

5th SUNDAY OF LENT

From the Pastor's Desk

The Season of Lent is quickly passing as we begin the Fifth week of our Journey to Mt. Calvary and Easter. At this writing this is also the beginning of the second week of the Pandemic Crisis hitting our nation and state. To say the least, the times are difficult and trying. We are all too aware of the news and analysis concerning the pandemic. Our Governor has been very good about daily briefings so far. This is welcomed and necessary. Please give these briefings your attention. That being said a great deal of reporting and precautions have been presented. But in the last analysis there is a great deal that all of us need to do on our part. We need to know and follow all the simple directives that have been presented to us. These are not too difficult precautions. We can do this. As a people of faith, we need to follow these precautions graciously. This past week our Holy Father Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to beware of the poison of laziness and complaining. Thus, we need to have a schedule to follow every day. We need a routine which includes daily prayer. This is where we get the grace to be gracious in the midst of this crisis. It is also a witness to the Christian faith.

At this point we have to let this virus run its course. We cannot fight Mother Nature; however, we can adjust accordingly. By nature, this virus has its laws in order to survive and spread. We can trust that this virus will be true to its nature. We adjust accordingly. God gave us a good brain. We are rational beings. Let us use our mind well. It is when we act irrationally that trouble comes. Note well some of the comments of those who insisted on living it up on spring break. These kinds of comments, although off the cuff, still reveal self-centeredness and irrational behavior. Nothing good comes from it.

To let you know what is happening here at the church, I can assure you that I do offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily. I pray the intentions for the day as well as praying for the good people of St. Nicholas. When I do come down into the church, I sit at the presider's chair and contemplate the empty pews. I have done this often in the past and now I do this daily during the crisis. I am reminded of the many intentions of our parishioners. The church is not the same without the people in the pews. Your absence is deeply felt and my prayers are all the more urgent for you and your intentions.

I have been called to administer the Anointing of the Sick (in two case Last Rites) for a few individuals. They were not parishioners but just the same they were at the hospital and in need of a priest to attend to them. There are guidelines for administering the sacraments in such cases that are protective of the patient and the priest. Although a little awkward I was glad that I was able to extend the pastoral care of the Church.

While at the hospital I was acutely aware that our prayers are especially needed for those who work in our hospital during these days. We need to ask God to watch over all the doctors, nurses, technicians, pharmacists, and support staff; all of our police officers, firefighters and ambulance attendants. There are so many who are on the front lines in dealing with this crisis. Our prayers are for their protection and good health. They make great sacrifices in their vocations in the healthcare industry. God Bless Them.

A continuous thought that I have had over the last couple weeks concerns our older parishioners. I hope that there are individuals, either family or friends, who are checking up on them and assisting them with anything that they may need. If you are able, please check on any elderly individuals you may know.

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent our Gospel reading for today's mass is the story about Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the

dead. This passage is found in The Gospel of St. John chapter 11. If you do not have a copy of the "*Word Among Us*" you can also find this passage on the webpage for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Since we will not be in Church this weekend, I thought that I should offer a couple reflections.

The first thing that caught my attention was at the very beginning. Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus saying, "*Master, the one you love is ill.*" As we read in the story Lazarus died from his illness. Jesus for his part did not leave immediately but waited for two days before he travelled to the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Why did Jesus wait? Lazarus was his friend and one would think that there would be urgency about the situation and that Jesus should have left immediately. What kind of a friend is Jesus?

Jesus' response to the word that Lazarus was ill seems to be rather shocking. The family of Lazarus was close to Jesus and he had been to their home often. One would think that he would act quickly. Yet he waits. We find this shocking. We can easily identify with the frustration of Martha and Mary about Jesus' delay. Often times we turn to Jesus when a loved one is ill and possibly close to death. We turn to the Lord and ask for help. Even during this pandemic, we turn to God for help. There is so much anxiety, suffering and the death. What are we to think? St. John invites us to contemplate the words of Jesus that follows the message he received. "*This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God.*" St. John tells us we must have faith in the Lord of Life. We must learn that suffering and death are not meaningless: God can work through these dire times for his purposes in the world. Even if God's plan remains hidden from us, we must put our faith in God. God's plan will be revealed.

When Jesus arrives, the death of Lazarus is confirmed. The hurtful reproaches of both Martha and Mary in their turn are addressed to Jesus... "*Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*" Jesus tells them that their brother will rise. Then he reveals his identity at a deeper level: "*I am the resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*"

Here is the point: We are called to have Faith in Jesus Christ who is the *Resurrection and the Life*. The only thing that is necessary now is Faith. We are called to have faith in Jesus Christ. Our faith in a loving God gives us hope. We now have hope in the Resurrection and eternal life in Jesus because he is *the Life*. With this faith we are able to face every challenge. Our Hope in eternal life has us looking beyond this world with all its joys and most especially all its sorrows.

Another thing that occurred to me that I have never considered before happen when Jesus was at Lazarus' tomb. Lazarus had been buried for four days. After they removed the stone, Jesus prayed and then called out... "*Lazarus come out!*" Lazarus heard and came out of the tomb. In other words, the dead are able to hear the voice of the Lord. Death is not the end! Death is not a transition into nothingness! The dead are able to hear the voice of the Lord. They are able to respond and come to the one who calls them.

If anything, this should give us hope. Our beloved dead are able to hear the voice of Jesus. They live. We can also think about this in terms of this life. Even those who are steeped in sin and seem to be spiritually dead, they too are able to hear the voice of the Lord. Even for ourselves, we may think that we are not able to be saved, yet dead because of our sin; we can still hear the voice of the Lord. While we live, we have hope to be able to respond to the voice of the Lord. Those caught in the darkness and despair of sin and appear to be dead; they are still able hear the voice of the

Lord. The hopeful word is that as we live in this world, we are never so far away from the voice of the Lord who calls out to us. No sinner is beyond the mercy of God. Lazarus was dead. He was brought back to life. There are hopeful possibilities. The voice of the Lord is always calling out to us. Jesus Christ is always calling us to life: Life in Him.

The response we give to the Lord is the same as the response of Martha and Mary. Even in the face of death; “*Yes Lord I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world*”.

Let us continue our Lenten journey and our *imposed retreat* from social contact with faith and graciousness.

Father Ralko

This week we pray Week I of the Liturgy of the hours.

Spring cleanup –Mt. Olive Cemetery will begin cleaning off wintertime decorations in preparation for mowing at the end of March. Families are advised to remove any personal keepsakes they wish to retain before March 29.

ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Nicholas Church has a convenient way to make your regular offerings. With our electronic giving program, you can easily set up a recurring giving schedule. We encourage you to set up a schedule of recurring contributions. It's convenient for you and provides much-needed consistency for our church. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. Even when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, our church will continue to receive your contributions on an uninterrupted basis. To become an electronic giver, call or visit the church office for a brief form to fill out.

Bishop Rosecrans High School is seeking a head football coach for the 2020-2021 school year. If interested, please send a cover letter and resume to Kelly Sagan, Executive Director at ksagan@cducation.org. Deadline to apply is March 25, 2020.

Did you know that the Palms from last year's Palm Sunday are sacramentals? Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church. They prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it. When sacramentals no longer serve a purpose, they cannot be thrown in the trash, they must be disposed of reverently. The proper way is to burn them and bury the ashes, or simply bury them in the ground where no one will walk.

Daily Mass Online

www.ewtn.com Holy Mass from the EWTN Chapel

www.vaticannews.va/en/pope-francis/masscasa-santa-marta-pagelist.html
Holy Mass with Pope Francis from Casa Santa Marta



Life in Christ Gospel Reflection based on John 11:1-45 I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord. An innocent man mounts the steps to the guillotine. He hasn't led the best of lives. He has seen in himself nothing worthy of honor. But he has exchanged places in prison with the young husband of the woman he loves. He had promised to do anything to protect her and hers. He has saved the man at the cost of his own life. You may recognize the scene from Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities. As Sydney Carton goes to meet his death, the words of Jesus echo in his mind, what Jesus said to Martha, grieving over the death of her brother Lazarus: I am the resurrection and the life. When my father died, I wasn't overcome by grief. That came later. I thought about the promise of Jesus to Mary and Martha. My father, even though he should die, would live. It wasn't just Jesus that would give him life, but that Jesus was life. It wasn't just that Jesus would raise him up as he raised Lazarus, only to die once more, but that Jesus was the Resurrection. If you are in Jesus, you are in the Resurrection and the Life. It's what Sydney Carton learned at last, and what all Christians, even in the deepest sorrow, must remember.

Esolen, A. (2020). "Life in Christ" in S. White, O.P. (Ed.), Magnificat® Lenten Companion Lent 2020, New York: Magnificat® Inc. Daily

An Act of Spiritual Communion

When we cannot receive Holy Eucharist in person

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

Prayer to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love You, and with a lively sorrow for my sins, I offer You this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to Your Will. Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in You and for You. Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions; give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, Your blessings on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death.
Amen.

www.welcomehisheart.com



5th SUNDAY OF LENT

LITANY OF TRUST

The Litany of Trust is a prayer composed by Sr. Faustina Maria Pia, SV.

This prayer asks Jesus to deliver us from the things that hold us bound and to help us trust in His promises.

From the belief that I have to earn Your love

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear that I am unlovable

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the false security that I have what it takes

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear that trusting You will leave me more destitute

Deliver me, Jesus.

From all suspicion of Your words and promises

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the rebellion against childlike dependency on You

Deliver me, Jesus.

From refusals and reluctances in accepting Your will

Deliver me, Jesus.

From anxiety about the future

Deliver me, Jesus.

From resentment or excessive preoccupation with the past

Deliver me, Jesus.

From restless self-seeking in the present moment

Deliver me, Jesus.

From disbelief in Your love and presence

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being asked to give more than I have

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the belief that my life has no meaning or worth

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of what love demands

Deliver me, Jesus.

From discouragement

Deliver me, Jesus.

That You are continually holding me, sustaining me, loving me
Jesus, I trust in You.

That Your love goes deeper than my sins and failings and transforms me

Jesus, I trust in You.

That not knowing what tomorrow brings is an invitation to lean on You

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You are with me in my suffering

Jesus, I trust in You.

That my suffering, united to Your own, will bear fruit in this life and the next

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You will not leave me orphan, that You are present in Your Church

Jesus, I trust in You.

That Your plan is better than anything else

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You always hear me and, in Your goodness, always respond to me

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You give me the grace to accept forgiveness and to forgive others

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You give me all the strength I need for what is asked

Jesus, I trust in You.

That my life is a gift

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You will teach me to trust You

Jesus, I trust in You.

That You are my Lord and my God

Jesus, I trust in You.

That I am Your beloved one

Jesus, I trust in You.

Written by The Sisters of Life www.sistersoflife.org

Readings for Week of March 23

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| Mon. | Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 | Jn 8:1-11 |
| Tues. | Nm 21:4-9 | Jn 8:21-30 |
| Wed | Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95 | Jn 8:31-42 |
| Thurs. | Gn 17:3-9 | Jn 8:51-59 |
| Fri. | Jer 20:10-13 | Jn 10:31-42 |
| Sat. | Ez 37:21-28 | Jn 11:45-56 |
| Sun | Mt 21:1-11 | Mt 26:14-27:66 |

Daily Intentions

MONDAY, March 30
Robert Ralko

TUESDAY, March 31
Reg Gear, Anniversary

WEDNESDAY, April 1
A. J. Nader

THURSDAY, April 2, St. Francis of Paola
Pastor's Intention

FRIDAY, April 3
Leona Hohman

PALM SUNDAY

SATURDAY, April 4
Mary Jo Dooley

SUNDAY, April 5
St. Nicholas Parishioners

