

PSALM SUNDAY

APRIL 5, 2020

ST. ATHANASIUS PARISH

St. Athanasius Church, 2050 E. Walnut Lane Philadelphia PA 19138

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Mass Live Stream Monday through Friday 9:00AM
Benediction and evening Prayers Monday through Friday 6:00PM
Live Stream Sunday Mass 10:00am
PLEASE JOIN US

Reverend Joseph F. Okonski, Pastor, Reverend Anayo Nna, C.Ss.R. In Residence
Permanent Deacons Mr. James Mahoney, Mr. Fred Poellnitz, retired, Mr. Stephen Hopkins, retired



Pope Francis's "Urbi et Orbi" blessing amid coronavirus pandemic Friday March 27, 2020

"When evening had come" (*Mk* 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost.

Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

On this boat... are all of us.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (v. 40).

Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples' faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus' trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (v. 38). *Do you not care*: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: "Do you not care about me?" It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.

The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly "save" us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity.

In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

"*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*" Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: "Wake up, Lord!"

Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith

"*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*" Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: "Be converted!", "Return to me with all your heart" (*Joel* 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*. It is not the time of your judgment, but of our judgment: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.

We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives. This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves.

In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one" (*Jn* 17:21). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

"*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*" Faith begins when we realize we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith.

We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.

The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. *Is* 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

We have an anchor... We have a rudder... We have a hope

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity.

By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith"? Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter's rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God's blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace.

Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (*Mt* 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. *1 Pet* 5:7).

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

April 5, 2020

On this day, the Church celebrates Christ's entrance into Jerusalem to accomplish the Paschal Mystery of His death and resurrection. The memorial of this event is included in every Mass, with the Procession or Solemn Entrance before the principle Mass and the Simple Entrance before the other Masses.



First Reading

Isaiah 50:4-7 (38ABC)

Responsorial

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Second Reading

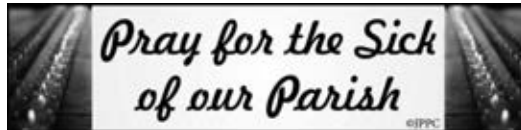
Philippians 2:6-11

The Passion of the Lord

Matthew 26:14-27:66 4:5-42 or 27:11-54

Reflection by Rev. Leonard N. Peterson

As we hear the Passion read to us, or ponder it privately, today and throughout this coming Holy Week, there may come to us a healthy onrush of guilt. That's because our sins, yours and mine, ultimately caused this to happen. What our Redeemer suffered deserves our tears. But neither guilt nor tears was the purpose of the Passion nor the intent of Christ. After all, He told the women of Jerusalem along His way to Calvary: "Weep not for Me." And so I conclude this brief reflection with a blessing for you, even if you want to think "Wow!" But I heartily recommend a far better reaction to the Passion in this well-known prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: *"I adore You, O Christ, and I praise You...because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world."*



PRAY FOR OUR SICK: At each mass, we pray for **all** our sick, whether their **name** is **on** the sick list or **not**. The **list** of names below is for those **in the hospital** or **seriously ill**. Thanks for **letting us know** whose names can be **removed** from the list.

Deborah Blanks, Jeanette Brown, Shirley Brown, James Burley, Pearl Carter, Maily Colson, Sandra Dowell, Marvin Felder, Gloria Gaston, Justin Graves, Gladys Gross, Juanita Hartwell, Theresa Hinton, Eunice Holmes, Theotis Holmes, Deacon Stephen Hopkins, Gloria Hopkins, Louise Hughes, William Jackson, Eleanor Jeffries, Alicia (Dolly) Johnson, Mattie Johnson, James Jones, Umaria Kai'ed, Almeada Lindsey, Ireen Lojeski, Frank Long, Jean Long, Phyllis Louis, Jean Love, Linda Love, Ethel Mabry, James Marshall, Patricia McDione, Jessica McNeil, Linda Miles, Margaret Miller, Geraldine Mitchell, Dr. Roberta Muse, Charles Murray, Donald Nash, Paxson Nash, Catherine Newman, Heather O'Kubo, Anthony Pettis, Harmon Philips, John Pompey, Lorraine Pompey, David Robinson, June Robinson, Allison Rogers, Rochelle Sadler, Gwendolyn Slaughter, Katrina Smith, Stephen Smith, Gloria Solomon, David Bindley-Taylor, Joseph Temple, Robby Thompson, Omar Travis, Marge Walker, Theotis Warfield, Josephine Webster, Pricilla Werner, Nicole White, Lucille Williams

For those in homes: Ezell Fraizer, L. Gaskins, Matte Hill, Henry Jackson, Kathrine McFarland, S. Strybuc, M. Tiley

THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (HOLY THURSDAY)

APRIL 9, 2020



At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His body and blood.

***We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
In whom is our salvation, life and resurrection,
Through whom we are saved and delivered.***

Cf. Galatians 6:14

First Reading Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 (39ABC)
Responsorial Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18
Second Reading 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
The Passion of the Lord Matthew 26:14-27:66 4:5-42 or 27:11-54

"O sublime humility! O humble sublimity!"

These words written by Saint Francis of Assisi echo in my mind as I read today's Gospel. Francis wrote these words specifically about our Lord hidden under the form of ordinary bread in the Eucharist. But at the Last Supper, when Jesus instituted that wondrous sacrament, he also performed another act of sublime humility which we read about today.

Taking off his outer garments and tying a towel around his waist, Jesus kneels down in front of his disciples and washes their feet. The men watch as their teacher, the one who drove out demons and walked across turbulent seas, now takes their dusty feet into his hands to perform a task typically reserved for the lowliest of servants.

Jesus performs this act of service to leave an example of fraternal charity to his disciples and to the world. And as he kneels down before Judas, the one who would hand him over to his torturers, Jesus demonstrates that this charity must defy reason; we must extend it even to our enemies, even to those who will betray us.

The washing of the disciples' feet not only teaches us an important lesson about how we are to love, it teaches us a lesson about the kind of God we have. Our God, the Creator of the Universe, is willing to bend down in front of us and wash the dirt off of our feet. It's in this simple, intimate act of service that God reveals his nature. He loves us tenderly, gently, and all the way to the cross. "He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end."

Perhaps, like Peter, our reaction is one of protest; how can we, sinful creatures that we are, possibly accept such a gift? But the mystery and beauty of our faith lies in the fact that God pours out his love on us even though we will never deserve it. And in order to have an inheritance with him, we must accept it.

I pray that as you meditate on today's Gospel, you allow yourself to accept Jesus' love for you. And in receiving that sublime gift, I pray that you would humbly share it with everyone you encounter.

CATHOLIC T

FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD (GOOD FRIDAY)

APRIL 10, 2020

According to the Church's ancient tradition, Mass is not celebrated today. The celebration of the Lord's Passion consist of three parts: The Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Cross, and Holy Communion.



PRAYER OF SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

**Saint Michael the Archangel,
Defend us in battle, be our protection against
the wickedness and snare of the devil.**

**May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host,
by the Divine Power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all
the evil spirits who roam throughout the
world seeking to ruin of souls.**

POPE LEO XIII

Note from the Pastor

I would like to thank you for remembering your Sunday contributions and tithes. If you are able you can put your envelopes through the mail slot of the rectory or donations can be made by credit card or PayPal. When you make your donation it will say it has gone to the school campaign. It is the account we are using during this emergency situation. We will be updating. All donations will go to the parish. Check the button that says "Share your mailing address with St. Athanasius School Campaign" so we can acknowledge your donation. Thank you and God Bless you for remembering the parish.



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