

V Easter 2026 (Rogation Sunday)

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

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



The year is 470 AD. Gaul (Modern-day France and parts of surrounding countries) was in a crisis. Internal moral decay, heavy taxation, stagnant economy, war and political turmoil, has left the once-mighty Roman Empire on the verge of collapse. Natural disasters created severe environmental and health crises. There was famine and people were starving.

Saint Mametus (died 475 AD), Archbishop of Vienne, a town that still exists today about 20 miles southeast of Lyons, instituted the first “Rogation Days”, three days of penitential prayers and processions, asking God to bless crops and to pray for His protection from natural disasters.

The Fifth Sunday after Easter is called “Rogation Sunday” and the three days following are the “Rogation Days”. They form the short transitional season called “Rogationtide” leading up to the Ascension Day, which we will celebrate this Thursday. The word **rogation** comes from the Latin verb **rogare...to ask**.

In this morning’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples the Father will give them whatever they ask of him in his name. He goes on to say they haven’t asked for anything in his name; and if they ask they will receive so their happiness may be complete. What exactly did Jesus mean when he told his disciples the Father will give them whatever they ask of him in his name?

When we ask God for something in Jesus’ name does that mean he will automatically give us what we are asking for? Asking God in Jesus’ name is not a magic formula to get what we want or think we need. He may say “no” if our request is selfish. Asking God in Jesus’ name means we approach God the Father based on Jesus’ merit, not our own. We can only approach God through Jesus. When we pray to God in Jesus’ name we honor and glorify him and try to conform our own wills to his.

Rogationtide is ultimately about prayer and prayer is asking God for both spiritual and material blessings. In the Collect we ask God to help

us not only to think good things but also to do good works. Saint James makes it very clear Christian Faith and good works are inextricably connected. James tells us that it isn't enough for us to just listen to the Good News about Jesus...we must put what we hear into practice. In James' time, orphans and widows were at a disadvantage. Social welfare programs didn't exist. Unless they had a friend or relative who was willing to take care of them, they could find themselves living on the streets.

Unfortunately, poverty, hunger, homeless people, widows and orphans, and unemployment are still present in the world today. Our successful cash campaigns for CALL Primrose help alleviate hunger for families and individuals in San Mateo County. But we can't stop there. We must do everything we possibly can using the good gifts and perfect presents God has given us, to provide hope for others.

When we ask God for material blessings we assume the responsibility that comes along with the asking...we must try to be good stewards of the good gifts and perfect presents he blesses us with. Part of what it means to be a good steward is recognize we have a duty as mature Christians to share what we have with those who are less fortunate.

Jesus tells us we should not hesitate to ask things of God the Father in his Name. When we hold back asking things of God we are saying we really don't trust him to provide us with what we need...not necessarily what we want or think we deserve. What Jesus asks of us is that we trust God our Father enough to ask him to provide the ordinary things we need to live: the right amount of sun and rain, our food, our clothing, our health, our homes. And he asks us to trust God to help us even when our lives get messy and disorganized.

The world in Archbishop Mametus' time was a scary place especially for people without hope. Today's world can also be a scary place for 21st Century Christians facing many of the same challenges. We have God's peace in our hearts and Jesus tells us to be brave when we face those challenges...he has defeated the world. Let us ask God to help us be brave and to help others be brave too!

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