

MARCH 21, 2021 | 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT

## HOLY FAMILY PARISH

312 Tazewell Avenue, Tazewell, VA 24651

(276) 988-4626 | email: [theword1875@verizon.net](mailto:theword1875@verizon.net) | facebook: search Holy Family SWVA

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Tazewell, VA 24651

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## The search for Jesus in our hearts

ONE PROBLEM with many Christians is the senseless search for God in different churches, prayer houses and among self-made “men and women” of God. These “wonder-workers” end up draining them financially and giving them false hope for riches and wealth; they would acquire without working, testimonies without a test, and Easter Sunday without a Good Friday. Unfortunately, we don’t see this religious harlotry among people of other religions against whom some of us claim superiority. Often, we look for things we already have in the wrong places and does that make any sense?

In the First Reading today (Jer.31:31-34), we hear Jeremiah giving the divine oracle after the religious reforms by king Josiah who began to rule when he was only eight years old. God decided to forgive the sins of the people after the years of their estrangement from Him. Furthermore, He promised to make

a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah:

*“I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the Lord. All, from the least to the greatest, shall know me says the Lord.”*

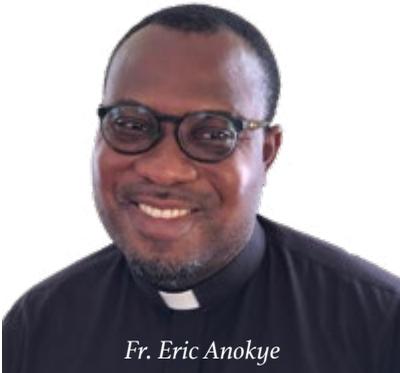
In the past, God made a covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses His servant. Afterward, the people were reminded each time about what God said. In fact, the public reading of the commandment was a regular ritual in the synagogue. In the new covenant, God decided to put the law into our hearts, like software that could be downloaded and activated on a computer. What is more interesting is that the knowledge of God is engraved in our hearts.

God speaks to us in our hearts, though His voice may not be as loud as most of the contending voices around us. The voice of God is present when our right and certain consciences trouble us over our actions and inactions. The voice of God speaks to us when we have that gentle push in our hearts to give up evil and do good. The knowledge of God in us often urges us to drop sin and take the route of righteousness. However, the decision to do all these depends on us.

The highpoint of the Gospel narrative today (John 12:20-33) is the search for Jesus by some Greeks who approached Philip and Andrew to assist them to meet our Lord Jesus Christ. This would be the second time that the Gentiles would seek to see the Lord. The first was the wise men from the east during the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-12). The question we could ask is: “why the search for Jesus?” It will be proper for us to explore the previous events and they include the death of Lazarus and the miracle of his raising the dead, the plan to kill him (Lazarus), and our Lord’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

One could say that the story of Jesus was widespread. Consequently, the Greeks who had come for the festival (the Passover) could have heard about the events and were curious, like every average Greek (Acts 17:20), to know more about the Lord and especially concerning the meaning of the raising of the dead to life. We know that the Greeks had a hard time believing in the resurrection as their encounter with Paul at Athens could attest (Acts 17:16-33).

We did not hear the Greeks ask our Lord any question when Andrew and Philip brought them, but the Gospel narrative says, “Jesus answered them...” (John 12:23). It is only rational to ask what question was he answering? Our Lord was answering the question in their



Fr. Eric Anokye

hearts, as he could see through them. The Gospel of John (2:24-25) tells us that He knows what is in everyone and there are other instances where he could read the hearts of people (Matt. 12:25; 22:18; Luke 6:8; 11:17; 16:15).

Our Lord's instruction to the Greeks was about his upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection:

*"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."*

In the hearts of the Greeks, Jesus should preserve his life and live it to the full, but our Lord answers and says to them,

*"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."*

The Greeks wished they could also serve the Lord, but they questioned how they could abandon everything and become his followers. The Lord answered and said to them,

*"Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me."*

The Gospel narrative did not give us the names of the Greeks who came searching for Jesus. In a sense, we are the new Greeks who are searching for Jesus Christ. The question is, "where do we search for the Lord?" They met Philip and Andrew who took them to the Lord, not to themselves. Today we have many "Philip's" and "Andrew's" who are making

themselves "saviors" instead of directing people to the Savior.

The liturgy of this Sunday invites us to continue the search for Jesus Christ but to do so in our hearts where God has left the imprint of His commandment and salvific knowledge and where we can find Him. The search for Jesus in our hearts this season encourages us to do away with sin, to listen to the word of God and not to count on the sufferings of the moment but on the glory that lies ahead.

May you find the Lord in your hearts and get to know Him more intimately and obey Him more steadfastly. Have a great Sunday and a beautiful week ahead.

*"The search for Jesus in our hearts this season encourages us to do away with sin, to listen to the word of God and not to count on the sufferings of the moment but on the glory that lies ahead."*

As Catholics, we are bound by obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.

Fr. Eric will gladly hear your confession after any Mass or at any other time by appointment.

## PASTOR

Fr. Eric Anokye  
eanokye@richmonddiocese.org  
(276) 385-7312

## OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

## OFFICE HOURS

Mon-Fri 9:30AM - 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

## MASS TIMES

### SATURDAY

4PM - St. Joseph's

6PM - St. Mary's

### SUNDAY

9AM - St. Elizabeth's

11:30AM - St. Theresa's

### MON | WED | FRI

10AM - St. Theresa's

Cover image:

James Tissot, *Last Sermon of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1886-94

# 5 Useful Words for the Catholic and the Curious

ANDREW PETIPRIN, *Word on Fire*



I HAVE the privilege of corresponding almost every day with people who are curious about coming into the Catholic Church. I also spend a lot of time with Catholics talking about the state of the Church and the world—what to hope for, what to worry about, whom to trust. For people outside the Catholic Church, there are often questions about what it would really be like if they came inside. For people inside, what the Church really is can become obscured by what we think it should be, imperiling our efforts to seek and save the lost, and to bring our separated brethren into full communion. For the sake of our evangelistic efforts, and the health of our own souls, I offer my fellow Catholics five useful words.

## **AUTHORITY**

As the Lord departed from his disciples in Matthew 28:18, he reminded them and us that we are empowered for our work in the Church and the world by a power proper to him alone: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” But even from the very beginning of the Church, Christ’s authority was never exercised in the abstract or according to competing visions of what it should be, but in the living authority of the Apostles, with St. Peter at their head. For Protestants looking to come into the Church, the pope can be an obstacle; but he also solves the problems of formal disunity and doctrinal disagreement that plague

other ecclesial groups. After all, if we don’t obey a living authority in the faith outside ourselves, then we obey our own interpretation of the faith. When I became Catholic, I was liberated from being my own pope. During Pope Francis’ reign, as in papacies of the past, Catholics should not spend time publicly criticizing the pope or dismissing his authority.

## **FREEDOM**

Trusting the Magisterium and being obedient to the pope does not mean switching off our individual brains when we open our copies of the Catechism. Rather, the clear boundaries of faith and morals in which we live as Catholics come to resemble an ever-expanding playground of the soul, not a claustrophobic mental prison. When I was a Protestant, I was sometimes paralyzed by infinite options, and at other times, I foolishly dug in my heels defending theologically broad ideas in a very narrow way because I imagined I was alone against the wicked world. As a Catholic, I can relax a bit—though I still have to watch myself against falling into scrupulosity. There is, after all, no such thing as “almost” heresy or “almost” sin. Dogmatic and canonical lines exist precisely so that we know exactly—not approximately—how far we can wander on our own spiritual journeys. And when we cross lines, we know exactly what to do to be healed, restored, and put back on the right track. I’ve never felt

freer to be myself than after Confession. Enjoy the Church's vast expanse!

## **FULLNESS**

Being Catholic means there is no part of one's life that is untouched. A couple of practical examples: We are not the weirdo sub-genre of Christianity that rejects contraception. Rather, we don't contracept because we cannot resist the power of a transcendent natural law that governs all of humanity whether we know it or not. Moreover, our complete openness to life is a response to Christ's full outpouring of grace upon us in everything we do. Likewise, we are not the "mean Christians" who refuse to let people start afresh if they have had a bad marriage. Rather, the annulment process, however it may end, is how the Church helps a couple discern a way forward in individual cases, while preserving the inviolability of a sacramental system that is much bigger than anyone. (But that's a topic for another time.) To insist on a sovereign self who makes sacrosanct personal decisions is to live in a very small universe. Thank God our lives are not about us!

## **MYSTERY**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it" (770). In the Church, we get a foretaste of eternity every Sunday, if not every day: Christ's Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. The veil between heaven and earth drops every time we are present for the sacrifice of the Mass. As a former Protestant, I can't get enough of this mystery. As St. John Vianney said, "If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy." I would ask, "Why don't we Catholics work a bit harder to help people find deeper understanding and deeper joy in the Mass?" In the Catholic Church, we

can make sense of the here-and-now because we can experience here-and-now the life of God in the liturgy. "The kingdom of heaven has come near," Jesus tells us. Why, therefore, do some of my Catholic brothers and sisters content themselves to ignore it or diminish it by getting mired in worldliness instead of receiving, spending, and sharing the heavenly riches of the Mass?

## **REALITY**

Catholicism is not a denomination. We should be quick to point out "the Church teaches \_\_\_\_\_," but none of us should give the impression that Catholics have the most truth simply because we have the most rules. The Creed, the sacraments, morality and ethics, and prayer are the way things are. They describe as much as they prescribe. As Joseph Ratzinger wrote in the Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, our faith should avoid "ecclesiocentrism," which "leads to a kind of relativism and subjectivism of faith," or "merely the Church's consciousness." This error can run in many directions—towards a liberal unraveling of the deposit of faith, to be sure, but perhaps towards an artificial traditionalism at times too. We do not become or remain Catholic because we find it the best option among many. Nor do we get bent out of shape when the Church does not always look the way we wish it did. The Church is, and we are within it.

When we find ourselves talking to people who are curious about the Catholic faith, or family members who have drifted away, let us use these five words as a framework for our conversations. And let us each check our own assumptions about what it means to be Catholic for the sake of expanding our number to the ends of the earth.

*mass intentions*

**Date Intention**

**3/20 SATURDAY**

4PM Doug Vance

6PM People of Holy Family Parish

**3/21 SUNDAY**

9AM Charles R. Lavender, Jr. †

11:30AM Fr. John Grinsell †

*council members*

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Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Cindy Deskins, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert

**FINANCE COUNCIL:**

Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Janet McDonagh

*please pray for*

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 Margie Stutso \*  
 Margaret Shawver  
 Billy Akers  
 Scotty McBride  
 Gerry Hankins  
 Clarence Moore  
 Lexi Cox  
 Sarah Wall  
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 Rayburn Minton  
 Jeanne Hash  
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 Lara Marshall  
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 Jim Shumate  
 Doug Vance  
 Andrew Satmary  
 Frank Mauceri  
 Lori Hale  
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Donations Received as of March 14 (Week 37)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	RECEIVED
St. Joseph's	11	\$161
St. Elizabeth's	15	\$260
St. Mary's	9	\$60
St. Theresa's	27	\$555
Total Offertory	62	\$1,036
Outside Donations		\$670
Year to Date Received		\$85,458
Goal		\$79,615
Ahead/Behind Goal		+\$5,843

*stewardship of treasure*

**OUTSIDE DONATIONS—THANK YOU!**

St. Francis, Staunton, VA: \$635

**OTHER DONATIONS**

Catholic Relief Services Collection: \$160

Building Fund (St. Mary's): \$310

## HOLY FAMILY NEWS

Mass continues to be livestreamed Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 10AM from St. Theresa's and the church will be open for anyone who wishes to attend in person. Masks are mandatory! The 11:30AM Sunday Mass at St. Theresa's will also continue to be livestreamed for those who are not yet able to join us in person.

Every Wednesday evening at 7PM, Fr. Eric leads us in a study of Sacred Scripture. We are currently studying the Gospel of Matthew. Why not start a new relationship with the Word! Come in person or join us on Facebook. Questions and comments always welcome!

**Join us every Friday in Lent at St. Theresa's at 10AM** for Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and Stations of the Cross. Daily Mass will begin at 11AM following Benediction.

Have you checked out Fr. Eric's "**Cast into the Deep**" column on our Facebook page? Fr. Eric carefully crafts a reflection every day on the readings. Use it daily and grow your faith!

[facebook.com/holyfamilyswva](https://facebook.com/holyfamilyswva)

## ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

As you prayerfully discern how to glorify God this week, consider making a donation to the Annual Diocesan Appeal. Like the single grain of wheat, your generous gift can bear an immense amount of fruit in our parish community, helping us to invite others more deeply into the life of God.

**Glorify God through your generosity. Support the Annual Diocesan Appeal.**

## HOLY TRIDUUM MASS SCHEDULE:

**Holy Thursday:**  
4/1

**St. Mary's: 5PM**  
**St. Theresa's: 7PM**

**Good Friday:**  
4/2

**St. Elizabeth's: 3PM**  
**St. Theresa's: 6PM**

**Holy Saturday:**  
4/3

**St. Joseph's: 4PM**  
**St. Theresa's: 7PM**

**Easter Sunday:**  
4/4

**St. Elizabeth's: 9AM**  
**St. Theresa's: 11:30AM**

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birthdays & anniversaries:

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## MARCH

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**BIRTHDAYS**—21: Whitney White | 23: John & Francine Horn

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