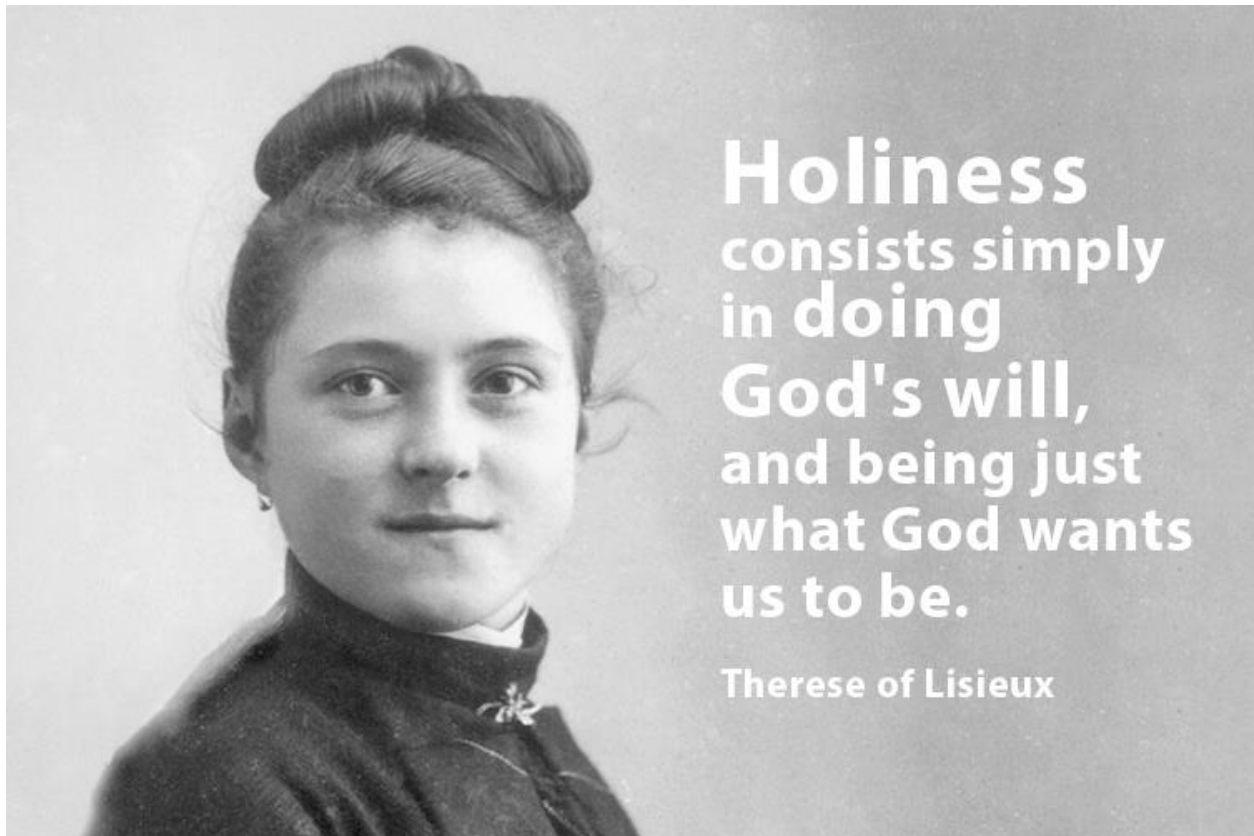


FROM FATHER JOHN – “I will fulfill my vows before those who fear the LORD. The lowly shall eat their fill; they who seek the LORD shall praise him: ‘May your hearts live forever!’ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; all the families of the nations shall bow down before him. To him alone shall bow down all who sleep in the earth; before him shall bend all who go down into the dust.” ~ Psalm 22

I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people, Alleluia!



I hope and pray that you and your family are doing well as we continue to struggle with the pandemic. I'd like to encourage all the people of our parish to place our trust in the Goodness of our Heavenly Father and in His Divine Providence. This is a good time for all of us to break open the Word of God, to remember what Jesus has done for all of us and to ask our Lord and God to come to our aid as we work toward the day our society will reopen and we will return to normalcy. Please remember that you, every member of your family and every member of our parish is in my daily prayers.

Here is the direct link to the readings for the Fifth Sunday of Easter.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/050221.cfm>

There's an old story about a terrible shipwreck. Only one man survived, cast ashore on a tiny island with nothing but the clothes on his back. For a while he hoped for rescue. But in time he knew he had to make a life there on the island. And that is what he did. He taught himself to fish and hunt, to garden, to cook on an open fire, and he built himself a little cottage overlooking the bay. He even carved a tiny flute which he played every night after supper.

One day he hiked to the top of the mountain at the center of the island just to see what he could see. As he reached the top, it began to lightning. He looked out and saw was a tower of smoke. It was his little cottage going up in flames.

He ran down the mountain as fast as he could. But it was too late. The cottage was in ashes — and his flute, his garden, his tools, his bow and arrows — everything he'd made with his own hands was gone, all of it — just gone!

He wept. He raged. He cursed God. He despaired. He felt empty and abandoned and incredibly alone. Finally, as night came, he collapsed on the sand and fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning he was awakened by sailors who had rowed ashore from a great cargo ship to rescue him. "But," he exclaimed, "how after all this time did you know I was here?"

"Ah," said the captain, "we saw the smoke from your signal fire."

On Ash Wednesday, someone asked me why Jesus had said, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" as he hung on the cross. I think it was because, in his humanity, Jesus was suffering everything we have ever suffered. I think it was because, in his humanity, he went down into the depths of suffering and became one with us in our own human suffering.

There are many times that we feel like everything is lost, there are times that we feel abandoned, that we feel emptiness, that we feel like we are incredibly alone. And it's worse today during this pandemic than ever before.

Jesus said to us, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, **would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way. ... I am the way and the truth and the life."* (John 14:1 – 2, 6)

Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us hope. He promises to make a place for us. And, he has. Before we were ever born Jesus Christ made a place for us in his heavenly kingdom. But, the promise of Jesus' word in today's gospel is much greater than that. He hasn't just made a place for us in heaven, he's made a place for us right here on earth as well.

St. Peter wrote in his first letter, *"You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* (1 Pt 2:9)

We are *"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own"* possession. Just like the captain of the great cargo ship rescued the man who had been lost, our Lord Jesus promises to rescue us whenever we are lost and feeling forsaken. He promises to rescue us from despair, from anguish, from hopelessness, from pain, from despondency, from anything that keeps us from joyfully knowing the great love of our Lord and God.

Even when we are suffering, even when we are feeling great loneliness, even when we feel abandoned, even when all seems lost, we have a place in this world because Jesus Christ is our Way, our Truth and our Life. He promises to be with us, leading us, guiding us, protecting us, and comforting us every moment of every single day.

He promises us a way on this journey of life, He promises us the truth that we need in order to set us free from sin and death and He promises to us the life that sustains us for he is our Way, our Truth and our Life.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

