



Last year, a good friend Lmine, a benevolent and staunch Catholic, lost both her compromised senior parents and her lucrative job because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) restrictions at that time made it impossible for me to condole personally with her, and so we connected online. Like many others who lost their loved ones from the killer virus, she unleashed an avalanche of emotions swirling within her: sadness, fear, anger, doubt, and despair. This led her to a string of often unexpressed queries: “Why won’t God just step in and stop this evil?” “Why would an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God allow bad things to happen to good people?” “Why does not God make things easier for us?” She would break down in tears and mutter, “It seems that staying in my faith is becoming harder than simply leaving.”

I listened to her sobs and soliloquies. Initially I had stock and partial replies in my mind, like, “God will sustain us if we remain in him”; “God can work good out of any situation if only we discern and look for what is good”; “God will have the last word. How that will work, I don’t know”; “Evil exists because God respects freedom, both in nature and in human beings.” I held back these answers because I realized she needed neither advice nor

STAYING WITH JESUS

Even When It’s Hard



by Fr. Angelo Paolo O. Asprer, SSP

apologetics at that moment. In my heart of hearts, a priest like myself also grapples with the same concerns. I just said, “Honestly, I don’t know. Maybe you can spend moments asking, heeding, and weeping with the Cross in your room.”

The stay-or-go predicament is something that most of us must face at some point in our lives. Making a decision, like a career switch or a relationship change, could be daunting and consequential. Our overall well-being and personal fulfillment are matters of prime consideration when making the choice.

Faith in God likewise requires constant discernment and decision-

making. In the First Reading, Joshua gathers the tribes of Israel and tells them to choose whom to serve: the Lord who has cared for them in their desert wanderings and in their journey to the promised land, or the pagan gods of the neighbors. It is God—or nothing.

In the Gospel, people are divided over Jesus’ discourse on the Bread of Life. The disciples find his words intolerable, and they reject him. But the Apostles remain with him, with Peter confessing that Jesus has the words of eternal life.

Christ has loved us to the point of giving his life for us, as Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians. Mutual loyalty and service, then, are called forth in order for marriage and family life to last (Second Reading). Mature love is always a decision and a commitment—and, indeed, it is rarely clear cut. The best relationships we know have issues, and the worst still have their potential actual virtues.

When it comes to our relationship with God, faith becomes most vital and compelling when we feel we are most hopeless or helpless. When we are weak and find ourselves empty, then it is time to let God take control.

Not long after our communication, my friend texted me: “Father, I may not fully understand all these bad things happening in my life, but I have chosen to stay. My faith still gives meaning and direction to my life.”

PASTORAL CATECHESIS FOR THE YEAR OF *MISSIO AD GENTES*

Announcing Jesus and His Message

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

In mission today there is the role of **explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis**. This dimension of evangelization includes preaching, catechesis on Christian life, teaching the content of the faith; in a word, this means “telling the Jesus story.” When the Holy Spirit opens the door and when the time is opportune, Christians do tell the Jesus story, giving explicit witness and testimony to the faith. Others are invited, in freedom of conscience, to follow, to know and love Jesus.

Through explicit proclamation Christians themselves are further instructed in their faith; through this process the Christian

faith is communicated to the next generation of believers. As Pope Paul VI writes (EN 22): “there is no true evangelization, if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.” Though this proclamation is very essential, Paul VI also notes: “it is only one aspect of evangelization.”

Pope John Paul II (RM 44) has asserted: “Proclamation is the permanent priority of mission. The Church cannot elude Christ’s explicit mandate, nor deprive men and women of the ‘Good News’ about their being loved and saved by God.” Proclaiming the mystery of Christ and his beautiful promises “lies at the heart of the Church’s mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns.”

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Cf. Ps 86[85]:1-3)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me; save the servant who trusts in you, my God. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—At the close of the discourse on the Bread of Life, Jesus confronts his listeners—the people and his disciples—to make a choice: either they believe him and ask him for this bread or they reject his claim as postposterous.

Like Jesus, Joshua in the First Reading inquires into our response: shall we serve God or not? We cannot be content with merely drifting through life. We have to make difficult choices. The Lord invites us to receive him. We can also refuse him. But as Peter asks, “To whom shall we go?” Far from the Lord, we will only find unhappiness.

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. *(Pause)*

P—You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.

All—Christ, have mercy.

P—You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All—Amen.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading

(Jos 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b) *(Sit)*

Joshua calls on all the tribes of Israel to renew their covenant with the Lord. If the people recognize the Lord as their savior and protector, then they have to forsake the idols of their pagan neighbors.

A reading from the book of Joshua

JOSHUA gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges, and their officers. When they stood in ranks before God, Joshua addressed all the people: “If

it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

But the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the peoples through whom we passed. Therefore, we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

—The word of the Lord.

All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 34)

R—Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Marfori

A A/G# F#m
Taste and see the

2 D E Asus A
good - ness of the Lord.

1. I will bless the LORD at all times;/ his praise shall be ever in my mouth./ Let my soul glory in the LORD;/ the lowly will hear me and be glad. **(R)**

2. The LORD has eyes for the just,/ and ears for their cry./ The LORD confronts the evildoers,/ to destroy remembrance of them from the earth. **(R)**

3. When the just cry out, the LORD hears them,/ and from all their distress he rescues them./ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;/ and those who are crushed in spirit he saves. **(R)**

4. Many are the troubles of the just one,/ but out of them all the

LORD delivers him;/ he watches over all his bones;/ not one of them shall be broken. (R)

Second Reading (Eph 5:21–32)

If we submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus, then we show him our reverence by obeying his commandments. In the case of husbands and wives, the Lord commands them to love one another.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish. So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

—The word of the Lord.
All —Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Jn 6:63c, 68c) (*Stand*)

All—Alleluia, alleluia. Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life; you have the words of everlasting life. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Jn 6:60–69)

P—A reading from the holy

Gospel according to John
All—Glory to you, O Lord.

MANY of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

—The Gospel of the Lord.
All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (*Sit*)

Profession of Faith (*Stand*)

All—I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (at the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P—Let us place our trust in the Father who is ever faithful to his people in need. May he look upon us with kindness as we say:

R—Lord, show us your kindness.

C—May our church leaders remain in their call to humility and service. May they live in Christ's truth and help unbelievers to seek God's will. We pray: (R)

C—May our political and civil leaders always opt for what is right and just, and not succumb to the temptations of power, influence, and financial gain. We pray: (R)

C—May all peoples find secure hope in the words of Jesus—the words of eternal life, as we go through this pressing time of crisis. We pray: (R)

C—May the Lord grant help to the needs of our sick brethren specially those who suffer in any way because of the pandemic. We pray: (R)

C—May our beloved dead see the hope of eternal life in the promise of Jesus' resurrection. We pray: (R)

C—Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (*pause*). We pray: (R)

P—Father, your kindness and love surpass all our expectations. Hear our prayers and make us sharers in the sacrifice of your Son Jesus Christ.

We ask this through Christ.
All—Amen.

**LITURGY OF
THE EUCHARIST**



Presentation of the Gifts

(Stand)

P—Pray, brethren...

All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by adoption through the one sacrifice offered once for all, bestow graciously on us, we pray, the gifts of unity and peace in your Church.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen.

Preface VIII

(Sundays in Ordinary Time)

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

P—Lift up your hearts.

All—We lift them up to the Lord.

P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For when your children were scattered afar by sin, through the Blood of your Son and the power of the Spirit, you gathered them again to yourself, that a people, formed as one by the unity of the Trinity, made the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, might, to the praise of your manifold wisdom, be manifest as the Church.

And so, in company with the choirs of Angels, we praise you, and with joy we proclaim:

All—Holy, Holy, Holy... (Kneel)



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Acclamation (Stand)

All—We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father...

P—Deliver us, Lord...

All—For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion

(Kneel)

P—Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(Jn 6:54)

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, says the Lord, and I will raise him up on the last day.

Prayer after Communion

(Stand)

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray, the healing work of your mercy and graciously perfect and sustain us, so that in all things we may please you.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P—Bow down for the blessing.
(Pause)

May almighty God bless you in his kindness and pour out saving wisdom upon you.
All—Amen.

P—May he nourish you always with the teachings of the faith and make you persevere in holy deeds.

All—Amen.

P—May he turn your steps towards himself and show you the path of charity and peace.
All—Amen.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—Go in peace.

All—Thanks be to God.