

APRIL 27–MAY 3 – Jesuit Mass Homilies

**Monday of the Third Week of Easter
St. Peter Canisius, Priest & Doctor
April 27, 2020
Father Rivera-Fals**

How many times do we seek God only because he fills our stomach, because we think that he can satisfy our desires, our ambitions? How many times, if we are honest, we must admit to seek God because we are afraid of life, because we do not understand, because we hope that he can help and support us on our journey...

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, passage we read last Friday, turned out to be a real disaster. Jesus' message was clear: faced with the hunger of men the disciple is called to bring into play all he has, even if little. He had hoped, with that gesture of compassion, the disciples and the crowd would finally understand. To overcome misery and narrowness it is necessary to imitate the gesture of the teenage boy who shares what he has. The crowd, on the other hand, understood the exact opposite: in the face of world hunger, here is where God finds solutions. The worst happens when the crowd is looking for Jesus to make him king. Who among us would not vote for a government that instead of asking for taxes would give away food?

Jesus is deeply sad, and he truly says what he thinks to the crowd: they are looking for him because they ate the loaves and were filled. Let us ask ourselves if our faith sometimes does not look like theirs and we seek the risen Lord because he satisfies our hunger. Hopefully we understand that God should be sought not only because he satisfies our basic needs but because he fills our hearts...

AMDG

Tuesday, April 28

3rd Week of Easter

Father Hooks

- Constant reminder of Fr. Nick Schiro about the students: They're not adults!
- Another truth: Often enough the adults most devoted to the school are those who ended up in PH most often when they were students
- Hard to see all the experiences that will eventually form them when they're sitting in PH:
 - Time, experience, hard knocks, study, love, breakups, a mortgage, getting hired, getting fired and hired again, having to ask for help, finding your heart enlarged by helping others
 - Lots of experiences between adolescence and adulthood that can change a young man
- Trick is to remind ourselves not to judge too early
 - To give the boy the patient credit for being able to change
 - And to give the Holy Spirit patient credit for being able to change lives
- First reading, dramatic: Hatred, stoning - St. Stephen, the protomartyr
 - Stuck into this scene, a strong, stoic image:
 - "The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul."
- Always been struck by this line
 - A quiet but meaningful aside in a dramatic scene of courage and death
- Saul is Paul, later the greatest apostle in Christian history

- A man who once persecuted Christians
- Later dedicates his life to making Christians
- And dies for love of Christ
- But now, he is a spiritual adolescent
- And stands stoically consenting to the trial and killing of Stephen
- Would someone who knew Saul as a spiritual adolescent in this scene even recognize him as an apostle after the Holy Spirit was done with him in his maturity?
- Given all that is happening and not happening in our world right now, this is a fit time to be preaching patience and trust
 - But the formula works:
 - Our patience and trust, working together with the HS, is what changed Paul
 - Patience, trust, quiet action of the HS is what changes young men
- When frustrated with our own hearts, habits, inability to change ourselves
 - Perhaps we're still "adolescing" spiritually
- Remember Saul in his adolescence and Paul in his maturity
 - Remember that the same Holy Spirit that changed his heart can change ours
- Let us be patient and trust the HS that things can change; that GOD can change US
 - And may the abundant mercy of Jesus make up for whatever spots remain

A.M.D.G.
Livestreamed Mass
Sacred Heart Chapel
April 29, 2020
Father Hermes

Today the Church celebrates the feast of a very great saint, Catherine of Siena, who lived from 1347-1380. St. Catherine has many titles: Doctor of the Church, Co-Patroness of Europe, Patroness of Italy, Co-Patroness of the City of Rome. The Popes of the 19th and 20th century have showered these titles upon her, presumably because of her growing relevance to them as a saint who once helped the Chair of Peter fulfill its spiritual mission by preserving its political and cultural independence.

Her most eye-catching title is Doctor or official Teacher of the Church, because in fact, she only learned to read and write as an adult. However, her Dialogue on Divine Providence, her letters, and other writings are spiritual and theological treasures of the Church to this day.

Like any saint, Catherine of Siena was canonized and is remembered and honored by the Church because of her close union with the Lord, and her imitation of Christ that followed from the union. So as to belong solely to Christ, she made a private vow of chastity at a young age, a vow that she later made publicly as a Third Order Dominican. St. Catherine was a mystic and visionary in her interior life, and she received the stigmata, a sign of her intimate friendship with Christ crucified.

Her mysticism can be called a mysticism of action, because it impelled her to involvement in the world around her, not only the drama of the 14th century papacy, but also her direct care for the sick, and her healing of those caring for the sick, during the plague, the Black Death that gripped Europe in the 1300s. I think that gives her a special relevance today.

Generations of Christians have profited from her Eucharistic spirituality and her emphasis on union with Christ crucified. She famously described that union using bridal imagery, a bride betrothed to the one she loves. Her bridal and eucharistic spirituality lead in the same direction, eternal union with Christ, the bridegroom who gives himself to the end and eternally to those he loves. From Saint Catherine, we learn the importance of familiarity with Christ in our prayer, to be on guard against a remote formalism. We learn the importance of meditation or reflection on the Word of God. She especially loved the psalms. And we learn the importance of the sacraments,

especially frequent communion. In communion, we draw near to the Crucified Christ and to his heart. St. Catherine writing in the voice of God the Father makes this clear -- "My son's nailed feet are a stair by which you can climb to his side, where you will see revealed his inmost heart. For when the soul has ... looked with her mind's eye into my son's opened heart, she begins to feel the love of her own heart in his consummate and unspeakable love."

For most of us, when we think of our spiritual lives, we are mainly aware of our own shortcomings, of how pitiful it all seems. We don't pray enough, or don't pray well or even correctly; we feel like we don't spend enough time on spiritual things; we are aware of how drearily rote and unreflective communion often is.

We need saints around us, and other friends in the Lord, spiritual guides like Catherine of Siena; This remarkable young woman – she died at the age of our Lord, 33 -- was often sought out as a spiritual mother, and that's how many people addressed her. She appealed to people of all classes and walks of life -- nobles, politicians, artists, and ordinary, everyday people. Most significantly for Church history, Pope Gregory XI, for all of his own shortcomings, became like a spiritual son to her. At the time the Papal court had been in Avignon, not Rome (the see of Peter and Paul) for decades. It was like an open wound for the apostolic church. It produced a lot of controversy, a controversy that Catherine waded into. In several famous letters, she urged the Pope to return to Rome, to restore the life and work of Peter to the See of Rome. Not long before she died, he did. She wrote to him, "Respond to the Holy Spirit who is calling you! I tell you: Come! Come! Come! Don't wait for time because time isn't waiting for you."

Those words resound in history because they helped the papacy and the Church maintain her independence from earthly powers, in that case, the French monarchy. But actually, they are words also for the individual Christian. If we heed St. Catherine's maternal exhortation, her words can help each one of us be free of the earthly attachments, addictions, and destructive powers that hold us in thrall. With all this time on our hands, there is even less reason for us to "wait for time." May we heed this great woman's advice, this great saint and Doctor of the Church, "Respond to the Holy Spirit who is calling you."

Thursday Easter week 3
30 April 2020
First reading: Acts 8:26-40
Father Deutsch

With a year left in my collegiate studies, I had reached the decision that I would finish my bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering, but that I was going to give my life to Jesus. I just had not found the religious order that I wanted to join. So many options of religious communities in the Catholic Church! Regularly I scanned Catholic magazines and church bulletins for vocation flyers and announcements, sending off for information (no internet back then). I was on alert for discernment weekends.

When I went home that summer before my last year of college, out of the blue my mother told me that there was a seminarian helping at the chapel on the air base nearby. She encouraged me to talk with him and see if he could give me advice. Only one meeting I had with that seminarian, and yet the trajectory that I follow for the past 40 years began that day. Such a puzzle that I do not even remember the seminarian's first name. I don't know if he followed through to ordination, whether he eventually served our country as a military chaplain – or if he chose another life path. A momentous 60 minutes in my life journey, and so few concrete details.

Let me suggest an exercise for the next days of this Easter season. Take 5 notecards – I like a variety of colors. On each notecard, write the name of a person or an event instrumental to the journey of your Christian discipleship. On the back of each card, give a brief explanation why this person or event is crucial. Then arrange the notecards and write a life history for yourself that has a definitive beginning and concludes with the present day. I have done this exercise several times in my life, and I am amazed at what comes back to me (or what has slipped away).

With this personal story fresh in your heart and mind, give thanks for God's guidance, that the Trinity has drawn you through many daunting challenges.

With this personal story fresh in your heart and mind, ask for the divine grace to trust that when paths are fog-bound that the Trinity will show you the way.

And, maybe someday we might find out that someone listed us on one of their notecards as crucial to their life of faith – even if they don't remember our name.

AMDG
Livestreamed Mass
Sacred Heart Chapel
Good Shepherd Sunday
May 3, 2020
Father Hermes

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday, taken from the Gospel in which Jesus presents himself as the Shepherd who know his sheep and calls them by name. In a shift of images, Jesus also refers to himself as the very gate by which the sheep enter and are saved, essentially describing salvation in terms of freedom and abundant life – “they will come in and go out and find pasture.” The Good Shepherd affirms that he has come “so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

The connection of entering abundant life through Christ is made explicit in the rite of the sacrament of Baptism. At the beginning of the rite, the parents of the child to be baptized are posed the following question: What do you ask of God’s Church? They respond either, Baptism. Or Faith. Or Eternal life. Three interrelated gifts that the Good Shepherd offers.

It is apparently not enough simply to hear and be moved by the word of God. The Acts of the Apostles preserves for us multiple occasions when the apostolic preaching, the exposition of the Word, leads to its sure destination, which is Baptism.

- A large number of people are baptized in Samaria by Philip.
- Ethiopian Eunuch asks for Baptism after this same Philip shows him that a passage from the Book of Isaiah is in fact a prophecy of Christ.
- A number of relatives and friends of Cornelius of Caesarea are baptized there after Peter is summoned from Joppa to preach.
- And today’s first reading gives us the model for this dynamic of Evangelization leading to Baptism in Peter’s famous sermon on Pentecost. Cut to the heart by the Apostle’s words, they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do?” Peter’s answer is immediate and clear; there’s no doubt about what follows conviction of the heart in the matter of Jesus Christ, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We are told that those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3000 persons were added that day.

Baptism understood as the gateway to the fullness of God’s riches is a clear reminder that the Christian religion cannot be reduced to Word-Response dynamic, or even more

weakly, mere dialogue with God. It's not sufficient to accept the Christian message or embrace Christian values because being Christian cannot be reduced to natural goodness. Baptism, the mystery of being incorporated into the dying and rising of Christ, and through his passion, death, and resurrection, entering into the eternal life of the Trinity – that's the fullness of Christian faith. It can't be evaded; there are no escape hatches, or backways around it. Baptism is the ordinary and only means we know to the gift of saving faith leading to eternal life. And it comes to us solely from above. We could never have thought it up nor acquired it by our own nature. Flesh and blood has emphatically not revealed this to us, but our Father in heaven.

Pope Benedict often wrote or spoke about the sacrament of Baptism. In one of his famous interviews, several years before he became Pope, I remember being moved by his insistence on the spiritual relevance and importance of knowing your baptismal day. After all, as important as your birthday is, which everybody knows, the day we entered mortal life, the day of our baptism, the day we entered eternal life, is infinitely more important. Pope Benedict was baptized on Holy Saturday in the late 1920s, a pretty dramatic day, and not hard to remember once you've learned the fact.

I remember being moved after reading that interview to learn my own baptismal date. For me, it's an easy one to remember – December 24, Christmas Eve. Tellingly, as a sign of how important baptism was felt in the Church back then, as the gateway to eternal life, I was only 11 days old.

So, I encourage you to look up your own baptismal date and mark it each year. After all, the eternal life which it opens up and to which it calls us, is a life we are already meant to begin living, in part, here and now. It's the life of the missionary Church, the life of the apostolic church we see in Acts, sent to all nations. May the Good Shepherd, our gateway to the inner life of God, forever call us to himself and send us forth as his witnesses. Amen.