

Jesuit Mass Homilies
March 30-April 5

A.M.D.G.
Monday of the Fifth Week of Ordinary Time
John 8: 12-20
Livestream Mass
Sacred Heart Chapel
March 30, 2020
Father Hermes

In today's Gospel, Jesus delivers his dramatically simple, but quite powerful testimony about himself, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus speaks in the Temple precinct, addressing the scribes and pharisees, and presumably those standing nearby. It's the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles, when enormous lamps were hung in one of the courtyards of the Temple. These lamps burned all night and could be seen all over the city. They reminded the people of the pillar of fire that guided Israel in the desert. A reminder for the people that the Lord would never abandon them, even in the most extreme situations, even in the wilderness.

The lamps for this feast kept alive in the heart of Israel God's promise to send a light, the Light, to a world overcome by darkness. The promised Messiah would enlighten the hearts of Israel, renew her glory, and bring joy.

Jesus's straightforward declaration, "I am the light of the world," is actually a most powerful and provocative claim about himself. The Pharisees challenge him and question the authority behind this testimony.

Jesus replies: I know who I am – where I come from and where I am going. That is, Jesus knows he comes from the Father and is going to the Father. His whole mission as Son is received from the Father, and the two together, Father and Son, are the decisive two witnesses (two are required by Jewish law), witnesses that the mission of Jesus is the mission of the promised Messiah . . . to bring light.

Every day we pray the Our Father, perhaps multiple times. We pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Today, we can think of the light of Christ as our daily bread.

We can pray, “Lord Jesus, illumine our path; where things are obscure in my life today, make them clear. Give me the insight and guidance I lack, the light I need as my bread, at least for today.”

Amen.

Tuesday March 31 – 5th Week of Lent
Gospel: John 8: 21-30
Father Deutsch

There is a phrase in English: “stood by me”. Usually I hear it spoken in the past tense and normally in the singular. It conveys that I trust a specific person because that person supported me at a difficult time. When I needed someone to lean on that person was strong for me.

I point out that this phrase, in my experience, is usually in the past tense because we don’t know if someone will stick around until times actually become problematic; plus, it seems often to refer to one person – as the experience of being supported at a difficult moment is rare. So, we say “he was there when I needed help”, “she could be counted on in difficult straits.”

In this dependable relationship, we move forward trusting. We do not ask for proof as we already have that. We step ahead presuming on this person’s support.

We are in difficult times now and we are called to keep moving forward. If our discipleship has taught us that Jesus has stood by us, then I believe that the question that confronts us is not “why?” but rather “how?”

For those who are fearful, who are anxious, who are unsure that Jesus stands by them – how can we spread encouragement to them?

Creativity is needed as the state and national officials are requiring us to shelter safely, to keep proper distancing when interacting in person. An example of creativity is Jesuit livestreaming Mass. The school website now has resources specific to this time of the Coronavirus.

A sense of personal connect can be maintained and strengthened through audio and video calls. Many meetings now are happening through teleconference.

“Stood by me” - May this compliment be paid to our school and to our Church during this worrisome, anxious time. May our creative solutions connect us in this time of distancing.

The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

April 1, 2020

Fr. Rivera-Fals

In today's Gospel Jesus promises that “the truth will set us free;” and linked this promise to his own person: “I am the truth.” Along with truth, he promises us freedom, when he says, “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” What he offers is what St. Paul called “the glorious freedom of the children of God.” The Holy Spirit he shares with us gives us power to live as God intends, to bring out what is best in us. True freedom empowers us to love and give ourselves to others as Jesus did. He, who was “the man for others,” invites us once again to follow in his footsteps...

... April 2 ...

... April 3 ...

Saturday 5th Week of Lent
4 April 2020
Gospel reading: John 11:45-56
Father Deutsch

The Gospel of John makes the clear connection that when Jesus raises Lazarus from 4 days in the tomb, he brings upon himself his own death. For the life of Lazarus, Jesus submits to his own death. [out of love for us]

For our life, Jesus lays down his life. [out of love for us]

To rescue lost women & men, Jesus pays the ultimate price on the Cross. [out of love for us]

To pull death from our human core, Jesus submits himself to the power of this world. From our wounded human heart, Jesus draws out our original rebellion; in exchange, he sheds his blood on the cross. Ancient is the image that Jesus's death is a poultice to draw out the fever of our human rebellion & death.

Inside of myself, I rebel in horror. I do not want my sins to be the cause of Jesus's Passion & Death. I want to help Jesus, not burden him with my sins. So, I commit myself to work harder and to be better.

- Pray more
- Do good deeds
- Fast
- Mind my attention so that I dwell on wholesome topics

But here is my spiritual trap. When I work harder, I begin to judge others – that they are not working hard enough, they are willful & stubborn. And then, when I come aware that I am judging others, I critique myself for pride. Sure enough there follows my conclusion that God is disappointed in me and I turn away from God in self-disgust.

With this self-judgment I harden in my relationship with God and resist God's initiative.

Such a puzzle is our human nature. It seems that the tools that we have to make progress are not “straight plumb” – all the tools seem to be somewhat off-kilter.

I know that I want Jesus to touch my heart. I want to help others. But – the tools I have used all my life lead me farther away from Jesus.

Our hope: each day when we pray the Examen we ask for spiritual Consolation and we consult the moments of spiritual Consolation to light a path for us in the dark.

For sure: this unknown path that is indicated through spiritual Consolation will bring to our attention others who need consolation. They are weary & self-judging & fearful.

Let us pray that we may, in the blessing of divine grace, receive these unexpected moments with gratitude and generosity.

5 April 2020
Palm Sunday
The Passion according to Matthew
Father Deutsch

Early in life, we learn the lesson that there are moments that we can miss and there is no going back again. This insight shows up in our phrases and even can be conveyed in a person’s tone of voice:

- You have one shot.
- I was asleep at the wheel.
- Pay attention!
- Sorry, you were not listening.
- Too late, you were not here.

This admonition is found in the gospel account of the foolish virgins who end up locked out of the wedding party as they had fallen asleep and did not have the necessary oil for their lamps.

In this time of social distancing, when special events are being put on hold (or even cancelled), it can feel like we are missing out and that we will not be able to go back. This can lead to a frantic desire to make up for “lost time”.

The Scriptures, however, reveal to us that our compassionate God loves surprise endings. He always chooses the weaker team. He plays the long odds. From our football history, we could say that He loves the “Hail Mary” play.

We encounter this today in the Passion according to Matthew.

- Jesus is dead.
- Jesus is buried.
- Jesus is in the tomb with a huge stone wheel in front.
- There is a seal on the stone wheel of the tomb.
- AND, the tomb is guarded by armed Roman soldiers.

Did I mention that God likes it when the odds are stacked against Him? God delights in turning our predictable world upside down. As it says in the Passion today, the sun is blotted out. The earth quakes. The dead are seen. It is not enough that God raises his Son; lots of people come from the grave. Even the Roman soldiers are stunned.

Lately, in my personal prayer, I have been reminded of a Scripture from the Exodus of the chosen People from Egypt. The chosen People are the weakest group at that time in history. They are trapped against the Red Sea and behind them coming at breakneck speed is the strongest army in the world, the Egyptians on fast chariots.

Did I mention that God likes it when the odds are stacked against Him? Amazingly, Red Sea parts in front of the chosen People allowing for their escape, and the demise of the Egyptians on chariots.

In Exodus 14: 15, the Lord says to Moses: “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the people to go forward!”

Can we not hear this ourselves: “Why are you crying out to me? Go forward!”

The steady Hand of God opens a path in front of us. Can we not see it?

