

# The Lion

A merely parochial tabloid for members only of St. Mark's Parish, Denver, Colorado. These contents do not represent the opinions or doctrines or particular judgements of any sentient being of any species.

May 2017

## SERMON at the Requiem Mass for Mary Cecilia Brainerd

24 April 2017

Monday in the Second Week of Paschaltide  
at St Mark's Church in Denver

The Rev'd Deacon John Woolley

**CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED, HE IS RISEN!**

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**A**ND THAT RIGHT THERE, in itself, is a complete sermon for the occasion of a Christian funeral; an excellent sermon for \*any\* celebration in this joyful Easter season; indeed, "Christ is risen!" is a perfect sermon for any Feast Day, for any Sunday, for any day of any year. Because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and our participation in his resurrection, is the Church's only message – salvation and triumph and hope. The Resurrection is the Gospel.

I'm going to tell you a story. As you may know, beginning during World War II and lasting for over 40 years, the nation of Albania was ruled by one of the worst tyrants of the 20th century, the Communist dictator Enver Hoxha. Hoxha declared that Albania was to be the world's first completely atheist country, with no religion whatsoever permitted, public or private. Churches and mosques were blown up and burnt, religious books, vestments, icons were all confiscated and destroyed. It was illegal to give religious instruction to anyone, even to your own children, or to baptize anyone; no religious

assemblies of any kind were permitted, no services, no Church weddings, no Church funerals. You weren't even allowed to give your child a Christian name – you could only use names that were on the Government's official list of non-religious names. It was illegal even to pray in private. Hundreds of clergy and religious, and who knows how many lay people, became martyrs. This terrible persecution went on with increasing fury from the late 1940s until Hoxha's death in 1985, and even after that. But in 1991, when thank God! the Communist governments of so many countries were overthrown, Albania was established as a free republic, and the few remaining believers were able to come out of hiding.

Albania was free again, but the people were suffering terrible poverty, and the Church was in an awful condition. Not only weren't there any church buildings, or Bibles or service books, or icons – they had practically no people; in the entire country, only 22 elderly priests had lived through the persecution. There were a few lay people who had been baptized in secret; but two generations of ruthlessly enforced atheism had ensured that almost no one in Albania had any real experience of Christianity or Church life. So an Archbishop from Africa, Archbishop Anastasios of Kenya and Uganda, was called to oversee the restoration, the resurrection of the martyred Church of Albania. He arrived there in 1992, and was immediately asked to address a meeting of the few remaining Orthodox people in the country.

They were anxious, of course, to hear what their new Archbishop had to say. What were his plans for rebuilding the Church of Albania? What programs would he set up? What would he want to do first? Build churches, establish Church schools, set up a printing press, get missionaries from abroad to come in and help? And where was the money for all this going to come from? The whole thing looked like a lost cause, hopeless. But Archbishop Anastasios stood up in front of the meeting, and his first words, proclaimed at the top of his voice, were: "Christ is risen!"

The Archbishop's meaning, of course, was that even in a situation that to a sober worldly eye would seem impossible and utterly hopeless, in the light of Christ's resurrection everything was full of hope.

Hope. In everyday language we use the word "hope" to mean something like a mild wish. "I hope the pizza guy

gets here soon”, “I hope somebody remembered to start the coffee”, and so on. But in the Christian vocabulary, hope is nothing less than our certain assurance in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in our participation in his resurrection. The Burial Office, which we read just before this Liturgy, speaks of our “sure and certain hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ”. Hear those words – our hope is *\*sure\** and *\*certain\**. And hope changes *\*everything\**.

If you read the old pagan literature of ancient Greece and Rome, or if you read the new pagan literature of the last few generations, or listen to worldly music, or look at worldly art, or architecture, or ethics or philosophy or politics – everything in that old pagan world and everything in this new so-called “post-Christian” world is characterized and coloured by despair, by a terrible emptiness, a loss of meaning – ultimately, by death. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ changes all that. In one of our Eastertide collects, we pray to God “who by the resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ hast given gladness unto the world”. Gladness! Joy! For us, who have been baptized into the death and Resurrection of Jesus, everything – everything! – is transformed by that sure and certain hope. Everything – work and play, love and friendship, study, commerce, art and music, life and death, everything is transformed by Christ’s Resurrection. “Behold,” says the Lord Jesus, “I make all things new.”

We still experience sorrow of course; death in particular still grieves us. But remember that our Lord Jesus himself could grieve at the death of his friend Lazarus, even though he knew most certainly that he was about to raise Lazarus alive from his tomb. Still, even knowing that, the Lord wept for his friend’s death. Jesus is human, one of us; and grief is how death affects us. But even death itself is trampled down, turned around, and defeated by hope.

In the Epistle we heard a few minutes ago, St Paul is writing to the Thessalonians, who are experiencing confusion and grief that some members of their church have recently died – “fallen asleep”, as St Paul calls it. Paul does not tell the grieving Thessalonians that they shouldn’t grieve; instead, he says that they should “sorrow not as others who have no hope” – implying that they *\*should\** be sorrowing *\*with\** hope. Even sorrow, even grief, is transformed by hope into ... what? Ultimately, into joy,

into life, into Resurrection. Listen to St Paul in another letter: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Whose victory? Christ’s of course. “Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus rises from the dead, and gives *\*us\** the victory, gives us *\*his\** victory.

How is it possible for us, sorrowing and surrounded by sorrow, to hold this audacious hope? It’s possible because we trust him. We trust the Lord Jesus. He is the one who promised us “This is the will of him that sent me, that everyone who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” That must have sounded like a pretty wild promise for any man to make, that he would raise people up from death at the last day, but he followed up the promise by the deed; he gave himself to be “crucified, dead, and buried”, and then *\*demonstrated\** that he is indeed the Lord of Life by rising from his tomb. Jesus’ Resurrection is a demonstration of power over death, but it’s more than that. We who are incorporated into Jesus Christ the Conqueror of Death, just as we share his life and death, we share also his Resurrection. Everything Christ does for our salvation, he does also in us. His Resurrection is our resurrection and our immortality as well.

We Christians believe these things, but it’s sometimes hard to keep all this clear before the eyes of our minds, especially when we’re suffering from some disappointment or pain or loss – as we are now. Grief can cloud our minds, and make it hard for us (as it were) to know what we know. But we *\*do\** know this, that indeed Christ is risen; and we trust him to save us. As he said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

**CHRIST IS RISEN!**

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## On the Occasion of My Mother's Wake

**M**ARY CECILIA BRAINERD turned fifty-two on 9 April, 2017. It's the first year that the author knew her age. She always seemed ageless. These "depth of wisdom" types always do when they manage to never lose touch with child-like joy.

Mary, daughter of the venerable Beverly and Thomas Blakemore, married John W., of the Brainerd/Watkins clan. Thus they joined together two gene pools with extra vivacity and intelligence in them already, in order to produce six children that have been reviewed by all comers as, "pretty good, all things considered," which gave her no end of joy. She valued the kitchen, the home, the self, and the wide world full of mysteries.

That's how it started.

With grief, I announce that I now have a good trick to remember my mother's age.

You know all these phrases. We've all heard them before. "With a heavy heart, I regret to inform you, that..." and then all the euphemisms. "Passed," or "didn't make it," or, my favorite, "we lost her," as if we simply misplaced her. And any of the other phrases we use to avoid the hard words that none of us like.

I understand the desire to soften the language. I burst into tears every time I say the hard words, so I understand wanting that. All these softened words do for me is prolong the moment of impact. I guess, though, we all gain something by spreading the pain out over a few minutes. I guess it helps.

I guess that's what I am doing.

My mother died. Those words hurt. Our mother died. Our wife died. Our daughter died. Our sister died. Our niece died. Our teacher died. Our mentor died. Our friend died.

Mary Cecilia died. The words hurt.

My mum believed that we have a temple in this whole wide universe. No good reason to restrict our celebration or mourning to particular buildings or moments.

If you want to help me wake her, I am glad for the company.

My mother likes hoppy beer, and she likes dry cocktails. She likes black tea, and she likes dark coffee. She likes rich chocolate and she like good red wine.

She likes good food well prepared, especially if it has a story attached to it. She likes fresh bread, and fresh tortillas, and fresh cake.

She likes big spaces full of empty wind and big sky and big mountains. She likes walking and she likes sitting and watching the world do what it does.

She likes reading. She read everything. And she likes good films and good TV, but she likes it best if she can talk to you about it afterwards.

So if you do wish to help me wake my mother, you may come, you may show support in the way that you like best. I understand that some people want to be present. The company helps. I appreciate it and my family does. It helps to know we're not alone.

If you really want to help me wake her, then raise a glass to her. Eat a meal and remember. Enjoy a book and watch the clouds.

And remember: when a glass is half air and half water, it's all the way full.

--Oliver Brainerd, Denver, CO, 24 April 2017



*The photograph provided is by John W. Brainerd and called "Mary working."*

# Passion Sunday

Preached at St. Mark's Church, Denver

by the Rev'd Deacon James E. Tochiara

From the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews:  
Christ being come an High Priest of good things to  
come. +

**I**N THE MOST ANCIENT of times, people would pray to God to give them a successful hunt. When they killed some game and brought the meat back to their families, they would offer some of the meat to God in appreciation and thanksgiving, and also to insure that God continued to have friendly feelings toward them.

Later, people learned how to farm and build cities. They would pray to God for a successful harvest and for protection. The best way to insure God's protection of the city was to build a sacred house for him. If God lived in the city, then the people would have his protection full-time. The people chose priests to serve God on a daily basis. They offered him portions from the best of their crops, and they offered him meat sacrifices worthy of a king's feast.

In the Holy Scriptures, God commands these sacrifices. Many people used to think that God needed these sacrifices to eat and to feed his own life energy, but very soon the holy prophets corrected the people's understanding. God is a Spirit—he does not need sacrifices to eat or to live. He demands sacrifices because the act of sacrifice can make an unclean people clean, and a sinful people holy.

And so the Hebrew people settled in to a predictable cycle: living imperfectly as humans and sinning, then cleansing themselves in order to offer sacrifices, and then sacrificing to come back to a holy life with God; sin, cleanse, sacrifice; sin, cleanse, sacrifice; and on and on. Christ is the priest who breaks this cycle. It's no longer sin, cleanse, sacrifice. He has brought us to a higher place.

We used to think God ate our sacrifices, but then we realized they were really for our good. How do sacrifices work? It is a simple and effective mechanism.

Imagine preparing a great feast. You choose the finest wheat, the extra virgin press of olive oil, the most refined wine, and of course the choicest cuts of beef or lamb. As you're preparing these elements, you think about how good they will taste, how delectable the sensations will be in your mouth, how satisfying this fine food will feel in your belly, and how eagerly your body will receive this pleasing nourishment into your blood and all throughout your muscles. Finally, everything is prepared and laid out upon the banquet table, and right before you can take the first bite—a man suddenly bursts in and declares that this feast must be delivered without a moment's hesitation to

the king. Workers swoop in, grab every last morsel, and in a matter of seconds the feast has vanished.

That is sacrifice.

Not always, but quite often, the best way to reach your spirit is through your body. Sometimes, the only way to reach your spirit is through your body. The spirit churns along, spewing out thoughts and judgments and opinions, thinking how splendid we are compared to others—but offer up a true sacrifice to the One True God. The spirit, our spirit, thinks about the feast of our life, imagining every detail, pursuing every consideration and potential consequence—suddenly, give that—your life—to God your King. Give just an hour, just half an hour, of pure sacrifice—put your life on hold, and give to God all of your heart, your soul, and mind.

Your pleasure is gone—who are you? Your plans are ruined—what is the meaning of your life? Your sacrifice to God will reveal the answers. You are a servant of the Most High God—that is who you are. You are here to become worthy of God's glory and to share that glory with others—that is the meaning of your life. You will learn these truths and live these virtues by sacrifice. That is how sacrifice redeems us and makes us holy, at least until we sin again.

How does Christ Jesus offer a higher sacrifice that breaks this cycle? First, we need to learn about the real Jesus, and cleanse our mind. Throw out the fantasy Jesus that we imagine as children, the harsh Jesus of Protestant morality, the institutional and magical Jesus of Roman Catholicism, the cheerful oozing Jesus of Evangelicals, the superficial Jesus of Joel Osteen, the drippy sentimental Jesus of Victorian piety...and I suppose there are countless others. A mature and balanced reading of the Holy Scriptures presents us with a divine and perfect Jesus, wonderfully and completely human.

This Jesus, the real Jesus, is anointed by his heavenly Father to be the Emperor of the planet Earth. Our Lord is the only person ever to be so qualified—whether by birth, divine sanction, prophetic annunciation, or personal perfection. Every moment he walked upon this planet, he knew that he was the true King of kings, and he proved himself by his wisdom and his humility and his compassion, to be worthy of receiving all power, and honor, and glory. He is worthy to sit upon his throne: yesterday, today, and forever. If he were to rule as Emperor of Earth, all wars and all injustice would cease. Every single person would be happy, healthy, and productive. He is the answer to all our problems—not a science or a system, but a human person—a loving perfect man who shows us how to live in peace and love and holiness.

And now, over the course of the next two weeks, we must watch him die.

That is sacrifice.

Just as the Lord Jesus sacrifices everything in this world—his life, his throne, and his kingdom—so do we sacrifice everything in this world when we watch him die. We love him, but we fail him and lose him and sacrifice him—our greatest treasure—so that our sins will not pollute his perfect kingdom. We kill him because we cannot bear his perfection. In that sacrifice, Christ finds a way—the way—we cannot enter his perfection as we are, but if we watch our precious King die, behold, he brings us into his pure kingdom by his grace. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats...sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the Blood of Christ...purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9)”

This Lent, this Easter, offer this sacrifice perfectly and totally, love Jesus perfectly and totally, and watch all that you love die upon the cross—then death shall suddenly fall away from you. Most likely, all of us here will fall asleep, but you will fall asleep without seeing death.

My brothers and sisters, that is why we are here today. We are here to keep our Lord's sayings, so that we might not see death. We shall pass through death, by the sacrifice of the cross, and then, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The cycle of sin and sacrifice, sin and sacrifice is broken when we offer the all-consuming sacrifice of the perfect God made man, the perfect man made King, the perfect King made sacrifice. Love Jesus totally, let his perfection devour you, and when he—our Lord Jesus Christ—dies, you shall be set free from death.

Abraham rejoices to see this day—the day of our salvation, the day of the salvation of the entire human race. At the holy sacrifice of the Mass, after we have called down the Holy Ghost upon the gifts of bread and wine to transform them into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, it is then that we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice unto God the Father. Then we pray for all the Christian dead, and then we ask to join the fellowship of all the Christian saints. Why is that? Because when we call down the Holy Ghost, Heaven descends to earth, and earth is lifted up to Heaven: we have crossed the boundary of death, and death has fallen away. We are in the presence of God and all the souls of the Christian dead surround us.

We are no longer in the cycle of sin and sacrifice. Now we are in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, and our Great High Priest breathes out the Holy Ghost upon us. Abraham is standing at the altar, rejoicing to see this day. Let us rejoice with him. Let us love Jesus Christ above all else, and his sacrifice then becomes our sacrifice, and his Kingdom then becomes our kingdom, our eternal inheritance. From the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come.+

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Graecyn Marie received the Mystery of Baptism/Chrismation on Easter Day. Her Dad, Joseph Tyler, received Chrismation. Mom, Emily Marie, is the daughter of Guy and Dana Huft. The Godparents

are Greg and Carolyn and Nate and Angela. Family and friends attended in numbers for the happy event.

**The 2017 Parish Life Conference** will be at Houston, TX this June 7-10. The location: The Westin Houston, Memorial City, 945 Gessner Road, Houston, TX. Hotel is \$168 a day.

**For the schedule of events:** [http://www.antiocchianevents.com/wichita\\_schedule\\_general.html](http://www.antiocchianevents.com/wichita_schedule_general.html)



His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop BASIL



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

Diocese of Wichita and  
Mid-America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

P A S C H A 2 0 1 7

Beloved and Christ-loving Clergy, Monastics and Laity of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America:

I embrace and greet you with a holy kiss in the Name of the Resurrected Theanthropos Jesus Christ, and, together with you and Orthodox Christians throughout the world, I joyfully proclaim that Christ is risen! **Χριστὸς ἀνέστη! أ المسیح قام! Христос Воскресе! Hristos a înviat!**

As we prepare to celebrate the most glorious Feast of feasts in our beautifully adorned church temples across the Heartland of America, let us recall and be inspired by another glorious Pascha – this one celebrated in stark Block 26 at Dachau Concentration Camp in 1945:

“The room was bare, save for a wooden table and an icon of the Theotokos. A creative solution to the problem of the vestments was found. Linen towels were taken from the SS hospital. When sewn together lengthwise, two towels formed an epitachelion, and when sewn end-to-end they became an orarion. Red crosses, originally intended to be worn by the medical personnel of the SS guards, were put on these towel-vestments. On Pascha, May 6<sup>th</sup>, countless Serbs, Greeks and Russians gathered in and around the barracks. In the entire history of the Orthodox Church there has probably never been a Paschal service like that one. Greek and Serbian priests together with a Serbian deacon wore the makeshift vestments over their blue and gray-striped prisoner’s uniforms. Then they began to chant, alternating from Greek to Slavonic, the Paschal Canon and the Paschal Stichera all from memory! The Gospel—“In the beginning was the Word”—from memory! And finally, the Paschal Homily of Saint John Chrysostom—also from memory! A young Greek monk from the Holy Mountain stood up in front of us and recited it with such infectious enthusiasm that we shall never forget him as long as we live. Eighteen Orthodox priests and one deacon concelebrated this unforgettable service.”

May our Paschal joy approximate in some small measure that experienced by those courageous Orthodox Christians in Dachau seventy-two years ago.

Wishing you and your families a glorious Paschal season, and looking forward to being with you all at our Diocesan Family Reunion hosted by St Anthony Church of Spring, Texas (June 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>), I remain

Your Father in the Risen Christ,

+Bishop Basil  
Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*

1559 North Woodlawn Street, Wichita, KS 67208-2429  
(316) 687-3169 Phone BpBasil@aol.com (316) 636-5628 Fax

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh  
Primate of the British Isles, Russian Orthodox Patriarchate

## ON PRAYER FOR THE DEPARTED

September 2nd, 1989

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

**W**HENEVER someone dear to us departs this earthly life and enters into eternity, we pray for God's mercy, indeed for God's love to enfold the person and bring him into the eternity of joy which is in God. Every Saturday, as on certain other occasions, we pray regularly for the departed, but on Saturdays in a special context - we pray also to the Mother of God and sing her glory. And it is not by chance or in vain that the two prayers are intertwined.

When we pray for the departed, we do not ask God to be unjust and to pardon sins gratuitously, and not to reject those who have rejected Him and are still unable to commune with Him before the love of God has penetrated them, as the warmth of the sun penetrates the cold bodies of the earth.. We pray for the departed testifying thereby that they have not lived in vain on earth, that they have, while they were on earth, kindled in our hearts a flame, a flame of gratitude, of reverence, of love; this flame may be small or great; it may be nothing more than the flickering light of a candle, but it can also be like the burning bush, shining with all the glory of the love of God, of His divine presence. We testify, when we pray for the departed, that we have received from them a message, a message of truth, of faith, of hope, of joy; that they have been for us a way to God, that they have opened to us a door which leads into eternal life, because life eternal consists in knowing the living God, and we pray to Him indeed, because He is not the God of the dead but the God of those who live. And if our love can be undying, if the Old Testament could say that love is stronger than death - how much more can we say that the love of God in Christ is stronger than anything - death indeed, among other things, because in Christ death has been defeated, death has been harrowed, life has gushed forth like a torrent from the tomb of the Resurrection.

And this is why we turn to the Mother of God, both in prayer and in veneration, rejoicing that She is one of us, a Woman among women, and yet - a Woman like none for the greatness, the perfection of her gift of self to God, of her transparency to God, for her suppleness in the creative hands of God. Indeed, it is because She could believe unreservedly, heroically that the Incarnation was made possible! She is truly the Mother of Life, but not as the first Eve, the mother of all those who live on earth and are doomed one day to depart this life. - No, She is the Mother of Life because She has brought into the world Life Eternal, God Himself

become man, the Son of God Who in, but also through Her, has become the Son of man.

She also had to die, as Christ did, in total solidarity, in union with us; but She died inseparably united to the God to Whom She had given her soul and her body, her life without reserve, and indeed, as we are told in one of the Church's prayers, the grave and death proved incapable of keeping her a prisoner. She so communed to eternal life by her total gift of self to God and for unity with Christ, that She rose alive, and She is after Christ the first fruit of all those who have lived on earth, departed this earthly life and entered into eternity; She alone, after Christ, entered it fulfilled, entered it in body and soul. We are expecting the glorious resurrection of the last day, when living souls, cleansed, renewed by repentance, by the tears of our broken-heartedness and washed in the blood of the Lamb will be reunited to our bodies and stand, an incarnate humanity beyond death, beyond sin, beyond everything which is less than communion with God, since we are promised that the day will come when God shall be all in all.

And when we pray now to the Mother of God, and for the departed, these are thoughts which are in our hearts and minds. Yes, death is overcome, and we have evidence of it in the person of the Mother of God, and not only in the unique victory of Christ. But can we, frail, hesitant in our faith, hope to follow her into eternity? Indeed, yes, if we learn from her the transparency that allowed the light of God to shine through her, the surrender that allowed her to become the vessel of the Incarnation, the gift of self, heroic, courageous, self-sacrificing that allowed her to be the Mother of our Saviour.

We must remember the words of Saint Paul, or rather of Christ spoken to Paul when he felt unable to fulfil his earthly mission and asked for strength, "My grace sufficeth unto thee, My power is made manifest in weakness", - not in laziness, not in cowardice, but in that weakness which is perfect surrender.

Let us learn from the Mother of God so to surrender that the life of God may pervade us; and let us pray for all the departed who entered into eternity in twilight that they should be enlightened, indeed, more that this - be filled with light, in the words of Saint Gregory Palamas, like pure crystals which obscure no light that flows through them, and yet reflect it in all directions through the many, many facets of their unique personality .....

Let us hope, let us believe, let us surrender, let us learn, and give glory to the Mother of God, and to our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ! Amen.

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by Fr. George W. Rutler

**T**HERE IS NOTHING NEW in being told that we are dust and shall return to dust. We hear it every year. Ezekiel pondered that when he saw a valley of dry bones. The answer came when God breathed, and the bones came alive again, “an exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:10).

One of the longest discussed, and often most harshly argued, questions for Christians has been how much divine breath, or saving grace, is needed to give eternal life when physical breathing stops. The idea that man is “totally depraved” took wide hold in the sixteenth century, but had already been engaged in the fourth century. Self-styled Reformers had lost their grasp on the original form of creation. All heresies are an exaggeration of a truth, to the exclusion of its subtleties. The Council of Trent affirmed the truth that man cannot be in harmony with God’s plan, or “justified,” by his own good behavior without the breath, or “grace,” of God which comes through Jesus Christ. This is why Christ said that no one is good except God (Mark 10:18). But Trent also rejected the lie that “since Adam’s sin, the free will of man is lost and extinguished.”

Dry bones and limp lives can come alive by giving God permission (as St. Teresa of Calcutta often said) to make us what he wants us to be. While no one is good except God, each of us can become perfect (Matthew 5:48). This is not a contradiction. Goodness is a quality of being; perfection is the result of contact with that goodness. Perfectionism is a neurosis based on the confusion of goodness and perfection. The secular progressivist dreams of building an ideal society on earth through human effort, and learns the hard way that utopias end up being hells.

Antoine de Saint Exupéry said that perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing more to take away. Perfectionism tries to add, as though goodness were a sum, while perfection subtracts that which obscures goodness. Michelangelo said that he sculpted Moses simply by chipping away from the marble all that was not Moses, as Moses had been there all along.

Exactly two years ago this month, twenty young Coptic Christian Egyptians were kidnapped by Islamic State militants while on a work crew in Libya. They refused to renounce Christ and chanted in chorus “Ya Rabbi Yas-sou!” — “Oh my Lord Jesus!” A black youth from Chad, Mathew Ayairga, not a Christian, was watching and, when asked by the captors, “Do you reject Christ?” he replied, “Their God is my God.” He was baptized by blood when all twenty-one were beheaded. While these martyrs had never heard of the theological disputes over grace and justification, they were confident that Christ can raise life eternal from dust and ash. The purpose of Lenten disciplines, not salvific in themselves, is to train voices to join their chorus of faith.

**HIS GRACE, BISHOP BASIL** of the Diocese of Wichita will visit, *Deo volente*, Saint Mark’s on Sunday, 14 May to Preside, Preach, and Ordain *James E. Tochiara* to the Order of the Sacred Priesthood. With James, The Rev’d Deacon *Vladimir Christopher McDonald* will be elevated to Archdeacon, *Daniel Thomas Socrates Brainerd* will be Ordained Subdeacon, and *Adam Surber* tonsured a Reader and all at the 10:00 o’clock Solemn High Pontifical Mass.

The Church Women will host a luncheon in honor of this occasion, which is also the National Mother’s Day. A number of clergy and visitors are expected in addition to the St. Mark’s Parish faithful. Please plan to attend and let your otherwise occupied family members take Mom out to Brunch on some other Sunday. Mom might better enjoy a box of See’s Candy and a nod to her religious convictions/persuasion/habit.

All the above vocations are, as is the custom in Orthodoxy, assigned to the Altar of their home Parish. When, as appropriate for the greater good of the Universal Church, they may be asked to serve at other Altars, that is done with the Bishop’s blessing and not merely at the whim of clergy who plan to go shoot rattle snakes on the ranch in Texas two out of four Sundays each month. It has been observed that every Parish with an assistant Curate is expected to provide him as a supply Priest for the Deanery. The point? Lord have mercy.

## The LION

V. Rev’d John C. Connely, Editor

St. Mark’s Parish

1405 S. Vine Street

Denver, CO 80210

*Address correction requested*

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For books / icons supporting the Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence & the Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence see : [www.andrewespress.com](http://www.andrewespress.com)