A Time to Choose

The evangelist we know as Matthew wrote for a community in disarray. As his audience grappled with how to live their newfound faith in Jesus Christ, deep tensions grew within their religious community. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. Matthew’s community could no longer live as they once had, but there was no clear path stretching before them.

At the beginning of the year, my sense of disarray came from the ever-deepening divide between poverty and wealth (especially in Philadelphia), crises of migration and race, storms and wildfires spawned by climate change, and politics that bled into extremism and hate. Add to that now a global pandemic raging out of control, and Matthew’s gospel seems most appropriate. It is increasingly unlikely that our lives will return to the way they were and we will have to find new ways forward. Like the community Matthew wrote for, we must do it without all the familiar religious practices of this season. All the more reason, then, to return to the scriptures themselves.

As I returned this week to the section of the gospel called the passion narrative, I was struck by all the names and places that crowd the story. The volume of detail seemed to echo the number and place names that fill news reports of spreading pandemic. But dwelling on the facts of the matter is not enough to find meaning in our experience.

I also noticed how often the evangelist quotes scripture, or uses some variation of the phrase, ‘this happened so that scripture might be fulfilled.’ This is how the evangelist tells us that Jesus moved toward his death trusting fully in God. But ‘so that scripture might be fulfilled’ is not the same thing as ‘according to God’s plan.’ Neither Jesus nor those around him are simply players in a tightly scripted drama. No, Matthew’s account of Jesus suffering and death is also an account of how those around him chose to respond.

Matthew’s passion narrative begins a few dozen verses before the Church’s appointed reading for Palm Sunday. A disciple, a nameless woman, pours an alabaster jar of precious ointment over Jesus’ head. While his disciples misinterpret her action, Jesus points out that she will be remembered for her loving attention to his impending death. The memory of her raises questions for us: what are we paying attention to? How can we act with loving care in these circumstances?

Among Jesus’s other disciples, only Judas and Peter are mentioned by name in Matthew’s passion narrative, as if to throw a spotlight on their choices. Both of them betray Jesus. While Judas is said to regret what he had done, only Peter “remembered the words that Jesus had spoken,” returning to him filled with remorse. Judas and Peter remind us that lack of faith, blame and betrayal are always options,

—continued on next page
perhaps ones we resort to now. At the same time, Peter demonstrates that no human choice is irrevocable; there is always the possibility of mercy and forgiveness.

The chief priests and elders are major antagonists in the passion narrative. And while they share the same scriptures as Jesus, they chose to see him as contradiction, not fulfillment. As their world changed around them, the chief priests and elders sought certainty in what God and God’s people had ‘always’ (air-quotes) done. As we consider their intransigence, perhaps we should ask ourselves

How we are stubbornly stuck in the past, refusing to move forward in faith?

Matthew’s passion narrative is a familiar story, although this year we recall it in unfamiliar circumstances. Perhaps this experience will lead us to new insight and renewed fidelity to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The choice, the evangelist suggests, is ours to make.

—BJ Brown
Pastoral Associate

In your prayers, please remember all those who have asked for our prayers and all patients and staff at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Douglas Adler, Christina Bergonzi, George Bernato, Debbie Brooks, Audry Brunet, Charles Capaldi, Vivian Close, Ann Crowther, Jane Crowther, Mary Kay Crowther, Barbara Epting, Harry Gregory, Tessie Griffin, Fr. Mike Hricko SJ, Sharon Krinksy, Jerry Levins, Glen Malunis, Allan May, Fr. Jerry McAndrews SJ, Giancarlo Mazzoleni, Barbara Paul, Tamara Lucia Sanchez Porta, Raymond Scannapieco, Sara Smith, Anne Francis Tozzi, Craig Walsh, Lawrence and Sandra Williams, Sharon Winge and Pat Yusko.

Dear OSJ Families,

As we navigate this uncharted territory together through our Easter season and beyond, we want to offer families continued support in their spiritual development. The next page of this bulletin contains some suggestions to consider as you pray together as a family. They were compiled by Carol Hanlon, a parishioner and catechist. You may have met Carol at February’s Family Lenten activity.

Use some or all of these suggestions, adapting them to fit your needs. Let’s keep each other in our continued prayers.

—Walter F. Modrys SJ
Pastor
Family Prayer: Bringing Families Closer to God

- Family prayer is both an opportunity to share the type of prayer that you find most spiritually satisfying AND your children’s chance to share their faith perspective with you. Sometimes prayer is wonder-filled (especially for our youngest children), or prayer can be expressed as concern and petitions for the world (usually after age 6), or through the lens of God’s mercy and our social justice work (often after age 13). Our children benefit from these conversations and we can grow from this shared opportunity with them.

- Start with what is comfortable for you and try to be consistent. And remember that it is never too late to try additional forms of prayer for as we change over time, so can our prayer. A few ideas for family prayer: before we eat or sleep, when we see someone in need, in the morning, birthdays, first days, last days, feast days, ordinary days, when we are worried or joyful. . .absolutely any time!

- Prayer can be expressed in an amazing variety: with our own words, with other’s words, in silence, while considering scripture, in song, in gestures and especially in Mass. (Listening to or watching Mass remotely is a wonderful opportunity to answer questions about what is similar or different from the Mass we share at OSJ! Opportunities to do so are listed on the home page of oldstjoseph.org).

- Consider preparing a prayer space for your family to share for prayer. Allowing our youngest to prepare your prayer table is an unspoken invitation for them to begin to consider their own prayers. A small box or basket could hold a white cloth (an unfolded napkin will work) for your prayer table or shelf, a cross or crucifix, a small plant or vase, a candle that could be lit when parents are present, and any other tools you use for your own prayer (rosary, image of a Saint or holy person, a photo of someone not currently with you that you’d like to remember in prayer, or words that inspire you). Your prayer box or basket could hold a flag, beautiful items from nature (perhaps a place you have visited together), or a photo of someone no longer with you (a wonderful opportunity to share a story, remember a birthday, or share their signature dish at a meal). Children may want to create their own prayer cards with just a few words (remember, our Alleluia returns at Easter) or a verse from a daily reading. (Daily readings are available at usccb.org through the calendar link at the upper right of the page.) As you consider scripture together, remember to use very small pieces at a time (perhaps one verse), ask open ended questions, and slow your pace so that you have plenty of opportunity for all to participate. And remember that sometimes silence is an appropriate response to really big questions.

- Prayer is about responding to God’s word and love. It was a way of mindfulness and being present with God. God already knows all, but our sharing brings us closer to God. Prayer can bring insight, it can move our heart, or comfort us when we are anxious. It is a gift that is deeply personal and always accessible. And it is one of the easiest gifts to share as a family as God is always calling us to prayer!

—prepared by Carol Hanlon for Old St. Joseph’s Church, April 2020.
INFORMATION

Pastor
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ (pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

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Faith, Food & Friends Director
Deborah Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Hospital Ministry
Tom Volkert (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Rectory Office Hours
Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Sunday: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Mass Times
Monday through Saturday: 12:05 PM
Saturday Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:30 PM
Sunday: 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM and 6:30 PM
Holy Days: 12:05 and 7:00 PM

Medical Emergency
In a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements
Old St. Joseph’s is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are available in the rear of the church.

Registration
Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org. They can be returned to the parish office by mail or in person.

Sacrament of Reconciliation
A priest is available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday through Saturday from 11:30 AM–12:00 PM or by appointment.

Sacrament of Baptism
If you want to arrange a baptism, please contact Fr. Hannafey (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org) at least two months before the desired date.

Eucharist for the Homebound
To arrange to receive Communion at home, please contact the parish offices.

The Sacrament of Anointing
The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is offered during the 12:05 PM Mass on the first Saturday of each month. Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

Rite of Christian Initiation
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

Mass of Christian Burial
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office.

Parish Pastoral Council
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council
Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo (adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership
Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life
Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation
Len Mancini (osjsspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Women, Faith and Fellowship
Rana McNamara (wff@oldstjoseph.org)

Young Adult Community
(osjyac@gmail.com)

Altar Servers
Maria Ramirez (altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Bill Stewart (EM@oldstjoseph.org)

Hospital Ministry
Luanne Balestrucci (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Homebound Ministry
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Lectors
Lou Anne Bulik (lectors@oldstjoseph.org)

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Children’s Liturgy of the Word
Peggy Connolly (clow@oldstjoseph.org)
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