

From the Deacon's Desk

Chrism Mass:

We are looking for some parishioners to attend the Chrism Mass on Tuesday, March 27th at 10:30 am at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption. If you are interested in attending, please let Deacon Jerry know or call the parish office.

Scripture Today:

All our reading for today address the themes of brokenness, suffering, pain, and hardship, and invite us to question where God is in those moments. Jeremiah, in the first reading, was bewildered with the nature of human disobedience from God's covenant and spoke of a new covenant not on stone but in their hearts. Jeremiah speaking for God says: I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts. There is a beautiful Rabbinic saying that God puts his words on our hearts, so that when our hearts break, the words will fall inside!

As Lent is fast drawing to a close, we are confronted with the messiness of life. We will see Jesus especially deal with pain, suffering and death, and the church will remind us that if we are disciples of Jesus, we will have to accept the cross into our own life as well. Daniel Barragan, a great Catholic social activist once said: "The only requirement for being a good Christian is that you have to look good on wood." Fr. Barragan wasn't being disrespectful or funny, but was making a statement that for us people of faith, we are called to suffer like Jesus did, and to transform our suffering (with God's help) into the new life of transformation.

Next Sunday we will hear about Jesus' agony in the Garden, and the word used for Jesus' agony in the garden in Greek is "Agonia," which literally refers to an intense kind of internal mental suffering before physical suffering begins. Jesus' agony in the garden is about him preparing himself to die to himself before he actually dies physically. Even before he is arrested, Jesus is dying to himself and his own wants and needs. Jesus spent years giving others his life, and now, he prepares to give them his death as well, as an example of what God's love for others looks like.

When it comes to human suffering, there are some common misunderstandings that people have when they think of suffering and its relation to God's will. Some think that God is using suffering to punish us for something which we have done wrong. It is obviously true that we do bring a lot of suffering upon ourselves by our sinful behavior, but the fact that Jesus was innocent should alert us to the fact that there is no necessary connection between suffering and guilt. We should see the crucifying of Jesus for what it was: a sinful decision made by people acting against the will of God. They were not carrying out God's will. They were resisting it. The crucifixion was not God punishing Jesus, but people acting badly.

We tend to jump to the conclusion that it is somehow God's will that we should be suffering in the way we are. It is true that God created a world that is in process: earthquakes, monsoons and many natural disasters are inevitably part of this process. If people are caught up in them, they suffer. But we should not be thinking of God as willing this or that particular disaster. It is true that God created people free to be able to say No to love, and, when we do, we and others suffer. We see this on the news each and every day. However, we should not think of God as willing the kinds of sinful behavior that bring so much suffering on our world. When we or others are suffering because of the sin perpetrated by those who obstinately reject grace and act sinfully, we should not think of the consequent suffering as being in any way God's will.

We are not saying that God is a victim of our cruelty, or that God stands by helpless, but that God has entered into all the sufferings of the world and continues to transform suffering from within.

Holy Week Triduum Liturgies:

I pray that you attempt to make it to as many of the Triduum Liturgies as possible. The Holy Week Triduum (meaning “three”) Liturgies are basically one liturgical act with intermissions or breaks between them. It really made a difference in my life once I began to understand and participate in all that these liturgies say about Catholicism and Christianity in relationship to the Paschal Mystery; the Passion, Dying, Rising and Ascension of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Mass of the Lord’s Supper is at 7PM on Holy Thursday. This is where the washing of the feet (Jesus’ premier example of discipleship) takes place as well as the invitation to stay for some time that evening to worship and adore Jesus in the “Reservation Chapel” set up in the parish library until 10PM that night.

Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord service (the only day Mass **is not** celebrated in the Catholic Church) begins at 12:30PM, **but at 12 Noon we are invited to listen to a dramatic reading of the Stations of the Cross by the youth of the parish.** One can expect to be moved as you participate in the Passion, the Adoration of the Cross, Holy Communion and silent dismissal so that you may prepare for the great celebration of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday at 8:30 PM. **There will be no 4:30 Mass or Confessions.**

The culmination of the Triduum, the Three Days, takes place at the Easter Vigil at 8:30 PM. At that liturgy, we will celebrate the baptism of Scott and he and his wife Kristen will be confirmed and welcomed to the Eucharistic Table. The Mass begins at the Easter Fire outside the church.

There is a Mass on Easter Sunday at 9:30AM.

Alpha Next Week: Why and how should I pray?

Talk summary:

- People pray in all cultures – and everybody prays in crisis – why do we do that?
- Christians pray to grow their relationship with God – an intimate, loving Father
- Christian prayer is to the Father, through the Son and by the Spirit
- There are rewards to prayer (presence, peace and power)
- God answers prayers differently (yes, no, wait)
- If it’s a no/wait – we may realise later why God didn’t answer at the time – but sometimes there’s no reason: I just have to trust that God is good and he loves me
- Jesus taught us how to pray (The Lord’s Prayer). There is no set formula but a simple model to remember is: ‘Thank you... Sorry... Please...’
- Keep it simple, keep it real, keep it going