne Bryant; Laurie & Reinardo Montero; Jimmy Brown; Ace Bowling; Richard Doggett; Ashlie & Eli Nolan; David Nichols; Kevin Leone; Norman & Jeannie Arbuckle; Celena Rivers; Rosella Sepulvado; Michael Dewayne Ebarb; Felicia Whitlow; Jackie Rivers; John Douglas Malmay; Felicia Whitlow; Maggie Manshack; Ronnie Brummerloh; Debbie Rutherford; Judy Ebarb; Tommy Leone; David Meshell; Robert Hersberger; Ricky Cryer; Jacob Wooley; Lucy Burns; Judy Ebarb; Joseph C. Sepulvado; Mark Austin; Benny Ray Sepulvado; Edward Pastureau; Howard Rivers; John LeRoy Meshell; Hosea Meshell

(The names on the prayer list go through a cycle. Once they make it to the top they are removed as new names are added, to keep the prayer list current. Contact the office to add, re-add, or remove names from the list. Thank you.)

4th Sunday of Lent

- In the near future there will be ad space on the back of the bulletin. If you are interested in advertising your business please leave a name and contact number with the office. Ray from the company has been making calls to some of the local businesses and leaving messages to those he was not able to speak to.
- No lunches will be sold by the CCW on Palm Sunday.
- All activities are suspended at the church, we will update as soon as we know via Facebook and website. This includes the Lenten Mission scheduled for April 1-3
- Both SWAG and Jr. Swag are suspended until further notice
- As more cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) are being identified in the Greater New Orleans area, administrators at Saint Joseph Abbey have made the decision to cancel the Spring 2020 Come and See Weekend, originally scheduled for April 3 through April 5. We are sad to hear this but of course we want everyone to be safe and healthy. Thank you for all your efforts to send young men to this event and I will certainly keep you posted for the next one which will take place in November.

Week of: March 22

Sanctuary Candle

In Memory of
Thomas Ferguson

St. Joseph Candle

In Memory of
James "Ed" Downs

Blessed Mother Candle

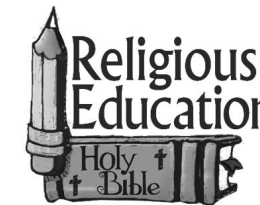
In Memory of
Mary Remedies

St. Ann's Candle

In Memory of
Jack Parrie and Dorothy Boudreaux

Please remember as you pray...
The family of:
Anthony "Kazmo" Kezerle

All classes are suspended until further notice.



Baptism class for parents and Godparents will be **rescheduled for a later date.** Please call 508-0203 to have your name added to the list and you will be informed at a later time of the date and time. Baptism class must be completed before you can schedule your child's baptism date. Any questions please call or text 508-0203.

We will post information as we receive it on our Facebook page and website.

Although we can not have an actual mass we are leaving the church open from 7 AM until 5 PM at St. Joseph for those to have private Adoration and prayer.

Thank you to those who have continued to respond with contribution envelopes. Anyone in need of spiritual help during this time, Fr. Ampatt can be reached at 318-426-0142.

Last Weekend's Collections:

Will be counted with this weekend's contributions on Monday.

The Bereavement Committee

Death and burial of a beloved person is a devastating time for Families. Burying the dead and feeding the poor are the fundamental option of the children of God. As a community of God's children, we must live up to this call of God in comforting the bereaving families and entertaining them after the burial.

This mission of consoling the Families during bereavement is now taken up by the Pastoral Council. Hence, after detailed discussion, the Pastoral Council has decided to form a Bereavement Committee comprised of five good hearted and generous persons. The Council also expresses its gratitude and appreciation to the Ladies' Guilds for tirelessly holding this ministry in the past.

Hence, after prayerful consideration, if you are called to join this important Committee, please call the following members of the Pastoral Council: Cindy Ezernack (318-508-0035, Res: 318-645-6345) or Becky Loupe (318-645-2388 & 318-332-9603).

The Pastoral Council also requests that all Parishioners consider obliging the Bereavement Committee when called upon for help in providing food or a drink for the meal after the burial.