

My Dear Friends of St. Lawrence,

May God bless all of you!

Welcome to May! We just began a whole new month and based upon much of what we are seeing in the news, it appears as though the proverbial curve of the Covid-19 related deaths are decreasing and we are inching our way towards better times. Obviously, we have a very, very long way to go, but I am cautiously optimistic that this past April's showers will indeed bring May flowers. Speaking of May flowers, I wish to commend John Devery and Claudia for spending countless hours in our garden, making everything look so beautiful and fresh for Spring! It's an absolute pleasure to stroll through our little property of St. Lawrence Parish and gaze upon the tulips and cherry blossoms - certainly an oasis of nature's beauty situated in one of America's largest urban and most industrial areas.

A few days ago, I was admiring the tulips around our life-size statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is a beautiful statue and I love how it greets the people of God as they enter the property. Anyways, a neighbor walked by and caught me admiring the statue and I reckon that curiosity got the better of her because she asked me why us Catholics worship statues. Now whenever we enter a Catholic church or go to a Catholic cemetery or visit a Catholic institution, the odds are that we will encounter statues of saints, Mary or Jesus. But do we actually worship statues? Of course not. We have statues as a way of honoring our heroes of the Faith (or in Jesus' case, Founder of the Faith). Americans do not worship Abraham Lincoln, even though a giant statue of him sits on the Mall in Washington, D.C. The Oval Office at the White House has a bust of Martin Luther King, Jr. Bryant Park in Manhattan has a statue of Benito Juarez, and several statues of various men and women of historical significance all over Central Park can be seen. Do we worship them? Well, of course not. That would be idolatry - paganism. We have statues of Lincoln and MLK and others because we salute them for how they changed America and contributed to the greatness of the United States.

As Catholics, we do not worship statues either. We erect statues to memorialize outstanding men and women of Catholicism who did extraordinary things for the sake of their brothers and sisters. So what about the saints? Do we worship them? Absolutely not. Worship is reserved for God and for God alone. To worship a saint would be blasphemous because again, it would be idolatrous. We revere our saints because we acknowledge the fact that they exercised heroic virtue. Often times, people will say something like, "I pray to St. Jude." Such a statement actually sounds like worship, but it is not. Rather, we pray that St. Jude will join with us in praying to God. The Catholic Saints are men and women who enjoy an exalted and privileged position with God in Heaven because of what they did on earth. These men and women have been "canonized" or declared Saints by the Church because they have proven through miracles and other supernatural phenomena that they are indeed in Heaven. Therefore, if I pray to St. Lawrence, I'm merely asking him specifically to join with me in presenting my prayers to God. I am not actually worshipping St. Lawrence in as much as I am asking St. Lawrence to pray for me to God. All the time, I ask you - my fellow parishioners to pray for such and such an intention. If I ask Eileen Turner to pray for me, I'm not worshipping the First Lady of Weehawken. Rather, I'm asking a fellow believer and traveler on life's journey to help me present my petitions to God. The fact that St. Lawrence or St. Jude have distinguished themselves as stellar people of faith only helps my cause if I have these individuals praying on my behalf, just as I would have anyone of you do the same.

Today, May 1st is the Feast Day of St. Joseph The Worker. During this horrific pandemic, people are just itching to get back to work so that they can provide for their families and unfortunately, the unemployment rate is astronomically high. Americans long to get back to work, so we pray that St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, will pray along with us in asking God to miraculously put an end to the terrible effects of the Corona Virus and allow our economy to open up.

My dear friends, please remain safe and let us pray for one another ... I'm hoping that I get to see you all very soon in Church and today, May 1st, means that we're that much closer to making this dream a reality once again!

Peace and Blessings,
Fr. Eric