

5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER - MAY 2ND, 2021

St. Thomas More Parish with St. Bernadette Mission



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PASTOR: FR. ANTONIO BAROL

PLEASE PRAY FOR...

Those who are sick, especially:

Erica Perk/Shirley Kloefer/Josef and Hermie Jandristis,
Dolores Flood, Rio Barol and Oswaldo Bacareza.

And those who have died, especially
Bernadette Durand, Carlos Tampon and Fr. Bernie Bascal

MASS SCHEDULE: MAY 5TH – MAY 9TH

ST. THOMAS MORE RECTORY CHAPEL

WEDNESDAY : 5 PM, THURSDAY: 9 AM

ST. THOMAS MORE CHURCH

FRIDAY: 5:30 PM

SUNDAY 9AM—10:30AM

THE CHURCH WILL BE OPEN FOR PRIVATE WORSHIP
(ROSARY WILL COMMENCE AT 9:00 AM)

(MAX ATTENDANCE IN THE CHURCH - 10)

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FR. ANTONIO BAROL'S MESSAGE FOR THE 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Dear sisters/brothers, parishioners of St. Thomas More and St. Bernadette,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the love and mercy of God the Father, in communion with the Holy Spirit, be always with you.

As we navigate together in this difficult time of the pandemic, let us continue to be vigilant and to be concerned with each other's safety and good health. At least our lockdown and stay at home programs are paying off because we see a little decline of the number of cases; let us continue in doing our part of cooperating and respecting the health protocols until everything will be getting much better. Although we are not yet allowed to get together to celebrate the weekend masses, at least we have the weekday masses to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

As previously mentioned by the bishop, during this pandemic the faithful are exempt from the Sunday obligation. However, we are encouraged to watch the mass on social media, through live streaming and You Tube, especially every weekend from St. Peter-in-Chains Cathedral where most often you can watch our very own Bishop Daniel Miehm as the celebrant from the seat of our diocese. It is good to hear our shepherd speak to us personally. For this, let us thank Bishop Miehm for doing this wonderful opportunity especially last weekend was the Good Shepherd Sunday.

Again, a little flashback of last Sunday's Good Shepherd theme; let us be open and not just focused that this is meant for church leaders only because in reality every person created in the image and likeness of God are called to be shepherds in one way or the other to take good care of all that God has given to us.

A shepherd is meant to lead, so the image of a good shepherd has a staff, like Moses in the Old Testament when he lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt using his staff to point the direction of their journey as demonstrated when he pointed and parted the water of the Red Sea so that people can walk on dry land. The staff was also used to protect the flock to drive the predators away such as when little David as a shepherd had mastered a sling which he used against the giant Goliath.

Cont'd/.....

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Moses also used the staff by raising it in prayer to protect the people during battles; when Moses lifted up the staff the Israelites would be winning, but the moment he lowered it, the enemy troops were gaining strength and that was when the priest Aaron and Joshua helped Moses to lift the staff high in prayer. Today we all are called to be shepherds, religious leaders to lead the people of God towards our final destination in heaven. Parents are to lead the family to come to know God, and all of us to lead our life towards holiness, for that is our mission to be holy as God is holy. We can also put ourselves as part of the flock who hears the call of the good shepherd Jesus who knows us by name; he laid down his life to save us, and he promised to be with us at all times, especially during difficult moments of our journey. During this time of the pandemic, let us once more listen to the voice of our shepherd assuring us that we just have patience and good things are coming our way after this moment of difficulty. Let us remember that we are an Easter people and we know that after the suffering of Good Friday, the joy of Easter Sunday is not far away.

In this fifth Sunday of Easter, once again Jesus used another picture from our environment. Last week he used a shepherd and the flock and this Sunday he used the vine and the branches. God the Father is the vine grower, Jesus the Son is the true vine and we are the branches. We all know the nature of a plant and once the branches are connected to the main tree or to the main vine, they are good and can produce fruits, but once they are cut off from the trunk, then they wither and die. Jesus used this analogy to drive home the point that we need God in our lives in order to be alive and bear fruit. Let us examine the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, when Saul (Paul) was converted to the Christian faith, he tried to associate with the disciples in Jerusalem and they were afraid for they knew Saul before, who persecuted the Christians. They were still not convinced of Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus until Barnabas testified about it and because Paul's testimony was very strong and convincing therefore the religious leaders, who were responsible for Paul's mission to Damascus, wanted to silence him by death. We can read more about Paul's life story from the Acts of the Apostles and also from his many letters to the Christian communities which he had formed during his missionary journey. The Acts of the Apostles described how the different church communities were built and some of them were already experiencing peace, as it was noted, "Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers."

The second reading from the letter of St. John, exalted the early followers to live in peace and harmony by living the life of love. Let us remember the song that goes, "And they'll know we are Christians by our love." St. John said, "let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." Pope Francis had just ordained a group of priests in Rome and he advised them to pray, to be poor and to love people. An advice from a good shepherd, who said, 'smell like the sheep which could be said, immersed yourself with the people you serve'.

Let us pray therefore pray that God will send us shepherds who will be willing to smell like sheep, willing to lay down one's life for the flock, and pray also that through them we learn how to be connected to the true vine in order that we might be able to bear fruit. Let us not wait that God the vine grower will order his vinedressers to cut off the branches that are not bearing fruits and if ever we experience some pruning in us it is for our own good that we may grow and bear fruits in abundance. Let us not also forget that the fruits we have are not for our own consumption, but they are meant to be shared with others. As a branch from the true vine, let us be nourished by the Word of God and by the sacraments. It is in this way that we can ask God of whatever we wish and it will be granted to us.

The Pope's intentions for May. "The World of Finance." Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate the financial sphere and protect citizens from its dangers."

Take good care everyone and stay safe and healthy always....God bless.... Fr. Tony

A special reminder: May is the month of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and it will be appropriate that we as a parish family could at least pray at a particular time in the evening, let's say at 8:00 PM, that we start at home simultaneously in thanksgiving for all the blessings and for the intention to an end of this pandemic. I know some prayer groups are doing a live chat using messenger and other programs that they can pray together virtually.

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