

# APRIL

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**YEAR A  
WEEKDAYS I**

Saturday, April 1, 2023  
(Lec. 256)

- 1) Ezekiel 37:21-28
- 2) John 11:45-56

Gospel related: CCC 58, 60, 548, 596, 706, 994, 2793

SATURDAY OF  
FIFTH WEEK  
OF LENT

FOCUS: The Lord delivers us.

The high priest Caiaphas has a stunning “prophecy” today: *that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish*. This was no altruistic or messianic-driven prophecy. It was one of self-preservation. The Sanhedrin was afraid that Jesus would cause such problems that the Romans would oppress them even more, *[taking] away both [their] land and [their] nation*. If that happened they would be driven into poverty, and forbidden from practicing their religion.

It is no wonder that the elders and chief priests were afraid of Jesus, or at least, afraid of the problems he could cause. Jesus went around proclaiming God as king and that his realm was for all people, marked by healing and forgiveness. Many marginal types were the recipients of this mercy; there was no further earthly political vision. But the Jesus affair was threatening the members of the Jerusalemite hierarchy who considered themselves the keepers of the national integrity in the midst of the Roman occupation. Jesus is branded as marginal – a Galilean after all – and his departure would be a definitive solution for the city. The divine irony is that the Lord’s “sacrifice,” freely accepted, “saves” the people in ways the priestly caste never imagined.

Yet if the leaders had paid better attention, they might have realized that what they were seeing was what the prophet Ezekiel had foretold: The Lord was gathering the children of Israel from all sides, and bringing them to himself. *There shall be one shepherd for them all*, Ezekiel prophesied. Speaking for the Lord, he said, *My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God and they shall be my people ... my sanctuary shall be set up among them forever*.

In the midst of being under Roman occupation and rule, in the middle of all the human social and political practicalities over which the religious leaders had no control, God placed himself with a message of hope: *I will deliver them*. And he has. One man died, that all people may not perish.

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## SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2023

(Lec. 37)

Procession with the Palms:

1) Matthew 21:1-11

Mass Readings (Lec. 38)

1) Isaiah 50:4-7

2) Philippians 2:6-11

3) Matthew 26:14—27:66 or 27:11-54

Gospel related: CCC 333, 363, 441, 443, 500, 515, 536, 545, 586, 591, 596, 597, 585, 600, 609, 610, 612, 613, 633, 764, 1328, 1329, 1339, 1365, 1403, 1846, 2262, 2719, 2733, 2839, 2846, 2849 CSDC 454

## PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

FOCUS: Jesus is humbly obedient to his mission.

Today marks the beginning of Holy Week, the days in the Church year when we celebrate Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Before we get to Easter, though, the Church invites us to ponder the meaning of Jesus' death. And we should start by recognizing that his death was neither an accident nor was it an unfortunate misunderstanding. No, Jesus was murdered by the religious and political leaders of his time who would not tolerate his challenges to their greed, power, and hypocrisy. Jesus' words and actions made them angry, and they initiated actions to bring about his demise.

For example, in the first Gospel reading, we hear Jesus planning a triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This procession gets the entire city's attention. We don't hear the next part of the story in today's Gospel, but it's important. With everyone's eyes on him, Jesus enters the temple area and drives out the animal vendors and the money changers. These actions challenge the temple officials' greedy abuse of the people's religious observance. This so angers the temple officials that they plot Jesus' death, which we hear unfold in the second Gospel reading about Jesus' passion and death.

Jesus was aware that his actions would probably lead to his suffering and death. This did not mean that he had a death wish. Rather, as the second reading proclaims, Jesus was being obedient to his mission to preach and make present the kingdom of God. Jesus was faithful to this mission whether it was convenient or inconvenient, whether it would be well received or poorly received. He would not turn away from his mission even if it meant torture and death.

And Jesus did all of this with great humility. For Jesus, it was never about looking important or being famous. As the reading from Philippians proclaims, *he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*. As a sign of this humility, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, he doesn't ride a war horse like the rulers of the time, but a humble donkey, the beast of burden used by the lowly.

Jesus' willingness to accept suffering and even death is part of his saving work. His obedience should inspire us to stay faithful to our mission to proclaim the kingdom of God. This means loving others, even when they don't return our love. It means speaking the truth, even when others do not want to hear it. It means asking for forgiveness when we have been wrong. It means caring for others, even when that is difficult or inconvenient. And it means doing all of these things with humility. It isn't easy, but Jesus does not leave us alone in our efforts. Every time we come to the Eucharistic table, he gives himself to us, strengthening us to follow his example.

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Monday, April 3, 2023

(Lec. 257)

1) Isaiah 42:1-7

2) John 12:1-11

Gospel related: CCC 2449 CSDC 183

MONDAY OF

HOLY WEEK

**FOCUS:** Holy Week is a time for us to remember and be grateful for the love and sacrifice of Jesus.

The story in today's Gospel seems, in many ways, like a simple gathering of friends enjoying a meal. Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, are celebrating together with Jesus and some of his disciples. A meal has been shared. Jesus has recently brought Lazarus back to life, proving that he has power over death. And Mary shows her love of Jesus by anointing his feet with expensive oils. But this story is filled with foreshadowing. All this is taking place just days before Jesus will face his passion and death and, ultimately, his resurrection.

We find ourselves today at the beginning of Holy Week: A time the Church sets aside to honor, remember, and pay homage to the days leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It is a week filled with sorrow and hope, culminating in the joy of our salvation.

From the moment Jesus was lifted up onto that cross, cynics and non-believers have said – and continue to say – that if Jesus was really God, he would have been able to take himself down from the cross and spare himself such horrible suffering. When they say this, it shows that they miss the point of the sacrifice Jesus was willing to make to save us. Of course, as God, he could have saved himself. Of course, as God, he could have stopped the pain. Instead, fully human and fully divine, he endured the agony, the humiliation, and mortal death. His was the ultimate demonstration of unconditional love – to lay down one's life for others.

This is the perfect week for us to prayerfully contemplate this unconditional love God has for us, to be grateful for it, and to look for ways to spread that love to others.

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Tuesday, April 4, 2023

(Lec. 258)

1) Isaiah 49:1-6

2) John 13:21-33, 36-38

TUESDAY OF

HOLY WEEK

FOCUS: Let us continue to bring the light of Christ to the world.

Throughout this week, we march steadily toward the Triduum celebration of our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection.

Jesus was fully aware of the suffering that lay ahead of him, and yet he carried on. In the Gospel today, Jesus is reclining at dinner with his disciples. These are the chosen few: They were called by name by Jesus, they walked hundreds of miles behind him, and slept countless nights alongside him. As Isaiah prophesied that it was "too little" for God's servant "to be just a servant," so it was "too little" for them to be just his disciples. They were truly his friends; Jesus loved them. They would be the ones who would continue to bring his light to the world.

It is because of this that Jesus is *deeply troubled*. The betrayal and denial he knows will come are not the betrayal of an enemy or the denial of some stranger; it is Jesus' friends who will do this to him.

The mystery lies in this: It is precisely because of that betrayal that Jesus can offer his life for the salvation of those he loved. Jesus doesn't offer his life only for his loyal servants. Rather, he lays it down for all, including the friends who betrayed him.

In ways known only to our own hearts, this is true of us as well. All of us are guilty of betrayal. But Jesus has the same message for us that the prophet Isaiah offered: *It is too little ... for you to be my servant ... I will make you a light to the nations*. Let us give thanks for this great gift as we prepare to receive the body and blood of the Lord who loves us, and in return go forth to continue to bring his light to the world.

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Wednesday, April 5, 2023  
(Lec. 259)

- 1) Isaiah 50:4-9a
  - 2) Matthew 26:14-25
- Gospel related: CCC 610, 1339

WEDNESDAY OF  
HOLY WEEK

FOCUS: Following Jesus is worth more than any earthly treasure.

On this day when the Gospel tells us of Judas' betrayal, let us consider what following Jesus is truly worth to us. In the end, it seems as if Jesus was worth practically nothing to Judas. A mere 30 pieces of silver bought his betrayal. Judas didn't see what following Jesus was truly worth. Judas lost sight of the treasure of eternal life, and so following Jesus became worthless to him.

In contrast, how have Christian martyrs been able to give their lives for Christ? Because they understood what following Jesus was truly worth. Jesus is not just a man or a historical figure or a miracle worker. Jesus is God, who became man to save us from hell and bring us to heaven through his death on the cross. Because Jesus is the Savior of the world, every finite treasure pales in comparison to following him into eternal life.

When following Jesus is the first priority in our lives, we can see all the other things in life according to their proper value. By holding fast to the treasure of life in Christ, we become masters over sin rather than prisoners to earthly temptations. So what is following Jesus worth to us? The answer to that question determines both the experience of our earthly lives and our eternal destiny.

Let us allow ourselves to be purified this Holy Week by the Holy Spirit, so that we may know and live according to the true value of following Jesus. Through the Eucharist we receive today, Jesus is offering us the grace to continue following him in this way. As we come to the altar, let us receive the gift to know and follow Jesus for who he truly is – the Savior of the world.

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**Thursday, April 6, 2023**

(Lec. 39)

1) Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

2) 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

3) John 13:1-15

Gospel related: CCC 423, 447, 520, 557, 609, 616, 622, 730, 1085, 1269, 1337, 1380, 1524, 1694, 1823, 2843 **CSDC** 484

**THURSDAY OF  
HOLY WEEK  
(HOLY THURSDAY)**

**FOCUS:** In Christ we have met love and mercy incarnate.

It's hard not to feel the weight of many different emotions as we enter the Upper Room with Jesus at the Last Supper, even from our vantage point in history. We know the immense importance of the night with its institution of two sacraments, the priesthood and Eucharist. At the same time, we are aware of the additional events of that night and how the intimacy of the evening will quickly be overshadowed by the weaknesses and sinfulness of those present, just hours later. Their failures are on full display with the betrayal and abandonment of Jesus to unjust accusations, humiliation, brutal torture, and painful death. These extreme events are so opposed that it is hard to imagine them both in this same space.

Yet, thousands of years removed, we are still in a similar place. We celebrate the generous outpouring of love of Jesus' most holy body, blood, soul, and divinity being offered to us in the Eucharist. And we also recognize how we are prone to the same weaknesses and sins that betray and fail Jesus even as we seek to love and follow him.

Jesus knew all this that first night, and still does. He knows how easy it would have been for his first Apostles, or for us here today, to allow the failures to constantly replay in our minds and hearts. We can be crippled by fears, doubts, and sadness at our unworthiness. It is his grace, however, that allows us to feel our contrition, make our confessions, and be repentant. It is his grace that gives us the gift of faith and allows it to grow. Through his grace and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to do as he did – in the washing of the feet – and go forth in service to one another.

There is much for us to reflect on over the next few days as we gather to celebrate these three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. We bring our joys and sorrows, our faithfulness and our weaknesses, knowing that God's love for us, and his dying for our sins, is his doing, not ours. *Of course* we are unworthy – but God's limitless mercy overshadows that. In Christ we have met love and mercy incarnate. We are entrusted with the difficult but privileged task of not just sharing that story but living it in our world today.

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**Friday, April 7, 2023**

(Lec. 40)

1) Isaiah 52:13—53:12

2) Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

3) John 18:1—19:42

Gospel related: CCC 217, 440, 478, 495, 501, 544, 549, 559, 575, 586, 595, 596, 600, 607, 608, 609, 624, 641, 694, 726, 730, 964, 1225, 1432, 2471, 2561, 2605, 2618, 2677, 2679

**FRIDAY OF THE  
PASSION OF THE LORD  
(GOOD FRIDAY)**

FOCUS: By his death, Jesus has transformed our death into the promise of eternal life.

The one thing that we can all be sure of is that we will die. Yet we seem to spend most of our lives ignoring this truth, or at least doing everything we can to avoid its reality. As with many other manners and patterns of human behavior, Jesus turns this one on its head. From early on in his ministry, Jesus is very candid in sharing with his followers that he will suffer and die, often to their annoyance and distress. They don't want to hear that his proclamation of the kingdom might end in seeming failure. Peter even goes so far as to rebuke Jesus for his words, and then turns around later and denies that he knows Jesus at all.

Each evangelist treats the passion of Jesus in his own way. In general, Mark, Matthew, and Luke portray Jesus as one who was abandoned and betrayed by his disciples and friends and yet remained passive in the face of his tormentors, allowing them to have their way until the moment of his final agony. In doing this, their focus is on the total self-giving of Jesus.

John, on the other hand, whose passion narrative is always the Gospel on this day, depicts Jesus as more in control; there is a gravitas and serenity in his exchanges with the members of the Sanhedrin and Pilate as the drama of salvation unfolds. Even Jesus' final act of commending his mother to the care of the beloved disciple demonstrates his ongoing concern for others and his desire to faithfully fulfill the mission of salvation to the very end.

Anyone who has ever sat with a dying friend or relative knows the sense of powerlessness that can accompany that sacred and solemn moment. For many, death can be painful, degrading, and even full of darkness. But on that first Good Friday, Jesus transformed dying into an act of love and, ultimately, one of life. By his own death, Jesus takes the worst of our fears and changes them by opening up the hope of eternal life. No longer is life measured just in earthly years, it now has an eternal dimension.

Today, especially, we remember that Christ died for love of us. Even in our sinfulness, he continues to witness to God's steadfast love. This is indeed, on the one hand, a day of great sadness: The innocent one is unjustly condemned and crucified. And we who gather to venerate the cross do so with hearts full of repentance.

It is also a day of great joy and goodness – it is, after all, Good Friday – for, as in all things, the Lord has the last word. Indeed those final words of Jesus – *it is finished* – have resonated through the centuries. "What has finished?" we might ask. God's salvific plan for us has finished – been brought to fruition. Through the obedient self-giving of Christ that began in the Incarnation, continued in his preaching, and came to fullness in his death and resurrection, we have been redeemed. Through the life of his Church we have a newness of life and the promise of a glorious future.

Because of the cross we can now, in the words of the Letter to the Hebrews, *confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help*. So even in the midst of our sorrow, as we stand vigil around the cross, we take hope that he who has been made perfect in suffering and paid our debt to God has now become for us the source of eternal salvation.

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Saturday, April 8, 2023

(Lec. 41)

- 1) Genesis 1:1—2:2 or 1:1, 26-31a
- 2) Genesis 22:1-18 or 22:1-2,9a, 10-13, 15-18
- 3) Exodus 14:15—15:1
- 4) Isaiah 54:5-14
- 5) Isaiah 55:1-11
- 6) Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4
- 7) Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28

**HOLY SATURDAY  
EASTER VIGIL**

**New Testament Readings**

- 8) Romans 6:3-11
- 9) Matthew 28:1-10

Gospel related: CCC 500, 641, 645, 652, 654, 2174 CSDC 454

FOCUS: This is the ultimate celebration of our Church.

What a privilege it is to be a Catholic on this holy night. We celebrate one of our most ancient liturgies, this great vigil, which dates all the way from the Apostolic times. We have fasted and done penance to prepare, and now it is time to put on the mantle of joy and praise. We commemorate the greatest event in human history: The Lord Jesus has risen from the dead and our salvation has been accomplished!

This night we also have the great honor of welcoming new members into our family. All around the world Catholic parishes are celebrating baptisms, confirmations, and receiving new people at the table of holy Communion. Again, this is a tradition that is nearly 2,000 years old. Our family is blessed to “give birth,” through the waters of baptism, to many more brothers and sisters as we celebrate this sacred night. It is a sign of life when a body grows and thrives. Never are we more Catholic, never are we more united as a worldwide Church as on this very night. When we consider all the great saints and leaders who have done what we do tonight, we are humbled and inspired to be part of such an amazing movement of the Holy Spirit.

On this powerful night, we bless water and fire to emphasize the sacramental life of the Church. We hear the promises of God proclaimed from the prophets and Apostles. We see the grace of the Holy Spirit in the joy of new converts joining our holy family. We hear the powerful Good News that Jesus is not dead, but he lives again.

Then we join in our ultimate act of unity and intimacy with Christ as we receive his body and blood from the sacred altar. We come together tonight as a community, but also with our brothers and sisters from every corner of the world, to begin our celebration and testimony that Jesus lives, and the tomb is empty. Let us go forth like the women at the tomb to tell our loved ones that Jesus’ victory is the source of our joy, and can be the source of their joy forever.

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## SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2023

(Lec. 42)

- 1) Acts 10:34a, 37-43
- 2) Colossians 3:1-4 or  
1 Corinthians 5:6b-8
- 3) John 20:1-9 or  
Matthew 28:1-10 (Lec. 41)

Gospel related: CCC 500, 515, 640, 641, 645, 652, 654, 2174 CSDC 454

## EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD - SOLEMNITY

**FOCUS:** Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.

Jesus blesses those who believe even when they can't see what lies hidden beyond the veil of mystery. The Easter story is about people daring to believe in Jesus' resurrection precisely because of what they could not see or find – his body in the tomb.

Mary Magdalene was making her way to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea in the pre-dawn darkness. She wasn't going there expecting to find an empty tomb. She was going to wash and anoint Jesus' body for burial, according to Jewish custom. Mary found nothing but the stone rolled away and the grave emptied of its precious contents. When she ran to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple, she was thinking his body had been stolen as one final, cruel act of mockery.

The disciple whom Jesus loved *saw and believed*. Who did he see? No one. What did he see? Nothing, just the shroud. He believed even if he did not yet understand.

No one saw the moment when the Lord God raised Jesus from the dead, but the Apostles would soon see Jesus, touch him, and eat with him by the shores of Galilee. They would be strengthened by him and given the Holy Spirit to guide them in the important work that lay ahead of them – that of building the Church. There would be no looking back from that day forward.

The same can happen for us. If we let him, the risen Christ can change our hearts so that we, too, will never be the same again. The risen Lord wishes to draw our eyes and our attention to heaven, that we might seek and think of what is above. Just as God rolled the stone away from the tomb and called his Son to new life, the risen Lord Jesus is seeking to roll the stone away from our tombs as well, calling us forth to live our faith more deeply.

Some people look at a cross and see an interesting geometric shape, a piece of art, or a Roman symbol of torture. For the believer, when we look upon a cross we see love and victory. Worldly people look at an empty tomb and they feel just like it – empty. Witnesses to the Resurrection look at the empty tomb with hearts full of faith, and we believe precisely because of what we can't see inside of it – the body of Jesus.

As we begin our 50-day celebration of Jesus' resurrection, may we be blessed for all that we do not see and still believe.

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Monday, April 10, 2023

(Lec. 261)

1) Acts 2:14, 22-33

2) Matthew 28:8-15

Gospel related: CCC 640, 641, 645, 654

MONDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

**FOCUS:** Jesus' message to the women is his message to us: "Go, tell others about me and come to meet me."

Why were the chief priests and elders so concerned about hearing of the empty tomb that they bribed the guards to make up a story? They realized that the empty tomb and a missing body would be compelling evidence of Jesus' resurrection. The *catechism* points out that while the empty tomb alone isn't direct proof of the Resurrection, it's "an essential sign for all" (CCC 640). It also sets apart this Resurrection account from the raising of Lazarus, who walked out of his tomb still bound with burial cloths.

When Jesus meets Mary Magdalene and *the other Mary*, he tells them: *Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.* This is the same command Jesus gives us: "Go tell others about me! Tell them of my love for them, which is so great that I died for them and rose again from the dead. Proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ!"

Just as the early disciples encountered people who claimed the resurrection of Jesus was false – Matthew writes, decades after Christ's resurrection, that the story of Jesus' body being stolen *has circulated among the Jews to the present day* – we, too, will encounter those who challenge our faith. Some will claim it's all a lie. But we know better because we have seen Jesus. We have encountered him, touched him, consumed him in the holy Eucharist.

Jesus instructed the women to tell his disciples to meet him in Galilee. But to us, he invites us to encounter him here at Mass. Here, we will see him, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to the Supper of the Lamb.

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

(Lec. 262)

1) Acts 2:36-41

2) John 20:11-18

Gospel related: CCC 443, 640, 641, 645, 654, 659, 660, 2795

TUESDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus comes to find us in our waiting and our grief.

How many people do we know who may be like Mary Magdalene in our Gospel reading today? Weeping, waiting, they wonder where God has gone. What lies, what confusion, what misunderstanding of God or theology, what suffering or evil, boredom or apathy has taken our loved ones far from Christ? Maybe we feel that our Lord is far away, even in the midst of this Easter season. *They have taken my Lord*, Mary laments.

But when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there. Jesus comes to meet us. The risen Christ would not allow even death to keep him from us. He meets us in the garden, an image that draws our imagination back to the Garden of Eden. He meets us in our sinfulness, in the fallenness of the world, in our pain.

Jesus meets us here today in the words of Scripture, in this assembly gathered, and in a special way, in this Eucharist. If it is hard for us to see, if we still mourn for a loved one who cannot see Christ here, remember that Mary Magdalene, the Apostle to the Apostles, did not initially recognize Jesus. She thought he was the gardener. Patiently, Jesus called her by name. As Jesus continued to reach out, Mary turned and recognized her Lord.

May all those who feel that God has been taken, that God is far away, hear Christ's voice of love calling their name. May those who cannot recognize Christ be given the grace to see him. In the grace of this sacrament, may we all turn and know our good Teacher.

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Wednesday, April 12, 2023  
(Lec. 263)

- 1) Acts 3:1-10
- 2) Luke 24:13-35

Gospel related: CCC 112, 439, 552, 555, 572, 601, 640, 641, 643, 645, 652, 659, 710, 1094, 1166, 1329, 1347, 2625

WEDNESDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: The Resurrection changes everything.

Saint John Paul II famously said, "We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song!" During Easter, we are invited to reflect on the ways the Resurrection has transformed us and our world.

Our first reading takes place after Pentecost in the earliest days of the Church. Peter and John have come to the temple to pray. As they enter the temple, they encounter a man who has been crippled from birth. Peter and John are practicing their ritual worship. The man comes to the temple every day to ask for alms. All three of them are performing routine actions, but this mundane moment is transformed by the power of the Resurrection.

When Peter addresses him, the man looks at Peter and John because he expects them to give him alms. What he receives instead is healing. Peter *raised him up*, just as Jesus was raised from the dead. Not only is the man now able to walk, but he is strong enough to enter the temple and praise God by jumping for joy. Everyone gathered at the temple is amazed because they recognize him from the gate where he sat every day.

Today's Gospel reading takes place on the day Jesus rose. The two disciples do not immediately recognize Jesus, but their hearts burn within them as he explains how the Scriptures pointed to his suffering and resurrection. It is in the breaking of bread that they finally recognize him, and they set out at once to tell the Apostles what has happened.

Jesus is still present in the proclaiming of Scriptures and the breaking of bread. May our hearts burn within us as we witness the power of the risen Lord to transform our lives here and now.

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Thursday, April 13, 2023  
(Lec. 264)

- 1) Acts 3:11-26
- 2) Luke 24:35-48

Gospel related: CCC 108, 112, 572, 601, 627, 641, 644, 645, 652, 702, 730, 981, 999, 1120, 1122, 1304, 2605, 2625, 2763  
CSDC 52, 491

THURSDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus reveals himself in the breaking of bread.

*Have you anything here to eat?* Jesus breaks the revelry of his companions with this mundane, straightforward question. One can imagine the scene: Having witnessed their friend and leader return from the dead, the disciples are overcome with joy and full of questions, such as, “Where have you been, Jesus?” “How did you come back?” “What will happen to our movement?” They expect an explanation in this remarkable moment.

How remarkable it is, therefore, that Jesus begins his interaction with the disciples not with his teaching – he will get to that eventually – but with the simple question: *Have you anything here to eat?* The disciples want to learn, and Jesus simply wants to eat! Jesus presents himself in the most ordinary, human fashion.

It is easy to prioritize intellectual or spiritual needs over bodily ones. Yet for Jesus, this either/or does not exist. In fact, Jesus makes himself known precisely in, what the Gospel author Luke calls, *the breaking of bread*.

While the Scriptures certainly reveal Jesus to us, Jesus himself gave priority to the everyday task of eating together. Throughout the first century of the Christian movement, then, followers of Christ went on to share meals with one another in their homes as the central component of their Sabbath worship.

Today, we have our practice of Eucharistic sharing – the physical act of eating consecrated bread and drinking consecrated wine – in communion with one another. It is the gift Christ gave us, that we might remain in him and he in us. We are connected in our bodies and our spirit to Christ and the whole Church. May we never underestimate the power of this sacrament and, indeed, of a communal meal, even that simple bite of baked fish so long ago. Christ is present always and forever.

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Friday, April 14, 2023

(Lec. 265)

1) Acts 4:1-12

2) John 21:1-14

Gospel related: CCC 448, 645, 659, 1166

FRIDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

**FOCUS:** Be attentive to the Lord's presence and guidance in the events of the day.

In today's Gospel, the disciples had had a long, frustrating night of work and were probably tired from casting the nets and pulling them back in over and over again with nothing to show. Most of us have probably had days like that when, despite our best efforts, nothing seems to go well, and it comes to the point when we just want the day to be over.

It was in the midst of such a day that the Lord appeared and told the disciples to cast their net one more time. After fishing for hours, the disciples might have thought to themselves that it would be a waste of time. They did as the Lord instructed, however, and, lo and behold, they caught a bounty of fish – and the day suddenly improved. To top it off, the Lord prepared something for them to eat when they were done.

Such is the Lord. He cares about how our day is going, about our work; he cares about our basic needs. He knows these things are important, and he is ready to help us with them, to turn things around when they aren't going well, to comfort us and give us rest when that is what we need.

Yet, just as the disciples had to take the step of casting that net at the Lord's instructions and respond to the Lord's words, we, too, have to obey and respond. We have to be open to the ways he is seeking to help us in the ordinary tasks and responsibilities of our days. Sometimes doing so is easier than at other times. The wonderful news is that God has given us a great gift to help us respond to his word. He has given us the Holy Spirit; he has given us the Eucharist; and he has given us the gift of faith. As we go about our day today, let us do so with particular attention to the Lord's presence and guidance.

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Saturday, April 15, 2023

(Lec. 266)

1) Acts 4:13-21

2) Mark 16:9-15

Gospel related: CCC 643, 645, 659, 888, 977, 1223

SATURDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Let us open our hearts to Jesus' call to proclaim the Gospel.

In today's Gospel, we hear about an obstacle to faith – *hardness of heart*. The phrase conjures up a harsh image. Our heart, which gives us life and is at our core, is our foundation. Being hard, inflexible, and impenetrable would be harmful to our ability to grow and to share love with others.

Mark's passage sheds light on this human experience of hardness of heart. The disciples, deep in grief after the devastating loss of Jesus, cannot accept Mary Magdalene's news of the risen Jesus. When two disciples tell of walking with the risen Jesus, the others do not believe them. With these denials, they show that they carry hardened hearts. Although we now know they were wrong to deny this beautiful truth, we can empathize with them. They were in deep grief, and such a devastating loss could cause any heart to close up to others.

We also see the transformational change they made once they do soften their hearts to witness the risen Christ. In the first reading from Acts, the disciples refuse to stop preaching the Gospel, for Jesus had commanded them to go into the whole world and do so. Even when threatened by leaders, they steadfastly stick to their conviction that they must be missionaries in their work as disciples.

As we near the end of the Octave of Easter, let us consider what type of hardness of heart we might carry. It could be grief, like the disciples. Or perhaps it is apathy, selfishness, or something else that prevents our hearts from being penetrated with love. Let us accept the invitation from the risen Christ to open our hearts and proclaim the Gospel. May our recognition of Christ in the Eucharist strengthen us.

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**SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 2023**

(Lec. 43)

- 1) Acts 2:42-47
- 2) 1 Peter 1:3-9
- 3) John 20:19-31

Gospel related: CCC 442, 448, 514, 575, 643, 644, 645, 659, 730, 788, 858, 976, 1087, 1120, 1287, 1441, 1461, 1485, 2839  
CSDC 491

**SECOND SUNDAY**

**OF EASTER**

**or SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY**

FOCUS: At every Mass, we share in the same joy of the first disciples who received the resurrected Christ.

As we continue to bask in the joy of Easter, we recognize that the joy we experience is the same joy of the first disciples, who received the Lord in his risen body. Through receiving Jesus in word and sacrament in the celebration of the Mass, we are experiencing the resurrected presence of Christ in a very real way.

Today's Gospel passage says that the proof of Jesus' resurrection was written down so that we might come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that through this belief we *may have life in his name*. The Scriptures we proclaim are not merely words on a page, but the living and active word of God, able to penetrate our minds and hearts with the truth about the resurrection of Christ and the promise of eternal life.

When Jesus appeared to the first disciples, he breathed on them and spoke to them in order to communicate the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we hear the Scriptures proclaimed, Jesus is also speaking to us with the breath of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not content to merely have a written record of his life that we could appreciate in a historical sense. Jesus wants to speak to us personally and powerfully through the Scriptures. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can know his voice – as Thomas and the other disciples came to know his voice.

Let us also consider the resurrected presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Though we do not yet see Jesus in his human form, we truly see and receive his sacramental body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. Through the celebration of holy Communion, Jesus Christ gives his whole self to us in a way that unites us to the experience of the first disciples. Once again, Jesus was not content to merely show his resurrected body to the first disciples and have us wait for his second coming. Jesus wants to give his resurrected body to every disciple in the Eucharist.

Because we receive Jesus' body into our bodies, the celebration of the Eucharist creates a deeper union with him than even what Thomas experienced. Instead of seeing the marks of the nails in his hands, we receive him into our hands. Instead of putting our hand into his pierced side, we receive him into our hearts.

Let us rejoice, then, with the same joy of the first disciples! Jesus will come again today to give us his body. May the Holy Spirit deepen our faith in the word of God and the body of Christ as the presence of Jesus among us. We can come to every Mass expecting to encounter the risen Lord. As we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we can proclaim with Thomas the Apostle: *My Lord and my God!*

\* \* \*

Monday, April 17, 2023  
(Lec. 267)

1) Acts 4:23-31

2) John 3:1-8

Gospel related: CCC 432, 526, 581, 591, 691, 720, 728, 782, 1215, 1225, 1238, 1257, 1262, 1287, 2790 CSDC 50, 484

MONDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

**FOCUS:** Call upon the Spirit for the fortitude to proclaim the Good News.

The need for, and the power of, the Holy Spirit is evident today in our Gospel reading from John. A Pharisee named Nicodemus is instructed by Jesus in the ways of baptism. One needs “to be born again...of water and the Spirit,” Jesus says. But Nicodemus doesn’t get it.

Nicodemus is an interesting biblical figure. As a leader in the Jewish council known as the Sanhedrin, he was made aware of many of the miracles Jesus had performed. Consequently, he took it upon himself to investigate. He states clearly that he understands that the signs Jesus carried out show that *God is with him*. Beyond that, Nicodemus just doesn’t grasp it. While Jesus says that we need to be born again “spiritually,” Nicodemus can only visualize being born again physically from a mother’s womb.

Nicodemus has further dialogue with the Lord in this chapter of John, but never fully understands Jesus. When he appears later in John’s Gospel, there is a hint that Nicodemus is becoming a follower when he defends Jesus, at least from a Jewish legal process standpoint. But it isn’t until after Jesus’ crucifixion that we understand that Nicodemus did indeed become Jesus’ disciple.

Perhaps we can feel some kinship with Nicodemus. We sometimes believe we need to see more proof that Jesus is active in our lives. There are times when our faith is shaken and we feel abandoned by God. Other times, as with Nicodemus, we may even be afraid to publicly show our support for Jesus. It is then that we need to summon the Holy Spirit’s gift of fortitude, so that we may proclaim the word of the Lord just as the disciples of the early Church did.

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Tuesday, April 18, 2023

(Lec. 268)

1) Acts 4:32-37

2) John 3:7b-15

Gospel related: CCC 423, 440, 505, 526, 591, 661, 2130 CSDC 50

TUESDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: We know. We understand. We believe.

Today's Gospel passage comes soon after Jesus had cleansed the temple. The people had demanded that Jesus show them a sign, and he had retorted, *Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up* (John 2.19). The temple he referred to was his own body, which would be raised up on a cross as punishment for crimes against the Roman Empire. The cross that was a symbol of torture and oppression would become the means of salvation for all people.

This is the message Jesus is attempting to convey to Nicodemus in today's Gospel: *Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.* Nicodemus is understandably confused. He is an educated man, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin. He has seen the signs and wonders that Jesus has performed, but he doesn't quite understand everything he sees and hears. Unlike his fellow teachers and religious leaders, however, he seeks to know more, in good faith.

Initially he does so in secret, at night, but the time will come when he will openly defend Jesus and profess his faith. And in a beautiful "come full circle" demonstration of God's mercy and love, Nicodemus – who today is told in the darkness of the need for Jesus to be raised *up* on the cross – will eventually stand firm in the light of day, a bold and decisive follower of Jesus, and gently help remove his body *from* the cross, and lay it in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

This is the savior of all, the Son of Man. Nicodemus knows. He understands. He believes.

As do we. Therefore, in our lives of discipleship *we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen*, bearing witness as those first Apostles did to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. May the Spirit help us proclaim the Gospel to the world.

\* \* \*

Wednesday, April 19, 2023  
(Lec. 269)

1) Acts 5:17-26

2) John 3:16-21

Gospel related: CCC 219, 444, 454, 458, 678, 679, 706 CSDC 3, 64

WEDNESDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

**FOCUS:** The Eucharist is the source of light that comes into the world, dispelling the darkness.

In today's Gospel we hear arguably one of the most well-known verses in sacred Scripture: *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.*

It is through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that we truly have eternal life. However, that sacrifice is not just a historical event from 2,000 years ago; it is ever present today. The light of Christ still shines in the darkness. Toward the middle of today's Gospel we heard, *And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil.*

Are there not times when we prefer *darkness to light*? Do we find ourselves shying away from something that we know is good, but do not want to pursue it because it means leaving behind what has been a comfort to us? Jesus came into the world to show us the light, to show us the true goodness of God's love – the depth of his love for each of us. It is a radical love that saves us in his mercy and sustains us in the Eucharist.

Every time we come before our Lord in the Eucharist, his light transforms our hearts with God's eternal love. Through this transformation, we come to live in the light of Christ as a beacon of hope to all we encounter.

God so loved the world that he sent us Jesus to shine the light of love in mercy into our hearts, and into a world that is so desperately in need.

\* \* \*

Thursday, April 20, 2023

(Lec. 270)

1) Acts 5:27-33

2) John 3:31-36

Gospel related: CCC 161, 504, 690, 1286

THURSDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Go forth with confident belief in Jesus Christ.

A person's strong, confident beliefs about important issues can call us to a moment of decision. We might react to that person with admiration, respect their faith in their beliefs, and consider adopting those beliefs for ourselves. Or we might react with scorn, skeptical that anyone could have such absolute certainty and reject any consideration of what truth those beliefs might hold for us.

Strong, confident beliefs about Jesus are the theme of today's readings. In the first reading from Acts, Peter declares his belief in Jesus' resurrection and saving power. This challenges the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council of leaders, to a moment of decision. Should they allow the Apostles to continue proclaiming these beliefs or should they stop them through imprisonment or even death? Many members of the Sanhedrin see Peter's beliefs as a dangerous perversion of the true Jewish faith.

In the Gospel reading from John, we have the confident assertion of God's mercy, and that Jesus Christ has been sent by God and speaks his word: *Whoever believes in him will not be condemned.*

The confidence of the early Apostles and disciples is a gift of faith. We have been given that same gift, and though we at times may still have questions, or we struggle with how to live that faith, we know that the Lord holds the fullness of that gift out to us. With his grace we can embrace it, and have confident belief in Jesus Christ and his love for us. As Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist today, we give thanks for the gift of him, and for the gift of faith.

\* \* \*

Friday, April 21, 2023  
(Lec. 271)  
1) Acts 5:34-42  
2) John 6:1-15

FRIDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Anselm,  
Bishop and Doctor of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 439, 549, 559, 1338

FOCUS: Let us see with the eyes of faith the great and magnificent wonders Jesus works on our behalf.

Many of us have had the experience of offering something wonderful to someone, only to have it rejected for something *less* valuable. In *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis suggests that often, our desires are not too strong, but too weak: “We are half-hearted creatures ... far too easily pleased.” We are unaware of how much is offered to us, he says, “like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.”

In much of John’s Gospel, Jesus encounters the limitations of his followers. They don’t want too much. No, they are satisfied with too *little*. A large crowd follows Jesus – not because they recognize him for all he is, but because they saw the signs he was performing. They follow him like an audience attending a magician’s show.

When Jesus asks his disciples where they can buy food for the large crowd, Philip shows his own limited lens: *Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough* for them to have only *a little*. Andrew is of the same mindset: There is a boy with some food, *but what good [is this] for so many?*

Christ, however, gives more than others could ever expect. He takes what is available, gives thanks, and offers it to the crowd. Not only does everyone have their fill, but there is much left over.

Yes, Christ is greater than others’ expectations of him and greater than our own. We often have a mental box that constrains Christ to our own limited views. Yet Christ *does* more, *provides* more, *is* more. Perhaps the challenge for us today is to expand our vision of Christ. Like the boy in the Gospel, we can entrust to Jesus all that we have. Like Jesus, we can offer thanks for what we have, even if it is small. And hopefully, we can see with the eyes of faith the great and magnificent wonders Jesus works on our behalf.

\* \* \*

Saturday, April 22, 2023

(Lec. 272)

1) Acts 6:1-7

2) John 6:16-21

Gospel related: **CCC** 1338 **CSDC** 453

SATURDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: *Do not be afraid.* God, who is Love, is with us.

Today in John's Gospel, Jesus surprises the disciples when he rejoins them by walking on water. Their first reaction is one of fear, but after Jesus identifies himself and tells them not to be afraid, the relieved friends immediately want to welcome him into the boat, only to find they have arrived to shore safely in his company.

One of Saint John Paul II's most often-used phrases was a quote from today's Scripture, "*Do not be afraid!*" He recognized that whether people are presented with unutterable evils or the glory of God's presence, we often find ourselves paralyzed with fear. In the face of evil, we may fear pain and destruction. And when faced with the glory of God's presence and truth, we may succumb to the fear of failure.

The message of the Gospel, however, is to grow in faith and hope because the Lord himself not only has never abandoned us, he literally comes to meet us where we are. More accurately, he already lives within and among us, but not in some amorphous, general way. He attends to us in each of our individual and personal circumstances. When the early Church needed help, the Holy Spirit inspired them to choose men who would help them serve at table. When the disciples needed their anxiety, and the seas, calmed, Jesus came to them. He even led them where they needed to go. Wherever we are, the Lord meets us and assists us in moving through the challenges we face. How can this possibly be something to fear?

Amid the storms of daily living, today we are reminded to open our hearts and minds to God's companionship and comfort. With the Lord's help, we might find the answers to our needs as incredible as Jesus walking on water. And so as we take a moment to ponder God's word, let us prepare ourselves to receive the Lord with awe and wonder at the Eucharistic table.

\* \* \*

## SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2023

(Lec. 46)

- 1) Acts 2:14, 22-33
- 2) 1 Peter 1:17-21
- 3) Luke 24:13-35

Gospel related: CCC 112, 439, 552, 555, 572, 601, 640, 641, 643, 645, 652, 659, 710, 1094, 1166, 1329, 1347, 2625

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

FOCUS: Christ fulfills God's plan of salvation for us.

On this third Sunday of Easter, we continue to celebrate in a more pronounced way the power and meaning of the Resurrection. Luke and Peter, whose words we hear today, were witnesses to the Resurrection and had interactions with the risen Christ. They were among the first to grapple with what it all meant and to share its Good News. We are recipients of that Good News and come together in worship – to be glad and rejoice in it.

Just as we return to their texts today, Luke and Peter turned to the most sacred texts of their time to make meaning of the Resurrection. As we still do, they sang the ancient psalms of David: *My heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted ... because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.* A thousand years after King David, this verse was sung anew by the disciples who witnessed the Resurrection. After their experience of Jesus and the first Easter, they found new meaning in these ancient lines about salvation.

Prior to Jesus, this psalm was sung in joyful anticipation of a king like David to restore his powerful throne. God's people would triumph, saved from corruption and the netherworld, through this mighty and regal descendent. But when judges, prophets, and kings [like David] failed to turn his people from sin and its destruction, and bring them to repentance, God sent his only Son as priest, prophet, and king. He would reconcile us to the Father, and would save our souls not through silver or gold but by his own precious blood.

It was difficult for the disciples to understand all the events surrounding Jesus. Cleopas and his companion were debating all that had happened as they walked to Emmaus. It was not until a traveling companion interpreted Scripture for them and broke bread with them that they saw Jesus and comprehended how he had fulfilled the Scriptures.

Fulfillment in Christ was known by God before the foundation of the world, Peter tells us. Salvation through Christ's sacrificial love poured forth was always the plan. The world was founded on it, the disciples witnessed it, and we are all redeemed by it. This is what we continue to celebrate this Easter season: God's love and mercy from the foundation of the world through Christ, broken and shared for us. Let us be glad and rejoice!

\* \* \*

Monday, April 24, 2023  
(Lec. 273)

- 1) Acts 6:8-15
- 2) John 6:22-29

MONDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen,  
Priest and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 698, 728, 1296, 1338, 2835

FOCUS: Do not be blind to the call of Jesus.

At first glance, our two Scripture passages do not seem to have much in common. In the first reading, Stephen is filled with grace and power but makes enemies of those who cannot accept his arguments for faith in Jesus. In the Gospel, Jesus is hotly pursued by people who had witnessed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, and he warns them against focusing only on physical food.

There is a connection, however. Both readings have to do with spiritual blindness. In the first reading, the people listening to Stephen were blinded by a limited understanding of their Jewish faith. They could not accept that Jesus was the fulfillment of religious hopes and beliefs. Rather than being open to the truth of Stephen's message, they attacked the messenger.

Likewise, many of the people who came to find Jesus were blinded to Jesus' message. They were too focused on the miraculous multiplication of the loaves they had witnessed and the physical food it provided. They could not see the larger message: the importance of believing in the one who performed the miracle – the one who could give them eternal life.

How do we ourselves escape this pitfall, of being blind to the Truth? That we are here is part of the "how." We have the gift of faith – *the work of God* of which Jesus speaks – and as such *[we] believe in the one he sent*. Prayer is part of the "how," and our psalmist offers a beautiful way to begin: *Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds ... remove from me the way of falsehood, and favor me with your law.*

Let us not make the mistake of thinking we do any of this alone: God is our help. He loves us, he sent his Son for us, his Spirit remains with us. We are not entitled to spiritual blindness, for we have been entrusted with the light of truth that enables perfect sight. Pray to be filled with grace and power as Stephen was, that those who see us will see the wisdom of God.

\* \* \*

Tuesday, April 25, 2023  
(Lec. 555)

1) 1 Peter 5:5b-14

2) Mark 16:15-20

Gospel related: CCC 2, 156, 161, 183, 434, 659, 670, 699, 888, 977, 1223, 1253, 1256, 1257, 1507, 1673

**SAINT MARK,  
EVANGELIST  
- FEAST**

**FOCUS:** *Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.*

As we celebrate the feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, we hear him tell of Jesus' commission to his disciples: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.* As descendants of his disciples, this is our commission too. Let us look more at what this charge requires of us.

The very first word, go, speaks to action. We are driven to move away from where we currently are and to push ourselves across borders of every type. We are challenged to leave our comfort zones. There is momentum to it, but it is not easy to leave what is familiar to us. But we do not do this alone: We can *cast all [our] worries upon [God] because he cares for [us]*. The one who sends us knows us, and loves us infinitely.

Where are we sent? Where are we to go? Into the whole world. Everywhere. We are all in different places on our journey of discipleship, and God has given each of us our own unique set of gifts. Jesus' focus was likely geographic. But for us, maybe Jesus is calling us to build on where we already reflect his Gospel in action and deed.

What are we to do? Proclaim the Gospel. On this feast of Saint Mark, it is certainly appropriate to reflect on what it means to proclaim the Gospel. Mark's words are considered to be the first full Gospel written down and are a concise account of Jesus' ministry. We can listen to the words of Jesus and hear about his deeds, asking God to give us the strength to further witness to the Gospel with our lives.

The final part of the great commission is that it is to reach all creatures – everyone. Those who first shared the Gospel with us, whether by example or words, chose to follow this commission and include us in their "everyone." We can take this gift and share it with those around us. God has given us this gift.

Go. Everywhere. Proclaim. Everyone. These are the building blocks of the great commission.

\* \* \*

Wednesday, April 26, 2023  
(Lec. 275)

- 1) Acts 8:1b-8
- 2) John 6:35-40

Gospel related: CCC 161, 606, 989, 994, 1001, 1338, 2824

WEDNESDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Rejoice! God is for us.

The scene is dismal: One of the leaders of the Church, Stephen, has just been put to death; believers are displaced from their homes and separated from one another; threats of imprisonment, or worse, lurk menacingly around every corner. And yet the Apostles and other believers continue to go about *preaching the word*, as the author of Acts writes. Philip travels to Samaria, seen by traditional Jews as the epicenter of uncleanness, to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. No matter how dark the prospects may be for new believers, the city is filled with *great joy*.

It is logical to ask: Where does this joy stem from? Today we face fewer dangers and far less severe persecutions in comparison to those early believers, yet often it is hard for us to find joy in our modern lives of faith. What exactly was the early Church so excited about?

We need look no further for an answer than today's Gospel. After proclaiming himself to be the *bread of life*, Jesus goes on to explain the will of God, which is that all who believe become members of the royal family, the kingdom of God. God desires salvation for each person on earth.

This is cause for immense joy – true “Good News” that the early believers understood in their depths and couldn't help but share with others, no matter the threat. Contrary to modernity's impoverished view of God, God is always, unfailingly, overwhelmingly “for us.”

As we turn to the Eucharistic table today, may we find joy in experiencing this God – the God who continually wills our good and eagerly longs for our salvation.

\* \* \*

Thursday, April 27, 2023

(Lec. 276)

1) Acts 8:26-40

2) John 6:44-51

Gospel related: CCC 151, 259, 591, 728, 1001, 1335, 1338, 1406, 1428, 2837

THURSDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

**FOCUS:** The miraculous manifestation of the Lord's infinite love for us happens in our midst, at every Mass.

Miracles. Whether the bodies of saints preserved from decay, miraculous healings in Lourdes, or apparitions of our Blessed Mother, many of us are drawn to the miraculous. Maybe we long to witness a miracle or we pray for one for a sick loved one. Perhaps we have a sense that a miracle reveals God's power in a way that nothing else does, or would show God's love and care for his faithful in a more tangible way.

One of God's greatest miracles was the manna in the desert that Jesus mentions in the Gospel. God fed an entire people for 40 years with miraculous food. Forty years of an ongoing miracle. What could possibly top that in the eyes of any faithful Jewish person in Jesus' time?

And yet, Jesus leaves us an even greater miracle: the Eucharist. His gift to sustain us not only for 40 years but until his return – however many years that might take. Ordinary bread, transformed into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord and Savior, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the fullness of his presence for we human beings to partake of, that we might become like him, that we might share in eternity with him.

We don't need to look far and wide for miraculous proof of God's power, of his love and care for his faithful. The manifestation of the Lord's infinite love for us happens before our eyes, in our midst, at every sacred liturgy. And for those of us who are blessed to receive the Eucharist, we receive the greatest source of healing and sustenance in the Lord himself.

As we gather at the table, let us prepare our minds and hearts to experience once again this miraculous manifestation of God's love that he so graciously shares with us.

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Friday, April 28, 2023  
(Lec. 277)

- 1) Acts 9:1-20
- 2) John 6:52-59

FRIDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Peter Chanel,  
Priest and Martyr;  
Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort,  
Priest)

Gospel related: CCC 787, 994, 1001, 1338, 1384, 1391, 1406, 1509, 1524, 2837

FOCUS: Jesus Christ nourishes and sustains us in the Eucharist.

In his Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus contrasts his own body and blood (the Eucharist) to another gift from God: the manna the Israelites ate in the desert. *My Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink*, Jesus says to the crowd. He goes on: *Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever*. The manna of the Old Testament points to the Eucharist instituted by Jesus in the New Covenant.

The manna was necessary because the Israelites were in motion – moving from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. Traveling through the desert for 40 years, they had no way of growing and procuring food from crops. They were hungry and complained against God, and God in his eternal generosity knew they needed nourishment.

Consider our Christian life: We, too, are travelers heading toward the Promised Land of heaven and trying to escape the slavery of sin. God knows that we need nourishment to sustain us through this journey. And even though we may complain, he gives us nourishment for our very souls. God gives us the most beautiful gift we can imagine: his own Son, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist. Jesus is the new manna come down from heaven.

But Jesus reminds us that there are key differences between the two. *Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life*, Jesus says. And since Jesus is God, we know he speaks truth. Jesus in the Eucharist is the Bread of Life. The host that we consume truly is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ, given to nourish and sustain us as we journey to heaven.

\* \* \*

Saturday, April 29, 2023  
(Lec. 278)

- 1) Acts 9:31-42
- 2) John 6:60-69

SATURDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Catherine of Siena,  
Virgin and Doctor of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 438, 440, 473, 728, 1336, 1338, 2766

**FOCUS:** With Jesus' teaching and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can bring healing and peace to our world.

Often, situations in our world can seem overwhelming and even impossible to resolve. How can we make a difference in a world filled with war, poverty, hunger, illness, and injustice? In our readings today, we can look to Peter as a true model of one who allows the power of God to work through him.

In the Gospel, Peter shows unwavering trust in Jesus, even though Jesus' words about the Eucharist were hard for many to accept. Though he will later fail Jesus by denying and abandoning him in his hour of need, Peter's trust in the Lord, particularly in the risen Lord, will give him confidence and empower him in his mission to lead the Church.

We see this exemplified in the first reading, where the fruits of Peter's faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit are obvious. In the name and power of Jesus, he heals a man paralyzed for eight years and restores a beloved woman to life.

Most of us can't expect to bring healing and life in such a dramatic way. Yet if we follow Peter's example, and let the Lord work in and through us, we can make a difference in the lives of people around us. By word and deed we can *make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for [us]*. We can restore life to someone who is discouraged and feels unable to go on. We can bring a sense of healing and wholeness to friends and family who may be suffering.

May Jesus, in this Eucharist of which he spoke, give us the power to bring healing and life to those around us – in whatever ways they need it. May we, putting our trust in Jesus, make a difference in the lives of those around us, helping to transform a troubled world.

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**SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2023**

(Lec. 49)

1) Acts 2:14a, 36-41

2) 1 Peter 2:20b-25

3) John 10:1-10

Gospel related: CCC 754, 764, 2158 CSDC 1

**FOURTH SUNDAY  
OF EASTER**

**FOCUS:** The sheep follow Christ because they recognize his voice.

This passage has so many powerful images and, if we allow our imagination to explore all that Jesus offers us here, we will encounter much richness. But today, we will focus on this line:

*The sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice.*

We all *know* we should follow Jesus. We have been told how he longs to lead us to the goodness for which we were created.

But many of us struggle with the next part – actually hearing his voice and following. How do we recognize his voice? How do we quiet all of those voices of “strangers” that Jesus mentions? How do we learn to follow as we ought?

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see a powerful example of this type of hearing. Peter stands up with the Eleven and proclaims Christ, and the people *were cut to the heart*. Three thousand people accepted his message and followed the voice of Christ, speaking through his Apostles, on that day!

Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, is calling *us* today. He is present, leading *us*. That is why we are here, at this Mass. We have been willing to recognize his voice speaking, perhaps clearly in our hearts, but maybe through a family member or simply through the habits we’ve acquired through a lifetime of practice. Whatever form it took, Christ called us to this place at this moment. And we practiced listening.

And we’re still practicing listening. Jesus speaks to us through the Scriptures and through his disciples. Just as Christ sent Peter, he sends his faithful out to call his sheep today. Let us pray for all who seek to participate in this call.

How do we learn to recognize his voice and sort out the voices of strangers who would lead us to slaughter and destruction? Just as sheep learn the voice of their shepherd – through time, proximity, and practice. The sheep hear the shepherd’s voice every day, time and time again.

We celebrate the Mass. We take time to read and reflect on Scripture. And perhaps we intentionally seek out holy friends, and make the effort to speak about God and faith with them.

Even if, like sheep, we have gone astray, we are here together at this Mass; *we have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of [our] souls*. May Christ, in the Eucharist, teach us to hear his voice more clearly, draw us closer to him, and protect us from all evil.

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