



MAY 7, 2023 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

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Tazewell, VA 24651

ST. ELIZABETH'S

160 Merrick Lane
Pocahontas, VA 24635

ST. MARY'S

1122 Farmer Street
Richlands, VA 24641

ST. JOSEPH'S

1007 Independence Rd.
Grundy, VA 24614

Chosen to run the race on the way to the truth and the life!

WHAT YOU CHOOSE in life determines a lot about your future; that is why we must choose wisely. Furthermore, there must always be a reason or reasons for every choice we make in life. We could make choices among alternatives, people or events could choose us among others, and God chooses us in accordance to His will and design (John 15:16).

Today we are reflecting on divine choice and its implications for our lives. The Second Reading (1 Pet.2:4-9) among other things says:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

God is too gracious to us. Our life as humans is all thanks to God's kindness and love. God could have made us ants, trees, or any other phenomenon. However,

it pleased Him to allow us to have a share in His image and likeness (Gen.1:27). This is a divine choice. Beyond this privilege, God wants us to be united with Him forever after this life, and that explains the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to repair the relationship between God and us and to show us the way to eternal life (10:10b).

God calls and chooses (Matt. 22:14). This divine choice is what St. Peter tries to explain in that part of the Second Reading we presented above. God did not choose us because we are qualified, but He intends to qualify us through this choice, leveraging on our cooperation. God chose us to become His own and to deliver us from darkness to light, from death to life, from nowhere to somewhere, from nobody to somebody. God's choice for us is not an end itself, but a means towards an end. We have instances where the chosen of God misuse the choice. King Saul is a very dependable example of a choice that went bad (1 Sam. 15: 11ff).

Let us reflect on St. Peter's exhortation on divine choice which directly recalls the oracle of Isaiah (43:20b-21). Peter begins by saying that we are a chosen race. One would ask which race? We know that race is descriptive of people with common characteristics which differentiates them from other people.

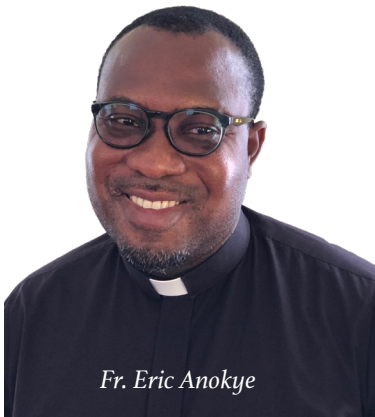
By race, we do not mean people who are differentiated by color or other physical characteristics. We understand race here as

pointing to individuals who bear the mark of Christ. Furthermore, and more significantly, it refers to those who are on the heavenly journey (race). Yes! We are running a race, and we are specially chosen for this race as St. Paul confirms in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor.9:24).

To run a race, we need to be on track—if you like, the right way. In the Gospel Reading today, our Lord says that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. From these three phenomena, we see clearly the enabling elements for the race.

Those chosen for the race need to run through a way. There are indeed many ways in our world today, but there is only one way; also, known as THE WAY. Our Lord made it clear that he is THE WAY (John 14:6). The way is the new life in Christ, the route to eternal life which is, however, narrow (Matt. 7:14). We could recall that the post-resurrection disciples of Jesus Christ were accused and persecuted for following the Way (Acts 22:4; 24:14). Running the race as chosen people means following the Way, namely our Lord Jesus Christ. The Way leads to two other important realities: the truth and the life.

Our Lord also declared that He is the Truth. In the dialogue with Pilate, Jesus Christ told him that He came to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37-38). The truth is one essential element that the world does not want to hear because it often convicts and chastises. In a world running currently



Fr. Eric Anokye

on the wheels of political correctness, the truth is suffering while lies are becoming daily norms.

We need the truth as well as those who will speak the truth in season and out of season. We need the truth as well as truth speakers in our families, in our communities, in the Church, and in the world. The greatest truth is that God loves us and desires our salvation if we but believe in Him and live uprightly.

Finally, our Lord Jesus Christ declares Himself the Life. There are various walks of life, and people head towards different directions in life. There is the material life and the spiritual life. It is very unfortunate that in our world today many lives are materially driven, and few have the spiritual orientation.

Many people are more attentive to the nourishment of their bodies than to the nourishment of their souls. We obey our physicians to the letter when we receive medical advice, but we tend to disregard the prescriptions for our souls, especially the ones that tell us to go and sin no more (John 8:11) and to bear good fruits (Gal. 5:22-23).

Today, we have the invitation as the chosen ones to run the race on the Way of Truth and Life. God is ready to provide us with grace for the race. Like the seven deacons in the First Reading today (Acts 6:1-7), we have the encouragement to become servants in this race, which is not all that rosy. He who has called us is faithful and would not fail the people He has chosen for Himself (2 Tim. 2:13).

As you continue on this race, keep your eye on the prize (Phil 3:14) and God's grace will remain sufficient for you. As our Lord advised in the Gospel Reading, do not let your hearts be troubled; run the race by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

Have a grace-full Sunday and as a chosen one on the way to the truth and the life, may your strength increase.

PASTOR

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OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

MASS TIMES

SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph's

6PM – St. Mary's

SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth's

11:30AM – St. Theresa's

TUESDAY & FRIDAY

10AM – St. Theresa's

Cover image:

Heinrich Hofmann, *Figure of Christ*, 1884

Priest Warns of the Dangers of Mediocrity: Don't Settle

By Fr. Bill Peckman, *churchpop.com*



The other day I was talking to a young man whom I taught back some time ago.

He was at a crossroads. He had recently graduated from college and started a well-paying job. But he wasn't happy. He felt like he was settling.

The money was good, but money isn't a factor for him.

He wanted something that he wanted to do for the rest of his life. So, he is heading out to work at a National Park. He knows it is a significant pay cut.

But he was wise with his money and holds no debt. Maybe the NPS is where he will stay, maybe it isn't, but the adventure will be worth it. He is still searching for something beyond mediocrity.

I have been thinking about this for some time. We settle for mediocrity.

We settle because mediocrity is comfortable.

If we are willing to make the Faustian trade of comfort for mediocrity, for a while it will be okay, but if we have even a little bit of a soul, it won't be enough. We settle for mediocrity if it pays well. We will settle if most people do.

In talking with this young man, he remembered a part of my story—how as a young man, I was restless in my dead-end career and felt unfulfilled and out of place.

All the money and power in the world couldn't motivate me to spend the rest of my life living in mediocrity.

The core of my mediocrity was spiritual; my agnosticism was spiritual mediocrity.

It demanded nothing of me, fueled bad habits, but left me cold. I remember how I felt in those days and I shudder. I thank God that some fire lit in my soul and made me stop trying to fill that God-sized hole with earthly stuff.

Settling, though, is easy even if it is unfulfilling. We do it in our lives and our corporate lives as well. I see this a lot as a pastor—people settling with mediocrity even if it starves them spiritually.

Parishes will do just enough to remain open, but slowly die on the path of least resistance (which is what mediocrity is) until they fade away.

The rallying cry of the chronic mediocre is, "We have always done it that way."

Yeah, and that's why we are where we are.

To shake mediocrity requires a leap of faith. It does for this young man; it did for me. It does for a parish. It involves risks. It involves the potential of failure and setbacks as we try to find our way.

Another word for mediocrity is lukewarmness.

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus compares lukewarmness to a vile taste which he spits out of His mouth. I would imagine the taste to be like that of warmish rancid food. Utterly revolting.

Mediocrity and lukewarmness are a slow, suicidal death for those who adhere to it.

Mediocrity of faith is death. Period.

So push out of mediocrity, not because you'll succeed, but because you are willing to break free.

God will give us the grace to bust out of those shackles of mediocrity. We won't be able to do it on our own. What I want to do as a pastor is shatter any and all mediocrity and lukewarmness. It is the enemy.

I am already seeing some of the payoff as we grow and get rid of the chains of mediocrity.

Christ didn't do what He did for us so we could be a lifeless corpse floating downstream. No. We may not succeed at everything, and that's okay. Better to try and fail than to never try.

Prioritize the Ordinary: Go for a Walk Together

By John Cuddeback, life-craft.org



The path to restoring home-life will be in restoring the ordinary. It might not be easy, but it should be rather obvious what to do. If someone takes a ball away from a child, the child will in any case know what to look for—that is, unless it's gone so long he begins to forget, or, those around him keep handing him other things to distract him.

Many of the ordinary functions of human living have been taken away from us. I use the passive voice here of necessity; how does one say who has taken them away? We can't really say that 'they' have taken away singing around the piano, story-telling, sitting on the porch, reading aloud, and the shared work of home. Who would "they" be? Yet this much is sure, somehow these things have functionally vanished. In 1930 Andrew Lytle called these "the ordinary functions of living." He continued:

The rights to these human functions are the natural rights of man, and they are threatened now, in the twentieth, not in the eighteenth, century for the first time. Unless man asserts and defends them he is doomed...

It has been well nigh a century since Lytle penned these words. One might reasonably be concerned at this point whether we can go into our collective memory and rediscover what perhaps has never before been "lost" to man. What does one do when what was and arguably should be "ordinary" has faded to a vague

memory and feels strange to us?

One remains calm, and gets to work. There is good news here. Given the intrinsically "ordinary" character of such activities, as a rule they will always be there for the choosing—even if it takes intentional effort; and even if it feels like we're swimming against a riptide... just trying to do the ordinary.

Of first importance is realizing that we are not alone. There are growing numbers of people who want something better and who are making different choices. I see them with my own eyes. Families are opting for the ordinary. And they are achieving something extraordinary.

We can begin with one or two things and really lean into them. Maybe it's growing a garden this year. Maybe it's reading aloud together. But these might be a little daunting. Perhaps the most simple is going for a walk together. Let's begin there; not for the cardio aspect (though that's a great effect), but just because; just because it's an ordinary way of being together, and enjoying one another as we enjoy the beautiful world in which we live.

This is in our reach. Others need not know or feel that this is something of a project, even though it is. The only way for something to be really ordinary is for it to be done with some regularity. The first steps are right outside our front door. And who knows to what wonderful places they might lead.

mass intentions

Date Intention

5/6 SATURDAY

4PM For Mother's Day travelers by Doug Vance

6PM Mary Hylton ☩

5/7 SUNDAY

9AM Lucious Santana Crouse ☩

11:30AM Russel Christian ☩

stewardship of treasure

Donations Received as of April 30 (Week 44)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	8	\$235
St. Elizabeth's	21	\$490
St. Mary's	9	\$560
St. Theresa's	54	\$1,709
Total	92	\$2,994
Outside Donations		
Year to Date Received		\$130,093
Goal		\$118,461
Ahead/Behind Goal		+ \$11,632

RICE BOWL: \$472

please pray for

Louise Serreno*
Gerry Hankins
Clarence Moore
Lexi Cox
Sarah Wall
Tammy Bennett
Margaret Wasilewski
Nic Ulate
Frannie & Rayburn Minton
Sue Bailey
Christian Lambert
Shane Neal
Archbishop John Kwofie
Pete Belcher
Lucas Boyd
Ralph Heldreth
Chris Jessie
Leo Brown
Carolina Ferrare
Junior Aiken
Jeanne Hash
Lara Marshall
Carol & Jim Shumate
Andrew Satmary
Glenn Harrison
Donna Petro
Christian Marshall
Tina Rocchetti
Alice Godin
Randy Snyder
Bryan Gunter
Michael Beavers
Natalie Dodge

Roger Empson
Dreama Ritter
Marco Warner
Chris Lambert
Virginia Dy
Mary Muncy
Cindy Lambert
Jean St. Clair
Helen Petro
Clinard Coleman
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Joe & Yvonne Blevins
Kyle Brown
Bobby Cole
Jeffrey Parkhurst
Sarah Walters
Everly Duns
Amelia Proffit
Maurice Law
Zac Carter
Dennis & Frances Savage
Nancy Jo Testerman
Donnie Neal
Josh Cornwell
John Shumate
Seth Waddell
Doug Vance
Russ Hatfield
Connie Pace
Lynn Jones
Jody Hamilton
Jeanne & Nick Ameli
Bella Tester

council members

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FINANCE COUNCIL:
Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Lydia St. Peter

parish news & events

- **Holy Family Parish's Spring Mass and picnic will be held on May 21 at Fincastle Country Club and is hosted by St. Elizabeth's. Sign-up sheets are available at each church and need to be turned in by May 7.**
- The first Sunday of each month, St. Theresa's will host coffee and donuts after Mass. Plan to stay and visit as long as you like!

“I am the way, the truth and the life, says the *Lord*;
no one comes to the *Father*, except through me.”
– Jn 14:6

birthdays & anniversaries:

MAY 12: Fr. Dan Brady, Hao & Kacie Pham (Anniversary)



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