

IV EASTER 2015
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
ST. JAMES 1.17 ST. JOHN 16.5

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Every good gift and every perfect present comes from God...the Creator of the heavenly lights...he will not take back what he has given us...he does not cause darkness and death but brings us light and life...he will not destroy what he has pronounced good and made perfect... powerful words of hope from our friend Saint James!

When we receive a gift for our birthday or Christmas or some other occasion...it is a good gift because it comes from the goodness of the heart of the person who gave us the gift. The gift becomes a perfect present when we unwrap the package and put the gift to good use...as the giver intended.

Everything we have comes from God. He gives us good gifts and perfect presents...good gifts and perfect presents that help us resist temptation. He does so because he loves us and wants us to succeed. And because he is our Father who loves us, he does not go back on his word. He always keeps his promises.

God does not give us bad gifts or imperfect presents...it is not in his nature to act against our wellbeing. He does not cause us to be tempted any more than he causes the evil things that we see happening all around us that focus on darkness and death. God is about light and life.

Saint James tells us we can expect to see all kinds of trials come our way. He also warns us not to deceive ourselves into thinking it's OK for us to give into our temptations because we think God sent them. That kind of thinking is flawed. It is the kind of mind-game the devil loves to play on us...and it leaves us trapped in our own sins.

Instead, we should rely on God's good gift and perfect present of the Holy Spirit to help us recognize when we are being tempted and to avoid caving in to temptation. God's Holy Spirit helps us take the good gifts we each possess and turn them into the perfect presents...in what we say and in our work.

Saints James tells us God created us and has put us in first place above everything else he has created. We have the responsibility to act

accordingly...like people who have the good gift and perfect present of being in first place with God...but not in arrogant or self-righteous ways. Saint James gives us some practical advice and we need to follow what he says.

Learning to listen to what someone is saying can be challenging...often times we are far too ready to offer our own opinion about things...or we get angry. Instead...we should think before saying anything. Make certain we are hearing correctly what is being said and then say the right thing at the right time. There is a difference between judging a person's action and being judgmental.

In the classic King James prose we are told to "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness". The Good News version..."get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct"...leaves no doubt what James means. When I was growing up the nuns always said to avoid the near occasions of sin...stay away from those things that lead us into the devil's trap.

James tells us we have the "word of truth" planted in our hearts. When we were baptized, we received God's most perfect gift of the Holy Spirit, and our lives were changed forever. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength and help we need to put our Faith into action...to turn our own good gifts into the perfect presents that show our love for God and other people.

When James tells us to submit to God he does not mean blind obedience! We are not mindless robots or pieces being moved around on a chessboard. He means when we accept the "word of truth" planted in our hearts we become active participants in God's plan for salvation. We acknowledge, by the power of the Holy Spirit...God the Father truly is the source of every good gift and perfect present we have.

About that good gift we received for our birthday or Christmas or that special occasion...it will only become the perfect present it was intended to be when we open the package and put it to good use.

What good gift and perfect present has God given us to help us and sustain us through this life? Let's not wait any longer...let's unwrap the package...and put to use the good gift and perfect present God has given us.

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