

NOTRE DAME PARISH

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Whoever lives the truth comes to the light.



It's easy to use the analogies of "light" and "darkness" when academic notions are discussed. "Light" is mastery of the subject. "Darkness" is ignorance. However, when we apply these analogies to the faith and morality, we can no longer speak of "light" as mastery, but as commitment. "Light"

becomes faithfulness. "Darkness" becomes rejection. In Jesus' discourse to Nicodemus, he spoke of "light" and "darkness." But, the light was not the believer's commitment to God. The "Light" was Christ, the Father's commitment to his creation.

MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, March 13 @ 4PM
Tom & Margaret McCarthy
Ed Raab
Stanley Jasinski, Jr.

Sunday, March 14 @ 9:30AM
Ruth Smith

Monday, March 15 @ 8AM
Mary Jane Staresinich

Tuesday, March 16 @ 8AM
John Benish, Sr.

Wednesday, March 17 @ 8:30AM
Ted Rickard

Thursday, March 18 @ 8:30AM
Beverly Battle

Friday, March 19 @ 8AM
Kazwara, Maronisi, Szostak
Families

Saturday, March 20 @ 4PM
Frank Parkerson

Oremus – Let Us Pray

- For catechumens preparing for their baptism at Easter
- For courage to live our Christian faith in the light
- For Pope Francis on the anniversary of his election as pope
- For the many in the world experiencing persecution.
- For healing the wounds of racism
- For continued progress in vaccinations against COVID-19
- For a renewed spirit of stewardship over the resources and goods of the earth
- For perseverance in Lenten discipline

The Fascination of Royalty

Oprah Winfrey's television interview of the royals, Harry and Meghan, prompted me to ask, "What is the public's fascination with royalty?"

Fairy tales and children's literature are replete with images of kings and queens, princes and princesses. Most live happily ever after.

Reality paints a decidedly opposite picture. Consider the assassination of Julius Caesar, the "would be" dictator; King John's conflict with his barons at Runnymede; the family dysfunction of King Henry II depicted in the movie, *The Lion in Winter*; the American revolt against George III, and the "crowned heads" that led the world into "The Great War."

Britain's royal house has survived many crises that might have ended it: Queen Victoria's

prolonged grief and isolation at the death of her husband, Prince Albert; the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936; the divorce of Prince Charles and Diana; the death of Diana; and now the accusation of racism by the Duchess of Sussex.

Note that the language of worship, also, is suffused with royal imagery. Christ is king. Mary is queen. Mass prayers repeatedly implore "the divine majesty."

Our Lord never referred to God as king; rather, he addressed him as *abba* or Father. He rejected the people's effort to proclaim him king and, before Pilate, refused the title. Christ emptied himself of his divine power.

Is our fascination with royalty a child's dream? Or, perhaps, is it a voyeuristic desire to peek into



the lives and scandals of the rich and famous?

I pity those born into such circumstances. Who can really live under such scrutiny, confined by protocols, defined by expectations, always a public person, and yet distant from ordinary folks?

Father Keith & Rocco

Remembering What Brought the Irish to America



Detail from The Irish National Famine Monument showing a Coffin Ship. Sculpture by John Behan.

The traditional parades, wearing of the green, and tanked-up celebrations of Saint Patrick's Day in America tend to blur the dismal conditions that brought the first wave of Irish to these shores in the 1840s.

In September 1845, Irish farmers noticed the leaves on their potato plants starting to wilt and turn black. When the potatoes were dug up, they initially appeared to be fine, but then rotted within days. A fungus called *Phytophthora infestans*, accidentally brought from North America, was rapidly spreading. The cool, moist climate of Ireland allowed the spores to thrive. Virtually overnight, entire fields were infected.

The Irish potato famine, also known as the Great

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Saint Joseph and the Pandemic

by James Martin, S.J.

Last December, Pope Francis announced a year of St. Joseph in honor of one of his favorite saints. With his apostolic letter “*Patris corde*” (“With a father’s heart”), the pope invited the universal church to meditate on and pray for the patronage of the foster father of Jesus.

Joseph’s example and patronage come at the perfect time. At a time when a global pandemic has forced millions to live hidden away, isolated and alone, we can see Joseph as a model of the hidden life. We know, too, that Joseph died before Jesus’ public ministry; Mary’s husband was undoubtedly familiar with suffering. So we can see him as our patron, too, praying for us as he understands our struggles with illness.

Like many saints whose lineage can be traced back to the earliest days of the church, very little is known of St. Joseph, besides what we learn from the few lines written about him in the Gospels. He was of King David’s line and engaged to a young woman from Nazareth. Mary was found, quite unexpectedly, to be pregnant. But Joseph, “being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to

public disgrace,” as the Gospel of Matthew tells it, planned to dissolve his betrothal quietly. Even before Jesus was born, then, Joseph’s tender compassion and forgiving heart were on full display.

But God had other plans. As with another troubled Joseph – a patriarch in the book of Genesis – God used a dream to reveal his redemptive plans for the carpenter from Nazareth. In the dream, an angel let Joseph in on Mary’s secret: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” That same angel, after the birth of Mary’s son, advised Joseph to take the child and his mother to Egypt to flee the murderous King Herod. And Joseph listened.

Those years were Joseph’s time. A time spent caring for his foster son and teaching him carpentry. In Joseph’s workshop in Nazareth, Jesus would have learned about the raw materials of his craft: which wood was best suited for chairs and tables, which worked best for yokes and

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plows. An experienced Joseph would have taught his apprentice the right way to drive a nail with a hammer, to drill a clean and deep hole into a plank and to level a ledge or lintel.

Joseph would also have passed on to Jesus the values required to become a good carpenter. You need patience (for waiting until the wood is dry and ready), good judgment (for ensuring that your plumb line is straight), persistence (for sanding until the tabletop is smooth) and honesty (for charging people a fair price). Alongside his teacher, a young Jesus labored and built, contributing all the while to the common good of Nazareth and the surrounding towns. It is not difficult to imagine that the virtues Jesus learned from his teacher – patience, judgment, persistence and honesty – served him well in his later ministry. Joseph helped fashion Jesus into what the theologian John Haughey, S.J., called “the instrument most needed for the salvation of the world.”

But almost as soon as Jesus started his ministry, Joseph disappears – at least in the Gospel narratives. Significantly, Joseph is not listed among the guests at the wedding feast at Cana, which marked the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. Did he die before his son had reached adulthood?

At an art exhibit at the

Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City several years ago, I came upon a portrait entitled “The Death of Saint Joseph.” In the huge portrait, painted by Francisco Goya, an ailing Joseph lies in bed. Standing beside his bed is a youthful-looking Jesus, perhaps 16 or 17 years old, beardless, wearing a long tunic, eyes trained intently on Joseph. Sitting by the bed is Mary.

Goya’s painting beautifully captures the sadness that must have surrounded the early death of Joseph. A similar sadness has been with us for many months, the sadness that surrounds the deaths of so many from Covid. Joseph is traditionally invoked as the patron of a “happy death.” But his could not have been a happy death for Jesus or Mary. The Gospels tell us nothing about their mourning. There are no lines about Mary’s grief, no verses about Jesus’ sadness. The Holy Family, then, is like many families today who grieve the loss of parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and children during this pandemic. So much of their grief, too, must be done in isolation, not appearing in any headlines.

The hiddenness of Joseph’s life can also speak to those overwhelmed by the pandemic, who wonder if God is with them, if God sees. Appearing only briefly in the Gospels, given no words at all to speak, Joseph leads a life of quiet service to God, a life that remains almost totally unknown to us. And yet his life – filled with countless hidden, unseen, unrecorded acts

of love – was of infinite value. Joseph’s life says to all of us, “God sees.”

His hidden life is intimately shared by millions of people making their way through the pandemic: the health care worker on the frontlines whose sacrifices are hidden even from her family. The single parent who cannot confide to anyone her intense worry about her children. The adult child of an aging parent living in a nursing home, terrified about the spread of illness among elderly residents. The checkout person, the public transit worker, the maintenance person, barely eking out a living before this year’s economic crisis, who now have no way of “working from home.” The priest who has celebrated countless funerals for Covid victims and their families, worried that he wasn’t able to comfort them as he would hope to. The Covid patient dying alone, weeping in frustration and anguish, wondering what is happening.

So many hidden lives. So many unseen acts of love in this pandemic. So many secret prayers raised to heaven. The husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus understands them all. +



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Hunger, had begun. The 1851 Irish census recorded more than a million deaths between 1845-1849. A cleric gives this firsthand account:

Several instances in this parish of almost all the members of families being carried off from the effects of famine. I have known some families where five members have perished...Fever is now superadded to famine and dysentery here, and numbers are suffering from it. The evil is likely to be very much extended and aggravated from want of a local fever hospital. I know instances of all the members of families being laid sick in fever, and no one to attend them. The food supplied by relief committees suits not the condition of the sick...The new relief act has not as yet come into action here, and the gentry do not seem oversolicitous to work it.

Emigration has taken place to a great extent from this parish, and mostly of those classes of persons who were the most thriving, industrious, and well behaved in general. As if the cup of misery were not sufficiently charged with "gall and vinegar," some landlords here are serving their tenants with notice of ejection, so that lest famine should not kill its victims, extermination by landlords will be added – April 22, 1847.

Even before the famine, Irish farmers lived in extreme poverty. They were tenant farmers working land owned by the British. The absentee landlords collected rents, but rarely, if ever, visited their properties. Middlemen, who often managed the farms, sought to increase rents by dividing the farms into smaller parcels. The farms became too small to hire help, leaving many Irish unemployed. In order to survive, farmers had nothing to depend on but a small plot of potatoes to feed their families and livestock.

When the famine hit, farmers fell behind on rent. Some British landlords evicted starving peasants and burned their homes. The blight continued and peaked in 1847 (also known as Black '47) because suffering was so extreme. Weakened by hunger, many Irish succumbed to starvation or diseases like dysentery, typhus, and infection.

The British response to the deepening crisis was slow. Parliament passed the Soup Kitchen Act which led to nearly 3 million people lining up

each day for a bowl of soup, often their only meal of the day. Unable to keep up with demand, many of the soup kitchens went bankrupt and the government shut down the program.

It wasn't until 1997 that Britain apologized for their response to the famine, saying they had "failed their people."

Desperate to escape the crisis, a flood of emigrants loaded in Canadian timber ships bound for North America. Passage was cheap because the ships were not intended for human cargo, and conditions were horrific. They became known as "coffin ships" because so many died during the voyage.

Starving and desperate, more than 1.5 million Irish sought refuge in the United States. Today many Americans of Irish descent can trace their heritage back to this pivotal time in history. +



THE STEERAGE OF AN ATLANTIC STEAMSHIP FORTY YEARS AGO.

VIII. JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



The tears that Jesus entrusts to the daughters of Jerusalem as an act of compassion, these tears of women are always present in this world.

They fall silently down their cheeks. And undoubtedly, even more often, they fall unseen in the heart, like the tears of blood spoken of by Catherine of Siena.

Not that women alone should weep, as if it were their lot to grieve, passive and helpless, as part of a history that men alone are called to write.

Their grief embraces all those tears shed quietly and without fanfare in a world where there is much to weep for. Tears of terror-stricken children and of those wounded on battlefields crying out for a mother, the tears of the sick and dying, alone on the threshold of the unknown. Tears of dismay falling on the face of this world, which was created on the first day for tears of joy, in the shared rejoicing of man and woman.

IX. JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME



Lord, you fell a third time, exhausted and humiliated, beneath the weight of your cross. Like all those girls forced onto the streets by groups of traffickers in human slavery. Like you, they cannot hold up under the exhaustion and humiliation of seeing their young bodies manipulated, abused and ruined, together with their hope and dreams. Those young women feel divided in two: sought out and used, while at the same time rejected and condemned by a society that conveniently ignores this kind of exploitation, the fruit of its throwaway culture. On one of many nights spent on streets of Rome, I looked for a young woman recently arrived in Italy. Not seeing her in her group, I kept calling out her name: "Mercy!" In the darkness, I caught sight of her curled up and half asleep at the edge of the street. When she heard me calling, she awoke and said she couldn't go on. "I can't take it any more", she kept repeating. I thought of her mother. If she knew what had happened to her daughter, she would burst into tears.