

5th Sunday of Easter Bulletin for St. Ambrose Parish

May 10th, 2020



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ANNIVERSARY: St. Ambrose Parish would like to extend their best wishes to Fr. Henry Smolenaars this coming Thursday May 14th for his 10th Anniversary of Ordination to the priesthood. *Thank you for your loving service to the church. May God bless you abundantly in your priestly ministry!*

LIVE MASS WITH FR. HENRY: I (Fr. Henry) do a live mass every Wednesday and Sunday at 9:00 am (unless there are technical difficulties and then it will be put on after it has been recorded.). The next live mass is this Sunday, streamed live from St. Ambrose Church. If you want to watch, go to our web site at www.stambroseyarmouth.ca or go to my YouTube channel www.youtube.com/channel/UC1CwQV-c8xpu57fbCsu0fLg/videos?view=57&flow=grid
(Copy and paste this link into your web browser if you would like to follow along.)



QUOTE OF THE WEEK: Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance. Prayer suppresses anger. Prayer prevents events of emotions of pride and envy. Prayer draws into the soul the Holy Spirit and raises people to heaven.
- St. Ephrem

SUPPORTING YOUR PARISH FINANCIALLY: During this difficult time, I ask that you continue to support our Parish financially. If you want you can drop donations off at the office during office hours. Please knock on the door to be served. We now have an account on line to which you can donate to. Simply go to <http://www.stambroseyarmouth.ca/> and scroll down the page to the donate button in red and follow the directions.

DECREE OF NULLITY: "The Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth invites people with questions or concerns about the application for nullity process to contact the Marriage Tribunal Office. The office is open and ready to assist anyone who seeks additional information or guidance in how to begin the process. We can be reached by phone at 902-429-9800 ext. 321 or please visit the "Marriage Tribunal" on the Archdiocesan website www.halifaxyarmouth.org under "Pastoral Services".

REFLECTION: The Only Way to Salvation

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” [John 14:6](#)

Are you saved? Hopefully the answer to this is “Yes” in three ways: You were saved by grace through Baptism, you continue to be saved by God’s grace and mercy as you freely choose to follow Him, and you hope to be saved in your final hour so as to enter the glories of Heaven. Anything we accomplish in life means nothing if we cannot answer “Yes” in this threefold way.

It’s also important to be reminded of how we are saved. How is it that we were, are and hope to receive the precious gift of salvation? The answer is simple: Through the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ our one and only Way to the Father. There is no other way we obtain salvation than through Him.

Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that we achieve salvation by simply being “good.” In other words, do your good works save you? The proper answer is both “Yes” and “No.” It is “Yes” only in the sense that our good works are a necessary part of union with Christ. Without Him we can do nothing good. But if we have accepted Christ into our life and, thus, if we are on the road to salvation, then good works will be necessarily present in our life. But the answer is also “No” in the sense that Jesus and Jesus alone is the only Savior. We cannot save ourselves no matter how hard we try to be good.

This discussion is especially familiar among our evangelical Christian brothers and sisters. But it’s a conversation we should be quite familiar with also. At the heart of this conversation is the Person of Jesus Christ. He and He alone must be the central focus of our lives and we must see Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the only Way to Heaven, He is the fullness of the Truth we must believe, and He is the Life that we are called to live and is the source of this new life of Grace.

Reflect, today, upon the central and singular role of Jesus in your life. Without Him you are nothing, but with Him you obtain the life of perfect fulfillment. Choose Him in a very personal and concrete way this day as your Lord and Savior. Humbly admit that you are nothing without Him and let Him into your life so that He can offer you to His loving Father in Heaven.

My Lord and my Savior, I say “Yes” to You this day and accept You into my life as my Lord and Savior. I thank You for the gift of Baptism which began my life of grace and I renew my choice to follow You, this day, so that You may enter more fully into my life. As You enter into my life, please offer me to the Father in Heaven. May all my actions be directed by You so that I may be an eternal offering with You, dear Jesus. Jesus, I trust in You.

Indwelling of the Trinity

Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.” [John 14:23](#)

Children seem to get it. They seem to understand that God dwells in their hearts. Of course, if you asked them how they know this they may look at you with a confused look and not know how to respond. But, nonetheless, somehow, they do understand that God dwells within them.

So, what would you say if someone asked you, “How do you know that God comes and makes His dwelling within you?” Perhaps you also may be at a loss for words to describe this incredible mystery of our faith. Do you believe this to be true? That God wants to make your heart and soul His dwelling place? If so, how does this happen?

By the gift of faith, we, like little children, just know that God wants to dwell within us. We know that He wants to possess our souls, speak to us, strengthen us, lead us and guide us. We know, by the gift of faith, that God is real and desires the deepest and most intimate relationship with us. We just know.

The good news is that faith leads to understanding. This means that the more we are attentive to the voice of God speaking within us, leading and guiding us, the more we begin to understand His indwelling presence. As St. Augustine said, “Faith is to believe what you do not see. The reward of faith is to see what you believe.” Faith in God’s indwelling presence leads us to the answer of the question above. The answer is one that God and God

alone can give to us. We can share our faith with others, give witness to His presence in our lives, and give those around us the answer to that question through faith. How do I know God dwells within me? The answer: Because I see Him there, I speak to Him there, and He speaks to me.

Reflect, today, upon the Lord living within you. Let Him speak to you and, in that ever deepening conversation, allow His Indwelling Presence to grow and to become manifest to others. God wants to not only dwell within you, He also wants to shine through you.

Lord, come live in my heart. Make my heart Your dwelling place. Help me to see You there, to meet You there, to converse with You and to love You in my soul. Jesus, I trust in You.

A Troubled Heart

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” [John 14:27](#)

What a wonderful reminder that we all need to hear on a regular basis. “Do not let your heart be troubled.” And “Do not let your heart be afraid.” How often do you follow that advice?

Interestingly, it’s actually more than advice. It’s a command of love from our Lord. He wants to be clear and wants us to know that a fearful and troubled heart is not of Him. To be troubled and fearful is a great burden and weighs us down. Jesus desperately wants us to be free of these burdens. He wants us to be free so that we can experience the joy of life.

So, what is it that burdens you in life the most? Is there something in your life that you obsess about, are angry about, can’t let go of or that tends to dominate your life? Or perhaps your burden is more subtle. Perhaps there is nothing that overwhelms you but, instead, is a constant burden in a small way, always there in the background. These burdens can be quite difficult when they last from year to year.

The first step to freedom is to see the burden for what it is. Identify it and seek to identify the underlying cause. If the cause of your burden is your own sin, repent of it and seek Confession. This is the best way to experience immediate freedom.

If, however, your burden is the result of another’s actions or some situation in life that is out of your control, then you are in a unique position to surrender to our Lord, giving Him complete control of this situation. Freedom is found in total surrender, trust and abandonment to His will.

Spend some time today reflecting upon that which burdens you the most in life. What is it that weighs heavily upon you? It is this, more than anything else, that Jesus wants to enter into and lift for you. He wants you free so that you can experience the joy that He has to offer you in life.

Lord, I want to be free. I want to experience the joy You have in store for me. When the burdens of life weigh me down, help me to turn to You in my need. Jesus, I trust in You.

Being Pruned

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.” [John 15:1-2](#)

Are you willing to let yourself be pruned? Pruning is necessary if a plant is to produce an abundance of good fruit or beautiful flowers. If, for example, a grapevine is left to grow without pruning, it will produce many small grapes that are good for nothing. But if care is taken to prune the vine, the maximum number of good grapes will be produced.

Jesus uses this image of pruning to teach us a similar lesson in bearing good fruit for His Kingdom. He wants our lives to be fruitful and He wants to use us as powerful instruments of His grace in the world. But unless we are willing to go through the purification of spiritual pruning from time to time, we will not be the instruments that God can use.

Spiritual pruning takes the form of letting God eliminate the vices in our lives so that the virtues can be properly nourished. This is especially done by letting Him humble us and strip away our pride. This can hurt, but the pain associated with being humbled by God is a key to spiritual growth. By growing in humility, we grow ever

more reliant upon the source of our nourishment rather than relying upon ourselves, our own ideas and our own plans. God is infinitely wiser than us and if we can continually turn to Him as our source, we will be far stronger and better prepared to let Him do great things through us. But, again, this requires that we let Him prune us.

Being spiritually pruned means we actively let go of our own will and our own ideas. It means we give up control over our lives and let the master grower take over. It means we trust Him far more than we trust ourselves. This requires a true death to ourselves and a true humility by which we acknowledge we are completely reliant upon God in the same way a branch is reliant upon the vine. Without the vine, we shrivel and die. Being firmly attached to the vine is the only way to life.

Pray this day that you will let the Lord prune away all that is not of Him in your life. Trust in Him and His divine plan and know that this is the only path to bearing the good fruit God wants to bear through you.

Lord, I pray that You prune away all my pride and selfishness. Purify me of my many sins so that I can turn to You in all things. And as I learn to rely upon You, may You begin to bear an abundance of good fruit in my life. Jesus, I trust in You.

Unlimited and Unconditional Love

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you.” [John 15:9](#)

There are three beautiful insights we should take from this passage.

First, the love of the Father for the Son is perfect in every way. It is unconditional and all-consuming. It’s total and selfless. In receiving the Father’s love, Jesus receives all He needs.

Second, the love Jesus receives from the Father cannot be contained. It cannot be kept to Himself. The love of the Father is such that it overflows from Jesus’ heart. It is this overflowing love that pours forth from Jesus to us.

Third, a key thing to ponder in this is that this overflowing love, now given to us, cannot be contained within us either. It must overflow from our hearts to others. Therefore, if we are to be true recipients of the love of the Father and the Son, we must in turn let that love pour forth onto others in an “unlimited” and “unconditional” way.

Think about it. “Unlimited.” “Unconditional.” Is this truly possible? Is it possible to be so radical and total in our love of others? Yes, it’s possible only if the love we speak of originates in the heart of the Father, given to the Son, and then poured out upon us to distribute freely.

Reflect, today, upon the fact that the love you are called to share with others originates in the Heart of the Father in Heaven. The first and most important step in learning to love with the Father’s Heart is to let God love you. This can be very hard to do. It can be hard to let God love you, to receive that love, and to let it affect you deeply. But if you can continually let God love you with His perfect love, you will start to see that this love automatically flows forth from you as if it were an overflowing river of grace and mercy.

Lord, I do love You and know that I am loved by You. Help me to be open to Your love. Help me to let that love sink in so that it may also overflow from my heart to others. Jesus, I trust in You.

You Are Chosen

Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain.” [John 15:16](#)

Children love to play games. When a game is organized between two teams, kids will often line up and wait to be chosen. Each child hopes to be chosen first. It is affirming to be wanted for the team. When a child is chosen last this can be difficult and hurtful.

This reveals the desire within each of us to belong and to be wanted. The good news is that God does choose each one of us. He wants us as a member of His family and He wants us to belong to Him. This is essential to understand and, when it is understood, it is very affirming.

It is a good spiritual practice to regularly reflect upon the fact that God chose us even before we were born. He knew us from all eternity and set His eyes upon us, longing to bring us into His fold. We need to understand this, accept it and believe it. We do belong.

God not only chooses us to belong to Him, He also chooses us for His mission. He wants to use us to go and bear fruit for His Kingdom. He wants to use us for a sacred purpose and a divine calling. Being a member of His “team” means that our lives have purpose and meaning. No matter how “unqualified” we may feel at times to make a difference, we must remember that God does not see us that way. Rather, He sees the infinite potential within each of us and chooses to use that potential for the building up of His Kingdom.

Reflect, this day, on two short phrases: “I have chosen you” and “Go and bear fruit.” Accepting your call from God will change your life and will also change the lives of those whom you are called to serve.

Lord, I know You have chosen me. I accept Your call in my life. I accept the fact that You have appointed me to fulfill Your mission in a unique and glorious way. Help me to continually say “Yes” to Your call. Jesus, I trust in You.

Persecution

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“Remember the word I spoke to you, ‘No slave is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” [John 15:20](#)

Do you want to be like Jesus? If so, beware of what that means. It’s easy to think that the closer we grow to Christ the more we will be loved and understood by the world. We can think that everyone will see our holiness and admire it and all will be good and easy in life.

But all we have to do is look at the life of Christ to know this is not the case. He was obviously perfect in every way. As a result, He was treated with great malice and persecution. It’s hard to fathom the dark truth that they actually killed Him. In the dark of the night, He was arrested, given a mock trial, found guilty and sentenced to death. His punishment was then carried out immediately.

Why did they do this to the Son of God? Why would someone so perfect and merciful in every way be so cruelly treated?

If we were there, as His first followers, we would have most likely been shocked, frightened, scandalized and confused. We may have thought that Jesus messed up and lost hope in Him. But His plan was perfect in every way and His plan did centrally involve Him enduring false accusations and malicious persecution. And by freely accepting this abuse, He redeemed the world.

So back to the original question, “Do you want to be like Jesus?” This is a tough question when we look at it in the light of what happened to Him. “No slave is greater than his master.” “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” These are tough sayings to accept and agree to.

Persecution is something from which we should not run. We should not despair if it happens and we should not hold our head low. Why? Because persecution is a clear sign that we are following in the footsteps of our Master. We are more deeply united to Christ as a result of persecution than we could ever realize.

The key is to know that God intends to use all maltreatment for good if we let Him. And we let Him use it for good when we surrender it to Him and receive it freely, not begrudgingly. Our response must be to “rejoice and be glad” that we have been found worthy to follow in the steps of our Divine Lord.

Ponder today any form of persecution or injustice you suffer for the sake of your faith and embrace of the Gospel. The Lord wants to use that if you let Him.

Lord, I do surrender to You all that weighs me down. I give any suffering I receive for being Your follower. May I not only imitate You in Your suffering, but also in Your willing embrace of it. Jesus, I trust in You.