

Sept. 16-17, 2017

Thoughts from the pastor,

In case you didn't get the email, the Bible Study starts this weekend. It is 9:30-10:30am Sundays. The first day of readings would be 9/17, this Sunday, with the first chapter of Genesis, Psalm 1, and the first half of chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew, vs. 1-17. My old notes are on the website: stelizabethann.org under bible study. They will be out of sync with our timeline but I have left them in for those who started early. I will submit the new ones next to them each Sunday or Monday.

I really hope you take advantage of this opportunity. There are very few ways that God can touch us deeper than with His Word, but if we don't know it or always use the excuse that we don't understand it, we will be in trouble taking the final test, or our judgment before God. This is when you study for a test, not after it is too late.

This week, on 9/14, we had the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. We celebrate Flag Day as a country on June 14, but September 14, the whole church celebrates its symbol of who we are. The design of our flag is to remind us of who we are. We came from 13 original colonies or states so we have 13 stripes. We now have 50 states so we have 50 stars. The white stands for purity and innocence. The red stands for hardiness and valour; and the blue signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice. Even when we do not live up to who we are, the flag represents what we should want to be.

The Holy Cross is similar. It has a horizontal and vertical beam to remind us that we have two Great Commandments, to love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We must reach up to connect with the God who is trying to make a connection with us. We are to reach out to make a connection with each other. The dead wood of the cross is to represent the consequence of our having lost the connection to the tree of life in paradise. That consequence is death. When Jesus submitted to the humiliation of the cross, He came with a crown of thorns to show he was doing the work that God warned Adam about. God told Adam: "Cursed is the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bear for you, and you shall eat the grass of the field. By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground. From which you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you will return. (Gen.3:17-19) Jesus took on the work of saving us knowing that in this world it would mean thorns and sweat from His brow. He was doing the "work" of His Father, and He was doing it to save us from having to do it in vain; or worse, we would have had to do it forever.

Then we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on 9/15. This also fulfilled our curse. "To the woman he said: I will intensify your toil in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. (Gen.3-16) Every mother knows that the pain of childbearing does not end with the birth of a child. Mary felt this pain many times, with and for her son. But besides being the wife of Joseph, she is also the bride of Christ, representing who we are meant to be as the Church. So she fulfills all of this also.

This and more is what you would be learning in the Sunday Bible Study.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank