



2323 Montgomery Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405  
(707) 542-6984

### PASTORAL STAFF

Rev. Frank Epperson, Rector  
Fr. Gabriel Sanchez, Parochial Vicar  
Rev. Bala Putchakayala, Parochial Vicar  
Rev. Jeffrey Keyes, In Residence  
Deacon Mike Heinzelman  
Deacon Gary Moore  
Deacon Russ Bowden

### WEBSITES

Parish: [www.steugenes.com](http://www.steugenes.com)  
School: [www.steugenesch.org](http://www.steugenesch.org)  
Email Comments/Suggestions to:  
[Office@steugenes.com](mailto:Office@steugenes.com)

### TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Parish Office Phone	(707)542-6984
Parish Office Fax	(707)542-1621
Religious Education	(707)326-3408
Finance Council – Marty McCormick	(707)526-1700
Choir Directress – Pam Zieminski	(707)578-8848
School Office	(707)545-7252
Preschool Office – Sharry Caesare	(707)528-9133
Homeschool Academy– Jessica Warner	(707)206-5579

### PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Friday – 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Entrance is located at SW corner of Rectory

### REGISTRATION IN THE PARISH

Our warmest welcome to all who worship in our community. If you are not registered in the parish, please complete a registration card. Cards are available at church entrances or at the parish office.

### MARRIAGES & BAPTISMS

Please contact the office at least 12 months in advance for weddings and 3 months in advance for baptisms. Check the parish website for more information.

### ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Please call the parish office when a parishioner is home bound or hospitalized to arrange for Holy Communion and Anointing of the Sick.



### MASS TIMES

Daily Mass: 6:45 and 8:00 a.m.  
Saturday: 8:00a.m; 4:30 p.m. & Sp.6:30 p. m.  
Sunday: 7:30, 9:00 & 10:30 a.m.  
12:00 noon and 5:30 p.m.  
Tuesday Latin Mass: 5:30 p.m.  
Sunday Latin Mass: 1:30 p.m.

### CONFESSIONS

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Saturday or by appointment

### PERPETUAL ADORATION

**Perpetual Adoration** is in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To sign up for your hour with our Lord, call Annette (English) at: (707)542-3635 or Maria Vega (Spanish) at: (707)710-5094

**Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament** is held in the chapel every First Friday following 8:00 a.m. Mass. *During this time of Covid-19, Benediction is not being held.*

### DEVOTIONS

**Recitation of the Rosary** is Monday – Saturday at 7:25 a.m. in the Cathedral

**Chaplet of Divine Mercy** is Saturday after the 8:00 a.m. Mass in the Cathedral

### CATHEDRAL SHOPS

**Cathedral Thrift Shop** Hours: Tues & Wed. 9:30 am–2:30 pm

**Cathedral Books & Gifts** Hours: Wed-Sat 8:30 am-4:30pm & Sun 8:30am-1:30pm, Closed Mon/Tues -  
Phone: (707)542-0250

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT – MARCH 12, 2023

### PARISH CALENDAR

#### SUNDAY MARCH 12

Masses – Cathedral – 7:30 am, 9:00 am, 10:30 am, 12:00,  
1:30 pm (Latin) & 5:30 pm  
RCIA – PLC – 10:30 am  
Coffee Social – PLC – 8:00 am – 12:00 Noon

#### MONDAY MARCH 13

Morning Masses – Cathedral – 6:45 & 8:00 am

#### TUESDAY MARCH 14

Morning Masses – Cathedral – 6:45 & 8:00 am  
Women of the Word – PLC – 9:00 am  
PSR – School – 3:45 pm  
Latin Mass – Cathedral – 5:30 pm

#### WEDNESDAY MARCH 15

Morning Masses – Cathedral – 6:45 & 8:00 am; Outdoor  
Rosary – Fatima Grotto – 6:00 pm  
Bible Study – PLC – 7:00 pm

#### THURSDAY MARCH 16

Morning Masses – Cathedral – 6:45 & 8:00 am

#### FRIDAY MARCH 17

Morning Masses – Cathedral – 6:45 & 8:00 am  
**Stations of the Cross – Cathedral – 2:00 & 6:00 pm;**  
**Spanish – 7:30 pm**  
Meager Meal – Parish Life Center – 6:30 pm

#### SATURDAY MARCH 18

Morning Mass – Cathedral – 8:00 am  
**Mini-Retreat – Cathedral – 9:15 am**  
Little Flowers Meeting – PLC (Hope Room) – 9:30 am  
Confession – Cathedral 3:30 – 4:30 pm  
Sunday Vigil Masses – Cathedral – 4:30 pm & 6:30 pm  
(Spanish)

### SECOND COLLECTION INFORMATION

#### ~ NO SECOND COLLECITON~

This weekend, March 11 & 12, we will not have a Second Collection. Next weekend, March 18 & 19, our Second Collection will be for our Religious Education Program. As always, thank you for your generosity!

### DIOCESAN NEWS

#### ~JOB OPPORTUNITY~

The Diocese is looking for part-time bookkeepers. For more information, please contact Lori Norcia at: [lnorcia@srdioocese.org](mailto:lnorcia@srdioocese.org) or call 707-566-3322.

### Hearing Aid Users, Switch to T-Coil

### ADMINISTRATION

#### For the Week of 02/26/23

Sunday Donations Received:	\$12,422.
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Second Collection: <i>No Second Collection</i>	
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#### ~ CATHEDRAL BOOKS & GIFTS~

Our Special of the Month for March are our Over-Stock items comprised of brand new items which were ordered in larger quantities than usual. Our Over-Stock table will have all items marked at 25% off, so take advantage of great deals for the upcoming Communion, Confirmation and RCIA gifts you'll be buying. Please stop by and see what we have to offer! (Please note, we have a great Spanish language section, too!) The shop hours are: Wed-Sat from 8:30 am-4:30 pm & Sun 8:30 am-1:30 pm. We are closed Mon./Tues. Call us at: 542-0250.

### SCHOOL NEWS

#### ~REGISTRATION HAS STARTED~

St. Eugene's Cathedral School has started its registration process for the 2023-24 school year. We are proud of our students and our school. We offer an excellent academic education with a challenging curriculum integrated with gospel values. We strive to develop the total child – spiritually, academically, socially, emotionally and physically. We also encourage the development of leadership and an enthusiasm for Christian community service among our students. We are accepting applications for all grades. Come by the school office to pick up an application or call 545-7252, and we'll send an application to you. You can also go to: [www.steugenesch.org](http://www.steugenesch.org) - "Admissions". If you would like to take a closer look at our campus, we offer a tour every month! **This month, our tour will be on Friday, March 17th, at 9:00 am.**

#### ~"NEW ROOF FUND" UPDATE~

We would like to thank all of you who have donated to our fund which will enable us to have a new roof put on the Cathedral. To date, we have collected \$95,000 of our \$100,000 goal! We are almost there! Your generosity and prayers are most appreciated as we continue to move toward our goal.

The bulletin submission deadline is Thursday @ 3:00pm for the Sunday after next bulletin. We reserve the right to edit or omit items. E-mail items to: [office@steugenes.com](mailto:office@steugenes.com).

## MASS INTENTIONS

<b>Saturday</b>	<b>March 11</b>
8:00 am	Leland Cagwin, deceased
4:30 pm	George & Chris Schirle, deceased
6:30 pm (Sp)	Angelita Valencia, living
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>March 12</b>
7:30 am	People of St. Eugene's
9:00 am	Scott Voelker, living
10:30 am	Gadeisuva Family, living & deceased
12:00 pm	Luis Alfredo Gonzalez Monterroso, deceased
1:30 pm (EF)	Mary & Vince Buettner, living
5:30 pm	Mr. Luis Fonseca, deceased
6:00pm Newman Ctr.	Robert Michael Mertz, deceased
<b>Monday</b>	<b>March 13</b>
6:45 am	Joseph Benedict Arnerich, living
8:00 am	Ricardo Olvera Galvan, deceased
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>March 14</b>
6:45 am	Mary Foley, deceased
8:00 am	Homobono Gomez, deceased
5:30 pm (EF)	Nancy Hoyer, living
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>March 15</b>
6:45 am	Denise Knight, living
8:00 am	Leo Pimentel, deceased
9:20 am (School)	Holy Souls in Purgatory
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>March 16</b>
6:45 am	Marcus Johnson, deceased
8:00 am	Deacon Mike Heinzelman, living
<b>Friday</b>	<b>March 17</b>
6:45 am	Jean Knight, living
8:00 am	Aurora Huerta, living
12:00 pm (Hosp)	Michael Tran, living
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>March 18</b>
8:00 am	Felipa de Jesus Monterroso, deceased
4:30 pm	Nancy Azevedo, deceased
6:30 (Sp)	Eligio Valencia, deceased

### ~PLEASE PRAY FOR~

Those who are ill need your support and prayers: Tristan Humble, Samuel Agius, Marjorie Miles, Amelia Lansangan, Gail Brown, Leo Del Santo, Emeline Jane Smith, Rosalind Britto, Ken Davis, Rita Wyatt, Karen Mills, Eileen Carol, Nancy Amador, Patrick Welter, Cristeta Marentes, Jesus Navarro, Michael Boland, Stephen Warner, Aida Catapang, Bob Goldman, Pat Davenport, Paulita Castro, Jean L. Alfano, Theresa Pham, Rainey Olson, Michele Otten, Pauline Goslovich, Mary Gonzales, Nick Sidjakov, Sandi Picconi, Margaret Keifer, Joan Cosgrove, Denise Ealy, Becky Harber, Ernest Lanford, Daniel Bruce Moore, Megan Ingrassia and Art Haake.

## SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY

### ~FRIDAY "MEAGER MEALS"~

Each Friday during Lent, various parish groups will be providing a meager meal of soup, bread and water at 6:30 pm in the Parish Life Center so that those leaving Stations of the Cross can gather together afterwards (and those coming to the 7:30 pm Spanish Stations, too!) A different group will host the meal each Friday. The third Friday of Lent, our hosts will be our Hispanic Community.

### ~LENTEN MINI-RETREATS~

Lent is a time for us to pause and to make extra time for prayer, penance and reflection. To assist us on this journey, we are offering mini-retreats on 3 consecutive Saturdays during Lent: **March 4, 11 & 18**. Our priest-presenters will offer the 8:00 am Mass and then begin the talks approximately 15 minutes after Mass/prayers/devotions have ended. A Lenten snack will be available in the Parish Life Center during this break time. In our second presentation, on March 11th, Fr. Cameron Faller, of the San Francisco Archdiocese spoke on the "Four Last Things": death, judgment, heaven and hell. **This coming Saturday, March 18th, will be our final presentation** with Fr. Raul Lemus, of St. Joseph Church in Cotati. Fr. Lemus will talk about "holiness" and base his presentation on a homily given by St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) with the theme being: Holiness cannot exist without evangelization." **All talks will be given in the Cathedral.**

## SOCIAL ACTIVITY

### ~YOUNG ADULT FELLOWSHIP~

Are you seeking Catholic Young Adult fellowship and ways to enrich your prayer life? Join Santa Rosa's "Carlo and Chiara Catholic Young Adults" who meet for prayer, community, faith formation, food, hikes, and more! Email [castfireontheearth@gmail.com](mailto:castfireontheearth@gmail.com) and join their email newsletter. Also follow them on GroupMe/ Facebook/ Instagram @ CarloandChiaraYA . For a complete list of all SF Bay Area Catholic Young Adult activities email - [thegrapevinesf@gmail.com](mailto:thegrapevinesf@gmail.com) and join their email newsletter. If you are a teenager, teens this summer are once again coming from all across Northern California to our Eureka Homeless Mission Outreach July 16 - 21st and our Leadership Training July 6th - 8th. For more info and to register via email, contact Stephen Morris [dsryouth@srdiocese.org](mailto:dsryouth@srdiocese.org).

### ~RESPECT LIFE COMMITTEE~

The Respect Life Committee is working with students from Cardinal Newman High School who are doing a service project whereby they are collecting **diapers and baby wipes** in the hopes of gifting them to the Bridges Pregnancy Clinic located in Santa Rosa. We will have a large box set up in the main vestibule for the next several weeks for your donations. Thank you and may God bless you for your generous Lenten almsgiving in helping families in need!

# MY CATHOLIC FAITH

## THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

### ~FROM THE PASTOR~

We are now starting our third week in Lent and moving ever closer to the great Feast of Easter. The following reflection, from a former Protestant, gives us great insight into the Protestant vs. the Catholic view of salvation, sin and suffering. Let's take a look at the article, "Lent, Suffering and the Death That Brings Life", by Sam Guzman. Also, we have an interesting, very short article in which we read about how God is with us even when we feel abandoned in a world steeped in sin. Finally, I share quotes from the Catechism (paragraphs 1817 - 1819) on the virtue of Hope. Enjoy ...

## MORE THOUGHTS ON LENT

### ~A GREAT PARADOX~

"Lent is here, and quite frequently the weather suits the somber tone of the season. Ashen gray skies and the bare reaching arms of trees create an atmosphere that is at once stark and solemn. Yet this season is not entirely bleak or without hope. Warmer days replete with sunshine break up the gloom, and bird songs welcome the green buds shooting forth from once barren trees. Green grass breaks forth in clumps among the coarse and yellowed remnants of the year before. Spring is a time of death mingling with new life—the dormant world waking up with a lingering yawn. It would be difficult to imagine a time more suited to the Lenten season, in which we remember the death of Christ, but also look forward to his glorious resurrection. It is a time when we remember the death that brings new Life. For the great paradox at the heart of Christianity is that a Death was the remedy for death. It was in losing his life that Christ brought new life to the world."

### ~IMPUTATION~

"Growing up a protestant, I was taught quite young the theological idea of *imputation*. That is, that Christ died in our place to bear the death sentence that we deserved, and in doing so, transferred his righteousness to us. It was a grand exchange. He takes ours sins and we get credited righteousness. But most importantly, Jesus suffered and died so that we *do not* have to suffer and die. We escape the cross because Jesus went there in our place."

### ~PARTICIPATION~

"The Catholic idea of salvation is quite different. Imputation is largely foreign to Catholic theology. Instead, Catholic theology operates on the idea of *participation*. That is, Christ came to earth and died on the cross, not so that we could avoid death and suffering, but so that he could transform the inevitability of death and suffering from the inside out. By communion with him, by *participation* in his cross, we could receive eternal life."

### ~THE GREAT EQUALIZER~

"After all, what is the fate of each and every human being? Death. It is the great equalizer. No matter how rich, famous, beautiful, or healthy we are, we will all die sooner or later. Death is the consequence of sin, for sin is a movement away from God who is Life itself. Sin is therefore by definition non-Life. It is death by its nature. And because our first parents chose sin, death is the fate of every human being."

### ~HE CHANGED IT ALL~

"Our enemy was gleeful at our demise. He meant for our death to be eternal, and for our physical death to be the gateway into eternal doom. But Christ came and changed all that. He embraced death and death could not hold him. He transformed it from the inside out, changing it from the gateway to eternal death to that of eternal life. In the words of the Byzantine liturgy, "He trampled down death by death." Put another way, Christ did not suffer and die so that we do not have to—he suffered and died so that our suffering and death could be transubstantiated into a means of life. He embraced the cross not to keep us from it, but so that our crosses could be changed from instruments of death into healing remedies that bring life. As baptized Christians, we are members of the body of Christ. We are incorporated into him and we live in communion with him. This communion means that we share in his life—not by making some act of intellectual assent, but by living his life after him. And living his life after him requires carrying the cross after him and sharing in his death. The cross is the price of eternal life."

~TRANSFORMING OUR CROSS~

"This is the meaning of Jesus when he said, "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Could there be any clearer sign that he did not come to keep us from the cross? No, rather he came to transform our crosses into the means of life. Having been instructed by Christ himself, St. Paul understood this well. "I die daily." "I have been crucified with Christ." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The cross is foolishness to them that are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God and the Wisdom of God." The cross was always in his heart and on his lips, for it was to him, as it is for us all, the means of eternal life. Suffering is inevitable. To varying degrees, we will all suffer. And with a similar certainty, we will all die. It could be said that a cross lies at the heart of human existence. But the cross need not be a fate to be feared. Our Lord trampled down death by death. In the greatest paradox of all, he changed death into a means of life. What was once our doom is now our salvation." Lent, Suffering, and the Death that Brings Life, By Sam Guzman, www.theCatholicGentleman.com

**GRUMBLING & COMPLAINING**

~TESTING GOD~

"In the first reading today we hear about the events that took place at Meribah in the desert where the people of Israel tested God and grumbled against Him because they did not have water to drink. Any of us could understand that if we were in the desert and we were out of water, we might be tempted to grumble against the Lord as well. Sadly, for so many people today it does not require being out in the desert and suffering from thirst before we complain against God. We complain about the smallest and most ridiculous things. We, too, seem to test God on a regular basis. As things continue to get worse in the world and more and more people abandon their faith in God for something secular, selfish, or occult, we hear more people asking the same basic question as the Israelites: Is the Lord in our midst or not? St. Paul, in the second reading, tells us that through faith we have been justified and through this same faith we have access to the grace of God in which we stand. He goes on to speak of the hope that does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Even though it may seem like the Lord has removed Himself from us, our faith tells us that He is with us, our hope looks forward to the day when we will feel that union once again, and our love for God continues unabated in the midst of the darkness and dryness. This is the way God has purified the saints throughout history. Today, we are among those whom He wants to be saints. Are we willing to cooperate? The real question we have to ask as individuals and as a people is not whether or not God is in our midst, but whether or not we are with God. St. Paul reminds us that Jesus died for us while we were helpless and ungodly. In fact, he says that God proves His love for us by dying for us while we were still sinners." By Fr. Robert Altier, For entire article, go to [WWW.thewandererpress.com/catholic/news/our-catholic-faith/do-not-doubt-gods-presence/](http://WWW.thewandererpress.com/catholic/news/our-catholic-faith/do-not-doubt-gods-presence/)

~ON THE VIRTUE OF HOPE~

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."<sup>84</sup> "The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."<sup>85</sup>

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the *hope of Abraham*, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice.<sup>86</sup> "Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations."<sup>87</sup>



# MI FE CATOLICA

## **TERCER DOMINGO DE CUARESMA**

### **~DEL PASTOR~**

Comenzamos nuestra tercera semana de Cuaresma y nos acercamos cada vez más a la gran fiesta de la Pascua. La siguiente reflexión, de un antiguo protestante, nos ofrece una gran perspectiva sobre la visión protestante frente a la católica de la salvación, el pecado y el sufrimiento. Veamos el artículo "Cuaresma, sufrimiento y la muerte que trae vida", de Sam Guzmán. También tenemos un interesante y muy breve artículo en el que leemos sobre cómo Dios está con nosotros incluso cuando nos sentimos abandonados en un mundo impregnado de pecado. Por último, comparto citas del Catecismo (párrafos 1817 - 1819) sobre la virtud de la Esperanza. Disfruten ...

## **MAS REFLEXIONES PARA CUARESMA**

### **~UNA GRAN PARADOJA~**

"La Cuaresma está aquí, y con frecuencia el tiempo se adapta al tono sombrío de la estación. El cielo gris ceniciento y los brazos desnudos de los árboles crean una atmósfera a la vez austera y solemne. Sin embargo, esta estación no es totalmente sombría ni carente de esperanza. Los días más cálidos y soleados rompen la penumbra, y los cantos de los pájaros dan la bienvenida a los brotes verdes que brotan de los árboles antes estériles. La hierba verde brota en macizos entre los restos toscos y amarillentos del año anterior. La primavera es una época en la que la muerte se mezcla con la nueva vida: el mundo dormido se despierta con un bostezo persistente. Sería difícil imaginar un tiempo más adecuado para la Cuaresma, en la que recordamos la muerte de Cristo, pero también esperamos su gloriosa resurrección. Es un tiempo en el que recordamos la muerte que trae nueva Vida. Porque la gran paradoja en el corazón del cristianismo es que una Muerte fue el remedio para la muerte. Fue al perder su vida que Cristo trajo nueva vida al mundo".

### **~IMPUTACIÓN~**

"Al crecer como protestante, me enseñaron muy joven la idea teológica de la imputación. Es decir, que Cristo murió en nuestro lugar para cargar con la sentencia de muerte que merecíamos y, al hacerlo, nos transfirió su justicia. Era un gran intercambio. Él carga con nuestros pecados y nosotros recibimos su justicia acreditada. Pero lo más importante, Jesús sufrió y murió para que nosotros no tengamos que →

sufrir y morir. Escapamos de la cruz porque Jesús fue allí en nuestro lugar".

### **~PARTICIPACIÓN~**

"La idea católica de la salvación es muy diferente. La imputación es en gran medida ajena a la teología católica. En su lugar, la teología católica opera sobre la idea de participación. Es decir, Cristo vino a la tierra y murió en la cruz, no para que pudiéramos evitar la muerte y el sufrimiento, sino para que pudiera transformar la inevitabilidad de la muerte y el sufrimiento desde dentro hacia fuera. Por la comunión con Él, por la participación en su cruz, podíamos recibir la vida eterna."

### **~EL GRAN IGUALADOR~**

"Después de todo, ¿cuál es el destino de todos y cada uno de los seres humanos? La muerte. Es el gran igualador. No importa lo ricos, famosos, hermosos o sanos que seamos, todos moriremos tarde o temprano. La muerte es la consecuencia del pecado, porque el pecado es un alejamiento de Dios, que es la Vida misma. Por tanto, el pecado es, por definición, no-Vida. Es muerte por naturaleza. Y como nuestros primeros padres eligieron el pecado, la muerte es el destino de todo ser humano".

### **~ÉL LO CAMBIÓ TODO~**

"Nuestro enemigo se regocijaba con nuestra desaparición. Quería que nuestra muerte fuera eterna, y que nuestra muerte física fuera la puerta a la perdición eterna. Pero Cristo vino y cambió todo eso. Abrazó la muerte y la muerte no pudo con él. La transformó de dentro afuera, cambiándola de la puerta de la muerte eterna a la de la vida eterna. En palabras de la liturgia bizantina, "pisoteó la muerte con la muerte". Dicho de otro modo, Cristo no sufrió y murió para que nosotros no tuviéramos que hacerlo: sufrió y murió para que nuestro sufrimiento y nuestra muerte pudieran transustanciarse en un medio de vida. Abrazó la cruz no para alejarnos de ella, sino para que nuestras cruces dejaran de ser instrumentos de muerte y se convirtieran en remedios curativos que traen vida. Como cristianos bautizados, somos miembros del cuerpo de Cristo. Estamos incorporados a él y vivimos en comunión con él. Esta comunión significa que compartimos su vida, no mediante un acto de asentimiento intelectual, sino viviendo su vida después de él. Y vivir su vida después de Él exige llevar la cruz después de Él y compartir su muerte. La cruz es el precio de la vida eterna".

### ~TRANSFORMAR NUESTRA CRUZ~

"Este es el sentido de Jesús cuando dijo: "Quien no carga con la cruz y me sigue, no puede ser mi discípulo". ¿Puede haber una señal más clara de que no vino para alejarnos de la cruz? No, vino más bien a transformar nuestras cruces en medios de vida. Habiendo sido instruido por Cristo mismo, San Pablo lo comprendió bien. "Cada día muero". "Estoy crucificado con Cristo". "Dios me libre de gloriarme sino en la cruz de nuestro Señor Jesucristo". "La cruz es necesidad para los que se pierden, pero para los que nos salvamos es poder de Dios y Sabiduría de Dios". La cruz estaba siempre en su corazón y en sus labios, porque era para él, como lo es para todos nosotros, el medio de la vida eterna. El sufrimiento es inevitable. En mayor o menor medida, todos sufriremos. Y con la misma certeza, todos moriremos. Podría decirse que la cruz está en el corazón de la existencia humana. Pero la cruz no tiene por qué ser un destino temible. Nuestro Señor pisoteó la muerte por la muerte. En la mayor paradoja de todas, transformó la muerte en un medio de vida. Lo que antes era nuestra perdición es ahora nuestra salvación".

### REFUNFUÑAR Y QUEJARSE

#### ~PONIENDO A PRUEBA A DIOS~

"En la primera lectura de hoy oímos hablar de los acontecimientos que tuvieron lugar en Meriba, en el desierto, donde el pueblo de Israel puso a prueba a Dios y refunfuñó contra Él porque no tenían agua para beber. Cualquiera de nosotros podría entender que si estuviéramos en el desierto y no tuviéramos agua, también podríamos sentir la tentación de refunfuñar contra el Señor. Lamentablemente, para muchas personas hoy en día no es necesario estar en el desierto y sufrir de sed antes de quejarse contra Dios. Nos quejamos de las cosas más pequeñas y ridículas. Parece que nosotros también ponemos a prueba a Dios con regularidad. Mientras las cosas siguen empeorando en el mundo y cada vez más gente abandona su fe en Dios por algo secular, egoísta u oculto, oímos a más gente hacerse la misma pregunta básica que los israelitas: ¿Está el Señor entre nosotros o no? San Pablo, en la segunda lectura, nos dice que por la fe hemos sido justificados y que por esta misma fe tenemos acceso a la gracia de Dios en la que estamos. A continuación habla de la esperanza que no defrauda, porque el amor de Dios ha sido derramado en nuestros corazones por el Espíritu Santo.

Aunque parezca que el Señor se ha alejado de nosotros, nuestra fe nos dice que Él está con nosotros, nuestra esperanza espera el día en que volveremos a sentir esa unión, y nuestro amor a Dios sigue intacto en medio de la oscuridad y la sequedad. Así ha purificado Dios a los santos a lo largo de la historia. Hoy, estamos entre aquellos que Él quiere que sean santos. ¿Estamos dispuestos a colaborar? La verdadera pregunta que tenemos que hacernos como individuos y como pueblo no es si Dios está o no en medio de nosotros, sino si estamos o no con Dios. San Pablo nos recuerda que Jesús murió por nosotros mientras éramos impotentes e inmorales. De hecho, dice que Dios prueba su amor por nosotros muriendo por nosotros cuando aún éramos pecadores."

#### ~SOBRE LA VIRTUD DE LA ESPERANZA~

La esperanza es la virtud teologal por la que deseamos el reino de los cielos y la vida eterna como nuestra felicidad, poniendo nuestra confianza en las promesas de Cristo y contando no con nuestras propias fuerzas, sino con la ayuda de la gracia del Espíritu Santo. "Mantengamos sin vacilar la confesión de nuestra esperanza, porque fiel es el que prometió"84. "El Espíritu Santo . . . lo derramó abundantemente sobre nosotros por Jesucristo, nuestro Salvador, para que fuésemos justificados por su gracia y herederos en esperanza de la vida eterna"85.

La virtud de la esperanza responde a la aspiración a la felicidad que Dios ha puesto en el corazón de todo hombre; recoge las esperanzas que inspiran las actividades de los hombres y las purifica para ordenarlas al Reino de los cielos; aleja al hombre del desaliento; lo sostiene en los momentos de abandono; abre su corazón en la espera de la bienaventuranza eterna. Animado por la esperanza, es preservado del egoísmo y conducido a la felicidad que brota de la caridad.

La esperanza cristiana retoma y realiza la esperanza del pueblo elegido que tiene su origen y su modelo en la esperanza de Abrahán, bendecido abundantemente por las promesas de Dios cumplidas en Isaac, y purificado por la prueba del sacrificio.86 "Esperando contra toda esperanza, creyó, y así se convirtió en padre de muchas naciones".87



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