RogationSunday(2023)

**Announcements:**

*"In the world ye shall have tribulation...*.

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Today is the Fifth Sunday after Easter and also known as Rogation Sunday. The next three days this week, being the three days before Ascension, traditionally have been called the Rogation of **Lesser Litanies,** with all four days together equaling “Rogationtide”.

In early days the Greater and Lessers might have been separated by several weeks due to the movement of Easter. It would have been rare to have had them all end up within the same week. On rogation days violet vestments are used, but we wear white today because this is still a Sunday in Easter which of course takes precedence.

The two sets of Rogation festivals began differently, but were not different in practice. The Greater, which this day could be compared to, began during the Roman Empire. The Romans had a festival, the **Robigalia**, offered up to the God of plight, *Robigo*, for blessing the crops which involved processions into the fields.

The early Christians simply tossed out the pagan god and kept the liturgy since they obviously had no problem asking God for a good harvest. The lesser litanies started later in France in the late 5th century because of earthquakes and other natural calamities that had been occurring.

Rogationtide **has two emphases**. It recognizes that nature can be GOOD to us or BAD to us. The ancient Jews knew this very well and implored God to withhold his just wrath towards them and grant them a good harvest. Indeed, two of their three biggest holidays, *Pentecost* and *Tabernacles*, were dedicated to such imploring.

Our collect for this Sunday has us imploring the Lord to inspire (or **breathe** into us) good thoughts and help us to perform the same. Our collect for Rogation days also does imploring. In it we will pray: "ALMIGHTY God, Lord of heaven and earth; We beseech thee to pour forth thy blessing upon this land, and to give us a fruitful season." Implore and beseech are synonymous.

St. James in the Epistle for today is imploring his readers to be "doers of the word and not hearers only". He compared one that is a doer only to someone who sees himself in a mirror and simply walks away. Someone who sees how he really looks and decides there is nothing to bother with.

This is always a strong temptation**:**  to come to church but not do anything during the week. Yet, what James says simply put**:** what is heard in this Holy Place needs to be practiced in the marketplace. Going through Holy motions one hour a week does **not** "cut it".

In our Gospel Jesus instructs that by trying to be a Christian--practicing what is preached-- you will have tribulation in the world. Usually getting to church on Sunday though is **not** the challenge. It is what happens on Monday.

Tribulation more likely occurs in the marketplace among other people, those we know and those we don't. Today it is becoming common for employees to need to work on Sundays and Holy Days. Doing the "right thing" at work or elsewhere can lead to "questioning". Perceived social standing can be affected. One might lose of old friends who have turned away from God or are turned away by your turning **towards** God.

Nonetheless, Christians are called to be doers of the word in every aspect of life, **including** political debate. Politics gets messy, but Christians not only are obliged to put in their "two cents", but also keep putting them in. Being a good Christian is about following Christ, and persevering. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus did not say, "this is too hard!!".

Society also **needs** our contribution. America was built upon Christian principles. The founding fathers might have attributed their views such as freedom, democracy, reason, and capitalism, to the Christian Enlightenment, but, as Cardinal Chaput has noted, "those views are inconceivable outside the Christian culture from which it emerged", and from which "they borrowed their vocabulary". A recent column in the WSJ echoed this by pointing out that societies begin to die when they become **un-moored** from the principles that founded them.

So American society and structure, whether non-believers want to admit it or not, comes from Western thought and Christianity in particular. **Preachers** inspired people to get slavery ended; universal laws against murder and stealing come straight from the Decalogue. Laws respecting or honoring authority, something politicians, police, and judges get to enjoy flow directly from Judaism and Christianity.

This does not mean Christians have to support every idea people put forth for, say, helping others. Programs can often become a fig leaf for do-gooders, or "virtue signaling" as it is called today.

Taking someone else's money to do what **you** think is best is not a Christian action or attitude. Policies can be based upon envy. This is the more dangerous twin sister of jealousy, both flowing from coveting.

For example, I may be **jealous** that my neighbor has a Porsche and wish I had one too. Only **I** suffer from jealousy. But if I wish my neighbor didn't have that Porsche since I can't have one, then my **envy** might lead to his property getting hurt.

So society ought to be delighted to have Christians contributing to the political debate, and Christians ought also to contribute to it heartily. We are not being true to our founders by silencing **others** from exercising their religion in public. Exiling religion from the public realm was not envisioned by those who proclaimed "Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion". (Or the separation of State and Church.) What better place to exercise than outside?

And, we are not being true to St. James and ultimately to our Lord's imploring to be doers of good works if we rope off an area of our **own** life by saying, "I just can't do **it**  here". What we hear in **here** needs to be spoken and performed "out there". Amen. +