

V Easter 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

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



What does Jesus mean when he tells us the Father will give us whatever we ask for in his name? We know God gives us good gifts and perfect presents all the time, as our friend James tells us, because he wants us to have them. Those gifts can be material or spiritual. What else should we ask God for? It's not a "what" we should be asking God for. Our prayer is God will send the Holy Spirit, who Jesus tells us will make our happiness complete.

Today is the Fifth and final Sunday after Easter...commonly called Rogation Sunday...and with the three Rogation Days which follow forms the short Season of Rogationtide leading to the Ascension Day. The word **rogation** comes from the Latin verb **rogare...to ask**. We see **rogare** in words like **interrogate**...to ask or question systematically; **abrogate**...to ask or propose an end to something; **subrogate**...to substitute a right or claim.

Beginning in the fifth century, the custom developed in European countries of "beating the bounds"...the parish church would hold a procession in the springtime every year to mark the geographical boundaries of the parish. Louisiana with its French heritage uses the term "parish" instead of "county" for its local government jurisdictions.

During the Rogation Procession, prayers would be said asking God to bless the good seeds that had been planted...that they would produce a bountiful harvest in the fall. Today we will bless the seeds planted by the pre-school children in our Saint Francis Garden. The fruits and vegetables they produce will be harvested by the schoolteachers to make tasty and healthful treats for the children. Sometimes I even get to sample those tasty treats.

This coming Thursday is the Ascension Day. Jesus told his disciples not to be sad because he was going away and they wouldn't see him. He promised he would send them a Helper from God the Father. The Helper...the Holy Spirit would give them the strength and courage to carry on their mission to spread the Good News about him to the world. Rogationtide is about prayer...**asking** God for both spiritual and material blessings...and for the gift of the Holy Spirit...who teaches us to think good things...and then do good things.

We're supposed to share the material and spiritual gifts we receive from God with others. In this morning's Epistle, our friend James tells us it's not enough to just listen to God's word...we have to put the word we hear into practice. Anything less, James tells us, is like looking at ourselves in the mirror. We might think we look great and have our lives in order. But we're seeing a reflection of ourselves...not who we really are.

When we think about what James says about hearing God's word and then doing good works, we begin to understand our faith is more than an hour on Sunday morning...it must be dynamic and outward reaching. We need to get beyond the reflection we see in the mirror...and this is James' action plan for us...

... "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." (James 1.27)

In the Psalms we read...

... "God who lives in his sacred temple, cares for orphans and protects widows. He gives the lonely a home to live in and leads prisoners out into happy freedom." (Psalm 68.5-6) "Defend the rights of the poor and the orphans; be fair to the needy and helpless. Rescue them from the power of evil." (Psalms 82.3)

The poor, homeless, widows and orphans of James' time were at a distinct disadvantage. Social programs didn't exist and they were largely ostracized from the community unless they had sympathetic friends or relatives to help them. We have a fundamental moral and spiritual obligation to help others in need. We must do everything we possibly can to use the good gifts and perfect presents God has given us to provide hope for others.

Jesus tells us we should not hesitate to ask things of God the Father in his Name. What Jesus asks of us is that we trust God our Father knows what is best for us. That trust in God comes from the Holy Spirit who will teach us to ask God to think what is good and do what is good and right.

We have an action plan. Let's get to work!

