

## V EASTER 2019

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

#### FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ST. JAMES 1.22-27 ST. JOHN 16.23-33



What does it mean to LIVE our faith in Jesus Christ? It means we must put into practice God's word. It means listening isn't enough...we must take ACTION!

James tells us when we look at ourselves in a mirror we get a reflection of what we look like in real life. But it's only a reflection...and when we walk away from the mirror we forget what we look like.

Our faith has to be more than an hour of hearing God's word and receiving the Holy Eucharist on Sunday morning. Our faith experience has to extend beyond the church building...it has to be put into ACTION...our faith must define who we really are...not like a reflection in the mirror we quickly forget.

God's word...James tells us...is planted in our hearts...and that's where it begins to grow and change our lives. The way it starts to grow is by asking God for his Holy Spirit to increase our faith daily. The way our faith grows is through the power of prayer...asking God for help.

Today is the Fifth and Last Sunday after Easter...commonly called **Rogation Sunday**. The word **Rogation** comes from the Latin verb **rogare...to ask**. Beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century...parish churches in Europe held processions on Rogation Sunday that went to every corner of the parish...asking God to bless the spring planting and for a bountiful harvest in the fall.

At one time a parish was defined as a geographical area...not just the church building. Rogation processions still occur today and include the custom of "beating the bounds"...marking the parish boundaries and asking God to bless the parish and its work.

Rogation processions were important in agrarian societies that made their living of the land. Seeds planted in the ground in the spring must "die" in order to be "resurrected" as the crops that will be harvested in the fall. Our bodies planted in the ground when we die will be resurrected into new and glorious bodies in heaven.

Rogation Sunday and the three Rogation Days are about planting seeds and asking God to bless the crops. The harvest takes place in the fall and the day we talk about harvests is Thanksgiving Day...when we ask Jesus to hurry up and return and harvest us. Rogationtide is perfect conclusion to the Easter Season.

Rogationtide is ultimately about prayer, the kind of prayer that asks God for the help we need to both know and do what is right and pleasing to him. In the Collect we ask God to "inspire" us not only to think those things that are good...but then to do those things that are good. The perfect prayer and a good place to start any conversation with God is the Lord's Prayer...it is simply put a CALL TO ACTION!

James tells us we must put our faith into action. Faith in action is the way we show we are serious about God's love for us, and sharing that love with others. James writes pure and genuine religion in God's eyes is how well we take care of orphans and widows and to keep our selves from being corrupted by the world. Widows and orphans were at a distinct disadvantage in James' time...they depended on family and friends for help.

Our obligation to help others extends beyond our family and friends. Pure and genuine religion means showing love and compassion toward everyone! It means doing the right thing for everyone all the time. We will spend the long Trinity Season trying to follow Saint James' instructions. We will work hard to LIVE OUR FAITH in what we say and what we do.

If we find ourselves getting discouraged in a world that seems less interested in God and more concerned about instant gratification in everything else...we need to pay attention to what Jesus tells us in the Gospel. He has not left us alone...we have God's Holy Helper.

What we will experience is peace beyond our wildest imaginations...the peace that comes from knowing Jesus and the transformative power of God's Spirit. Jesus tells us the world will make us suffer...but we are to be brave! He has defeated the world.

