Fifth Sunday of Lent March 29, 2020

History and 14th century prayer to the Blessed Mother for protection from the Plague.

According to Tomasso Auriemma, SJ, writing in Venice in 1712, during the Coimbra (Portugal) plague of 1317, the nuns of the Monastery of St. Clare, fearing infection in their immediate vicinity, decided to leave the monastery when they heard a knock at the door. They answered the knock to find a pilgrim whom they recognized as St. Bartholomew the Apostle. He consoled them and urged them to recite often the prayer to the Mother of God under her title of "Star of Heaven" that was written on the card that he gave them. Then he departed. The Poor Clares recited the antiphon every day in choir and privately, and remained free of infection “even as every-thing burned around them.”

Star of Heaven, who nourished the Lord and rooted up the plague of death which our first parents planted: May that star now deign to hold in check the constellations whose strife causes in people the sores of a terrible death. O glorious star of the sea, save us from infection. Hear us: for your Son, who honors you, denies you nothing, Jesus, save us, for whom the Virgin Mother prays to you.

V. Pray for us O Holy Mother of God. R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. God of mercy and forgiveness, moved to pity at the affliction of your people, you commanded the destroying Angel to stay his arm for the love of that glorious Star, at whose precious breast you sweetly drank the remedy for the poison of our sins: come to our help with your divine grace so that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary your Mother and Blessed Bartholomew your beloved Apostle, preserve us from all contagion and untimely death, and mercifully save us from the danger of perdition. Through Jesus Christ, King of glory and Savior of the World, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Available to view on our website:
Hello everyone,

I would like to complete this cycle of Lenten meditations with St Athanasius who was a bishop in Egypt with a letter of his on Easter.

“The Word who became all things for us is close to us, our Lord Jesus Christ who promises to remain with us always. He cries out saying: See, I am with you all the days of this age. He is himself the shepherd, the high priest, the way and the door, and has become all things at once for us. In the same way, he has come among us as our feast and holy day as well. The blessed Apostle says of him who was awaited: Christ has been sacrificed as our Passover. It was Christ who shed his light on the psalmist as he prayed: You are my joy, deliver me from those surrounding me. True joy, genuine festival, means the casting out of wickedness. To achieve this one must live a life of perfect goodness and, in the serenity of the fear of God, practice contemplation in one’s heart.

“This was the way of the saints, who in their lifetime and at every state of life rejoiced as at a feast. Blessed David, for example, not once but seven times rose at night to win God’s favor through prayer. The great Moses was full of joy as he sang God’s praises in hymns of victory for the defeat of Pharaoh and the oppressors of the Hebrew people. Others had hearts filled always with gladness as they performed their sacred duty of worship, like the great Samuel and the blessed Elijah. Because of their holy lives, they gained freedom, and now keep festival in heaven. They rejoice after their pilgrimage in shadows, and now distinguish the reality from the promise.

When we celebrate the feast in our own day, what path are we to take? As we draw near to this feast, who is to be our guide? Beloved, it must be none other than the one whom you will address with me as our Lord Jesus Christ. He says: I am the way. As blessed John tells us: it is Christ who takes away the sin of the world. It is he who purifies our souls, as the prophet Jeremiah says: Stand upon the ways; look and see which is the good path, and you will find in it the way of amendment for our souls.

“In former times the blood of goats and the ashes of a calf were sprinkled on those who were unclean, but they were able to purify only the body. Now through the grace of God’s Word everyone is made abundantly clean. If we follow Christ closely we shall be allowed, even on this earth, to stand as it were on the threshold of the heavenly Jerusalem, and enjoy the contemplation of that everlasting feast, like the blessed apostles, who in following the Savior as their leader, showed, and still show, the way to obtain the same gift from God. They said: See, we have left all things and followed you. We too follow the Lord, and we keep his feast by deeds rather than by words.”

I am celebrating Mass for the intentions listed in the previous column. Except for Sunday when we Livestream Mass at 9:00 a.m., I am celebrating Mass each day at 6:00 a.m. with the intention of the day, and all of you “on the paten.”

Good fifth week of Lent,
Father Joe Callipare
The Gospel today, challenges us to see and believe the signs of grace in our lives: joy, peace, forgiveness, mercy and kindness. The food pantry always welcomes the reception of the following nutrition essentials: Peanut butter, Macaroni and cheese, spaghetti and other pasta, spaghetti sauce, rice, bulgur, quinoa, dried beans and lentils, Breakfast cereals (oatmeal preferred), canned fruit (no added sugar or heavy syrup) and fruit juices (100% juice), soup or broth, and canned tuna, chicken, ham. Donations can be placed in the SVdP food basket in the Church vestibule.