

POPE FRANCIS' GENERAL AUDIENCE: On Judith: The Courage of a Woman Gives Courage to a People

“This woman, a widow, risks looking bad before the others! She is courageous! She goes ahead! This is my opinion: women are more courageous than men”

Rome, January 25, 2017, zenith.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Outstanding among the figures of women that the Old Testament presents to us, is that of a great heroine of the people: Judith. The biblical Book that bears her name talks about the imposing military campaign of King Nebuchadnezzar who, reigning in Nineveh, extended the borders of the empire, defeating and enslaving all the surrounding peoples. The reader understands he is before a great, invincible enemy, which is sowing death and destruction and which arrives at the Promised Land, putting in danger the life of the children of Israel.

In fact, Nebuchadnezzar's army, under the leadership of General Holofernes, besieges Bethulia, cutting the water supply and thus sapping the population's resistance.

The situation became dramatic, to the point that the inhabitants of the city turned to the elders asking them to surrender to their enemies. Theirs were desperate words: “There is no one to help us now! God has sold us into their hands by laying us prostrate before them in thirst and utter exhaustion. So now, summon them and deliver the whole city as plunder to the troops of Holofernes and to all his forces”

For now we have no one to help us; God has sold us into their hands, to strew us on the ground before them with thirst and utter destruction. Now call them in and surrender the whole city to the army of Holofernes and to all his forces, to be plundered” (*Judith 7:25-26*). The end seemed ineluctable; the capacity to trust God was exhausted. And how many times we come to the limit of situations, where we do not even feel the capacity to have trust in the Lord. It is an awful temptation! And, paradoxically, it seems that, to flee from death, they had to hand themselves over to the hands of those that kill. They know that these soldiers will enter to plunder the city, to take the women as slaves and then kill all the others.

And in face of such despair, the head of the people attempts to propose a pretext for hope: to hold out for five more days, awaiting God's saving intervention. But it is a weak hope, which makes him conclude: “But if these days pass by, and no help comes to us, I will do what you say” (7:31). Poor soul: he was without a way out. God is granted five days — and here is the sin— five days are granted to God to intervene; five days of waiting, but now with the prospect of the end. They grant God five days to save them, but they know they do not have confidence, they expect the worst. In reality, no one among the people is still capable of hoping anymore. They were desperate.

It is in this situation that Judith appears on the scene. A widow, a woman of great beauty and wisdom, she speaks to the people with the language of faith. Courageous, she reproves the people to their face (saying): “You are putting the Almighty to the test, [...]. No, my brethren, do not provoke the Lord our God to anger. For if He does not choose to help us within these five days, He has power to protect us within any time He pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. [...] Therefore, while we wait for His deliverance, let us call upon Him to help us, and He will hear our voice, if it pleases Him” (8:13.14-15.17). It is the language of hope. We knock at the doors of God's heart, He is Father, He can save us. This woman, a widow, risks looking bad before the others! But she is courageous! She goes ahead! This is my opinion: women are more courageous than men (Applause in the Hall).

And with the strength of a prophet, Judith recalls the men of her people to lead them back to trust in God; with the look of a prophet, she sees beyond the narrow horizon proposed by the heads and which fear renders even more limited. God will certainly act — she affirms —, whereas the proposal of five days of waiting is a way to tempt Him and to withdraw from His will. The Lord is God of salvation, — and she believes it — whatever form it takes. It is salvation to be liberated from enemies and to make one live but, in His impenetrable plans, it can also be salvation to be delivered to death. She, woman of faith, knows it. Then we learn the end, how the story ended: God saves them.

Dear brothers and sisters let us never put conditions to God and, instead, let hope conquer our fears. To trust God means to enter in His designs without pretending anything, accepting also that His salvation and His help may reach us in a different way from our expectations. We ask the Lord for life, health, affections, happiness, and it is right to do so, but in the awareness that God is able to draw life also from death, that peace can be experienced also in sickness, and that there can be serenity also in solitude and blessedness also in weeping. It is not we who can teach God what He must do, what we are in need of. He knows it better than us, and we must trust Him, because His ways and His thoughts are different from ours.

The way that Judith indicates to us is that of trust, of waiting in peace, of prayer and of obedience. It is the way of hope, without easy resignations, doing everything that is in our possibilities, but always remaining in the furrow of the Lord's will, because — we know it —. she prayed so much, she spoke so much to the people and then, courageous, she left, she sought a way to approach the head of the army and she succeeded in cutting off his head, in slaughtering him. She is courageous in faith and in works. And she always seeks the Lord! Judith, in fact, has her plan, she implements it with success and leads the people to victory, but always in the attitude of faith of one who accepts everything from God's hand, certain of His goodness.

Thus, a woman full of faith and courage gives back strength to her people in mortal danger and leads them on the ways of hope. And we, if we exercise our memory a bit, how many times have we heard wise courageous words from humble persons, from humble women that one thinks — without scorning them — are ignorant ... but they are words of the wisdom of God! — the words of grandparents ... How many times grandparents are able to say the right word. The word of hope, because they have the experience of life, they have suffered so much, they have entrusted themselves to God and the Lord gives us this gift of the counsel of hope. And, going on those ways, it will be joy and paschal light to entrust oneself to the Lord with Jesus' words: “Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (*Luke 22:42*). And this is the prayer of wisdom, of trust and of hope.

St. Gerard Catholic Church



640 Edrie St. NE
Aiken, SC 29801
803 649-3203

SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

Zephaniah 2:3;3:12-13(70A)

Responsorial:

Psalms 146:6-7,8-9-10

Second Reading:

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Gospel:

Matthew 5:1-12a

Today's Missal

Lectionary Readings for the week of January 29, 2017

Monday: Hebrews 11:32-40;
Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday: Hebrews 12:1-4;
Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday: Hebrews 12:4-7,11-15;
Mark 6:1-6

Thursday: Malachi 3:1-4;
Hebrews 2:14-18;
Luke 2:22-40

Friday: Hebrews 13:1-8;
Mark 6:14-29

Saturday: Hebrews 13:15-17,20-21;
Mark 6:30-34

The Fourth Sunday In Ordinary Time January 29, 2017

Mission Statement

Called to be a People for Others

Vision Statement

Anchored by faith hope and love in Jesus Christ, we strive to be active disciples, serving each other and all God's people by welcoming and embracing the enriching diversity of our community of faith.

Father Emmanuel Andinam: Administrator

How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance.

Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill.

Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

'Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account



Mass Times: Weekdays Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:15 AM,

First Friday Benediction after Mass

Weekend Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 7:00 AM and 11:00 AM

Confessions: after weekday Masses and by Appointment

Office Hours: 9:00 AM till 3:00 PM Tuesday - Thursday

Bible Study: Fridays 10:00 AM, **CCD:** Sundays 10:00 AM

RCIA: No Class at this time

Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Funerals: By Appointment, Contact the office.

Contact Us: Phone 803 649-3203, **E-Mail** stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net

Facebook @stgerardaiken, **Emergency number for Father** 803 341-5933



Pray for our sick:
 Judy Riley
 Marge Glauser
 Leonard Saunders
 Shirley Paige
 William and Jackie Cobbs
 Woody Alexander
 Lena Mickens
 Rosa Johnson
 Brenda and Ike Ligons
 Joe Fulmer

"A Church without charity does not exist" - Pope Francis
 Each new year gives us the opportunity to renew our commitment as disciples of Jesus. We understand that all gifts are entrusted to us by God. We commit ourselves to return those gifts with increase. As stewards we offer our lives in service.



Pastoral Council:
 Marge Glauser, Chairperson
 Janet Menefee, Vice Chair
 Payson Borst
 Jacqueline Brown
 Fredrick Cadek
 Joan Hesik
 Gregory Wright
 Patricia Hayes
 Matt Fitzpatrick

Finance Council:
 Robert Erikson, Chairman
 Leon Gagnon and Anna Marie Key, Auditors
 Lisa Solenberger, Secretary
 Art Wagner

Mass Intentions
 4:00 PM Mass said for The Dixons 52nd Anniversary, 7:00 AM Mass is said for your own personal intentions. 11:00 AM Mass is said for Annie Luck's birthday: From A. Lauer

Weekend Offering
 January 21-22, 2017

Collection	\$2,214.00
Needed	\$2,612.00
Under	\$398.00
Attendance	137

Stewardship a way of life

The Gathering Hymn	130 M
We Gather Together	
The Offertory Hymn is	602 H
Blest Are They	
The Communion Hymn is	CHOIR 627 BB
Whatsoever You Do	
Our Song of Praise is	126 M
Now Thank We All Our God	



Lector: David Didimamoff
 E E Ministers: Ellen Heim

Lay Ministers	
Saturday 4 February	Sunday 5 February
4:00 PM Vigil Mass	7:00 AM Mass
David Didimamoff	Denise Gelinis
E E Ministers: Ellen Heim	Roger Gelinis

Lector: Diane Begic
 E E Ministers: Pam Ziomek

Saturday 11 February	Sunday 12 February
4:00 PM Vigil Mass	7:00 AM Mass
Diane Begic	Mary Kay L'Esperance
E E Ministers: Pam Ziomek	Gerard L'Esperance

Refreshment January 29
 Shirley Paige/Anna Marie Key

Refreshment February 5
 Patricia Hayes/Joan Lacombe

Refreshment February 12
 Janet Menefee/Mike Solenberger

The goal is to have the contribution tax letters in the mail by 31 January

Second Collection this week For:
 Church in Latin America



Father is installing The Parish Council members at 11:00 AM Mass this week.

The Legion of Mary is meeting at 1:30 on Fridays. Please consider joining. Call the office with questions. Please Pray the Rosary.



Please come to Bible Study on Fridays at 10:00 AM Father brings the true perspective to the scriptures. Please try to attend.

Perpetual Novena in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Tuesdays at the 8:15 Mass

The Brown Scapular
 St. Gerard's will be scheduling a Consecration of the Brown Scapular to Mary's Service. If you wear or would like to wear a Brown Scapular (for those who wear a Brown Scapular, Mary's promise to us is that "Whosoever dies clothed in this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire.") Please let Marge Glauser know if you would like to take part in this service and if you will be needing a Brown Scapular (there will be no charge for the Scapular - Donations accepted). Deadline is February 5. Please contact Marge with questions, 803 649-7408, Thank you.

Volunteer Corner:
 Thanks for all you do for our church

Family Charitable Outreach:
 Someone in need? Maybe we can help. Contact Marge Glauser or the office.

Parish Council
 Matt Fitzpatrick has joined the Parish Council

If you attend St. Gerard on a regular basis and feel welcome, Why not consider becoming a member. We would love to have you. Feel free to talk to a member or call the office 649-3203.
Registration forms are in the the church hall lobby.

Although seats are limited for the upcoming diaconate ordination on February 11th, a live stream will be available during the event and available for viewing afterwards. Please use the following link on February 11, 2017 at 11:00 AM to see the ordination of Joe Dennis and his 14 classmates

For Joe Dennis
 Joe Dennis will be ordained as a Deacon on February 11, 2017 at The Immaculate Conception Church in Goose Creek SC at 11 AM. We have a few tickets and they are first come first serve. Please think about coming and supporting Joe. Call the office for tickets.
 There will be a pot luck dinner and reception after the 11:00 AM Mass on February 12, 2017. This is for Joe Dennis' first Mass as a Deacon. Please bring a dish. Sign up sheet in the lobby.
 The Church will provide the cake.

And Jesus Wept. John 11:35
GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

St. Mary's has an ongoing grief support group that meets on Wednesdays. The 13-week program uses Griefshare, a special, lay-led weekly seminar and support group that embraces a biblical, Christ-centered approach to grieving. Please join us for help and encouragement after the death of a loved one. We provide a safe and loving environment to encourage sharing and exchanging of concerns and feelings as you are comfortable. This group is open to anyone in our community, regardless of Church affiliation. Please pass the information along to anyone you know who might need it. People may join the group at any point during the 13 weeks; each session stands alone. The meetings are held downstairs in Smith Hall from 3:30 until 5:00 pm but we join for coffee and fellowship any time after 3:00. The registration fee is \$20 and scholarships are available. Registration information is available at the St. Mary Parish Office. Please contact Bette Ross at 803.649-4777 or bross@stmarys-aiken.org for additional information or questions.
I will turn their mourning into joy; I will console and gladden them after their sorrows
 — Jeremiah 31:13

The Marriage Anniversary Celebration is an opportunity to honor all married couples especially those in long marriages. The married couples will affirm their love and commitment to each other. Most Reverend Robert Guglielmone, Bishop of the Diocese of Charleston will be the main celebrant.

The Mass will fulfill the Sunday obligation. **Sunday, February 12, 2017 at 2:00 pm, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church**, 195 Amicks Ferry Rd, Chapin, SC 29036 For registration please contact, Kathy 803 547 5063 or FamilyLife@catholic-doc.org