

IV EASTER 2018
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
ST. JAMES 1.17 ST. JOHN 16.5

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***EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE,
COMING DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF THE
HEAVENLY LIGHTS, WHO DOES NOT CHANGE LIKE
SHIFTING SHADOWS.***

Who doesn't like receiving a gift...especially when it is totally unexpected? Gifts can take many forms...such as a framed print from a friend we haven't seen in a time. The gift becomes even more special when our friend suddenly shows up at our front door.

God gives us good and perfect gifts...in fact it would never occur to him to give us bad and imperfect gifts...that would not be in his nature! He is...as James tells us...the Father of the heavenly lights...he does not change his character...he is not like shifting shadows that change their appearance.

We're should be grateful for the material gifts and friendships God has blessed us with. We should also be grateful for the singular gift of the Holy Spirit who helps build our characters...empowers us to do good works... and keeps us from acting like shifting shadows.

This morning's Epistle is Part I of II. Saint James is very clear on how we are to apply the gifts God gives us in our lives...since the Holy Spirit is active in the good works we do. He also cautions us...since we have the gift of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives:

- *We should be good listeners*
- *We should think before we speak*
- *We should not get angry easily*
- *We should get rid of unhealthy, immoral and destructive habits*

Human anger...James reminds us...does not do God's work...and usually does not produce good results. James will have more to say about good works next week...stay tuned!

In this morning's Gospel...Jesus talks more explicitly about the gift he would send to the disciples...once he was back in heaven with the Father. He tells them it is better for him to go away...then the *Comforter* would come to them...*Comforter* means *Helper* and

Strengtheners. The Holy Spirit would help them and keep their faith strong.

It is the same Holy Spirit Jesus promised he would send to the disciples...who helps us and keeps our faith strong. James calls the Holy Spirit the "word of truth" which he says we have planted in our hearts. We received God's most perfect gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptisms...and our lives were changed forever.

James also tells us to "Submit to God". He does not mean surrendering our free will in an act of blind submission! He means that when we accept the "word of truth" planted in our hearts...we become active participants in God's plan for salvation. We acknowledge he is the source of everything we have...those good and perfect gifts...and we ask for his help in using them wisely.

Gifts and presents are only useful if we open up the packages they are wrapped in and start using them for their intended purpose. The good perfect presents we receive from God our Father, work in the same way. We can keep them tightly wrapped inside us, or we can let them go to work.

Jesus promised after he went back to heaven he would send the Holy Spirit...the Comforter...to help us and give us strength and guidance...and we would be happy for his help. Jesus always keeps his promise.

Next week is Rogation Sunday and we will take time to thank God for another of his good and perfect gifts...Planet Earth! We will bless the seeds the children from the pre-school recently planted in the Saint Francis Garden...and pray they will grow into healthy plants.

The disciples received a gift they didn't expect. We look forward to Pentecost and ask God to increase the good and perfect gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives every day...

...HE IS THE GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT FROM ABOVE!

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