

3rd Sunday in Lent **3/15/2020**

Celebrate: “In today’s Gospel the Samaritan woman asks Jesus for water, an image of our thirst for God. Jesus offers living water, a sign of God’s grace flowing from the waters of baptism. The early church used this gospel and those of the next two Sundays to deepen baptismal reflection during the final days of preparation before baptism at Easter, As we journey to the resurrection feast, Christ comes among us in word, bath and meal- offering us the life-giving water of God’s mercy and forgiveness.”

Prayer: “Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever more. Amen”

Scriptures:

First Reading - Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

Second Reading – Romans 5:1-11

Gospel – John 4:5-42

Message

J.V. Trautwein

This past year during one of my hospital stays I read an account of the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 in Baltimore. I was amazed to read that from the initial cases of influenza reported among soldiers at Fort Meade it took less than three weeks for it became a full-fledged epidemic in Baltimore. Just within the city 4,125 people lost their lives to the influenza during that year.

What haunted me after reading this article was how fast an invisible enemy could cause an entire city to close down and cause so much human misery and death. There was not a person, in some way, that wasn’t affected by this virtually invisible tiny virus. Furthermore, it is almost inconceivable that such a tiny microbe can destroy the life of what is considered to be the highest intellectual form of life. It can even bring the world to its knees faster than humanity with all of its knowledge can stop it. Eventually antibodies will be discovered in order to destroy this virus. But by that time this virus will have left its mark of fear and destruction.

It is interesting that even after years of medical advancements, with the onslaught of the Coronavirus, today we must go back 100 years to understand how to combat an epidemic like the world is facing today. Like with the Spanish Flu, quarantines and containment policies help to halt the progressive nature of the epidemic. This mandates that society by-in-large shut down, keeping people out of reach with others or at least limited to a small few personal contacts.

To know that such a small microbe has such power over us can be a very humbling experience. It is humbling to see how our lives can be controlled by something which is invisible to the naked eye. This should be a reminder to us during this Lenten season that we so often take the gift of life for granted and forget how vulnerable life is. It is during these times we need to reflect upon

what God has given us and how we respond to these gifts. What have we given in return for the sacrifice which God made so that we may know of His great love and forgiveness – His grace?

During this Lent we are being forced to make sacrifices in order to help stop the spread of what can be a deadly virus for many. Many may resist and ignore and even rationalize around the warnings given but in the long run they will be the losers. They are missing out experiencing the joy of celebrating the love which can evolve out of sacrifice. It is through sacrifice that we develop the meaning of being one with another person, one with the society in which we live, and one with God.

Paul in His letter to the Romans goes even further for he states that sacrifice ultimately leads to hope. He writes that first we must have faith in the message of Jesus, “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” With this faith then sacrifice takes on further meaning. He concludes, And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

These words of Paul are not only true but reassuring and relevant to us during this time. By making the sacrifice we know this will help to bring any epidemic to a more advantageous conclusion for all. Each person can make a difference. Just think of that small microbe and the difference it has made upon our lives. How we respond to its ugly appearance in today’s life will tell how successful it will be. But with the sacrifices we make can make a difference and bring hope that the virus’ success will be limited.

We pray that we will be uplifted at this time by the power of God’s presence within each of us since as Paul states, “Because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” As members of the Body of Christ, although we may not be physically together we are always united spiritually. We can always communicate with and support each other through prayer and directly by other means at our disposal.

We have the assurance and hope that God’s love and comforting presence is always with us.

Prayer:

God of all creation we come to you with thanksgiving for all the wonders of life you have given us. One of these wonders is the power of healing in times of need. We are in one of these times when your healing power and guidance is needed. People across the world are in fear and pain needing to know your comforting and healing presence. Reach out and touch each of us during this time.

We especially seek healing and comfort for , Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Darrell Garrison, Al Honey, the John Family, John Kahl, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Terre Rones, Paul Sagal, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering fear anxiety, pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen
((The Lord's Prayer)

.The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.