

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT 2020

Friends, a couple of practical things I want to mention before I begin my homily. First, to Annunciation parishioners, if you find yourself seriously ill or tested positive for the coronavirus, please let me know so that we can pray for you. Second, the church will be open during the day every day from 9am to 7pm seven days a week, and all are welcome to come and pray, making sure to observe social distancing. And finally, I know the quality of this video is not great--this is a security camera not made for the purpose of televising Mass. If you'd like another video stream to watch, linked on the webpage you're watching from there's Archbishop Rodi's Mass and the EWTN Mass and Fr. Robert Barron's Mass. All worthy of watching I'm sure. This video is a 24/7 livestream, and so if you desire to make a spiritual communion with the Lord, note that I will continue to hold Eucharistic Adoration on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at 7am followed by Holy Mass at 8 am. Wednesday adoration and Mass are 4:30pm and 5:30 p.m., respectively.

And Sunday Mass as you know is at the regular time of 10:45 a.m.

Now...

“Be not afraid!”

Be not afraid. This is the motto of Saint John Paul II, repeating those words that were uttered by Jesus in two different places when the disciples were afraid: when he was walking on the water to the Twelve on the Sea of Galilee, and when Peter James and John heard the voice of God the Father on Mount Tabor in the Transfiguration, which we just read at Mass two weeks ago.

In those two situations, Jesus tells his followers, “Be Not Afraid,” and that’s because in both cases he—Jesus—was right there to take care of them and protect them when they were confused and afraid and didn’t understand what was going on...

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Fear is an appropriate topic to talk about today, because it is quite understandable that many people are afraid of this pandemic, which is already a horrific scourge in some places and is now beginning to affect our part of the world. Those in our country who have not experienced at least some fear at what has happened in the world in recent weeks are, I believe, in denial about how serious this situation is.

Now, I want to give two examples regarding fear—and the first is from the Book of Job.

The Book of Job was a comfort to me at a certain time in my life. I realized that if this book could be in the Bible, if this book could be part of Divine Revelation, then even though I did not understand the negative things I had experienced in my life, even though I did not understand the suffering and evil which are so sad, so very, very sad, both in my own life and in what I had witnessed in the lives of others—even though I did not understand the mystery of evil, Job taught me: God understands.

God understands it all. God understands things we will never be able to understand. Remember that God is the Father, and we are His children. There are some things

that children by definition never understand that the Father does understand...

The idea of Divine Providence, that God knows all and also that somehow all can and will be made to glorify Him—that is comforting. It certainly calms my fears.

So...

So, I encourage you during these difficult times that one person to imitate is Job. It might be good for you to read that book—it's not too long. Despite his friends' complaints that he must have through sin brought upon himself the suffering he experienced, and despite having lost everything—first livestock, then family, then his health--no matter the situation Job stubbornly held on to his allegiance to God. It appears to me that Job was never for a moment afraid, for he had a holy stubbornness, I would say. Even as he was upset and bewildered at what God had allowed to happen to him, it's clear that Job's love for God never wavered. And that is because Job understood that while he doesn't know everything, God does.

Friends, we are made to praise God, and to do so even—and maybe especially—in times of suffering, adversity and evil. We do not need to understand the world in order to praise God: we need only recognize that that is who we have been created to be, persons who praise our Almighty Lord.

Now I'd like to switch gears and ask you to consider the Annunciation.

The Annunciation, as we know, is that actual historical event where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, the mother of the Savior of the World. Today we were to have cake and a special celebration at our parish for the Feast of the Annunciation, which is on Wednesday. Remembering the Annunciation should a special day each year for us here at Our Lady of the Annunciation Parish. This year, those plans we had been working on now seem so very, very far away. The past couple weeks have really changed things in a powerful way for all of us, haven't they?

Again, at the historical event of the Annunciation the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she was to be the mother of the Savior of the World...

And Mary, who her entire life was “filled with grace,” was not afraid at this news, but only wondered how this could be, since she was a virgin and had had no relations with a man.

Mary had no fear. Because she had a perfect faith, a gift from the Lord of being “filled with grace,” she had no fear. She was not afraid of the angel Gabriel, she was not afraid of the pregnancy that had been announced to her, she was not afraid of the unknown, of that which she did not understand.

That’s what God’s grace does, is give us the faith to love Him no matter what, without fear. And so, God’s grace gives us the ability to handle the unknown, even the ability to endure natural evils in this life such as plagues, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes... as well as the ability to confront moral and social evils such as poverty, injustice, hatred, persecution...

And God's grace also provides the power of faith for a simple woman to trust in His plan at a surprise pregnancy, and even for that same woman to endure the radical evil... of having to watch her Son be crucified on a Cross...

Friends, while we may not fall ill ourselves, we nonetheless are sadly watching untold numbers of others suffer. And it's not inappropriate to have moments of fear for our own safety and that of our loved ones...but our faith should be a general inoculation against the anxiety that so many are now experiencing. Let us imitate the faith of Mary—and of Job—and trust in God no matter what. God bless you.