

ST. JAMES APOSTLE/IX TRINITY 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ACTS 11.27 ST. MATTHEW 20.20

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Today we celebrate...and it's a triple-header if there ever was one! The Feast of Saint James Apostle...Lara's Churching...Liam's Baptism...combine to make this a special day.

James and his brother John worked for their father Zebedee in the family fishing business. By all accounts business was booming. Their friends Peter and Andrew worked for them. Jesus nicknamed James and John *Boanerges...the Thunder Boys...think loud and impulsive hotheads...blowing off steam at the local watering hole.* Jesus chooses the most unlikely characters to be his followers.

Mothers want what's best for their children and Mrs. Zebedee is no exception...but she too is a bit impulsive. She thinks her sons are the greatest ever and asks Jesus for a favor...make certain her sons get the best seats in his kingdom and get to rule along with him...one on the right and the other on the left...the positions of honor.

Jesus doesn't answer Mrs. Zebedee directly. He knows the request is coming from James and John and not from their mother...he tells them they have no idea what they are asking. If they understood the kingdom he was talking about was heaven they wouldn't have asked the question in the first place. God will take care of the seating...don't worry about the place cards.

Jesus tells James and John if they really want to follow him...selfishness and ambition have to give way to humility and selfless service to others. Saint James would later write our Faith must produce good works...giving God lip service is meaningless...we must do what is best for others. We show we are serious about our Faith when we put it into action and see the results.

As a parish we want what's best for mothers and children everywhere...especially the mothers and children within Saint Joseph Parish. It is fitting and proper we thank God for Lara's safe delivery of a healthy Liam. We do this through the Liturgy called the Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth...the Churching of Women.

Churching of Women traces its history to the purification rites in Leviticus. For a forty-day period after the child's birth, a mother was not permitted to enter the Temple, until she was declared ritually clean by the priest. Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple when he was forty days old and kept the prescribed ritual. Every February 2nd we celebrate the Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin...also called the Presentation of Christ and Candlemas...and light candles to remind us Jesus is the Light of the World.

There is no such purification meaning attached to the Churching of Women today...it is a Thanksgiving. We can thank Pope Gregory the Great in a letter he sent to Saint Augustine of Canterbury in the late 6th Century telling him the birth of a child is a wonderful gift from God...and the mother should be encouraged to return to Mass as quickly as possible.

Mother's want what's best for their children and so does the Church. Jesus told his disciples to go out to all people everywhere and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them. All people includes children...we are doing what is best for Liam...and welcoming him into the Church...making him a member of the Body of Christ.

Jesus also instructs us to teach children the faith. Liam's godparents stood in for him today in making promises they will teach him the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and at the proper time bring him to the bishop to be confirmed. With their love and support and that of Lara and Jason, Liam's faith will become strong and productive...like Saint James says it should be.

Today we thank God for the life and work of Saint James the Apostle...for Lara's Churching ...for the safe delivery of Liam and for the new life in Jesus commenced today with his baptism. Baptisms are by nature a parish event and an opportunity for all of us to think about our own baptisms...and our parents and godparents who have helped shape us into who we are.

We couldn't ask for a better gift from God than today's triple-header.

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