

# APRIL

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**YEAR B  
WEEKDAYS II**

Monday, April 1, 2024  
(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: Trust the messengers God sends into our lives.

Life is like a rollercoaster. We revel in the highs and the thrills of celebrations and great achievements. Then there are the lows and the valleys, when we may wallow in despondency. It is in those times when many people turn to God for comfort and reassurance that they are not alone.

It is not trite to say God works in mysterious ways. God is God, and his ways are not our ways, that is certainly clear. The greatest example of this may be the great feast we have just begun to celebrate: Easter. How can anyone possibly explain how a person three-days dead can rise to new life? Furthermore, it is not to the elite of society that the Resurrection is first revealed. Instead, as we witness in today's Gospel, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are the first ones to behold the risen Lord. They are his messengers to the entire world; Jesus says to them: "Go and tell."

Jesus' first words, *Do not be afraid*, are words of empathy. He deeply knows the sorrows of humanity, and can relate to the isolation and pain that come with being in the valleys of life. His words provide a sense of direction – that life will indeed get better. When we are able to move past our fears, Jesus is there to accompany us on that journey out of darkness.

Jesus also instructs Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to "Go and tell." They are his heralds, the first to bring the Good News of his resurrection to the world. The Apostles could very well have dismissed the two women, but instead they trusted in them, and trusted that Jesus would choose the right people for this job. If we were to continue reading Matthew's Gospel, we would see that they did follow the instructions, and encountered the risen Jesus for themselves in Galilee.

As we continue our Eucharistic celebration, let us be thankful for the gift of those people who point us toward God. With them, and with all who have believed in the risen Lord throughout all of history, we make up the Body of Christ. May we be ever thankful for the gift of communion with one another and with God.

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Tuesday, April 2, 2024  
(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 has called us by name.

We continue to hear joyful testimony of Christ's resurrection in our Gospel during this Easter season. As Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the tomb, she is trying to understand what has happened to Jesus. She is greeted by angels, though she does not seem to recognize them as angels. Her grief increases as she fears that the body of Jesus has been stolen.

When she sees Jesus standing near the tomb, she does not initially recognize him. His resurrected and glorified body is somehow different enough to keep his identity hidden. She is confused and anxious until she hears her name spoken. When her loving teacher says *Mary!* she recognizes Jesus and finally understands that the Lord is risen. He ultimately sends her to witness to the Apostles that she has seen the risen Lord.

We sometimes find ourselves just as Mary Magdalene was: grieving, confused, uncertain. In our struggles, we experience anxiety and confusion until we hear Jesus call our name. He loves us and knows us. God has a plan for us and calls us each by name. It is said that the devil knows our name but calls us by our sins, while Christ Jesus knows our sins but calls us by our names. It is a comfort and relief to know that Jesus has called us through our baptism to be holy and beloved. We each have a vocation to be united with our Savior forever.

Mary thought all was lost as she went to care for the body of Jesus in the tomb. Her grief was turned to joy once she understood that Jesus was alive and heard him calling her name.

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Wednesday, April 3, 2024  
(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: Recognize the presence of Jesus in our lives.

Where is Jesus *right now*? Where have we encountered him in the past week? How did we know he was really there?

In both readings today, individuals experience the presence of Jesus. In the first reading, Peter commands the man begging at the temple gate to rise and walk *in the name of Jesus*. The *catechism* tells us that his very name, Jesus, “contains the presence it signifies” (CCC 2666). Thus, Peter, by invoking the name of Jesus makes Jesus present to the man as well as to himself, John, and others who witnessed the miraculous healing.

In the Gospel, Jesus comes alongside two disciples headed out of Jerusalem to Emmaus. When they arrive at their destination for the night, the disciples invite him in. It is there they realize their fellow traveler was none other than Jesus.

How did these individuals recognize his presence? In the case of the man who could not walk, he recognized Jesus’ power and presence in his healing. He testifies to his presence as he enters the temple, *walking and jumping and praising God*. In the case of the two disciples, they recognized Jesus when he broke the bread. Their hearts burning with joy, they return to Jerusalem that very night to share their story with the Apostles.

In a few moments we, too, will have the opportunity to meet Jesus in the breaking of the bread, in the Eucharist. As we prepare, let us call upon Jesus by name, ask him to show us he is here, and ask him to grant us the courage to go and share our joy in his presence with others.

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Thursday, April 4, 2024  
(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, 1094, 1120, 1122, 1304, 1329, 1347, 2605, 2625, 2763 **CSDC** 52, 491

THURSDAY  
WITHIN THE OCTAVE  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: May the peace of the risen Christ be with us all.

Fear is one of the most common of all human emotions. We have all been afraid at one time or another. So we can understand the fear that must have gripped the disciples in the days after the crucifixion and why, as we hear elsewhere in the Gospels, they hid out in the Upper Room. Yet this fear was short lived, for within three days they had come to know that Jesus had truly been raised from the dead and was present in their midst, preparing them to take on the mission of spreading the Good News. Today's readings recall that period of preparation and how it changed the lives of the disciples forever.

Our Gospel follows directly from the Emmaus event where two of the disciples encountered Jesus along the way and recognized him in the breaking of the bread. Now it is the turn of the others. First, Jesus bestows upon them the gift of peace, the antidote to fear. Then he reassures them that he has truly risen, allowing them to touch his hands and feet. Finally, he eats a piece of fish proving that he is not a ghostly apparition.

Having allayed their worst fears, Jesus sets about preparing them to take on the work of the kingdom by opening their minds to the meaning of the Scriptures and by making sense of all that has happened. But as much as they may wish to, the disciples cannot linger in this joyful moment of reunion: There is work to be done – the work of proclaiming the kingdom and the promise and hope of the Resurrection.

And we see that work at hand in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Gone is the fear, and instead we see disciples full of courage and commitment, ready to proclaim the risen Jesus before the very people who had just recently called for his blood.

As we celebrate the Easter mystery, let us ask for that same courage and commitment to living and sharing the promise of the risen Lord with others. Whatever our fears or worries, may the peace of Christ console our hearts and give us joy and peace this day.

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Friday, April 5, 2024  
(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: We celebrate our risen Lord, who invites us to follow him.

The Church's liturgical calendar alternates between seasons of Ordinary Time and the seasons related to solemnities and feasts. Advent and Lent prepare us for the central feasts of our faith – Christmas and Easter, respectively. These are not simply one-day feasts but whole seasons, with Easter being the longest: a full 50 days celebrating Jesus' resurrection.

The readings proclaimed during these 50 days are unique. None come from the Old Testament. Instead, the first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles concerning living out the paschal mystery in the Church, and the Gospel readings focus on the resurrected Lord leading up to his glorious ascension.

Today's Gospel account depicts the last time Jesus appears to his followers. Peter features prominently. We know he has faithfully followed Jesus throughout the Gospel, listening to all that Jesus says. But we also know Peter has struggled with being erratic, impulsive, doubtful, and uncertain at times.

Yet as Peter quickly jumps into the water to retrieve a great catch of fish, the storyline harkens back to the call of the first disciples. We can see Peter come full circle by, once again, jumping all in to follow Jesus.

Peter has grown throughout the Gospels and today, we see that his faith blossoms. Jesus leaves the young community in Peter's hands, the first pope.

As believers, we might see these same kinds of ups and downs in our own faith lives. During Easter, we celebrate the risen Jesus, who invites all of us to "come and see" and to "follow me." Are we listening?

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Saturday, April 6, 2024  
(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: Moments of doubt can help us grow.

In today's Gospel from Mark, first Mary Magdalene, then two other disciples who had been on the road, told the 11 Apostles of Jesus' resurrection. They did not believe Mary Magdalene, and though the other two disciples also claimed to have seen Jesus, they did not believe these eyewitness accounts either. The Apostles had doubts and they clung to them.

All of us have had our doubts about things in our lives, perhaps even doubts about God and faith. It's important to note that there are two kinds of doubt: voluntary and involuntary. We might think of these as "willful" and "non-willful," or "intentional" and "unintentional." "Voluntary doubt about the faith," as the *catechism* teaches us, deliberately "disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief" (CCC 2088). We're going to leave that to the side for another homily.

"Involuntary doubt refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity" (CCC 2088). In other words, doubt arises because we cannot make sense of things before us, even though we want to. Some of us may then feel guilty about doubting God. But as with the Apostles in today's Gospel, there are times when we do not understand – when something other than pride or obstinacy is keeping us from holding onto faith.

Here is the goodness that God allows to be drawn out of those moments: Doubt, while troubling and uncomfortable, is also the place where we have the opportunity to grow, in faith, love, humility, and holiness. When we doubt, we seek answers, which can – through prayer and study – lead only to goodness. Just as Jesus was present to the disciples in their doubt, so he is always present to us. *He* never walks away; *he* never doubts *us*. And since faith is a gift, sometimes all we need to do is ask for it: Lord, increase my faith; or Lord, help me in my unbelief.

Perseverance in prayer and trust in God are related – each affects the other. In our times of darkness, we must trust that there will be a light to lead us out of that darkness. That light is Jesus, the light of the world.

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**SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024**

(Lec. 44)

1) Acts 4:32-35

2) 1 John 5:1-6

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: We are called to be merciful as God is merciful.

Today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. Jesus asked Saint Faustina to institute this feast during one of his appearances to her in 1931. On this day, we are encouraged to trust in God's merciful love for us and draw near to him, and also to perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy out of love for God, who redeemed us by his suffering and death.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus shows the disciples his hands and his side. His glorified body still bears the marks of his passion, signs of what he suffered for our sake. It is out of his side that the blood and water flowed when Jesus was pierced with a spear, while he was on the cross. In the Divine Mercy image, we see the rays of red and white pouring from Jesus' heart, representing that blood and water, and symbolizing the graces available to us in the sacraments. We are encouraged to approach him in the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist to receive his healing and nourishment.

When Jesus gave the Divine Mercy image to Saint Faustina, he instructed her to include the words, "Jesus, I trust in you." As Jesus told Thomas in today's Gospel, *Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed*. To be in right relationship with others, we must first be in right relationship with God. As we hear in our second reading, this means loving God and following his commandments. When we go astray, or miss the mark, we can trust that God will forgive us, no matter how great our sins may be.

In today's Gospel, Jesus breathes on the Apostles and says, *Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*. It is through this gift of the Holy Spirit, passed on through apostolic succession and priestly ordination, that we can be assured of the gift of God's forgiveness today. Each time we turn back to God, we will find that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.

When we receive God's mercy, it frees us to see more clearly who we are and how we are to act. Today's feast invites us to perform acts of mercy out of love for God. We are invited to share the truth with others, because we know that Jesus desires to show mercy for their souls, as he has for ours. As children of God, what we are given is meant to be shared. We are called to be forgiving because we have been forgiven, to be merciful as God is merciful.



Monday, April 8, 2024

(Lec. 545)

- 1) Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10
- 2) Hebrews 10:4-10
- 3) Luke 1:26-38

Gospel related: **CCC** 64, 148, 269, 273, 276, 332, 430, 437, 484, 486, 488, 490, 491, 494, 497, 505, 510, 559, 697, 706, 709, 723, 2571, 2617, 2677, 2812, 2827, 2856 **CSDC** 59

**THE ANNUNCIATION  
OF THE LORD  
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: *May it be done to me according to your word.*

The Annunciation has been the inspiration for countless works of art throughout the centuries. While they all provide some kind of unique inspiration and insight into this momentous occasion, there is one that stands out in its depiction of the angel Gabriel. In “The Annunciation” by Henry Ossawa Tanner, the angel Gabriel is depicted as a dazzling streak of pure light. The streak is so radiant and illuminating, it nearly washes out the left side of the picture. Beside the light, there is a humble Mary seated on the bed. Mary’s eyes are steady on the light, as her hands are quietly clasped in her lap. Her home is unassuming. It almost appears as if she has just awakened from sleep. Mary is attentive, but solemn. Even in a still painting, it seems there is much on her mind as she beholds this glorious light before her.

Take a moment to consider Mary’s responses during this incredible passage of Scripture. She is greatly troubled. She wonders what kind of greeting this could be. Even after the angel Gabriel explains more, she still wonders how this could be. This is powerfully shown in Tanner’s painting.

Perhaps Mary’s responses are relevant to us as we discern God’s will in our own lives. Whether we are at a crossroads or facing a difficult circumstance, it is not unreasonable for us to ponder these kinds of questions from God. We can feel troubled by our uncertainty. We can wonder where God’s presence is. We wonder how it will all work out in the end. We can feel overwhelmed by the light before us.

Mary’s response at the end of her encounter with the angel Gabriel is powerful. *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.* She is fully present and attentive to what God is asking of her. She is strong in her conviction that she wants to serve God. She wants to align herself with God’s will. Like Mary, our discernment might take some time of careful questioning and reflection. We can follow Mary’s example of being faithful to God, opening herself up to God’s wonder, and being fully present to what the world needs from her.

As we continue our Eucharistic celebration, let us continue to carry with us the model Mary has left us. Even when we may feel scared or overwhelmed, God is with us. And not only is God with us, we know that nothing is impossible for him. When we strive to align ourselves with God’s will, we are capable of incredible things that can serve the world in powerful ways. May our prayer today, strengthened in the Eucharist, bring us closer to this faithfulness.

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Tuesday, April 9, 2024  
(Lec. 268)

- 1) Acts 4:32-37
- 2) John 3:7b-15

Gospel related: **CCC** 423, 440, 505, 526, 591, 661, 691, 728, 1287, 2130 **CSDC** 50

TUESDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Following Jesus is both an individual and a communal act; it involves the whole Body of Christ.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles begins with: *The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.* Following Jesus is both an individual act and a communal act. Being a follower of Christ involves the whole Body of Christ.

It can be tempting to journey through the spiritual life alone and not in community with one another. In fact, we need community. We are called to communion – to live our faith with one another as the Body of Christ. Nothing we have in this life is reserved strictly for us; rather, it is to be used for the building up of the entire body. *No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.* Our lives are not about us, but are meant to be a gift of self to one another for God's glorification in the world.

We can strive to give of ourselves through our prayers at Mass, engaging in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, loving one another as Christ loves us, and through our personal prayer. Yes, even our personal prayer is an act of being in communion with the Body of Christ. If we don't feed our spiritual lives daily, we run the risk of journeying away from the communal life of the Church.

In today's Gospel Jesus says to Nicodemus, *we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen.* Perhaps today, we pray and reflect on how we can more deeply give of ourselves to God and to one another for the spreading of the Gospel message. We can testify to what we have seen – knowing that we are called to communion with God and with one another.

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Wednesday, April 10, 2024  
(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: *Whoever lives the truth comes to the light.*

Today's Gospel passage from John declares this central truth: *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.* The Father sent his only begotten Son to redeem us. He did this because he loves us. He knows our sins, he knows how we have rejected him throughout our history, and he loves us anyway. Saint Paul says that *God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us* (Rom 5:8).

Our practical and sacramental attention to sin and its consequences is not an exercise in self-deprecation, but a recognition that it is what separates us from God and his pure love for us. Understanding who we are without God – when we are in sin – allows us to rejoice all the more in the unbounded love he has for us. God does not condemn us, the Gospel tells us. If we are condemned, it is our own doing. We turn our backs on God, but he never turns his back on us. Someone once referred to our sin and need for redemption being a magnet for God. He comes to us in the depths of our sin and offers us a way out.

Especially during this season of Easter, we are reminded over and over how much God loves us. The more we accept that, and live in ways that reflect that love to those around us, the more peaceful and happy our lives will be. That is the Gospel message. It is the Good News – the promise of eternal love if we just follow Jesus and love one another as he loves us.

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Thursday, April 11, 2024  
(Lec. 270)

- 1) Acts 5:27-33
- 2) John 3:31-36

THURSDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Stanislaus,  
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 161, 504, 690, 1286

FOCUS: Our greatest joy is witnessing to Christ our Lord.

In the ancient Mediterranean world in which the Gospels were written, biographers included only what was significant about a person in order to show that he was whom he claimed, especially if he was a religious or political leader. This person was also legitimated in the culture if the movement that followed him showed itself to have the same characteristics the founder had.

In the first reading, belief in Jesus, and the evangelizing mission of the early Church, are legitimated by the Apostles. This is exemplified in the willingness of Peter and others to suffer persecution in order to preach the Good News of Jesus, raised *as leader and savior*.

The Gospel gives the same message in a slightly different way. John uses the language of “witnessing” throughout his Gospel to show how important it is to recognize both legitimate and non-legitimate testimonies in order to know the truth. The highest witness, of course, is Christ as manifestation of the goodness of God. His followers will be known as those who believe God’s promise as found in Jesus: the one who brings *eternal life*.

As with Peter and the Apostles, we have the joy-filled responsibility of being legitimate witnesses to a loving God and faithful Savior. We testify in our words and in our actions, sometimes to the point of discomfort, if need be. As we approach Christ’s table today, let us re-dedicate ourselves to that great mission and rejoice in the eternal life it offers to all.

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Friday, April 12, 2024  
(Lec. 271)

- 1) Acts 5:34-42
- 2) John 6:1-15

Gospel related: **CCC** 439, 549, 559, 1338

FRIDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus speaks to the world through his miracles, teachings, and his disciples.

Jesus “speaks” to the world in so many ways – through his teachings, which help us to understand and live out the many principles of the kingdom of God, and through the many miracles he performed out of his compassion for the people in need. In a very dramatic way, Jesus speaks to the people in today’s Gospel of God’s abundant generosity and power, as he gave them more than enough to eat through the distribution of five barley loaves and two fish. The people responded so quickly to his power and love that they tried to make him their king.

The words of Jesus, himself, the Word of God, are living words present in the Gospel. We hear him today, and every day, in the Scriptures. The Church herself, the bride of Christ, is a sign of God’s generosity, power, and love. Those of us who follow Jesus 2,000 years after his death and resurrection prove the point that Gamaliel was trying to make in the first reading. Jesus’ followers are still around – not only in Israel but throughout the world, proving that Jesus’ teaching and the preaching of the Word of God by Peter and John was the work of God. Jesus’ message is being preached today – by millions of Christians.

Now it’s our turn. We’re being called, as Peter and John were, to proclaim the Word of God – perhaps not through preaching at the pulpit and most likely not through formal miracles. We are called to preach with our lives in a world that, in many areas, has strayed from God. We testify that God loves us and has sent his Son to redeem us. As we receive Communion and leave this sacred place, let us carry on the work of Jesus, Peter, and John in a world that needs to hear this Good News and experience hope.

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Saturday, April 13, 2024  
(Lec. 272)

- 1) Acts 6:1-7
- 2) John 6:16-21

SATURDAY OF  
SECOND WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Martin I,  
Pope and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1383 **CSDC** 453

FOCUS: *Come, Holy Spirit.*

Today's first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, describes the growth and structure of the early Christian community. As the seeds of faith were planted in more and more places, some things became plainly obvious. The Apostles could not stay and "run" the Christian communities they founded. Leadership and structure were needed to make sure that needs were being met and no one was being neglected.

The Holy Spirit was, and is, instrumental in the choosing and development of Church leaders and leadership. The laying on of hands remains essential in the rite of ordination: the passing on of the sacred orders given by Jesus to Peter and to the Apostles, and through apostolic succession to today's Church.

How the Apostles needed the Spirit! Left to their own devices, they were often timid and afraid, as in the Gospel today. They were terrified when they saw Jesus walking on the water. Our Lord reassured them saying, *It is I. Do not be afraid.* The same Spirit has been given to us. When we find ourselves on the stormy seas of life, Jesus encourages us to be still and trust in God. There is no darkness he can't drive out, no fear that cannot be overcome by faith.

We are called upon to live in the Spirit and to act in the Spirit, like the deacons chosen for service to the earliest Christians, and the Apostles to whom Jesus spoke on the water.

*Come Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.*

**SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2024**

(Lec. 47)

1) Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

2) 1 John 2:1-5a

3) 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

**THIRD SUNDAY  
OF EASTER**

FOCUS: We respond to God's saving presence with our mind, our heart, *and* our body.

Every time we pray the creed, we proclaim that we *look forward to the resurrection of the dead*. Today's Gospel invites us to reflect on this tenet of our faith. What exactly are we looking forward to?

In this Gospel, the disciples are wrestling with what might be a common, even if unconscious, concern. Is the resurrection a promise of some kind of ghost-life? Is it something somehow less-real than the life we are living here and now?

Jesus' embodiment in this passage tells us the answer is "no." The promise of the kingdom is one that includes an understanding that the next life, not this one, contains the fullness of the kingdom. We have more to look forward to, not less. Jesus is living new life, but in a glorified body. We do not know what such a body will look like, exactly, or how we are meant to exist in it.

What we do know is that "We believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh" (CCC 1015). Or, as the early Christian author Tertullian says, more succinctly, "The flesh is the hinge of salvation" (1015).

In Genesis, God creates humans, forming our bodies from the dust of the earth and breathing his very breath to give us life. God looks at us, body and soul, and declares that we are "very good." Again and again in the Scriptures, we hear how Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's promises of salvation. And, in this Gospel story, Saint Luke highlights that Jesus will save us, body and soul. He has come to save us, our whole self.

This means that our body is not some sort of hindrance or burden that keeps us from Jesus' promise. On the contrary, our souls, separated at death from our human body, will be reunited on the last day, and we will begin life anew immortal, incorruptible, perfected in senses (Cf., CCC 1016; St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, 82-85).

This is why we physically come to Mass, why we engage in corporate, public worship. This is why the liturgy is not just thoughts or work we somehow do in our hearts. The work of our mind and our heart in this liturgy is vital, but it is intrinsically connected with our physical responses. We kneel, we use our vocal chords to respond, we make a throne of our hands to receive our King, we bow before our Lord in the Eucharist. We respond to God's saving presence here with our mind, our heart, *and* our body. And God acts in all of this to save us, body and soul.

This is the promise of Christ's defeat of death. It is a victory over all that would separate us from God – physical or spiritual. May we, in this Eucharist, open our hearts to receive God's saving

grace as we taste and see his presence with us today. May we draw ever nearer to the promise of salvation in the resurrection of the dead. May we, like the disciples, touch and see Christ's loving action here with us today.

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Monday, April 15, 2024

(Lec. 273)

1) Acts 6:8-15

2) John 6:22-29

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

MONDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Love is not always easy, but it is the choice Jesus instructed us to make.

We are an Easter People. We have to remember that always, especially when following in the footsteps of Jesus becomes painful or confusing. Jesus never said it would be easy. In fact, he warned us it would not be easy, comfortable, or painless. In light of all this, though, he told us not to be afraid. He assured us that he would be with us, that he would send an Advocate for us, that we would be given the right words and know the right actions if we relied upon the Holy Spirit to lead us. And in today's Gospel, he tells us how we can accomplish the works of God: *Believe in the one he sent.*

*Believe in the one he sent.* Faced with questions today we never thought of with regard to the beginning and end of life, what it means to live in a global community, and other contemporary issues – and the answers are not always obvious – it is good to remember Jesus' words: *Believe in the one he sent.* In spite of the mind-boggling pace of change in this world, one thing that has not changed is the instruction Jesus gave us: Love one another as I have loved you. Only God can see into the hearts of our brothers and sisters. Only he can judge. Our calling, as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, is to love. *Believe in the one he sent.* Love as he loves.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us to work for the food that *endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.* He wants us to seek his help on our daily journey of faith. He wants us to love one another. Love may not be the easy choice, but it is the choice Jesus instructed us to make.

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

(Lec. 274)

1) Acts 7:51–8:1a

2) John 6:30-35

Gospel related: **CCC** 423, 1094, 1338, 2835

TUESDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus calls us to look beyond.

Our Gospel today begins with crowds asking Jesus for a sign, wondering who Jesus is, and what he can do for them. It feels a bit awkward for us to hear this during the Easter season, when we are celebrating in a particular way Jesus' victory over death. But we have to remember that these crowds had not experienced the paschal mystery, and they were yearning to understand Jesus' identity.

Jesus' key response is to challenge them to look beyond their current framework. When they mention that Moses gave them bread in the desert, Jesus tells them it was actually his Father, not Moses, who did so. And then Jesus asks them to look beyond their physical hunger to their spiritual hunger. Jesus is the bread of life to fulfill this more important hunger.

Understanding Jesus as the bread of life is not just about what God can do for us, but about how knowing this truth of our faith changes us. In the first reading, we hear the story of Saint Stephen, the first martyr for the faith. This Scripture passage describes what it meant for Stephen to make a sacrifice for his faith. Just as Jesus has modeled sacrifice, and Stephen was the first exemplar of it, we are called to do so with our lives. We are to consider and act upon what our faith calls us to do for the sake of others, and what we can do for those around us.

In a moment, we will be invited to come up and eat the bread of life. May its grace strengthen us to help those who hunger, and may our work of discipleship bring us closer to satiating our eternal hunger for God.

Wednesday, April 17, 2024  
(Lec. 275)

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

Gospel related: **CCC** 161, 606, 989, 994, 1001, 1338, 2824, 2835

WEDNESDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Come to Jesus and he will bring us to our Father in heaven.

Jesus models for us the true purpose of human life: to seek and do the will of God. Discipleship and belief in Jesus are the means to that end. When making decisions, big or small, it is important to consider what God is asking of us, and what his will is for us. We are better decision makers when we rely on prayer, the Scriptures, and/or our faith community to help us and inform us.

We must open our hearts to make room for the prodding of the Lord, and not be singularly focused on persuading God to do what we want. After all, God's way is not only the best way, but is also the way to eternal life. He sent us his Son to be the light that leads us to him, and the Holy Spirit has remained to walk with us and advocate for us.

Thus, we come to Jesus today, confident in his promise to feed our hunger and lead us to the heavenly banquet. We are present here at Mass, ready to be fed by his Word and ready to meet him at the Eucharistic table. We pray that this nourishment may give us the strength to discern the Lord's will for us, to open our hearts to God's wisdom and creativity, to carry our personal crosses, and to find joy in the process. Upon finding God's joy, may we share it with those around us – as a beacon of hope and a call to others to come and partake in God's promise.

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Thursday, April 18, 2024  
(Lec. 276)

- 1) Acts 8:26-40
- 2) John 6:44-51

Gospel related: **CCC** 151, 259, 591, 728, 1001, 1338, 1355, 1406, 1428, 2835, 2837

THURSDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: God saves us and draws us to himself.

We are called to intimate relationship with God. Notice the language Jesus uses in today's Gospel: *Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me*. Jesus is the living bread who *came down from heaven*. He has given this bread, himself, *for the life of the world*.

When we wonder how it is that Christ should save us, what we see in Scripture is God, who is always present to us, reaching out and drawing us to him. Jesus says, *no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him*. The second person of the Trinity enters into human history with us – reaching out, speaking, calling us to communion with the Triune Majesty.

The need for God to draw us near, to call us to himself, and give us living bread makes sense if we understand what was fundamentally wrong in our relationship with God before Christ came: our disobedience and sin. Sin can perhaps be most simply defined as separation from God. And since God *is* goodness and truth, beauty and love and life, then separation from God is separation from goodness. We usually call separation from goodness evil, and we need to be saved from this separation.

How? God heals this separation by entering into humanity and drawing us into his divinity in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus even enters into death. Imagine that God, who is life, enters into death! Just as darkness cannot stand when someone turns on a light, death cannot stand in the presence of Christ.

In this Mass we remember and celebrate Christ's victory over death. In the intimacy of the Eucharist, we are united to the Trinity. God's goodness is present in whatever suffering or loneliness or woundedness we may be experiencing. His love is present in whatever hurt or broken relationship we may bear. His life removes the stone to whatever tombs may hold us.

May God give us the grace to truly know and receive his tender love in this sacrament. May we who eat this bread live forever in his glorious presence.

\* \* \*

Friday, April 19, 2024  
(Lec. 277)

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

Gospel related: **CCC** 787, 994, 1001, 1338, 1384, 1391, 1406, 1509, 1524, 2835, 2837

FRIDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: We are meant for union with God.

The Lord desires each of us to be with him for eternity. His plan of salvation has been laid before us, incarnated in Jesus, and passed on by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church and Scripture. It is, as one might say, "as clear as day."

But are there not times when we can also say, "it's as clear as mud?" We get distracted with earthly timelines and goals; we have competing desires; we have doubts; we sin. We create and walk along a different path than the one the Lord has set for us. We, like Saul, become blind to the truth and to our true purpose and how we can fully unite ourselves to God.

In the Gospel, Jesus says, *Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you.* Often, we work to fill a void in our lives by feeding on everything but the Lord's word, but nothing else will fill that void. Only the Lord can feed and nourish our souls in the way we need to feel whole and alive.

Sometimes, God puts someone in our life to show us this truth, to wake us up and realize our purpose, as he did in sending Ananias to Saul in the first reading. We also have the opportunity to meet Jesus and fully receive him each and every Sunday in the Eucharist. He reveals himself to us through the Eucharist and when we receive him, we are in union with God. We have the opportunity to fully realize God as the bread of life, opening our hearts and minds to him and his plan for us. We must be willing to listen and accept God's plan for our lives here on earth and if we do, we will be with him in life after death.

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Saturday, April 20, 2024  
(Lec. 278)

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

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

SATURDAY OF  
THIRD WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: *Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

It is hard to imagine followers of Jesus turning their backs on him and walking away from his tutelage, indeed departing from Life itself. Yet this is where today's Gospel picks up. In response to Jesus' instruction to eat his flesh and drink his blood just a few verses before today's passage, many of the disciples mutter, *This saying is hard; who can accept it?* In contrast to these nameless disciples, the Twelve appointed men, led by Peter, recommit themselves to Jesus in this moment. Instead of lamenting Jesus' seemingly impossible mandate, Peter declares, *Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.*

We know well the story of this Peter: Throughout the Gospels he gets things right, and then horribly wrong; he acts boldly with faith, and then with doubt and betrayal. Indeed, his discipleship is characterized by his capriciousness – until he receives the Holy Spirit! Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples following his resurrection, and from there the Church was born.

And what vibrant, life-altering faith we see in this early Church. Today's first reading tells of a Church *at peace ... being built up* through what the author, Luke, calls *the consolation of the Holy Spirit*. And there are miracles. Tabitha, whom Luke describes as *completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving*, dies and is brought back to life by Peter. Even before that, Peter took pity on a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bed-ridden for eight years. All of these things Peter did because of the Holy Spirit – the presence and power of God at work inside him.

God is not bound by our limitations, only we are. We can take courage amid our own faltering, for like Peter and the members of the early Church, we have the same Holy Spirit. He leads us to the Son and the Father, and what a gift that is. For as Peter says to the Lord, *Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

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**SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2024**

(Lec. 50)

1) Acts 4:8-12

2) 1 John 3:1-2

3) John 10:11-18

Gospel related: **CCC** 60, 553, 606, 609, 614, 649, 754, 764

**FOURTH SUNDAY  
OF EASTER**

FOCUS: Come to know the Good Shepherd.

As Jesus says at the start of the Gospel, he is the Good Shepherd. And what makes him a Good Shepherd? First, he *lays down his life for the sheep*. Second, he knows his sheep and they know him.

First, *he lays down his life for the sheep*. The Lord didn't just say he was willing to die for us, he actually did so. Many of us sacrifice a great many things for our family, friends, or country; or in our commitment to a cause. The people we love are worth those sacrifices, and we likely even have the sense that we'd give our life for them. Jesus came into our human history, took on human flesh, and willingly chose to offer himself to the Father as the ultimate and perfect sacrifice of love.

But Jesus wasn't just human. He was, and is, fully divine as well. He is the incarnate Son of God who died for us out of love, to offer us salvation; to bring us back into communion with God so as to *be called the children of God*. He knows us, and we know him. But how can we come to know our Shepherd even better?

One way to come to know our Shepherd is by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, which are his own words to us. As we immerse ourselves in the story of salvation, we encounter a God who seeks a personal relationship with his flock, who knows each one of his people: our strengths, our weaknesses, our desires, our hopes and aspirations, our sins, our disappointments, and heartaches. We also learn that despite our less-than-stellar response at times to the riches the Lord showers upon us, he continues to seek us, to pursue us, and ultimately call us to his side for eternity.

Another way to come to know our Shepherd is to do what we are doing here – gathering to celebrate and receive the Eucharist, the body and blood of our Good Shepherd.

Jesus points out in the Gospel that hired hands, who have no concern for the sheep they are shepherding because they are not their own, will run away at the sign of trouble. They leave the sheep to face the dangers on their own. This imagery, and thus the analogy of a Good Shepherd, works well for us, even in our less-agrarian lives: We understand what it means to protect and love what, and who, are important to us. It helps illustrate the reality of God's love for us: It is not fleeting, it is not temporal, and it is not dependent upon our worth. God gave us the Good Shepherd so that for all time we would have an advocate and protector.

Peter says the following in our first reading, and it is the perfect summary of what it means to have Christ as our Shepherd: *[Jesus] is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.*

Monday, April 22, 2024  
(Lec. 279)

- 1) Acts 11:1-18
- 2) John 10:1-10

Gospel related: **CCC** 754, 764, 2158 **CSDC** 1

MONDAY OF  
FOURTH WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: *I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.*

If someone asks us to think of a miracle, sign, or wonder from the Scriptures, what comes to mind? Is it the feeding of the multitude or Jesus walking on the water? Or one of the stories of someone being raised from the dead? How many of us would have thought about one of the many conversion stories in Scripture? Because in thinking it over, is there anything more wonderful than the conversion of the human heart?

Today's readings are about opening our hearts in faith to Jesus Christ. The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles gives us an account of the first Christians opening their hearts to Gentile converts. These Jewish Christians had a hard time believing that non-Jews could become Christians without first converting to Judaism. This made a lot of sense given their history and perspective. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter and the disciples with him were able to accomplish miracles, signs, and wonders, which allowed their hearts to be changed.

In the Gospel, Jesus is also talking about a conversion of the heart. He challenges the Pharisees to see him as the shepherd of God's people, the true Messiah. Again, it is understandable that these religious leaders might be skeptical – after all, Jesus comes from some out-of-the way village and has no religious credentials. But Jesus' powerful preaching and miraculous signs testify to his divine status, and already many have come to have faith in him, including some Pharisees.

We know that even miracles and powerful testimonies are not always enough to change hardened hearts – including, possibly, our own, at times. So as we approach the Eucharist today, let us ask God to give us the grace for conversion where we need it most, opening our hearts in order to share his love and acceptance with all the people he places in our life. Perhaps we can even help God bring about, for others, that most wonderful of human activities: conversion of heart toward the Lord.

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Tuesday, April 23, 2024  
(Lec. 280)

- 1) Acts 11:19-26
- 2) John 10:22-30

TUESDAY OF  
FOURTH WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint George,  
Martyr;  
Saint Adalbert,  
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 548, 582, 583, 590

FOCUS: Hear the voice of Christ, our Shepherd, and follow him.

*How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.*

One has to wonder at the mindset of the religious leaders and crowds who surrounded Jesus in the temple portico, in today's Gospel. Was this another test from them? Were they being sarcastic? Were they actually interested in the Truth?

Because, at this point in John's Gospel, Jesus had performed six miracles (of the seven found in John) that showed he was the Christ: turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana (2:1-11); healing an official's son in Capernaum (4:46-54); healing a man at the sheep-gate pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (5:1-18); feeding the 5,000 near the Sea of Galilee (6:5-14); walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee (6:16-21); and in Jerusalem, healing the man born blind (9:1-7).

Miraculous in their own right, what also was notable about these events was that nothing was demanded of the recipients of these miracles. In the pagan worship that made up the surrounding socio-cultural world of the Jewish people, the gods did not intervene in such dramatic ways, and certainly not without payment. But in Jesus' hands, sustenance, healing, and care in the face of anxiety and fear were all given freely. From our standpoint in history, we look back wondering, "How could they not know Jesus was the Christ?"

But they didn't. He was not the military leader they expected; he was not the political giant come to upend the Roman rule and free the Jewish people from occupation and oppression. They could not see what they were not looking for. And so Jesus does indeed speak plainly, saying, *The Father and I are one*. And there we have it: no prevaricating, no doubts, no words that could be misunderstood. The Son of God publicly claims and asserts his most intimate relationship with God the Father. He is the Christ. He has come to save us.

If we do not believe our eyes, because we cannot see what we are not looking *for*, we can believe our ears. God's eternal Word, incarnate in the Son, speaking words meant for us – meant for the whole world. He knows us. Hear his voice and follow him, for he offers eternal life.

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Wednesday, April 24, 2024  
(Lec. 281)

- 1) Acts 12:24–13:5a
- 2) John 12:44-50

WEDNESDAY OF  
FOURTH WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen,  
Priest and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 679, 1039, 2466

FOCUS: The Holy Spirit continues to call us to proclaim the Gospel.

Today's first reading includes unlikely companions. There was Saul, also known as Paul, who was a fierce persecutor of the first Christians until his conversion. There were early followers of Jesus. There was a friend of Herod. They were prophets and teachers meeting in Antioch, in modern-day Turkey.

What brought these faithful early Christians together from such different backgrounds and locations? Jesus. The conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. And faith in God through the Holy Spirit to guide them.

This same Holy Spirit guides us today, and brings us together to pray and then go forth and proclaim the truth about Jesus: *[He] came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in [him] might not remain in darkness*. One of the great treasures of the Church is the communion of saints, which includes saints from all walks of life and from all continents. This global Church arose from Christian missionaries and evangelists such as Paul and Barnabas, and the multitude of saints, known and unknown, throughout the centuries.

The Lord chooses men and women to share the Gospel so that others may come to know Jesus and, through knowing Jesus, come to know the Father. Through prayer, fasting, and trust in the Holy Spirit, we can encourage men and women who are called by the Spirit to do God's work. Just as in the earliest days of the Church, the Lord calls those from all walks of life.

Today as we approach Jesus in the Eucharist, let us prayerfully ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance. How can we proclaim the Gospel? How can we encourage others to fulfill this great commission? The Lord still calls to his people. May we have the grace to hear and listen.

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Thursday, April 25, 2024  
(Lec. 555)

**SAINT MARK,  
- FEAST**

- 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

FOCUS: We are commissioned by Jesus to share God's love with the world.

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Mark, whom we attribute authorship of Scripture's first and oldest Gospel. Mark's Gospel ends with the famous "Great Commission": Jesus' instruction for the disciples to *Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature*. Interestingly, Mark was not one of the men commissioned by Jesus at this moment, for he was not one of the original Twelve. Yet he nevertheless became a preacher of immense influence, especially through his writing.

Mark wrote extensively of the miraculous *signs* of Jesus that he mentions in today's Gospel: driving out demons, speaking new languages, even picking up serpents and being unharmed by poisonous drink. These signs serve to show the power of God and their nature as directed toward the healing, or good, of people.

As with Mark, our own ministry must be accompanied by signs, or what we might more accurately call works of mercy. For example, we can pray for healing for a sick friend or relative or, if possible, provide companionship to someone who is lonely or ill. Outward signs of love for those around us serve as the manifestation of our faith in Jesus.

As we approach the Eucharistic table and receive the risen Christ within us, we, too, are commissioned to live the Good News of Jesus everywhere we go. Mark did so with his gift of the written Gospel. May our own gifts, accompanied by miraculous or ordinary signs, bear God's love to the world.

Friday, April 26, 2024  
(Lec. 283)

- 1) Acts 13:26-33
- 2) John 14:1-6

Gospel related: **CCC** 74, 151, 459, 661, 1025, 1698, 2466, 2614, 2795 **CSDC** 1, 555

FRIDAY OF  
FOURTH WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus leads the way, and our destination is eternal union with our Triune God.

In the first reading, Paul arrives in Antioch, located in modern-day Turkey. He presents himself to the Jewish community as a messenger, proclaiming the greatest Good News to ever be delivered: that Jesus, the Son of God, has been raised from the dead. This message of the Resurrection is not just for the Jewish people, but for all God-fearing people.

These types of messages don't always elicit joy, however. They can also bring fear. Think how often the first words of God's messengers are, "Do not be afraid." Jesus' words in today's Gospel follow immediately after he had foretold Peter's denial. That must have been shocking to hear. Fear and anxiety were likely rising as we meet Jesus and the Apostles today. But in the passage we just heard, Jesus offers this consolation: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.* As his followers, we have faith in him, for he is *the way and the truth and the life.*

The disciples, the Jewish community in Antioch, and all of us gathered here today know that Jesus leads the way, and that the destination is eternal union with our Triune God. Every message is given for a purpose. Jesus came to live among us to reconcile us with the Father. Through our words and actions, we show the world that we are children of God – beneficiaries of his grace and mercy. Through our participation in and reception of the Eucharist, we come into communion with Jesus. That graced moment is a glimpse into the perfection and beauty of the dwelling place Jesus is preparing for us in his Father's house.

Saturday, April 27, 2024  
(Lec. 284)

- 1) Acts 13:44-52
- 2) John 14:7-14

Gospel related: **CCC** 470, 516, 2614, 2633, 2815 **CSDC** 28

SATURDAY OF  
FOURTH WEEK  
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus reveals the Father to us and intercedes for us.

Apart from sin, there is nothing of the human experience that Christ did not take on. Joy and sorrow, friendship and betrayal, suffering and temptation. Jesus experienced it all. In the language of the *catechism*, Christ “assumed all things in order to redeem all things,” so there is nothing we cannot bring to God in prayer (CCC 2633). Jesus tells his disciples in today’s Gospel reading that we honor him when we ask the Father for what we need in his name.

Again turning to the *catechism*, Christ “expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity” (CCC 470). His “whole earthly life – his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking – is Revelation of the Father” (CCC 516). So, if we want to know the Father, to know who God is and what he desires for us, we look to who Jesus is and what he did for us. We do this by spending time in prayer with him, and in reading and listening to sacred Scriptures.

The Scriptures give us the accounts of Jesus’ life here on earth. Some are eyewitness accounts of events, others are letters of instruction, encouragement, and reflection on his life. They are also a living Word, and the Spirit of God works in us in our reading and hearing of them, making us wise, growing us in love, and giving us sustenance for our journey.

One method we can use to pray with Scripture is Ignatian contemplation. This type of prayer involves using our imagination to place ourselves in a scene from the Bible, paying attention to what we see, feel, taste, smell, and hear, and inviting God to communicate with us through the details of the story. We may be able to immerse ourselves in the story as if it were a scene from a movie, or we may be more drawn to a memory or emotion that it evokes for us. God speaks to us in our humanity, through our intellect, our emotions, and our wills. As we grow our relationship with Jesus, may we bring our every need before him, trusting that what we ask in his name, he will do.

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**SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024**

(Lec. 53)

1) Acts 9:26-31

2) 1 John 3:18-24

3) John 15:1-8

Gospel related: **CCC** 308, 517, 737, 755, 787, 859, 864, 1108, 1694, 1988, 2074, 2615, 2732  
**CSDC** 39

**FIFTH SUNDAY  
OF EASTER**

FOCUS: When we remain in Jesus, his word bears fruit in us.

Spring is the season for preparing fields and gardens for growth. Debris is cleared away. Soil is turned over for seeding. Dormant plants are nurtured for regrowth. A skilled grower knows how to trim and prune to encourage new, revitalized growth. With care and tending, the field or garden will be a beautiful and abundant sight.

Jesus uses this imagery of pruning and growth to teach us about the nurturing relationship we have with the Father. The Father is the vine grower, Jesus is the true vine, and we are his branches. By remaining in Jesus, as branches of the vine, his Word remains in us and bears good fruit.

All we need to do is remain. Jesus says “remain” eight times in the eight verses of this Gospel. *Remain in me, as I remain in you*, he says. Remaining together in him, his Word bears fruit in us. As in today’s second reading, Jesus’ word is to *love one another*. As the Father trims and prunes us, we grow and flourish, bearing more and more fruit of love for one another.

We remain in Jesus, and leave the pruning and tending to the Father. The Father knows what we need – and don’t need –to flourish and be fruitful. He knows what sins need forgiving and what fears and bad habits need breaking. He knows what regrets and old hurts need forgetting and what brokenness needs healing to make way for new, revitalized growth.

With his care and tending, the Father makes us – his vineyard – a beautiful and abundant sight. Imagine a vineyard at the height of the season. The fully blossomed leaves are bright green and open wide. The branches of the vine intertwine into ideal shape and form along trellised rows. The purple, green, or red grapes are heavy with juicy sweetness. So it is with us. With the Father’s care and tending, we flourish. We are fully alive with hearts open wide to his love. We grow together as a fellowship of disciples nourished by Jesus’ word.

Like Saul in our first reading who speaks out boldly in the name of Jesus, we give witness as a flourishing and fruitful community. Those in need of Jesus and his saving love are attracted to the beauty and abundance they see. They are drawn to our fellowship. They desire the nourishment of Jesus’ word, the care and tending of the Father, and the love of the community.

Anyone who is new here or returning after time away: know that all are welcome in this vineyard. Remain with us, and together we will remain in Jesus, as his disciples. This is all we need to do: remain. Remain in Jesus, remain together, remain in his love. By the grace of his Word and sacraments, we will grow and flourish together. What a wonderful way to give God glory as we continue to celebrate this Easter season.

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Monday, April 29, 2024  
(Lec. 285)

- 1) Acts 14:5-18
- 2) John 14:21-26

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

Gospel related: **CCC** 243, 244, 260, 263, 647, 692, 729, 1099, 2466, 2615, 2623 **CSDC** 70, 104

FOCUS: The Holy Spirit teaches and reminds us.

In today's Gospel, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and tells them that the Spirit will *teach* and *remind* them of all that Jesus has already shared with them in his ministry. We should take note of these verbs – *teach* and *remind* – for they tell us much about the Holy Spirit's mission. They are active verbs that suggest an ongoing function and role – one that continues to this day in the life of the Christian community and every believer.

Jesus realizes that his disciples will struggle greatly in the events that are about to befall him. They will be full of fear, doubts, and even mistrust – and so they will need the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit if they are to recover their equilibrium and ultimately embrace their mission. Therefore, the promise of the Spirit is important for them, and also for us. As the Spirit teaches and reminds us, he brings us deeper into the teachings of Jesus and the true meaning of his commandments. Today we still very much need that inspiration and guidance.

As we survey the actions and words of the disciples in the period after Pentecost, recalled in the Acts of the Apostles, we see the Spirit at work in the life of the early Church, fulfilling that promise. Paul and Barnabas stand before us as great examples of how the Spirit can change hearts, inspire and console us, teach us and, most importantly, remind us of what is most essential to the Gospel message. With the power of the Spirit, Paul and Barnabas refuse to embrace the adulation of the crowd; instead, their focus is on sharing the Good News and using the opportunity to proclaim Christ and the abundant love of God before the Gentiles. May the Holy Spirit encourage us to do likewise.

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Tuesday, April 30, 2024  
(Lec. 286)

- 1) Acts 14:19-28
- 2) John 14:27-31a

TUESDAY OF  
FIFTH WEEK  
OF EASTER  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Pius V,  
Pope)

Gospel related: **CCC** 606, 1851, 2853 **CSDC** 491, 516

FOCUS: Jesus gives us his peace.

As Jesus prepares to leave his disciples, he tells them to not be afraid. Clearly, they were distressed that the master was preparing to leave them. To help calm their fears and ease their distress, he gives them his peace.

What is this peace that he says only he can give? Jesus will die on the cross shortly after he says this. In his death, he will reconcile all humanity with the Father and extend this gift of peace to all. This peace he leaves the disciples is a gift of hope and consolation which will blossom into forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God after the Resurrection.

But this peace carries not only a call to reconcile with God, but also with one another.

To reconcile with God calls us to consider what keeps us from growing in our relationship with the Father. Prayer and meeting Jesus in the sacrament of reconciliation are two possible ways we can begin to dismantle obstacles and seek a closer relationship with God.

To reconcile with our brothers and sisters in the Lord demands we examine that which divides us from one another and then discern what steps we can take toward healing divisions. To do so often calls us to seek help from God to overcome conflict and come together.

As we prepare to meet Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for the grace to share his peace with those in need of it.

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