

JUNE 25, 2023 | 12TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

312 Tazewell Avenue, Tazewell, VA 24651

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ST. THERESA'S

312 Tazewell Ave.
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

Do not be afraid—God's got your back!

THERE is a famous story about a young man of seventeen years whose life could serve as an odyssey—yes, a long adventurous journey. He was the beloved of his father not only because he was the youngest of all, but he was also upright.

The young man had older brothers who disliked him for a variety of reasons which included his dream of a future greatness above them and the love of their father towards him. One day, they had an opportunity to kill him in the woods and end his potential fame but later decided to sell him off to some merchants who were on a business trip to a distant land. In the distant land, things went from bad to good and from good to bad and again from bad to good and finally to excellent. He later became a great man, a renowned prime minister in the palace of pharaoh of Egypt. Of course, we are talking about Joseph the dreamer (Genesis. 37ff).

There is one lesson we could learn from the story of Joseph; he was never afraid, and the reason is that “God’s got his back.” The Bible gives us several references about the abiding presence of God in the life of Joseph. The following passages tell us that “God was with him and he prospered:” Genesis 39: 2, 3, 21, 23.

Way back in my younger years as a soccer player, we had a “*back-man*.” The backman was our amateur way of describing one of those playing the center fullback. The primary duty of the backman is to build defenses against the attacks of the opposing team; he’s got the back of the team.

We also notice that top government officials and prominent individuals often have security men standing behind them when they step out. The security designates work as backmen against possible physical attacks.

Among all the backmen we can think of there is none as formidable and enduring as God Himself. The key message we have today is that “God has our backs” against all possible physical and spiritual oppositions there could be in life.

The first reading of today (Jeremiah 20:10-13) opens the discussion by describing to us how God rescues the life of the poor from the power of the wicked. The victim in the passage suffers in the hands of friends who turn out to become persecutors. They devise various means to bring the victim down. However, he tells us this:

“But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion.” Put in another way; God’s got the back of the victimized.

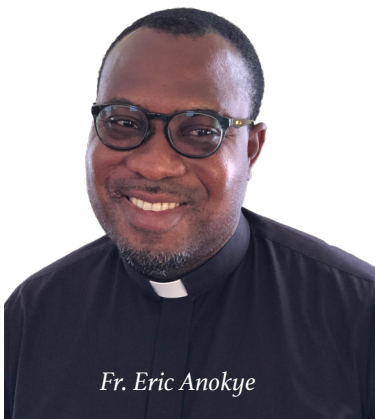
In the Gospel reading today (Matthew 10:26-33), our Lord Jesus Christ tells the twelve not to be afraid. Fear is an emotion that could wrap and wrinkle us when we allow it to rule us. There are reasons why we should fear, but our fear should not replace our faith. Faith tells us to accept facts without proofs (Heb.11:1). Faith tells us to come to God believing that He can do all things, even the impossible ones (Mark 11:22).

If we take a closer look at the Gospel reading, we can see that we have a kind of contradictory instruction “not to fear and to fear.” Let us look at the passage again and make a little sense out of it.

“And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.”

Some people naturally assume that the one who can destroy the body and the soul in hell is the devil. If that is the case, then we should fear the devil. The passage refers to God. He is the “One” who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Gehenna). The soul faces destruction when it does not enjoy eternity with God (John 15:5). God is the author of our being, and He takes the final decision about us.

You may be passing through tough moments in your life; do not be afraid, God has your back. Are



Fr. Eric Anokye

you struggling with so many things? Is your life going to the brink? Do not be frightened! God's got your back. Your relationship or marriage may appear to be in a trouble mode; do not be afraid, God has your back. You may be suffering from betrayal from those you trust; your friends may be turning into enemies; do not be scared. God has your back.

The word of God says in Psalms 30:5: "For His anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning." Here we learn that every ugly situation would eventually give way to God's glorious blessings. The tribulation might be many, but God will deliver us from them all (Psalm 34:19).

God is so detailed in His care over you that He knows the number of hairs on your head. You are not alone in your challenges; God knows your issues, He has your back and like the response to the psalm today says, "He would answer you in His great love."

Good parents look out for their children, provide for them, and protect them. God does more than good parents. God has comprehensive care over you even before your conception in the wombs of your mother (Jeremiah 1:5). God lacks nothing, and He can do all things without limitations. God has your back:

God says to Paul (Act 18: 9b-10a): "Do not be afraid...For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you."

God assures Joshua (1:5): "No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you."

Moses assures Joshua that God will not fail nor forsake him (Deut. 31:6b).

As we march into a new week, let us strive to erase our fears, bring forth our faith and God will show us His faithfulness. In all circumstances, remember that He's got your back! Have a great day!

PASTOR

Fr. Eric Anokye
eanokye@richmonddiocese.org
(276) 385-7312

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:

Michaelangelo, *The Prophet Jeremiah (Sistine Chapel)*,
1508-12

Getting in over our heads in the life of prayer

By Phil Lawler, catholicculture.org

“Put out into the deep...” (Lk 5:4) That was the admonition that Jesus gave to his disciples: an admonition that Pope John Paul II repeated in the conclusion of his for the Great Jubilee, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. It sounds so easy. But it takes courage.

The oceans, with their unfathomed depths and their incalculable powers, can be dangerous— as today’s news headlines remind us. When we speak of the “oceans” of God’s mercy—even deeper, even stronger— we must speak with awe.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose feast we are celebrating, used that image in a letter to his mother, which appears in the Office of Readings today. He wrote:

The divine goodness, most honoured lady, is a fathomless and shoreless ocean, and I confess that when I plunge my mind into thought of this it is carried away by the immensity and feels quite lost and bewildered there.

Dive into the ocean— any ocean— and you take a risk; you might be lost at sea. So most of us stay close to shore. Only the saints, like Aloysius Gonzaga, take the headlong plunge.

My father, a strong swimmer, taught all his children not to “put out into the deep.” He had been a lifeguard, and rescued more than a few foolish young people who had overestimated their own strength or underestimated the power of the current. (In one case, seared in his memory, he reached the struggling swimmer too late.) For a recreational swimmer at the beach, he told us repeatedly, “there’s no reason to go out over your head!”

At the beach, that is good advice. But maybe not in the life of prayer, because the oceans of God’s mercy will never turn deadly. Any ocean should be regarded with awe. But the “fear of God” is a pure sort of awe, not tainted by anything like the fear of drowning or of shark attacks. The exhortation to “put out into the deep” goes hand-in-hand with the frequent admonition to “be not afraid.”

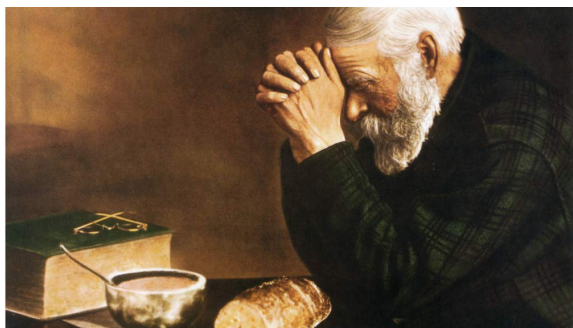
If you have ever had the experience of flying over a beach on a sunny summer day— as a plane makes its approach to an airport, perhaps— you have probably noticed how the beachgoers cling to the shore.

The ocean looks vast (as indeed it is); the swimmers are clustered in a tiny strip of shallow water. Even the yachts and fishing boats are fairly close to land. Beyond them stretch the miles of open water. Only the serious seafarers, who know the oceans well, go out so far.

For vacationers, though, a trip to the beach is fun, not serious business. We can swim in the salt water without risking our lives, without thinking much about the awesome powers of the seas. In New England, where I live, even wading in the chilly water is enough to cool off on a steamy summer day. Still someone who only splashes along the shore cannot really claim to know the ocean. Because to know the ocean is to understand, as St. Aloysius understood, how easy it is to be lost in it.

It is relatively easy, too, to dabble in the life of prayer. To give God a few moments each day, or an hour every Sunday, can be refreshing— like a quick dip in the ocean. But a serious effort to know God, the best spiritual writers all caution us, is a much greater challenge. You can get lost. In fact, if you rise to the challenge, you will get lost. And that— let’s be honest— frightens us.

As I stand on the shore, letting the waves lap over my toes— but no more!—I find myself thinking about the liturgy. We can think of Sunday Mass as a quick dip: something that refreshes us and restores our energy. Or we can think of it as an immense event, with power behind our comprehension, that threatens (but “threatens” is the wrong word here) to sweep us away. Give me the latter, please.



THE TABLE

**AUGUST 5, 9 AM-2 PM
MAIN STREET UMC**

What does it mean for us in the 21st century to sit with our brothers and sisters of various Christian traditions at the Table? At this conference, we will address this and related questions. Topics covered include:

Ministry: Inviting Others to the Table
The Domestic Church: The Table in Our Families
The Table: Can it unite us in 2023?
Panel on the Lord's Supper

Tickets are \$15 at the door and include admission, a locally catered lunch, childcare on site, and access to a display area highlighting ministries in area churches.

Main St UMC (118 Main St, Tazewell, VA 24651). For questions, contact Bond Strong at 276-202-5567 or sarahbondstrong@gmail.com

mass intentions

Date Intention

6/24 SATURDAY

4PM Veronica Ross by Doug Vance
6PM St. Francis parishioners

6/25 SUNDAY

9AM Bishop Knestout
11:30AM Ramona Kemper ☩

stewardship of treasure

Donations Received as of June 18 (Week 51)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	11	\$200
St. Elizabeth's	28	\$735
St. Mary's	17	\$530
St. Theresa's	48	\$1,881
Total	104	\$3,346
Outside Donations		\$1,667
Year to Date Received		\$153,160
Goal		\$137,308
Ahead/Behind Goal		+ \$15,852

OUTSIDE DONATIONS—THANK YOU!

St. Francis, Staunton, VA: \$1,667

HOME MISSIONS: \$50

ST. MARY'S BACKPACK PROGRAM:

Clinch Valley Medical Center: \$120

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
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
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Jeffrey Parkhurst
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Amelia Proffit
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Zac Carter
Dennis & Frances Savage
Nancy Jo Testerman
Donnie Neal
Josh Cornwell
John Shumate
Seth Waddell
Doug Vance
Russ Hatfield
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Lynn Jones
Jody Hamilton
Jeanne Ameli
Bella Tester
Annette Pike
Everett Neese
Pam White
Sharon Mullady
Veronica Ross

council members

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Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert, Maria Farris, Debbie Parkhurst

FINANCE COUNCIL:

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

parish news & events

A Call to Eucharistic Revival: Fr. Eric has arranged to have copies of Bishop Robert Barron's book *This is My Body* available at each church. Don't forget to pick up a copy for your family!

There will be no daily Masses next week. We will update the weekly Mass schedule once Fr. Renier has settled in.



Thank you, Fr. Eric!

Thank you for your love.

Thank you for your faithful commitment to our parish.

Thank you for your guidance when we needed direction and correction when we needed to change course.

Thank you for breaking open God's word.

Thank you for your reverence, your orthodoxy, and your priesthood.

You will be missed!

Fr. Eric's new contact info:

Rev. Fr. Eric Anokye
2470 Batterson Road
Powhatan, VA 23139

birthdays & anniversaries:

JUNE 22: Darren Adair | **25:** Bernie & Mary Spencer (35th anniversary)
27: Chael White, Brandon Whited | **30:** Pablo Carpio

JULY 1: Micah Beavers | **2:** Fr. Eric Anokye

“The *Spirit* of truth will testify to me,
says the *Lord*; and you also will testify.”
– Jn 15:26b, 27a



Bernie & Mary Spencer



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