

3rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

610

[He said to them], "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" - Lk 4:21-22

Vision Statement: "To offer every person in our community a life-changing encounter with Jesus."

POPE FRANCIS

JOSEPH: TENDER FATHER



Today, I would like to explore the figure of Saint Joseph as a father in tenderness.

In my Apostolic Letter Patris corde, (8 December 2020) I had the opportunity to reflect on this aspect of tenderness, an aspect of Saint Joseph's personality. In fact, although the Gospels do not give us any details about how he exercised his paternity, we can be sure that his being a "just" man also translated into the education he gave to Jesus.

"Joseph saw Jesus grow day by day 'in wisdom and age and favour before God and man" (Lk 2:52): so the Gospel says. As the Lord had done with Israel, so Joseph did with Jesus: "he taught him to walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him (cf. Hos 11:3-4)." (Patris corde, 2). It is beautiful, this definition in the Bible, that shows God's relationship with the people of Israel. It is the same relationship, we think, that there was between Saint Joseph and Jesus.

The Gospels attest that Jesus always used the word "father" to speak of God and his love. Many parables have as their protagonist the figure of a father. One of the most famous is certainly that of the merciful Father, recounted by Luke the Evangelist (cf. Lk 15:11-32). This parable emphasizes not only the experience of sin and forgiveness, but also the way in which forgiveness reaches the person who has done wrong. The text says: "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him" (v. 20). The son was expecting a punishment, a justice that at most could have given him the place of one of the servants, but he finds himself wrapped in his father's embrace. Tenderness is something greater than the logic of the world. It is an unexpected way of doing justice. That is why we must never forget that God is not frightened by our sins: let us fix this clearly in our minds. God is not frightened by our sins, he is greater than our sins: he is the father, he is love, he is tender. He is not frightened by our sins, our mistakes, our slip-ups, but he is frightened by the closure of our hearts - this, yes, this makes him suffer - he is frightened by our lack of faith in his love. There is great tenderness in the experience of God's love. And it is beautiful to think that the first person to transmit this reality to Jesus was Joseph himself. For the things of God always come to us through the mediation of human experiences. Long ago - I don't know if I have already told this story – a group of young people who did theatrical drama, a pop theatre group, ahead of the curve, were

struck by this parable of the merciful father and decided to create a pop theatre production on this matter, with this story. And they did it well. And the story is that, at the end, a friend listens to a son who is estranged from his father, who wanted to return home but was afraid that his father would kick him out and punish him. And the friend, said, "Send a messenger to say that you want to return home, and if your father will receive you, to put a handkerchief in the window, the one you can see as soon as you take the last part of the path home". And this was done. And the work, with singing and dancing, continues until the moment that the son turns onto the last stretch of the road and sees the house. And when he looks up, he sees the house full of white handkerchiefs: full of them. Not one, but three or four in every window. This is God's mercy. He is not deterred by our past, by the bad things we have done; settling the accounts with God is a beautiful thing, because we begin to talk, and he embraces us. Tenderness!

So, we can ask ourselves if we ourselves have experienced this tenderness, and if we in turn have become its witnesses. For tenderness is not primarily an emotional or sentimental

matter: it is the exloved and welcomed precisely in our poverty and misery, and thus transformed by God's love.

God does not rely only on our talents, but also on our redeemed weakness. This, for example, makes Saint Paul say that there is also a plan for one's fragility. In fact, he wrote to the community of Corinth: "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of

perience of feeling St Joseph, father in tenderness, teach us to accept that we are Loved precisely in that which is weakest in us. Grant that we may place no obstacle between our poverty and the greatness of God's love. Stir in us the desire to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that we may be forgiven and also made capable of loving tenderly our brothers and sisters in their poverty. Be close to those who have done wrong and are paying the price for it; Help them to find not only justice but also tenderness so that they can start again. And teach them that the first way to begin again is to sincerely ask for forgiveness, to feel the Father's caress. Amen.

Satan, to harass me...Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:7-9). The Lord does not take away all our weaknesses, but helps us to walk on with our weaknesses, taking us by the hand. He takes our weaknesses by the hand and places himself by our side. And this is tenderness.

The experience of tenderness con-

Continued on Last Page

GOSPEL MEDITATION

THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK

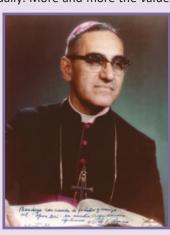


St. Oscar Romero (1917-1980) was a "Salvadoran Roman Catholic archbishop who was a vocal critic of the violent activities of government armed forces, right-wing groups, and leftist guerrillas involved in El Salvador's civil conflict (Encyclopedia Britannica)." As a voice of the voiceless, he was an outspoken champion of the poor who were the ones most affected by the civil unrest and violence. His advocacy provoked several attempts on his life. Nonetheless, St.

Oscar Romero was convinced that before all else his faith in the resurrected Christ and the values of the Gospel trumped any earthly concern or worry. He walked with complete confidence and trust. On March 24, 1980, St. Oscar Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass. Such is often the fate of those who challenge the socio-political agendas of the day.

We may look at the example of witness of St. Oscar Romero as something extraordinary. In one sense it is. Through the power of God, an ordinary human being did extraordinary things. But, in and of himself, St. Oscar Romero was simply a humble, loving servant of God. Oscar knew not only the power of love but the risk that comes when loving unconditionally. The beauty of God's message was able to shine in and through him because he was able to step out of the way and be a vessel. One can assume that for St. Oscar Romero, one's earthly life has no merit when faith, integrity, conviction, zeal and love are jettisoned. Fear and apprehension had no grip on this man who not only saw but spoke the truth.

Do we speak the truth? It makes us feel good to speak of God as love. But have we ever considered the ramifications of this radical message? There are assaults on human life occurring daily. More and more the value and worth of a human being is



being reduced and minimalized. We are becoming widgets in the production of life. In our whole simple humble ways, we too are called to be prophets. Knowing who you are and what is within your means to do, how can you make God's love real, stand up for what is right, and give witness to the sacredness of all that is around you? —LPI

CELEBRATING OUR FAITH

SACRAMENTS SCHEDULE

Mass Schedule

Incense is used at 9:30am Sunday Mass. Ministers have Glutenfree Hosts. 7:30 am Sunday Mass is Broadcast on Facebook at Epiphanyparish.com, with drive up Communion till 8:30am (Canopy). *Masks Required at 2 Masses.

Sunday, January 23, 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

7:30am* Raymond and Margaret Miles

9:30am Thomas Eaton 11:30am* People of the Parish

Monday, Jan. 24, Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop

7:00am Lucy Mancias Lector: Kara Esker EME: Deb Willenborg

Tuesday, Jan. 25, Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

7:00am Kathy Albee 8:15am Tom Van Deven Lector: Kris Angles EME: Dorothy Meier

Wednesday, Jan. 26, Sts. Timothy & Titus, Bishops

7:00am Ted and Catherine Schmitz 8:15am Carl and Anna Ekstam

Lector: Chris Niebur EMEs: Lynda Arnold, Ed & Newze Nnakwe

Thursday, Jan. 27, Weekday

7:00am Leone Lamb 8:15am Lois Haas

Lector: Jennifer Kamradt EME: Darly Menke

Friday, Jan. 28, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Priest

7:00am Kay Schultz

Lector: Mathew and Katrina Kinate EME: Aggie Hatch

Saturday, Jan. 29, Blessed Virgin Mary

7:30am All Souls' Day Memorial Society

4:00pm Pat McCarney

Lector: Steve G. EME: Barb Burdett, Mary C. & Keith Walljasper

Sunday, January 30, 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

7:30am* John Heller 9:30am Kimberly Dietz 11:30am* People of the Parish

Confession Times

7:30am **M-F** 7am,3pm **SAT** 7am,9am,11am **SUN**

PARISH UPDATES

Epiphany Youth Ministry

High School Youth Group - This Sunday, January 23rd is our MOVIE NIGHT, 6-8:30pm in The Crib (previously called the convent/pre-K/art room)! We're watching the movie "Unplanned" to remember the anniversary of Roe V. Wade and to pray for unborn children and their parents. This movie is rated R, so parental permission is required!

Not getting our emails? Sign up by emailing kara.esker@epiphanypar ish.com

Catholic Heart Work Camp is a weeklong summer mission trip for teens - you'll work tirelessly, think deeply, celebrate Mass, and build relationships. You'll dance, laugh till your side hurts, pray, change on the inside, and be part of transforming lives and communities for Christ! 8th graders and up are invited to join us in Memphis TN from June 12th-18th for Catholic Heart Work Camp. Contact Kara (kara.esker@epiphanyparish.com) for the registration link!

Junior High Youth Group is open to all 6-8th graders and meets once a month. Our next Junior High Youth Group is Friday, February 11th from 7-8:30pm. Come to the parish hall to hang out, have fun, and grow in faith together!

Date Night with Nick and Kari Becker

What is the one thing your kids need to know? What is the one thing your kids need to know?? Come find out and learn from decades of parenting experience. Friday, February 11th from 6:30-8:00 in the Parish Hall. Seating is limited to sign up on the website today. Contact Stephanie.Demboski@epiphanyparish.com for details.

Young at Heart Needs You!

Young at Heart has an opening for a representative from Epiphany to serve on the Board of Directors. Duties include attending 3-4 Board meetings a year, assisting at events as hosts, and planning the year's calendar. Young at Heart is open to everyone 50 years young and older. The purpose of the group is to foster fellowship among older adults within the parishes of the Bloomington/Normal area. YAH sponsors spiritual activities, dinners, and entertainment and educational opportunities. Please call Mary-Margaret McHugh at 309-452-7976 for more information.

Young at Heart Celebrates Valentine's Day

Celebrate Valentine's Day! Join us for lunch at the Olive Garden, Veteran's Parkway and Empire, Bloomington, on February 14, 2022. Seating will begin at 11:30am. You will order off the menu. Come enjoy a delicious meal and conversation with friends. Young At Heart is open to everyone 50 years young and older for the purpose of fellowship among older adults. Reservations: Call Mary-Margaret at 309-452-7976.

Catholic Spirit Radio Pilgrimage

Join Catholic Spirit Radio for a Lenten Pilgrimage on Saturday, March 12th. The all-inclusive trip provides charter bus transportation from Normal to Princeville and Peoria. We will visit the Community of Saint John for a Lenten talk, Adoration, Confession, Mass and lunch; the Archbishop Fulton Sheen Museum & Gift Shop; a talk on Sheen by Katie Bogner, followed by her book sale; Sheen's Tomb at the Cathe-

dral; and dinner at Obed & Isaac's. Register by February 7th for \$140 or by February 19th for \$155 at catholicspiritradio.com. For questions, contact Pam at (217) 855-4418 or elliottbus@gmail.com.

Small Group Opportunity: History of Black Catholics

The history of Black Catholics in the United States is replete with stories of devotion, perseverance, and unfortunately, also exclusion. During Black History Month, consider joining a group of 8-10 parishioners to discuss Father Cyprian Davis, O.S.B.'s book "The History of Black Catholics in the United States." The group will meet on the four Thursdays in February at 7:00 PM in the Cenacle Room. There is no fee and the book will be provided free of charge. To participate, email Joe Blaney ASAP: jrblane@ilstu.edu.

Small Group Opportunity: Sowers of the Seed

Come join for a ONE TIME Small Group on the Sower and the Seeds! Masks are required. Pat Luber will lead us through this parable and teach things we've never heard. It's amazing what we can learn from the Bible. Join us to find out at 6:30 PM on Thursday, February 24th in the Cenacle Room. RSVP on the website.

Carmelite Spirituality Group

Do you desire a community of likeminded people who will support each other in prayer as you live out the Carmelite Charism in the world? Then perhaps God may be calling you to become a Third Order Lay Carmelite. If you are 18 years or older, and a Catholic in good standing, you are invited to attend the Carmelite Spirituality Group. The next Group will be held on Saturday, February 5th, at 10AM-12PM in the parish hall of Historic St. Patrick's Catholic Church, located at 1209 Locust St. in Bloomington, Illinois. Please contact / RSVP - Lorrie Schmidt T.O.C. (Third Order Carmelite) at: LittlewayofCarmel @gmail.com

Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA

Individuals age 70% and older can make distributions up to \$100,000 a year to non-profit (501c3) organizations, such as your parish and Catholic school directly through their IRA *at any time*. Contact the custodian of your IRA for a list of the necessary steps.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Funeral Committee Volunteers Needed

We want to resume funeral luncheons after January 1st, but we need YOU! Serving on the Funeral Committee is a concrete way to provide comfort to grieving families when a loved one is lost. There are a variety of ways you can help: donate desserts, set up the parish hall, help during lunch, or clean up. Committee members are not committed to help with every funeral lunch. To join the Funeral Committee, contact Suzanne Ferrara at sferra@ilstu.edu or join the Funeral Committee on Flocknote.

Faith in Action News

Faith in Action is Charleston Bound this spring from April 3-9th! For all the details of this **bus trip**, visit https://bnfia.org/charleston-sc-bus-trip or call Jan at 309.827.7780. Book by Jan. 27, 2022! In addition, are you ready to brighten an older adult's day? With Faith in Action, **volunteer drivers**, shoppers and friendly visitors choose when and how often they volunteer. To register for Volunteer Orientation, email

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Stacey@bnfia.org or call (309) 827-7780. Upcoming dates: Jan. 4, 2022 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM, Feb. 1, 2022 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Writing Opportunity

Are you looking to exercise your creative writing skills? Want to be published on a monthly basis? Epiphany Church is looking for a volunteer to create a monthly newsletter for the parish. This newsletter would include a calendar of all events and help spotlight what opportunities are available as well as what various ministries are doing at the parish. Information to be published will be provided to you, but we need help creating an engaging, visually appealing manner of delivering this information to people's inboxes.



PARISH CONTACTS

Parish Office

(309)452-2585 Epiphanyparish.com

School Office

(309)452-3268 Epiphanyschools.org

Fr. Eric Powell (Pastor) pastor@epiphanyparish.com 309-660-7860

Deacon Mark Cleary (Baptisms) mcleary08@comcas

Fr. Peter O. Okola, AJ (Vicar) Fr.Peter@epiphanyparish.com 703-626-8819

t.net 309-531-1062

Kara Esker (Youth, CCD, Pastoral Team)) pastoralassistant@epiphanyparish.com

Stephanie Demboski

Adult Faith Formation & Evangelization Coordinator stephanie.demboski@epiphanyparish.com

Domine King, Joyce Tellman (Office Staff) office@epiphanyparish.com; Angie O'Connor business.manager@epiphanyparish.com

Mike Essington (IT) it.director@epiphanyparish.com

Spiritual Directors:

Sylvia Hernandez sylviahernandez50@gmail.com Deacon Mark Cleary mcleary08@comcast.net

Parish Outreach

If you find yourself in serious economic need, Epiphany Parish and St. Vincent de Paul want to help. Email Orlando Lopez our Outreach coordinator: outreach@epiphanyparish.com.

OUR DEARLY DEPARTED GRANT ETERNAL REST TO THEM, O LORD!



Patricia Houlihan, 1937-2022, wife of Fran and mother of Kathleen Janke, born 1960, followed by Mary in 1962, Maureen in 1964 and Aileen in 1973.

SHARING THE MISSION THANK YOU!

Gifts from Our Parish F	amily
January 16, 2022	\$9,634
E-giving	\$13,604
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Parish Endowment	\$511
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Endowment	\$165
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Capital Improvement Weekly Budget	\$511 \$24,500 \$710,500

sists in seeing God's power pass through precisely that which makes us most fragile; on condition, however, that we are converted from the gaze of the Evil One who "makes us see and condemn our frailty", while the Holy Spirit "brings it to light with tender love." (Patris corde, "Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us. [...] Look how nurses touch the wounds of the sick: with tenderness, so as not to hurt the further. And this is how the Lord touches our wounds, with the same tenderness. That is why it is so important to encounter God's mercy, especially in the Sacrament

2021 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Please tear out, fill out and return this document if you would like to receive a statement of your contributions to Epiphany Parish. Return it to the parish office, or place it in the collection basket on your way into church. Email Option: fill in all lines, but print your email address clearly below.

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Tuition Statements can be obtained by logging in to your FACTS account and printing a 2021 summary. Contact Angie in the Business Office with questions.

of Reconciliation, in personal prayer with God, where we experience his truth and tenderness. Paradoxically, the evil one can also speak the truth to us: he is a liar, but he can arrange

things so that he tells us the truth in order to tell us a lie, yet he does so only to condemn us. Instead, the Lord tells us the truth and reaches out his hand to save us. We know that God's truth does not condemn, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us." (Patris corde, 2). God always forgives: keep this clearly in your head and your heart. God always forgives. We are the ones who tire of asking for forgiveness. But he always forgives, even the worst things.

It does us good, then, to mirror ourselves in Joseph's fatherhood, which is a mirror of God's fatherhood, and to ask ourselves whether we allow the Lord to love us with his tenderness, transforming each one of us into men and women capable of loving in this way. Without this "revolution of tenderness" – there is a need for a revolution of tenderness! - we risk remaining imprisoned in a justice that does not allow us to rise easily and that confuses redemption with punishment. For this reason, today I want to remember in a special way our brothers and sisters who are in prison. It is right that those who have done wrong should pay for their mistake, but it is equally right that those who have done wrong should be able to redeem themselves from their mistake. They cannot be sentences without a window of hope. Any sentence must always have a window of hope. Let us think of our brothers and sisters in prison, and think of God's tenderness for them, and let us pray for them, so they might find in that window of hope a way out towards a better life.



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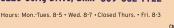
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