

## He heard my voice



Dear Friends in Christ,

*The cords of death encompassed me;  
the torrents of destruction terrified me.  
The cords of Sheol encircled me;  
the snares of death lay in wait for me.  
In my distress I called out: Lord!  
I cried out to my God.  
From his temple he heard my voice;  
my cry to him reached his ears.*

These plaintive words come from the Psalm for yestertoday's Mass, Psalm 18:5-7. They describe someone in distress, giving full vent to his suffering, crying out to the Lord...and being heard.

Psalms such as this can seem far removed from our experience. We live in one of the most comfortable and affluent areas in the world and in history. Certainly, we have our problems. But unlike the Israelites, we are not constantly being overrun by foreign nations, done in by famine, or decimated by plague. So, the psalmist's words might strike us as overwrought. Until now. Since the Governor predicted that the COVID crisis will not peak in Virginia until *May*, perhaps these words resonate with us.

The Psalms are full of laments and supplications. But they always end with praise. Such Psalms (e.g. Psalms 16, 18, 22, 40, 69) provide a good example of how to pray in times of crisis. Each one gives voice to the raw feelings in the midst of a dire situation but then also concludes with words of trust and praise. So it is with

today's psalm. Notice how it proceeds from blunt description of the crisis to words of praise for God's fidelity to His people.

The Psalms teach us how to pray. They are the inspired word of God and also the prayers of man. They are human words of prayer inspired by God Himself. They provide, then, the pattern of prayer most pleasing to God. Following the lead of the psalmist, then, we should not hesitate to express our plight before the Lord, giving full expression to our agony, anxieties, and sufferings. But then, like the psalmist, we should always end on a note of trust and praise.

Updates...

**Confessions al fresco.** Today's regular afternoon confessions will be outside. This enables us to observe proper social distancing *and* to leave the church open for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Please see the map below for where the confessors will be.

**Palm Sunday.** We will have Masses at our regular Sunday times tomorrow. The principal Mass, with the procession and music, will be at 1030am. If live-streaming that Mass, please make note of the [hymns](#) that we will sing. The readings can be found [here](#).

**Parochiae et Oppido?** Last week the Pope imparted his blessing *urbi et orbi* -- "to the city (Rome) and to the world." His namesake Saint Francis would also pray a blessing over the city of Assisi. So, why not here? At 8pm on Easter Sunday, to conclude the day of adoration, I will offer a benediction with the Blessed Sacrament from the front of the church and top of the church steps, to the entire parish and to the city of Falls Church.

**Fish Fry & Food Distribution.** Thank you to all who assisted at the fish fry and food distribution. How inspiring to see how so many parishioners continued to serve others despite the restrictions and complexity of our situation. May God reward you all!

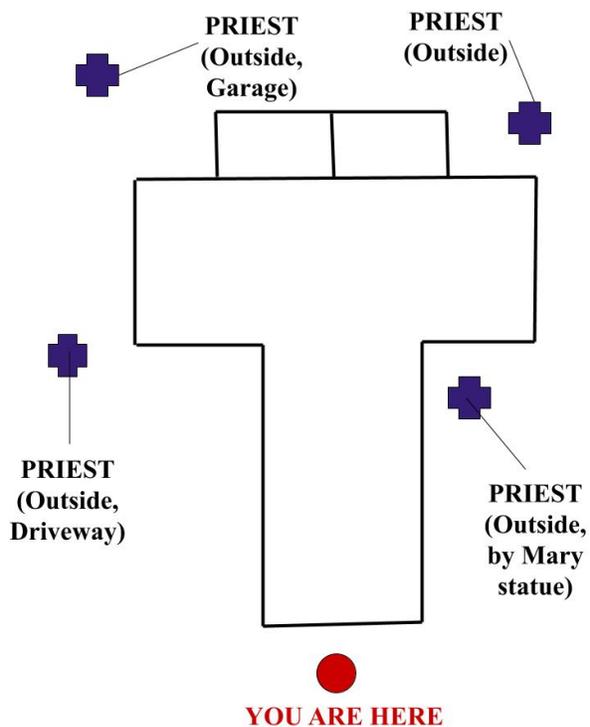
**Easter Pictures.** On Easter Sunday I encourage you to "attend" one of our live-streamed Masses (the usual Sunday schedule). But not only that. Put on your Easter best. Sit, stand, and kneel as you would normally throughout the Mass. And then post a picture of you and your family and/or friends (no more than 10, of course) on our Facebook page. Or send us a picture with permission to post. It would be great to have a virtual parish gathering in our Easter finery.

Through the intercession of our Lady and Saint James, may the Lord bless and keep you.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Scalia

### CONFESSIONS: Where are the priests?



St. James Parish, 905 Park Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22046

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