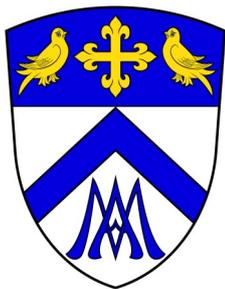


ST EDWARD'S CATHOLIC PARISH

[Mary Help of Christians Church]



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Free Parish App **myFaith** (available in Apple Store or Google Play)

Rev. Fr Paul Aguilar, PP | Rev. Paul Manvell, *deacon*



PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (A)

05 APRIL 2020

First Reading | Isaiah 50.4-7

The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple. The Lord has opened my ear. For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed.

Responsorial Psalm | Psalm 21(22)

Response: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All who see me deride me.
They curl their lips, they toss their heads.
'He trusted in the Lord, let him save him;
let him release him if this is his friend.'

Many dogs have surrounded me,
a band of the wicked beset me.
They tear holes in my hands and my feet
I can count every one of my bones.

They divide my clothing among them.
They cast lots for my robe.
O Lord, do not leave me alone,
my strength, make haste to help me!

I will tell of your name to my brethren
and praise you where they are assembled.
'You who fear the Lord give him praise;
all sons of Jacob, give him glory.
Revere him, Israel's sons.'

Second Reading | Philippians 2.6-11

His state was divine, yet Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Acclamation | Philippians 2:8-9

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!
Christ became obedient for us even to death,
dying on the cross. Therefore God raised him on high
and gave him a name above all other names.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

Gospel | Matthew 27:11-54 (shorter version)

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

*N. Narrator. ✠ Jesus. O. Other single speaker.
C. Crowd, or more than one speaker.*

- N.** Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate, the governor, and the governor put to him this question:
O. Are you the king of the Jews?
N. Jesus replied,
✠ It is you who say it.
N. But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders he refused to answer at all. Pilate then said to him,
O. Do you not hear how many charges they have brought against you?
N. But to the governor's complete amazement, he offered no reply to any of the charges.
At festival time it was the governor's practice to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they chose. Now there was at that time a notorious prisoner whose name was Barabbas. So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them,
O. Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?
N. For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. Now as he was seated in the chair of judgement, his wife sent him a message,
O. Have nothing to do with that man; I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him.
N. The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. So when the governor spoke and asked them,
O. Which of the two do you want me to release for you?
N. they said,
C. Barabbas.
N. Pilate said to them:

continued to next page...

continuation of the Gospel...

- O.** But in that case, what am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?
N. They all said:
C. Let him be crucified!
N. Pilate asked:
O. Why? What harm has he done?
N. But they shouted all the louder,
C. Let him be crucified!
N. Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said,
O. I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern.
N. And the people, to a man, shouted back,
C. His blood be on us and on our children!
N. Then he released Barabbas for them. He ordered Jesus to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified.
The governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium and collected the whole cohort round him. Then they stripped him and made him wear a scarlet cloak, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying,
C. Hail, king of the Jews!
N. And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucify him.
On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry his cross. When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots, and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him.
Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' At the same time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

- The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said,
C. So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself! If you are God's son, come down from the cross!
N. The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way, saying:
C. He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He puts his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, 'I am the son of God.'
N. Even the robbers who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way.
From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
✠ **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?**
N. That is, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said,
C. The man is calling on Elijah.
N. and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. The rest of them said:
C. Wait! See if Elijah will come to save him.
N. But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

Here all kneel and pause for a short time.

- N.** At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said,
C. In truth this was a son of God.

The WORD in other words

Commentary on the First Reading | Isaiah 50.4-7

The four Songs of the Servant of the Lord occur in the second part of the Book of Isaiah, pronounced by the prophet in the last days of the Babylonian Exile, a time which was vital for the consolidation and re-formation of Israel. They seem to hang together and form a body somewhat, but not entirely, separate from the rest of the prophecy. The third Song sings of the suffering accepted by the Servant for the LORD, humiliation, insult and spitting. Who, then, is this Servant? In its primary meaning it has been understood as the prophet himself, reflecting on his own experiences as God's messenger to Israel, though the difficulty here is that, as well as having a mission to Israel, he is identified as part of Israel. Is that identification in the second Song a later addition? The sufferings described in other Songs must be personal. Perhaps it is the prophet precisely as identified with Israel. Should a further extension of the meaning be understood as the long-term suffering of the People of God in witnessing to the values of Judaism? Certainly Christianity sees the prophecies to be fulfilled in the mission and sufferings of Jesus.

Commentary on the Second Reading | Philippians 2.6-11

This hymn was probably not written by Paul himself, but taken up by him into the letter, a very early Christian hymn. It celebrates the triumph of Jesus through his selflessness. The assertions at the end are staggering. The hymn claims for Jesus the titles and the worship which are due only to God. What is more, this acknowledgement of Jesus does not detract from the glory of God, but is precisely 'to the glory of God the Father'. This is perhaps the fullest statement in Paul of the divine glory of Jesus, and it is won by his humiliation in death.

The WORD in other words

Commentary on the Gospel Reading | Matthew 27:11-54

The accounts of the Passion given by the four evangelists are not identical. The basic outline of these dreadful events was clear enough. It is confirmed by the contemporary Jewish historian Josephus, who tells us that Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate at the instigation of the Jewish leaders. The task of the gospel-writers is not to relay to us the raw facts, but to help us understand their significance. Each stresses a particular aspect. For instance, John underlines that this was the triumph of Jesus: he shows his divinity already at the arrest-scene. He himself yielded up his Spirit only when he had completed his task. Matthew's preoccupation with Judaism dictates that he show in detail how the events accord with God's plan revealed in the scriptures. Almost every incident is told in such a way that hearers familiar with the scriptures would catch allusions to the biblical writings: nowhere is this more obvious than in the account of the death of Judas. Though Pilate the governor must bear the final responsibility, Matthew also stresses the pressure put on him by the crowd manipulated by the politically adept Jewish authorities, culminating in the horrific cry, 'His blood be on us and on our children' – an allusion to the sufferings undergone by the next generation during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. The significance of the events is further underlined by the apocalyptic earthquake at Jesus' death, and by the immediate release of the blessed dead, who come at last into the Holy City.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today we begin Holy Week, the days during which we journey with Jesus on his way of the cross and anticipate his Resurrection on Easter. Today's liturgy (*normally*) begins with the procession with palms to remind us of Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. The events of Jesus' Passion are proclaimed in their entirety in today's Liturgy of the Word. Those events will be proclaimed again when we celebrate the liturgies of the Triduum—Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Good Friday of the Lord's Passion, and the Easter Vigil. In communities that celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation with catechumens, these liturgies take on special importance because they invite the catechumens and the community to enter together into the central mysteries of our faith. These days are indeed profound and holy.

In Cycle A, we read the Passion of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Matthew on Palm, or Passion, Sunday. (On Good Friday, we will read the Passion of Jesus from the Gospel of John). The story of Jesus' Passion and death in Matthew's Gospel focuses particularly on the obedience of Jesus to the will of his Father. As Jesus sends his disciples to prepare for Passover, he indicates that the events to come are the will of the Father (Matthew 26:18). In Jesus' prayer in the garden, he prays three times to the Father to take away the cup of suffering, but each time, Jesus concludes by affirming his obedience to the Father's will (Matthew 26:39-44). Even Matthew's description of Jesus' death shows Jesus' obedience to the Father.

Another theme of Matthew's Gospel is to show Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture. Throughout the Passion narrative, Matthew cites and alludes to Scripture to show that the events of Jesus' Passion and death are in accordance with all that was foretold. And if the events were foretold, then God is in control. In addition, Matthew is particularly concerned that the reader does not miss the fact that Jesus is the Suffering Servant of the Old Testament.

Jesus acts in obedience to the Father even in death, so that sins may be forgiven. Matthew makes this clear in the story of the Lord's Supper. As Jesus blesses the chalice, he says: ". . . for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28) While the Gospels of Matthew and Mark have many parallels in their narrative of the Passion, there are a few details worth noting that are unique to Matthew. Only Matthew indicates the price paid to Judas for betraying Jesus. The story of Judas's death is also found only in Matthew, as is the detail that Pilate's wife received a warning in a dream and that Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' death. Finally, Matthew's Gospel alone mentions the earthquakes and other phenomena that happened after Jesus' death.

Matthew places the responsibility for Jesus' death on the Sanhedrin, the chief priests and elders who were responsible for the Temple. However, the animosity that those Jewish leaders and the Jewish people demonstrate toward Jesus is not to be interpreted in ways that blame the Jewish people for Jesus' death. Throughout Matthew's Gospel, the narrative reflects the tension that probably existed between the early Christian community and their Jewish contemporaries. At the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers made clear that all sinners share responsibility for the suffering and death of Jesus and that it is wrong to place blame for Jesus' Passion on the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus or on Jewish people today.

There are many vantage points from which to engage in Jesus' Passion. In the characters of Matthew's Gospel, we find reflections of ourselves and the many ways in which we sometimes respond to Jesus. Sometimes we are like Judas, who betrays Jesus and comes to regret it. We are sometimes like Peter, who denies him, or like the disciples, who fell asleep during Jesus' darkest hour but then act rashly and violently at his arrest. Sometimes we are like Simon, who is pressed into service to help Jesus carry his cross. Sometimes we are like the leaders who fear Jesus or like Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands of the whole affair. Jesus dies so that our sins will be forgiven.

The events of Jesus' Passion, death, and Resurrection are called the Paschal Mystery. No amount of study will exhaust or explain the depth of love that Jesus showed in offering this sacrifice for us. After we have examined and studied the stories we have received about these events, we are left with one final task—to meditate on these events and on the forgiveness that Jesus' obedience won for us.

NEWS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Building

Due to COVID-19 pandemic crisis, our church building is CLOSED.

Public worship and visiting is suspended until further notice.

Join us online for worship and updates at <https://stedwardsparish.org.au/> or on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/stedwardssouthtamworth>

Church Notices/Bulletin

Church bulletin will be sent out via email, please notify us by phone or email: southtamworthparish@armidale.catholic.org.au if you want to be in our mailing list. Bulletin will also be posted on the parish website: <https://stedwardsparish.org.au/> Hard copies are also available in front of the church: Sat. 12pm-5pm, Sun. 7am-12nn.

Good Friday Holy Land Special Collection

As per instruction from the Holy See, for this year this appeal is transferred on September 13, 2020.

Confession

Confession - Rite 1 only. Available by appointment phone 6765 9543.

Obligation to attend Sunday Mass

Bishop Michael Kennedy has given dispensation to all the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass during this time of pandemic. In the absence of attending Sunday Mass, everyone is encouraged to undertake suitable prayer and reflection to keep the Lord's day holy. This may be in the form of: (*check page 5 for resources*)

* reading and reflecting/discussing the Sunday readings and Gospel

* praying the rosary as individual or as a family

* follow the Mass online (TV Mass Channel 10, Sunday 6am)

* making a spiritual communion

* praying other family prayers

* creating and decorating a prayer space with a crucifix, candle, holy Bible and other sacred images.

Other Sacraments

1. Baptism - temporarily suspended unless the person is in danger of death. In such a case please contact the parish emergency number: 0466281608 or Deacon Paul Manvell 0418667329.

2. Anointing of the Sick/Sick Call/Viaticum - by appointment please call the parish office.

3. First Holy Communion and Confirmation - these sacraments are temporarily suspended until further notice.

4. Home Communion - regular holy communion rounds by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are to cease until further notice. The priest or the deacon, following appropriate precautions and government restrictions, are the only ones who may bring communion to the sick and homebound.

Pastoral Care

If you need a priest or deacon please contact the numbers above.

PARISH HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Spiritual Care Package

These will be available in front of the Church from Saturday 01.00pm-05.30pm and Sunday from 8am to 5.30pm. You may collect it as you pass-by the church during your Sunday shopping or walk/exercise.

Holy Week (no public celebration)

| | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Palm Sunday | 08.00am | |
| Holy Monday to Holy Wednesday | 08.00am | |
| Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper | 06.00pm | |
| Good Friday Stations of the Cross (<i>via parish Facebook</i>) | 09.00am | |
| | Celebration of the Lord's Passion | 03.00pm |
| Holy Saturday Easter Vigil Mass | 06.00pm | |
| Easter Sunday Mass | 08.00am | |

Mass of Holy Oils

As per instruction from the Holy See, this will be postponed to a later date.

In your charity, please pray for

Our sick

Fr Bernie Melville & Fr John McHugh
Julien Ryan & Gordon Livingston
Pearl Howard & Joy Makepeace
Johanna Turner & Bayly Turner
Cecilia Kelly & Rita Kelly
Jay Peachy & Ricky Lee Peachy
Addison Peachy

Our Deceased

+ Kylee Bidgood
+ Alastair Wall
+ Gabriel Alina
+ Dolores Costales
+ Tony Albans

Mass Intentions*

06/04 + Tony Albans
07/04 For the souls of all those who died due to COVID-19
08/04 For the fast recovery of those who contracted COVID-19
09/04 For the safety of all the front liners combating COVID-19
10/04 For the safety of all health care professionals

**In sending Mass intentions, kindly write your prayer requests on a piece of paper and place it in a sealed envelope. Drop it in the basket at presbytery front door.*

PRAYER APPEAL

In Matthew 18.20, Jesus our Lord has said: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Whilst our church is closed and we can't come together to pray as a parish family, we can be together spiritually and He the Lord with us. We are inviting and encouraging parishioners and friends to pray one decade of the Holy Rosary (1 Our Father, 10 Hail Marys and 1 Glory be) each day at 12.00 noon, in communion with other participants in this great powerful chain of prayer. End the decade with song/prayer:

*Arise says the lord, have no fear within
you for in my presence
there will be no darkness
I am the light of the of the world.*

*Walk in the light
there is no cause to stumble
I have come to light the path before you
I am the light of the world.*

Plate Collections | 29/03/2020

First Collection \$ 117.00
Envelopes PGP \$ 255.00

TV / ONLINE MASS & OTHER RESOURCES

TV Mass - Channel 10, every Sunday 6.00am

Parish Facebook

Link to livestream Mass will be posted on our Parish Facebook page. Follow us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/stedwardsouthtamworth>

Armidale Cathedral - Sunday 10.00am

St Mary's Cathedral - Sydney

<https://www.stmaryscathedral.org.au/>

Sunday 10.30am

Holy Week at Home: Family Prayer Guides

<https://stedwardsparish.org.au/blog>

EASTER TRIDUUM

Sts Mary and Joseph Cathedral - Armidale

(internet) live stream on facebook

Link to live stream Mass will be posted on our Parish Facebook page. Follow us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/stedwardsouthtamworth>

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Holy Thursday | 09/04 | 06.00pm |
| Good Friday | 10/04 | 03.00pm |
| Easter Vigil Mass (Saturday) | 11/04 | 06.00pm |
| Easter Sunday | 12/04 | 10.00am |

St Mary's Cathedral - Sydney

(TV) Channel 7 - live broadcast

| | | |
|---------------|-------|---------|
| Good Friday | 10/04 | 03.00pm |
| Easter Sunday | 12/04 | 10.30am |

HOW TO PREPARE FOR TV/ONLINE MASS

1. Prepare yourselves well.
2. Do not watch it with a cup of coffee or tea in hand. Mobile phone in silent or flight mode.
3. Before the Mass, read the Mass readings to prepare yourselves to hear them better once they are proclaimed in the Eucharist.
4. Have a few moments too to think what you are to thank the Lord for and what to offer to him during this Mass.
5. Remember that you are praying this Eucharist with many other fellow Catholics not only in our parish but all over the world.
6. Stay in reverend gesture throughout the Mass, standing and sitting up properly when possible.
7. Do not watch the Mass. Join it with your prayers, responses and singing. Join in it with your family.
8. At the time of communion, make the Act of Spiritual Communion. At the end of the TV or online Mass, take some moment of silence.

Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

PRAYER IN TIME OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

God our Father, we come to you in our need to ask your protection against COVID-19 that has claimed lives and has affected many. We pray for your grace for the people tasked with studying the nature and cause of this virus and of stemming the tide of its transmission. Guide the hands and minds of doctors, nurses and all health care professionals that they may minister to the sick with competence and compassion, and of those governments and private agencies that must find cure and solution to this pandemic.

Accord our frontline workers: wisdom, protection and compassion. Sustain all employees and business owners who suffer loss of livelihood due to shut-downs, quarantines, closed borders, and other restriction. Protect and guard all those who must travel. We pray for those afflicted may they be restored to health soon. Grant us the grace to work for the good of all and to help those in need. Hold in your gentle embrace all who have died and who will die this day. Comfort their loved ones in their despair.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Mary Help of all Christians, *pray for us.*
St Raphael the Archangel, *pray for us.*
St Roch, *pray for us.*
St Corona, *pray for us.*
St Edward the Confessor, *pray for us.*
St Mary of the Cross, *pray for us.*

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

With Sunday Mass suspended indefinitely, please remain conscious of the need to support our church to provide for the food and domestic requirements of the our parish church and the priests throughout the Diocese. To that end you may like to contribute to the 1st and PGP collection by way of EFT or perhaps by dropping a cheque to the Presbytery (*please indicate if it is for 1st collection or PGP*).

To support the priests (1st collection):

A/C Name: St Edwards Church Presbytery S A

BSB: 082 105 **A/C No.:** 001023592

Reference: First + last name

To support the Church (PGP envelope):

A/C Name: St Edwards Church Suspense Acct

BSB: 082 105 **A/C No.:** 001002950

Reference: Envelope Number + last name*

(for PGP) Please do notify us by email of your donation as sometimes REFERENCE doesn't appear in the transaction detail on our end.

EASTER OFFERING

Envelopes are in the PGP packs. This appeal supports our priests and presbytery upkeep. Leave your envelope in the basket at the presbytery front door or send it through EFT:

Account Name: Special Collection Account

BSB: 082105 **Acc. No:** 001059638

Reference: Easter Offering

Why St. Roch is a powerful patron against plagues?¹

The plague disappeared everywhere he went.

During the 14th century there was a plague in Italy, and St. Roch came upon one of the towns most affected by it. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, he “devoted himself to the plague-stricken, curing them with the sign of the cross. He next visited Cesena and other neighbouring cities and then Rome. Everywhere the terrible scourge disappeared before his miraculous power.” He eventually contracted the plague himself, but after retreating to the forest, he was also cured from the disease. After his death, St. Roch’s intercession was invoked when a plague struck Germany in the 15th century.

In 1414, during the Council of Constance, the plague having broken out in that city, the Fathers of the Council ordered public prayers and processions in honour of the saint, and immediately the plague ceased.



Time and time again he was invoked during various medieval plagues and is why he is labelled a patron against plagues.



Yes, there’s actually a St. Corona! And her remains are in Northern Italy²

Corona was only 16, and gave her life to comfort a fellow Christian.

*Right in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic is the city of Anzu, Italy. There is a basilica in Anzu where the relics of St. Victor and St. Corona have been preserved since the 9th century. The word Corona is Latin for crown. Ironically, St. Corona is considered as one of the patron saints of pandemics.**

The Coronavirus sweeping the globe is also named for “crown.” The Economist explains: Little noticed by doctors, let alone the public, until the outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) that began in Guangdong in 2002, the coronavirus family was first recognised by science in the 1960s. Its members got their name because, under the early electron microscopes of the period, their shape seemed reminiscent of a monarch’s crown. (It is actually, modern methods show, more like that of an old-fashioned naval mine.) There are now more than 40 recognised members of the family, infecting a range of mammals and birds, including blackbirds, bats and cats. Veterinary virologists know them well because of the diseases they cause in pigs, cattle and poultry.

Little is known about St. Corona, but she and the man she prayed for, St. Victor, are listed in the Roman martyrology and the Hagiography of the Church. There is ambiguity surrounding the dates and locations of St. Victor’s and St. Corona’s martyrdom. Most sources say it was in Syria, which was under Roman rule. Some say Damascus; others, Antioch. Most agree they were put to death in the year 170 A.D. Most historians agree they died during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and that they were put to death by order of a Roman judge named Sebastian. The story tells the tale of a Roman soldier named Victor. The Romans discovered that Victor was a Christian. The soldiers brought Victor before a judge, named Sebastian, who despised Christians. He decided to make an example out of Victor. He was bound to a pillar and summarily whipped until his skin was hanging from his body, and then Sebastian had his eyes gouged out. Through it all, Victor never denied Christ.

Nearby was a 16-year-old girl name Corona. She was the wife of one of the soldiers, and she was also a Christian. (Corona’s husband did not know his wife was a Christian). As Victor was being brutalized, Corona decided she needed to help the slowly dying man. She chose to announce her Christianity to all present and hurried over to where they were torturing Victor. She knelt and began to pray for him, letting him know she was there for him. It did not take very long for the soldiers to bring her too before Sebastian. Sebastian was livid that this young woman had so disrespected his authority. He immediately had her put in the prison and tortured. Then, he ordered her tied to the tops of two palm trees, which had been pulled down to the ground. At his signal, the ropes holding the trees bent were cut. The trees sprang back away from each other to an upright position. The force was so great that Corona’s body was ripped apart. Then Sebastian ordered Victor beheaded. The remains in the basilica have been there since the 9th century. In 1943 and again in 1981, they were examined, and the bones are from both a male and female. In the 1981 examination, they discovered cedar pollen, which was a typical plant from the Mediterranean basin during the time in question. Archaeologists confirm that this pollen would have been present in Syria and Cyprus. St. Victor and St. Corona are pre-congregation saints meaning that they were recognized as saints prior to Church canonization processes being standardized. [The first saint canonized by a pope was Ulrich, the bishop of Augsburg, who died in 973. He was canonized by Pope John XV at the Lateran Council of 993. Canonization became the general law of the church under Pope Gregory IX (1227-41)]. St. Corona’s feast day, along with St. Victor’s, is May 14. We ask both of them to pray for us all that this pandemic subsides.

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* Several readers have asked us about St. Corona being a patron saint to invoke against epidemics. This can be verified in various German-language sources, as this particular aspect of devotion to her is most common in Austria and Bavaria. Also, her name, in reference to the Latin word for crown, surely refers to her martyrdom, as she received the “martyr’s crown.” We might say this is similar to St. Veronica, known for wiping Our Lord’s face on the Way of the Cross. Veronica, literally, means “true image,” a reference to the image of Christ’s face that he left on her cloth. It is good to remember that the saints belong to the Universal Church, and thus the patronages of one or another might vary from one country to another. For example, in many English-speaking countries, if you ask who is the patron of animal lovers, you’ll surely hear St. Francis. But if you were to ask that same question in Italy or Spain, you’d hear that St. Anthony Abbot is the patron. Thus, about St. Corona, we can say that Providence truly has given her to us at this time, and that she and surely all the saints, are praying for our world in this dire situation.

¹ <https://aleteia.org/2020/03/04/why-st-roch-is-a-powerful-patron-against-plagues/> accessed: 31/03/2020

² <https://aleteia.org/2020/03/14/yes-theres-actually-a-st-corona-and-shes-buried-in-the-middle-of-the-pandemic/> accessed: 31/03/2020

³ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2020/03/26/german-cathedral-dusts-off-relics-of-st-corona-patron-of-epidemics> accessed: 31/03/2020



Restorer Luke Jonathan Koeppel and the director of the cathedral treasury Birgit Falk present shrine with the relics of Saint Corona, the patron of epidemics, at the cathedral in Aachen, Germany, March 25, 2020 as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues. REUTERS/Thilo Schmuellen³