



Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once I asked the students of St. Joseph Catholic School if they knew the first letter of the alphabet. They all responded "A."

Then I asked, "But do you know what the first letter of God's alphabet is?" After a number of guesses, I told them, "It is the cross." Pope St. John Paul II said, "The Cross is the first letter of God's alphabet, and it is written in the life of each person."

No one can escape the cross but you can choose how you respond. As we see today, one man responds by mockery, "Are you not the Christ? The Messiah? Save yourself and us." This thief knows how to see through people - to play the "gotcha" game: You're the messiah? Don't make me laugh.

It's easy to see through people - to point out their evident inconsistencies. The hard thing is to actually see the other person. This, the good thief does. It begins with humility. "We have been condemned justly." From there he recognizes it's not about me; it's about Jesus. "Jesus, remember me."

The good thief embraces the cross. For sure, it means shame and suffering. Still, the cross contains everything we need: forgiveness, healing, hope, humility. To reject the cross results in self-exultation, rage and finally, despair.

You can run, but you can't hide. Many have convinced themselves that science has disproved God's existence. It does no such thing. In the end we face a choice. As author Leon Bloy says, "Whoever does not pray to God, prays to the devil." That may sound extreme but in the first homily after election, Pope Francis uses the same quote, "Whoever does not pray to God, prays to the devil." We have to choose.

That choice involves the cross. Ultimately the cross confronts each one of us. After all, "The Cross is the first letter of God's alphabet, and it is written in the life of each person."

Have a Blessed Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion 2022!

Rev. Rafal Ligenza

Pastor — St. Joseph Parish