

St Thomas' Church
 Rotation Sunday
 Easter V
 May 9, 2021
 rmcneely+

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you.

Today through Wednesday are known in the Church as the Rogation Days. They usher in the commemoration of Our Lord's Ascension, on Thursday of this week.

The word comes to us from the Latin: "rogare" meaning to ask. It is the Latin root for such English words as
 interrogate,
 interrogation; and the dreaded; interrogatory.
 all including the concept of asking for something.

The four Rogation Days are taken from St John's Gospel for today
 The part of Jesus' final discourse to the Apostles
 In which He encourages them to ask God for their needs
 In prayer.

Prayer is the major theme of these Rogation days.
 Today's Gospel is from Jesus' final discourse to the Apostles
 On the night in which He was betrayed.
 One of the the last thoughts He gives them
 Is Prayer.
 He boldly tells them that after that night they should be
 Confident enough to pray directly to the Father.
 And "whatsoever ye ask the Father
 He will give it you."

Prayer is His parting Gift to the Apostles
 The means by which to stay in communication
 With God.

Prayer is the medium of conversation to which Jesus points us

Prayer of intercession, in which we pray for each other

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Prayer of Adoration,

expressing our love of God and His creation

Prayer of our self examination and confession, and

Prayer of Petition

Asking for His Grace.

All ways of Asking God for something.

The means by which we talk to God, our Father, creator

Mentor and loving friend.

All ways of loving and reflecting the love of God in our lives.

But Rogation Sunday is filled with other competing

Themes

Meanings, and

Rich in traditions.

Coming 40 days after Easter

It is always celebrated during the height of the Spring Season

in the Northern Hemisphere

This year, despite our dry winter

Spring seems to be bursting out all over San Francisco

The Spring flowers, trees and grasses

Are a foretaste of the harvest that will be realized in the Fall

They are the first fruits of that harvest

The best of what is to come.

And it is the first fruits which we give to God

In the Spring the thoughts of our agricultural Church ancestors
turned to

The fields
To preparing for the planting
To sewing the seed
That would become the crops
Feed the cows, the chickens, the sheep
That would sustain them through the following winter

It is difficult for us
whose dependence from the land
has been severed
by our seemingly endless food supply
from all over the globe.

It is difficult for us to share with them
their reliance upon the fields.

For them, if it didn't grow in their fields

They suffered

If the weather didn't cooperate

If insects, pestilence and disease

Ruined the crops

They starved.

Whole Foods was not delivering oranges from Chile

In those days.

So the Spring planting took on a significance

that we can not full understand.

You see, just as in all aspects of their lives

Our ancestors turned to God for all matters of importance.

They prayed for the fields

For the harvest

That could mean the difference between life and death.

I have often thought that Rogation Sunday

The day Jesus points us to Prayer

Was the day our ancestors chose to Pray for their fields.

Perhaps the best and most important example of the importance of Prayer in their lives.

Prayer for their very survival.

For Hundreds of years our Anglican Ancestors spent these days
“beating the bounds”.

The parish priest would lead a procession of the villagers

And would walk the boundaries of the parish

Their equivalent of our County Line.

Blessing the fields as he went along.

Seeking God’s protection

Asking in prayer for His bounty

Out of this tradition came

The Rogations Days

And the message of prayer

Focused them on the Earth that was so critical for survival.

Last month, people who knew no better

Celebrated Earth Day.

Thinking it an outgrowth of the ecology movement of the 60s

Some spent the time

Picking up our trash

Cleaning the beaches, creeks and rivers

Being kind to wildlife

Some spent the time in strident political speeches

Deriding government for doing too little

And industry for doing too much

And all of us for not caring for the planet.

Christians have been stewards of God’s creation

Since the dawn of man.

Offering Prayers for the planet Earth

For the source and genesis of life

Undertaking what it took to guard God’s creation.

Don't tell our ardent Earth Day friends
 But their cry is of Christian origin.
 They just don't know that it's name is Rogation Days.
 And that they are off by about three weeks.
 The more we learn about the universe
 The more our beautiful little
 blue planet
 Orbiting through silent space
 Bathed in the light of a yellow Sun
 Becomes a beacon of God's love.

In a Rogation Day sermon to this St Thomas congregation,
 Archbishop Morse said;
 "The Church proclaims the goodness of earthly things
 And that Our Lord lifts this world up,
 Transfigured and
 Beyond time,
 into Heaven."

He said that Catholic Christians
 "Do not separate the love of life
 From the love of God
 Because they are one in the same."

And that "to sense the sacred on Earth
 Is to love God
 Not only in nature
 But God in man as well."

That love has been the mystery
 And the force of Christ
 Enlightening the darkness of the world"

His love
 Which is the mystery of astrophysics
 was and is the driving force of the universe.

Ancient Scripture

So practical and reality oriented

Reveals that man,

The apex of creation,

Is the steward of all God created and creates

And is responsible for all of Nature

We join with our secular friends on Rogation Day

And ask “how are we doing?”

And we pray for guidance, for responsibility, for stewardship

We can never care for our environment until we personally and corporately take responsibility for it with the Love of God.

One of the other themes of this Day

Comes from the Epistle

The Catholic letter of St James

James is big on deeds.

He begins this section of His Epistle:

“Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.”

Not particularly comfortable words.

Wouldn't we so much rather

Sit back in our lazy boy chairs in the comfort of our homes

Faithfully read our Bibles

Or some other good book

Perhaps even pray for the world, the Earth, mankind

But James ruthlessly intercedes.

And won't let us get away with that life.

We must act. He exhorts:

“Pure religion is to go to the fatherless and widows
in their affliction.”

Ouch!

We are to be doers. People who are motivated by the love of God

To assist each other.

Love each other

As Christ loves us.

A tall order in this and any earlier world.

And so we discern our vocation

In the church, serving Him

As acolyte, altar guild, usher, lay reader

As Anglican Church Women and all they do

And Outside the church

On the front porch

In the hospitals

In the hospice homes

In the street

In the coffee houses

In the grocery store

Wherever the love of God needs us and sends us.

We go.

By the love of God

We go.

God is like the Sun

The giver of all life

And we are like mirrors that reflect that light

That love

And our lives magnify the glory of God

For all to see

And to admire

And to imitate.

We lead Christian lives
As a reflection of the bright light of God
We lead lives that are shining examples of what happens
When people obey and follow the will of God in their
lives

Once we have received the Word of God
Our vocation is only beginning
Once we have received the Word of God
If we do not put it to work
We are fooling our selves.

We say in every communion service
Love thy neighbor as thy self

In a paraphrase of St James:
So we just say that
Or do we mean it?

And it all begins in Prayer.