

POPE FRANCIS' GENERAL AUDIENCE: On Idolatry

'The Psalm's message is very clear: if one places one's hope in idols, one becomes like them: empty images with hands that do not touch, feet that do not walk, mouths that cannot speak.'

Rome, Jan 11, 2017, zenith.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Last month of December and the first part of January we celebrated the Season of Advent and then that of Christmas, a period of the Liturgical Year that reawakens hope in the People of God. To hope is a primary need of man: to hope in the future, to believe in life, so-called "positive thinking."

However, it is important that such hope be placed in what can truly help us to live and to give meaning to our existence. It is because of this that Sacred Scripture puts us on guard against the *false hopes* that the world presents to us, unmasking their uselessness and showing their folly. And it does so in several ways, but especially by denouncing the falsity of *idols*, in which man is continually tempted to place his trust, making them the object of his hope.

The prophets and wise men insist on this in particular, touching a neuralgic point of the believer's journey of faith. Because faith is to trust in God — one who has faith trusts in God —, but the moment comes when, running into the difficulties of life, man experiences the fragility of that trust and feels the need of different certainties, of tangible, concrete securities. I entrust myself to God, but the situation is quite bad and I need a certainty that is somewhat more concrete. And therein lies the danger! And then we are tempted to seek even ephemeral consolations, which seem to fill the emptiness of solitude and soothe the fatigue of believing. And we think we can find it in the security that money can give, in alliances with the powerful, in worldliness, in false ideologies. Sometimes we seek them in a god that can bow to our requests and intervene magically to change the reality and make it as we wish; an idol, in fact, that as such can do nothing, is impotent and a liar. But we like idols, we like them so much! Once, at Buenos Aires, I had to go from one church to another, a thousand meters, more or less. And I did so walking. And there was a park in between, and there were small tables in the park, but many, many, where seers were seated. It was full of people, who also formed a queue. One would give one of them one's hand, and <the seer> would begin, but the discourse was always the same: there is a woman in your life, a shadow is coming, but everything will go well ... And then, one paid. And this gives one security? It is the security of a — allow me the word — of a stupid thing. To go to a male seer or a female seer that reads cards: this is an idol! This is an idol, and when we are very attached to them, we buy false hopes. Whereas that, which is the hope of gratuitousness, which Jesus Christ has brought us, freely giving His life for us, that sometimes we do not trust so much.

Psalm 115, a Psalm full of wisdom which depicts for us in a very thought-provoking way the falsity of these idols, which the world offers to our hope and to which the men of all times are tempted to entrust themselves, states:

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them" (vv. 4-8).

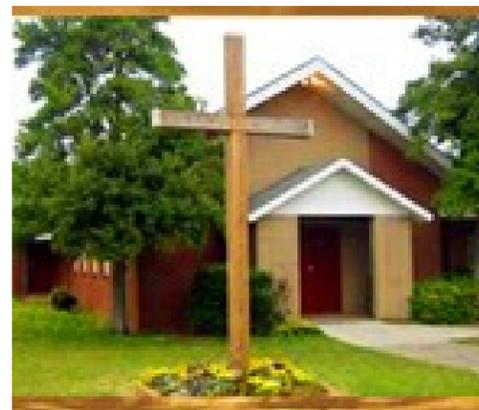
The Psalmist presents to us, also in a somewhat ironic way, the absolutely ephemeral reality of these idols. And we must understand that it is not only about depictions made in metal or another material, but also those built with our mind, when we trust in limited realities which we transform into absolutes, or when we reduce God to our schemes and to our ideas of divinity; a god that is similar to us, comprehensible, predictable, in fact like the idols of which the Psalm speaks. Man, image of God, makes a god to his own image, and it is also a botched image: it does not feel, does not act and, above all, it cannot talk. But we are happier to go to idols than to go to the Lord. Many times we are happier with the ephemeral hope that this false idol gives us than with the great and sure hope that the Lord gives us.

To the hope in a Lord of life who with His Word has created the world and directs our existences, is contrasted trust in dumb simulacra. Ideologies with their claim of the absolute, riches — and this is a great idol —, power and success, vanity, with their illusion of eternity and omnipotence, values such as physical beauty and health, when they become idols to which to sacrifice everything, are all realities that confuse the mind and heart and, instead of fostering life, lead to death. It was awful to hear and it pained my soul what once, years ago, I heard in the diocese of Buenos Aires: a good, very beautiful woman, boasted about her beauty and commented, as if it were natural: "Ah yes, I had to abort because my figure is very important." These are the idols, and they lead one on a mistaken way and do not give happiness.

The Psalm's message is very clear: if one places one's hope in idols, one becomes like them: empty images with hands that do not touch, feet that do not walk, mouths that cannot speak. There is nothing more to say, one becomes incapable of helping, of changing things, incapable of smiling, of giving oneself, incapable of loving. And we also, men of the Church, run this risk when we become "worldly." It is necessary to remain in the world but to defend oneself from the illusions of the world, which are the idols I mentioned.

As the Psalm continues, it is necessary to trust and hope in God, and God will give a blessing. Thus says the Psalm: "Israel, trust in the Lord [...] house of Aaron, put your trust in the Lord [...] you who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord [...] the Lord has been mindful of us; He will bless us" (vv. 9.10.11.12). The Lord is always mindful of us. He is also mindful of us in awful moments, and this is our hope, and hope does not disappoint — never, never. Idols always disappoint: they are fantasies, not reality. Behold the stupendous reality of hope: trusting in the Lord one becomes like Him, His blessing transforms us into His children, who share His life. Hope in God makes us enter, so to speak, in the ray of action of His remembrance, of His memory, which blesses us and saves us. And then an alleluia can burst forth, the praise of the living and true God, who was born for us of Mary, died on the cross and rose in glory. And we hope in this God, and this God — who is not an idol — never disappoints.

St. Gerard Catholic Church



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

SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

Isaiah 49:3,5-6 (64A)

Responsorial:

Psalm 40:2,4,7-8,8-9,10

Second Reading:

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Gospel:

John 1:29-34

Today's Missal

Lectionary Readings for the week of January 15, 2017

Monday: Hebrews 5:1-10;
Mark 2:18-22

Tuesday: Hebrews 6:10-20;
Mark 2:23-28

Wednesday: Hebrews 7:1-3,15-17;
Mark 3:1-6

Thursday: Hebrews 7:25-8:6;
Mark 3:7-12

Friday: Hebrews 8:6-13;
Mark 3:13-19

Saturday: Hebrews 9:2-3,11-14;
Mark 3:20-21

The Second Sunday In Ordinary Time January 15, 2017

Mission Statement

Called to be a People for Others

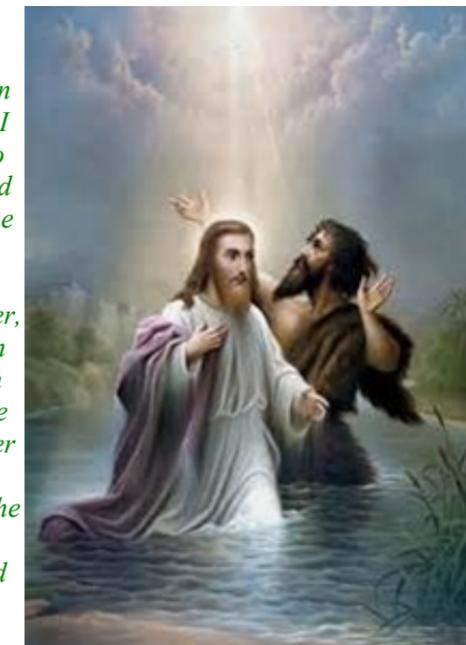
Vision Statement

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

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

John 1:29-34



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 Ligans
 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:
 (Vacant, Chairman)
 Payson Borst
 Jacqueline Brown
 Fredrick Cadek
 Marge Glauser
 Joan Hesik
 Janet Menefee
 Gregory Wright
 Vacant

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

Mass Intentions
 4:00 PM, 7:00 AM Masses are said for your own personal intentions. 11:00 AM Mass for Bill & Jackie Cobbs for special blessings of peace and health: From A. Lauer

The Gathering Hymn 674 H
All People That On Earth Do Dwell
The Offertory Hymn is 643 H
Here I Am Lord
The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 93 M
When Jesus Comes to be Baptized
Our Song of Praise is 606 H
The Church's One Foundation



Weekend Offering
January 7-8, 2017
 Collection \$3,115.00
 Needed \$2,612.00
Over \$503.00
 Attendance 125
 Total Christmas Offerings \$2,382.50
Stewardship a way of life



Lay Ministers

Saturday 21 January 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: David Didimamoff E E Ministers: Barbara Dixon /Joe Dennis	Sunday 22 January 7:00 AM Mass Denise Gelinat Roger Gelinat	Sunday 22 January 11:00 AM Mass Janet Menefee Jackie Brown
---	---	--



Saturday 28 January 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: Joan Hesik E E Ministers: Barbara Dixon	Sunday 29 January 7:00 AM Mass Mary Kay L'Esperance Gerard L'Esperance	Sunday 29 January 11:00 AM Mass Sheila Wagner Wayman Johnson
--	--	--

Refreshment January 15 Jackie Cobbs/Rosa Johnson	Refreshment January 22 Sheila Wagner/Matt Fitzpatrick	Refreshment January 29 Shirley Paige/Anna Marie Key
---	--	--

Finance Council Meeting is January 17 at 4:00 PM
Parish Council Meeting is January 17 at 6:00 PM
Please feel free to come to one or both of these meetings

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



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

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

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.

Volunteer Corner:
We need folks to step up and get involved in parish success in a number of areas. Please come to a parish council meeting.

Light up someone's life, Donate Blood The Gift of Life. The Knights of Columbus need you to Help save local lives! Sheppard Community Blood Center will conduct a Blood Drive At Saint Mary Help of Christian Church On Fairfield Street. Saturday, January 28th from 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm and Sunday, January 29th from 7:45am -1:30 pm Many things in this world can wait But a transfusion of blood to a dying patient cannot. Donate Blood so that others may live. Will you Choose 2 Give? THE NEED IS CONSTANT. THE GRATIFICATION IS INSTANT. GIVE BLOOD Thank You. Donors should drink plenty of water prior to donating! You will need a picture ID, driver's license, or donor card to donate. Each donor will receive a T-Shirt and a Free Lipid Profile after your 3rd donation in a calendar year

Your first free is gratis!!

When you trust your Pilgrimage to The Catholic Pilgrim Office, the first free trip is gratis at 20 full paying passengers, in addition to your benefits as planned (1 for 10 or any other sliding scale of frees you prefer). For instance, if you have a 1 for 10 program and have 20 paying passengers, you would normally receive just 2 frees. However, with this special promotion, we are giving you an extra free, gratis, on top of these benefits! This may allow you to gift a free to someone who otherwise may not have been able to go on the pilgrimage! This is a special promotion we are running for new pilgrimages booked in January 2017 for travel on or after November 1, 2017. Call us, email us, and entrust us with your next Pilgrimage whether it is Italy, The Holy Land, Ireland or anywhere else in the world!
 We look forward to your call!
 Blessings,
 The CPO Team
 Toll Free: 1(800) 769-9466
 Atlanta Number: (404) 467-8041

Feed the Valley, Thank you and bless your gifts of food.

In Harms' Way: Please remember in your prayers our Nation and loved ones of our parishioners currently serving in harms' way: James Ligon, Robert McHugh and James Rossini. Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Please ask any veterans (especially post-9/11 veterans) to contact ACTS at ph#803.642.5919
 They served us now let's help ACTS serve them.

Hospital Visits: If you or a loved one is in Aiken Regional Hospital (ARMC) please let St Gerards know. Remember - ARMC does not inform us of Catholic patients, even if you register as a Catholic; it is up to the patient or family to do so. You can: ask the ARMC Chaplain to call the Catholic church, ask your nurse to inform the Catholic church (name & room number), call-St.Gerard at 649-3203 and leave a message or email St Gerard at: stgerardscatholi@atlanticbnn.net.

BINGO
 Columbus Club Hall Every Monday at
 7:10 PM till 9:00 PM 5 Cards \$ 10.00
 Each Additional Card \$2.00

15 Regular Games	\$20 Payout
1 Coverall Jackpot	\$150 Payout

