

V Easter 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

St. James 1.22-27 St. John 16.23-33

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We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land...the opening words to the great Thanksgiving hymn we sang at the beginning of today's Mass. We asked for God to bless what we have planted...and pray for an abundant harvest...and for all his love. What has been planted is God's word...we want to see it grow!

The three days immediately preceding the Ascension Day are called the Rogation Days. We can trace their history in the Western Church to the Fifth Century. They were adopted in England in the Eighth Century. The Fifth Sunday after Easter...Rogation Sunday...takes its name from the three Rogation Day. Together they form a short transitional season that takes us from Easter to Pentecost.

The word **Rogation** comes from the Latin verb **rogare**...to ask. Beginning in the Fifth Century, the custom developed in European countries of "beating the bounds"...holding a procession that went to every corner of the parish...asking God to bless the spring planting and for a bountiful harvest in the fall.

This morning we will bless the seeds and saplings planted by the pre-school in our Saint Francis Garden. We will ask God for his special blessing on the fig tree planted in 2020...to replace the damaged tree we had removed. The new fig tree is a gift from the pre-school. We will also "beat the bounds" of the Garden.

Today's Epistle reading picks us where we left off last week. James continues his teaching about hearing God's Word and acting on it. Last week he reminded us every good gift and perfect present come from God. He gave us some practical advice on how to us see God's gift wisely. This week...James expands his teaching on what it means to do God's work.

James tells us it's not enough to come to Mass and hear God's Word...we must put it into practice. We deceive our selves when we fail to take action...it's like looking at our selves in a mirror. In James' time mirrors were often made of polished metal...the reflection was distorted. Even the mirrors in our homes

today don't reflect who we really are. There is no life in the image we are looking at.

We want to live our lives in ways that are pleasing to God. The reflection we see can't do that...only we can. James tells to listen closely to God's Word...it sets us free to put into practice what we have heard...and God will bless the work we do. And part of that work is what James calls "pure and genuine religion"...it extends beyond taking care of widows and orphans...it means helping anyone who needs our help.

Rogationtide is about asking God to bless our work and provide for our needs...material and spiritual. Jesus tells us that anything we ask of God our Father he will give us if we ask him in his Name. God our Father wants us to ask of him. And Jesus tells us we should ask of God so that we may receive from him and so that our happiness will be complete.

God wants us to be satisfied with the gifts he provides and in the work we do. It's entirely proper for us to ask for the material things we need and for good health so we can continue to do his work. We shouldn't be afraid to ask God for these things...Jesus makes that abundantly clear. The perfect prayer to begin with is the Lord's Prayer.

The next major events in the life of the Church are the Ascension Day and Pentecost. Jesus promised his disciples that when he went back to heaven he would not leave us alone or without help. He would send the Holy Spirit...the Helper...the Comforter...to guide us into thinking and doing what is right.

Rogation Sunday and Thanksgiving Day are the "bookends" of the Church's "growing season"...the Trinity Season. We spent the first half of the Church Year having God's Word planted in our hearts. Now it's time to let the Holy Spirit help us take what was planted in our hearts and help it grow and mature and produce a rich harvest of good works.

Jesus has one final good-bye for us before he returns to heaven on Ascension Day. He wants us to know everything he has told us is so we will have peace united with him. And we should always pray for peace in the world. Jesus tells us the world will make us suffer...but he has defeated the world!

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