

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

Holy Thursday to Pentecost

April 1 to May 22, 2021
Cycle B - Year 1

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What is the Anawim Spirituality?

Our spirituality has three essential characteristics:

Liturgical

The Liturgy is the source of our formation. Daily, we draw inspiration from the readings and prayers of the Liturgy, which we understand to be the ponderings of Mary's heart. For this reason, we honor Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Liturgical Life.

Eucharistic

Jesus in the Eucharist is the center of our spirituality. By faithful participation in Holy Mass and frequent Eucharistic Adoration, we are empowered by the Presence of Jesus to go forth to serve the people of God in all the circumstances of life.

Marian

We entrust ourselves to Mary, the mother and model of every Christian. She continually forms us in her spirit of humility, compassion and reconciling love, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus. She shares with us her spiritual motherhood as we are called to bring forth the life of Jesus in others.

If you would like to explore the Anawim Community further, we invite you to contact us.

Easter Triduum

***“I give you a new commandment:
love one another as I have loved you.”***

John 13:34

Theme for the Week

Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the Cross is the greatest expression of love. In the Eucharist, Jesus gives us himself – his whole self, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – just as he did on Calvary. Let us open our hearts to welcome his love that enables us, in turn, to love others.

The Easter Triduum

Pastoral Note: The document of Pope St. Paul VI, “General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar,” gives a good summary of the meaning of the *Easter Triduum* (also known as the *Paschal Triduum*):

Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life. Therefore the Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year. Thus the solemnity of Easter has the same kind of preeminence in the liturgical year that Sunday has in the week.

The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper [Holy Thursday], reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil [Saturday evening], and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday (#18-19).

The word “triduum” means three days. According to our usual way of counting, from Thursday to Sunday is *four* days. However, the days of the Easter Triduum are counted according to the Jewish tradition, where the new day begins, not at midnight, but at sunset. From sunset Thursday evening to sunset Sunday evening is *three* days. Thus, the first day extends from the Last Supper of the Lord to his burial in the tomb, and includes two major liturgies. The second day is all spent “in the tomb”; it is a day of rest. The third day celebrates the Resurrection, especially in the Easter Vigil, the “mother of all vigils,” but also including all the Masses of Easter Sunday.

April 1
Thursday of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)



First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “This month shall stand at the head of your calendar; you shall reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a family is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join the nearest household in procuring one and shall share in the lamb in proportion to the number of persons who partake of it. The lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole assembly of Israel present, it shall be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb. That same night they shall eat its roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

“This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It is the Passover of the LORD. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, the LORD! But the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thus, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you.

“This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD, as a perpetual institution.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:12-13, 15–16bc, 17–18

Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

How shall I make a return to the LORD

for all the good he has done for me?

The cup of salvation I will take up,

and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

R. Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

Precious in the eyes of the LORD
is the death of his faithful ones.

I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;
you have loosed my bonds.

R. Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

My vows to the LORD I will pay
in the presence of all his people.

R. Our blessing-cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.



Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Brothers and sisters: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Gospel Acclamation: John 13:34

I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.



Gospel: John 13:1-15

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so

you are clean, but not all.” For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”



Meditation:

Tonight we celebrate the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, in which Jesus gives us his own Body and Blood in the Eucharist as our true food and drink. This is a gift beyond our expectations, beyond our hopes, beyond anything we could ever have imagined, infinitely precious! Overflowing with gratitude for such a gift, we naturally ask ourselves, in the words of the Psalm, “How shall I make a return to the LORD for all the good he has done for me?” How can we make a return to the Lord, not only for the gift of the Eucharist which he gives us tonight, but also for his love poured out in his Passion and Death tomorrow?

The next verse of the Psalm gives us the answer: “The cup of salvation I will take up, and I will call upon the name of the LORD.” Our Lord offers us the cup of salvation, the cup of his own Precious Blood, poured out for us on Calvary. The best response we can make to such a gift is to accept it! The Lord does not want us to stand at a distance and marvel at the great gift. He wants us to come to him and receive what he offers us.

We read in the passage from Exodus that the Israelites were to mark their houses with the blood of the sacrificed lamb. The blood on the lintel and doorposts of their homes was the sign that they belonged to the Lord, and so the angel who executed judgment on the Egyptians did not strike them. God gave them the means of being saved from condemnation, but they had to take up the blood and apply it to their homes. If they did not take up the means of salvation which he had given them, then they would not have been saved.

In the same way, Jesus gives us the means to be free from the condemnation due to sin, by taking up the cup of his Blood. He urges us, as Paul recounts in the second reading, to eat his Body and drink his

Blood: “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.... This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” It has often been said that the Eucharist is not like other food, because when we eat other food, our bodies transform the food so that it becomes what we are, part of us. But when we take the Eucharist, it transforms us so that we become what it is, the very Body and Blood of Christ. It transforms us into a likeness to him. But for this to happen we must open ourselves to the transforming work of grace. We must will to be transformed. This is what it means to fully take up the cup of salvation.

To be open to the transforming power of the grace which Christ won for us by his Passion and Death we must follow as he leads us. We must strive to take on his mind and heart. He gives us a wonderful revelation of his heart in tonight’s Gospel. During the Last Supper, he takes off his outer garments, wraps a towel around himself, and washes the feet of his disciples. Washing the feet of the guests was the job of the lowest slave in the house. Jesus is humbling himself before the disciples, taking the lowest place in order to show them the depth of his love. This is the same kind of thing he did in coming into the world, “stripping off” the glory of his divinity to wrap himself in the humble “clothing” of human flesh. And we know that tomorrow he will allow his garments to be stripped off and gambled away as he hangs upon the Cross out of love for us.

The Gospel says that Jesus “loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.” He was not concerned about saving himself; rather, he humbled himself completely in acts of love for us. And he tells us in the Gospel Acclamation that we are to do the same: “I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.” So today, filled with gratitude for the great gift which he gives us, we accept his gift, opening ourselves up to the working of the Spirit within us, which will transform our hearts so that we will be able to love as he loves, pouring ourselves out for our brothers and sisters in all humility.

Throughout the hours of this most blessed Easter Triduum, we remain very close to our Mother Mary, as she leads us by the hand. We note that one of the lines in the Psalm says, “I am your servant, the son of your handmaid,” and we recall the words of Mary at the Annunciation: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” We are the spiritual sons and daughters

of Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, and with her we give our full assent to all that God is doing in us. “Yes, Lord! Let it be done to me according to your word!” This is the way to accept the Lord’s most precious gift. This is the way to make a fitting return to him for all that he has done for us. This is the gift that he most wants from us.

Can I humbly ask God for the grace to give of myself to others as Jesus did even unto death? As I receive the Eucharist, am I opening myself to the transforming work of grace in me? Does my way of life manifest to others my gratitude to God for the gift of the Eucharist?

Mary, my spiritual Mother, enable me to give my full consent to all that God is doing in me.

Notes

April 2
Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)



First Reading: Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

See, my servant shall prosper,
he shall be raised high and greatly exalted.

Even as many were amazed at him—
so marred was his look beyond human semblance
and his appearance beyond that of the sons of man—
so shall he startle many nations,
because of him kings shall stand speechless;
for those who have not been told shall see,
those who have not heard shall ponder it.

Who would believe what we have heard?
To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
He grew up like a sapling before him,
like a shoot from the parched earth;
there was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him,
nor appearance that would attract us to him.
He was spurned and avoided by people,
a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity,
one of those from whom people hide their faces,
spurned, and we held him in no esteem.

Yet it was our infirmities that he bore,
our sufferings that he endured,
while we thought of him as stricken,
as one smitten by God and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our offenses,
crushed for our sins;
upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
by his stripes we were healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep,
each following his own way;
but the LORD laid upon him
the guilt of us all.

Though he was harshly treated, he submitted
and opened not his mouth;
like a lamb led to the slaughter
or a sheep before the shearers,
he was silent and opened not his mouth.

Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away,
and who would have thought any more of his destiny?
When he was cut off from the land of the living,
and smitten for the sin of his people,
a grave was assigned him among the wicked
and a burial place with evildoers,
though he had done no wrong
nor spoken any falsehood.
But the LORD was pleased
to crush him in infirmity.

If he gives his life as an offering for sin,
he shall see his descendants in a long life,
and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him.

Because of his affliction
he shall see the light
in fullness of days;
through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,
and their guilt he shall bear.
Therefore I will give him his portion among the great,
and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
because he surrendered himself to death
and was counted among the wicked;
and he shall take away the sins of many,
and win pardon for their offenses.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25
Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.

In your justice rescue me.

Into your hands I commend my spirit;
you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God.

R. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

For all my foes I am an object of reproach,
a laughingstock to my neighbors, and a dread to my friends;
they who see me abroad flee from me.

I am forgotten like the unremembered dead;
I am like a dish that is broken.

R. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

But my trust is in you, O LORD;

I say, "You are my God.

In your hands is my destiny; rescue me

from the clutches of my enemies and my persecutors."

R. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Let your face shine upon your servant;

save me in your kindness.

Take courage and be stouthearted,

all you who hope in the LORD.

R. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.



Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

In the days when Christ was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Gospel Acclamation: Philippians 2:8-9

Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every other name.



Gospel: John 18:1 – 19:42

Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered. Judas his betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees and went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered him, "Jesus the Nazorean." He said to them, "I AM." Judas his betrayer was also with them. When he said to them, "I AM," they turned away and fell to the ground. So he again asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus the Nazorean." Jesus answered, "I told you that I AM. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." This

was to fulfill what he had said, “I have not lost any of those you gave me.” Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave’s name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?”

So the band of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards seized Jesus, bound him, and brought him to Annas first. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Now the other disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered the courtyard of the high priest with Jesus. But Peter stood at the gate outside. So the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high priest, went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and brought Peter in. Then the maid who was the gatekeeper said to Peter, “You are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Now the slaves and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire that they had made, because it was cold, and were warming themselves. Peter was also standing there keeping warm.

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine. Jesus answered him, “I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask me? Ask those who heard me what I said to them. They know what I said.” When he had said this, one of the temple guards standing there struck Jesus and said, “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing there keeping warm. And they said to him, “You are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with him?” Again Peter denied it. And immediately the cock crowed.

Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning. And they themselves did not enter the praetorium, in order not to be defiled so that they could eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and said, “What charge do you bring against this man?” They answered and said to him, “If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.” At this, Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law.” The Jews answered him, “We do not have the right to execute anyone,” in order that the

word of Jesus might be fulfilled that he said indicating the kind of death he would die. So Pilate went back into the praetorium and summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

When he had said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at Passover. Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this one but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly. Once more Pilate went out and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, "Behold, the man!" When the chief priests and the guards saw him they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." Now when Pilate heard this statement, he became even more afraid, and went back into the praetorium and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" Jesus did not answer him. So Pilate said to him, "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." Consequently, Pilate tried to release him; but the Jews cried out, "If you release him, you are not a Friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon.

And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your king!” They cried out, “Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, and, carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, “Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews.” Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that he said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be,” in order that the passage of Scripture might be fulfilled that says:

*They divided my garments among them,
and for my vesture they cast lots.*

This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Here all kneel and pause for a short time.

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately

blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. For this happened so that the Scripture passage might be fulfilled:

Not a bone of it will be broken.

And again another passage says:

They will look upon him whom they have pierced.

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by.



Meditation:

We have just read St. John's account of the Passion and Death of Jesus. We are brought into the very heart of deepest mystery here. Standing with Mary beneath the Cross of our dying Lord, we can scarcely take in all that is happening. We do well today to return again and again to stand here with Mary, to look upon him whom we have pierced, see his love poured out for us. As we read in yesterday's Gospel, Jesus loved us "to the end."

Above the Cross of Jesus, Pilate had an inscription placed: "Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews." He had this written in three languages, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, which symbolically means that it was a proclamation to the whole world. Earlier Pilate had presented Jesus to the Jewish people, saying, "Behold, your king!" Let us take Pilate's words to heart. Let us behold our King, hanging upon the Cross for us. Let us keep firmly in mind that, as we celebrate on the final Sunday of the liturgical year, this is Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

But how can this be? How can the King of the Universe be dying, nailed to a rough wooden cross, crowned with thorns, mocked and spit upon, abandoned by his friends, stripped of his garments, with only his mother and a few others to remain with him to the end? What kind of king is this?

When Pilate was questioning Jesus, he asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”, and Jesus answered him, “My kingdom does not belong to this world.” In order to begin to understand what is happening today, we must start with this truth: Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. He is not a king like any king or ruler of this world.

What kind of king is Jesus? As the Letter to the Hebrews tells us, he is a Priest King, who, by offering the sacrifice of his suffering and death, “became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.” Isaiah spells out the nature of this royal sacrifice most eloquently in the first reading. Jesus “was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed.” He was “smitten for the sin of his people.” He gave “his life as an offering for sin.”

He is a humble king, who seeks no glory for himself. Indeed, throughout the readings today we see how he allowed himself to be scorned. Isaiah says he was “one of those from whom people hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem.” Jesus could make the words of the Psalm his own: “I am an object of reproach, a laughingstock to my neighbors, and a dread to my friends.” In the Gospel, the Roman soldiers mocked him and struck him, and he said nothing. The crowd yelled out, “Crucify him,” and he remained silent. He allowed his hands and feet to be nailed to the Cross, and he suffered and died, fulfilling the will of the Father. He could have stopped all of this at any moment with only a word, but he did not. The King of the Universe allowed himself to be mistreated and killed in this way. There can never be any greater act of humility.

This is how our King acts. He is Servant King. He exercises his kingship as a service of love for us and for the glory of his Father. His Kingdom is a Kingdom of self-sacrificing love, and those who would be members of that Kingdom must follow the King, must do what the King does.

We can clearly see in the Gospel that the world rejects this Kingship of Jesus. One of the most tragic passages in the Bible is the scene in which Pilate presents Jesus to the people, saying, “Behold, your king!” “They cried out, ‘Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”

This is astounding! “We have no king but Caesar”? The Jewish people have awaited the Messiah for hundreds of years. Now he has come, proclaiming to them the Kingdom of God, teaching and healing them with amazing signs and wonders, doing everything to minister to them in love. Meanwhile they have been horribly oppressed by Caesar’s Roman army for many years. Yet when their Messiah is finally presented to them, they cry out for his death and proclaim their allegiance to Caesar!

Sadly, the people who were present on that day are not different from the rest of us. The drama which took place in Jerusalem two thousand years ago takes place in our hearts and in our world every day. Who is our king? It is the question which Jesus put to his disciples earlier, “Who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15). Am I your king or not?

We are taught by the world to say that we are our own kings: *I must reign as the king of my own life. My will be done; my kingdom come. I must be recognized and honored. I must have the power and the glory. Others should serve me. I should have a comfortable, pleasure-filled life.* This is the way of Caesar, and of all earthly rulers. If we follow this way, then we must reject Jesus as King. We must reject his Kingship over us and join the crowd in yelling for his crucifixion.

If Jesus is our King, then we must follow his way. We must die to ourselves for love of him and our brothers and sisters. We must humble ourselves and seek to raise up others. We must decrease so that they might increase.

Today’s Gospel makes it clear that this is not a simple mental exercise to ponder. This is a bloody, torturous, life and death struggle. Someone has to die: either our own self-will or Jesus. Either we live for ourselves or for Jesus. Either we say with the psalmist, “My trust is in you, O LORD,” or we trust in ourselves.

We can stand under the tree of good and evil and take the fruit from Eve’s hand, trying to claim for ourselves a self-destructive “godlikeness,” or we can stand beneath the “tree” of the Cross with Mary, taking her hand and allowing her to guide us in the way of her Son, into a true likeness to him.

Today we behold our dying King. Let us, with our whole hearts and minds, take him as our King, and ask him to lead us in his way so that we might enter fully into his Kingdom.

In my life struggle, do I live for myself or Jesus, and am I living in my self-will or Jesus' will? Am I my own king by doing my own will, wanting to be honored, and living a pleasure-filled life? Can I humbly die to self for love of Jesus and others and to decrease so others may increase?

Mary, take me by your hand and guide me in the way of Jesus into a true likeness to him.

Notes

Pastoral Note: The Divine Mercy Novena

On Good Friday, we “look upon him whom we have pierced.” We venerate the wound in Jesus’ Sacred Heart from which blood and water gushed forth as a fountain of life and mercy for the whole world. This sacred fountain is symbolized in the image of the Divine Mercy by rays of red and white light streaming from Jesus’ Heart.

Therefore, in these holy days during which the liturgy celebrates the overflowing gift of new life in Christ, a particularly fitting devotion is the *Novena to the Divine Mercy*, taught by the Lord to St. Faustina. The Novena begins today, Good Friday, and extends up to the Saturday before the Second Sunday of Easter, which is also Divine Mercy Sunday.

April 3, Holy Saturday

Liturgical Note: The *Roman Missal* gives three points indicating the unique character of this middle day of the Triduum:

1. *On Holy Saturday the Church waits at the Lord's tomb in prayer and fasting, meditating on his Passion and Death and on his Descent into Hell, and awaiting his Resurrection.*

2. *The Church abstains from the Sacrifice of the Mass, with the sacred table left bare, until after the solemn Vigil, that is, in anticipation by night of the Resurrection, when the time comes for paschal joys, the abundance of which overflows to occupy fifty days.*

3. *Holy Communion may only be given on this day as Viaticum.*



Meditation:

Jesus is lying in the tomb. The long-awaited Messiah, he who is Emmanuel, God With Us, has been put to death. To enter fully into the mystery of this day, we must put ourselves in the place of the first disciples of Jesus, on that first Holy Saturday, two thousand years ago.

Our hearts are broken. Our minds are numb. We walk around in a daze, hardly able to speak. Only a few days ago, on Palm Sunday, we were rejoicing as Jesus entered triumphally into Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecies of Zechariah. We proclaimed him as King, as the Son of David. We had great hopes that God was working mightily through him to bring salvation and restoration. But only yesterday we saw the same crowd screaming for his death, yelling, "Crucify him!" We saw him handed over to his enemies to be mocked, tortured and put to death, while we ran away and hid in fear.

It seems that, in the end, sin has defeated grace, hate and selfishness have defeated love, hope has been brutally crushed. God came among us offering reconciliation and restoration, but we rejected him and killed him. As St. John says, "He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him" (Jn 1:11). Eternal light came into our darkness, but we chose darkness over light, and we extinguished the light. This is what we see today. Where now can we find any light, any hope, any joy?

Reflecting on the devastating experience of the first disciples makes us realize and humbly admit that this pattern is often repeated in our own lives. We want God's salvation and healing, but we reject it

when he offers it. We want his light, but when it starts to shine on us, we scurry back into darkness, hiding from the light. We push away those who try to love us. In our weakness and sin, we sabotage God's plan to heal us. We can easily lose hope.

Let us shift, now, and consider this day from Mary's point of view. What must she think and feel today, as her beloved Son lies dead in the tomb? She recalls and ponders Gabriel's words to her at the Annunciation: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:31-33). What is she to make of this promise now? Where is the greatness of her Son now? How will his rule be "without end"?

Mary also recalls Elizabeth's words to her at the Visitation: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). Even now, as her heart remains in the tomb with her dead Son, she believes and trusts what was spoken to her, that "nothing will be impossible for God" (Lk 1:37). He who brought life into her womb, where there was no chance for life, can also bring forth life even from the tomb. He is the God of life, and his plans for life cannot be frustrated by any power in Heaven or on earth. And so Mary does not despair. She waits in steadfast hope for God to act.

If we stay with Mary and learn from her today, we will come to know that it is precisely from the tomb that God's new life springs forth. Despite sin and death, despite hate and cruelty, despite fear and despair, despite hopelessness, God is not defeated. His love is infinitely stronger than any darkness.

Today we can also ponder the words from Friday's Psalm. Even when all hope seems lost and it seems that all we can say is, "I am forgotten like the unremembered dead; I am like a dish that is broken," we can nevertheless continue with the psalmist: "But my trust is in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.'" No matter the circumstances, we believe that what was spoken to us by the Lord will be fulfilled. We cling to the exhortation at the end of the Psalm: "Take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the LORD." We wait with Mary in

steadfast hope for the living God to act, to bring forth life from the hopelessness of death.

How do I obstruct God's plan to heal me? What attitudes and patterns extinguish the light in my life and bring darkness? Can I believe as Mary did as she stood by the Cross that nothing is impossible with God?

Mary, stay by my side today as I hope for the living God to bring forth life from the hopelessness of death.

Notes

***The Resurrection of the Lord
and
the Octave of Easter***

***Christ indeed from death is risen,
our new life obtaining.
Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!***

Easter Sequence

Theme for the Week

Christ is Risen! By his Death, he liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life, a sharing in the divine life of grace. Let us open our hearts to the gift and mystery of Easter that we may experience the fullness of life.

THE VICTORY OF LOVE OVER THE ROOT OF EVIL *A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis*

Today the Church's proclamation echoes throughout the world: "Jesus Christ is risen!" – "He is truly risen!" Like a new flame this Good News springs up in the night: the night of a world already faced with epochal challenges and now oppressed by a pandemic severely testing our whole human family. In this night, the Church's voice rings out: "Christ, my hope, has arisen!" (Easter Sequence).

This is a different "contagion," a message transmitted from heart to heart – for every human heart awaits this Good News. It is the contagion of hope: "Christ, my hope, is risen!" This is no magic formula that makes problems vanish. No, the resurrection of Christ is not that. Instead, it is the victory of love over the root of evil, a victory that does not "by-pass" suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good: this is the unique hallmark of the power of God.

The Risen Lord is also the Crucified One, not someone else. In his glorious body he bears indelible wounds: wounds that have become windows of hope. Let us turn our gaze to him that he may heal the wounds of an afflicted humanity.

Today my thoughts turn in the first place to the many who have been directly affected by the coronavirus: the sick, those who have died and family members who mourn the loss of their loved ones, to whom, in some cases, they were unable even to bid a final farewell. May the Lord of life welcome the departed into his Kingdom and grant comfort and hope to those still suffering, especially the elderly and those who are alone. May he never withdraw his consolation and help from those who are especially vulnerable, such as persons who work in nursing homes, or live in barracks and prisons. For many, this is an Easter of solitude lived amid the sorrow and hardship that the pandemic is causing, from physical suffering to economic difficulties.

This disease has not only deprived us of human closeness, but also of the possibility of receiving in person the consolation that flows from the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation. In many countries, it has not been possible to approach them, but the Lord has not left us alone! United in our prayer, we are convinced that he has laid his hand upon us (cf. *Ps* 138:5), firmly reassuring us: Do not be afraid, "I

have risen and I am with you still!” (cf. *Roman Missal*, Entrance Antiphon, Mass of Easter Sunday).

May Jesus, our Passover, grant strength and hope to doctors and nurses, who everywhere offer a witness of care and love for our neighbors, to the point of exhaustion and not infrequently at the expense of their own health. Our gratitude and affection go to them, to all who work diligently to guarantee the essential services necessary for civil society, and to the law enforcement and military personnel who in many countries have helped ease people’s difficulties and sufferings.

In these weeks, the lives of millions of people have suddenly changed. For many, remaining at home has been an opportunity to reflect, to withdraw from the frenetic pace of life, stay with loved ones and enjoy their company. For many, though, this is also a time of worry about an uncertain future, about jobs that are at risk and about other consequences of the current crisis. I encourage political leaders to work actively for the common good, to provide the means and resources needed to enable everyone to lead a dignified life and, when circumstances allow, to assist them in resuming their normal daily activities.

This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic. May the risen Jesus grant hope to all the poor, to those living on the peripheries, to refugees and the homeless. May these, the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters living in the cities and peripheries of every part of the world, not be abandoned. Let us ensure that they do not lack basic necessities (all the more difficult to find now that many businesses are closed) such as medicine and especially the possibility of adequate health care. In light of the present circumstances, may international sanctions be relaxed, since these make it difficult for countries on which they have been imposed to provide adequate support to their citizens, and may all nations be put in a position to meet the greatest needs of the moment through the reduction, if not the forgiveness, of the debt burdening the balance sheets of the poorest nations.

This is not a time for self-centeredness, because the challenge we are facing is shared by all, without distinguishing between persons. Among the many areas of the world affected by the coronavirus, I think in a special way of Europe. After the Second World War, this continent was able to rise again, thanks to a concrete spirit of solidarity that enabled

it to overcome the rivalries of the past. It is more urgent than ever, especially in the present circumstances, that these rivalries do not regain force, but that all recognize themselves as part of a single family and support one another. The European Union is presently facing an epochal challenge, on which will depend not only its future but that of the whole world. Let us not lose the opportunity to give further proof of solidarity, also by turning to innovative solutions. The only alternative is the selfishness of particular interests and the temptation of a return to the past, at the risk of severely damaging the peaceful coexistence and development of future generations.

This is not a time for division. May Christ our peace enlighten all who have responsibility in conflicts, that they may have the courage to support the appeal for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. This is not a time for continuing to manufacture and deal in arms, spending vast amounts of money that ought to be used to care for others and save lives. Rather, may this be a time for finally ending the long war that has caused such great bloodshed in beloved Syria, the conflict in Yemen and the hostilities in Iraq and in Lebanon. May this be the time when Israelis and Palestinians resume dialogue in order to find a stable and lasting solution that will allow both to live in peace. May the sufferings of the people who live in the eastern regions of Ukraine come to an end. May the terrorist attacks carried out against so many innocent people in different African countries come to an end.

This is not a time for forgetfulness. The crisis we are facing should not make us forget the many other crises that bring suffering to so many people. May the Lord of life be close to all those in Asia and Africa who are experiencing grave humanitarian crises, as in the Province of Cabo Delgado in the north of Mozambique. May he warm the hearts of the many refugees displaced because of wars, drought and famine. May he grant protection to migrants and refugees, many of them children, who are living in unbearable conditions, especially in Libya and on the border between Greece and Turkey. And I do not want to forget the island of Lesbos. In Venezuela, may he enable concrete and immediate solutions to be reached that can permit international assistance to a population suffering from the grave political, socio-economic and health situation.

Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Message,
Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020

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Pastoral Note: What is the “Paschal Mystery”?

At Easter time, the clergy and the theologians like to use a term that the rest of us often hear but may not fully understand: *the paschal mystery*. This is such an important expression that it is mentioned in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* more than forty times. But what does it really mean?

To put it simply, when we say “the paschal mystery,” we are talking about *everything* Jesus Christ has done to save us. “Paschal mystery” captures in two words the whole work of Christ. This is why it is such a useful expression. It is like a summary of the whole Bible, or a summary of the whole story of our salvation from sin and our new life in Christ.

The very center of the paschal mystery is Jesus’ life, suffering, death on the Cross, Resurrection from the dead and Ascension to the Father. It is his “passover” from death to life. (The word “paschal” comes from the Hebrew word for “passover.”)

Jesus Christ took on our human nature and died and rose again *for our sake*. Therefore the paschal mystery applies not only to Christ, but also to everyone who follows him. His “passover” is the key to our “passover.” The *Catechism* puts it this way: “The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life” (#654).

The Church’s mission is to live, celebrate and proclaim the paschal mystery. We do this in a special way when we gather for the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which all that Christ has done becomes present for us now. The Eucharist unites us with him, so that our whole life can give glory to God. This is the greatest fruit of the paschal mystery.

April 4, Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

Readings for the Easter Vigil:

- (1) Gn 1:1 – 2:2 or 1:1, 26-31 The first seven days; the story of creation
Ps 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35 or Ps 33:4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20-22
 - (2) Gn 22:1-18 or 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18 The test of Abraham's faith: the sacrifice of Isaac
Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11
 - (3) Ex 14:15 – 15:1 The Israelites cross the Red Sea
(Ps) Ex 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18
 - (4) Is 54:5-14 The enduring love of God is revealed
Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13
 - (5) Is 55:1-11 Seek the Lord; He is rich in mercy
(Ps) Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6
 - (6) Bar 3:9-15, 32 – 4:4 Wisdom comes from God; walk in his ways
Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11
 - (7) Ez 36:16-28 God's people were defiled, but he will cleanse them
Ps 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4 or Is 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 or Ps 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19
 - (8) Rom 6:3-11 If we have died in Christ, we will also live with Him.
Ps 118:1-2, 16, 17, 22-23
 - (9) Mk 16:1-7 Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, has been raised
-



Meditation:

The high point of the entire year is the Easter Vigil, “the mother of all vigils.” It is not simply another Mass; it is the richest expression, the principal celebration of the whole liturgical life. The rest of the year can be considered a continuously unfolding meditation on what takes place on this most holy night.

The Easter Vigil has four parts:

1. The Service of Light

We begin in darkness. From the light of a new fire, the Easter Candle is lit. This symbol of the Risen Christ is carried in procession into the church as the Light of Christ spreads to the whole congregation. Then the solemn and joyful Easter Proclamation, the *Exultet*, is sung.

2. The Liturgy of the Word

A rich feast of the Word of God – nine readings and eight psalms or canticles – is at the heart of the Vigil (the number can be reduced if necessary). Each reading is followed by a corresponding prayer. In the readings, the highlights of the history of salvation are recalled, not only as a memory of past events, but as a celebration of the salvation we experience on this very night. Between the Old Testament readings and the reading from Romans, we sing the *Gloria* and joyfully ring the church bells.

3. *The Liturgy of Baptism*

The baptism of our newest brothers and sisters brings a special joy to the Easter Vigil. As we rejoice at the Resurrection of Christ, tonight we see with our own eyes his ultimate victory over sin and death being applied to us; we see the true rebirth of new Christians. We rejoice in the gift of baptism, which is our personal participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ. We invoke the Saints in the litany. The water is blessed through the immersion of the Easter Candle. We renounce sin and Satan, and profess our faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4. *The Liturgy of the Eucharist*

The light of Christ, the word of God and the power of baptism all prepare us for the moment of Easter Communion. We have shared in the death of Christ, now we share in his risen life. Amen! Alleluia!

The Mass of Easter Day



First Reading: Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Peter proceeded to speak and said: “You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

or *Alleluia.*

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

Let the house of Israel say,

“His mercy endures forever.”

R. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

or *Alleluia.*

“The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.

R. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.
or *Alleluia*.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.
or *Alleluia*.



Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.



Sequence: Victimae Paschali Laudes

Christians, to the Paschal Victim

Offer your thankful praises!

A Lamb the sheep redeems;
Christ, who only is sinless,
Reconciles sinners to the Father.

Death and life have contended in that combat stupendous:
The Prince of life, who died, reigns immortal.

Speak, Mary, declaring
What you saw, wayfaring.

“The tomb of Christ, who is living,
The glory of Jesus’ resurrection;
Bright angels attesting,
The shroud and napkin resting.

Yes, Christ my hope is arisen;
To Galilee he goes before you.”
Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.
Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!
Amen. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation: see 1 Corinthians 5:7b-8a

Alleluia, alleluia. Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed; let us then feast with joy in the Lord. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: John 20:1-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

or ***Mark 16:1-7***

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, “Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large. On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. He said to them, “Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.’”

or ***Luke 24:13-35 (for afternoon or evening Masses)***

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus’ disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it

happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.



Meditation:

The Lord is truly risen! Alleluia! Those of us who attended the Easter Vigil last night welcomed with great delight the glorious light that pierced through the darkness and the victorious ringing of the Church bells that pealed as we sang *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. The Lord's death left us in the dark and made us numb. But now we celebrate that he is fully and truly alive!

This glorious rebirth of life and light resonates deeply for all of us as we slowly recover from the havoc that the COVID-19 global pandemic has brought into our lives. Despite massive uncertainties and difficulties, we have clung to our faith in the Lord, the Prince of life, who reigns after conquering death in what the Sequence calls a “combat stupendous.”

In today’s Scripture readings, there are two things that confirm the fact of the Lord’s Resurrection. One is the empty tomb and the other is the appearance of the Lord himself to his chosen ones. In the Gospel options that today’s liturgy provides, we find one or the other. In the passages from John and Mark, there is the witness of the empty tomb. In the passage from Luke, the Lord himself appears and accompanies his disciples on their walk to Emmaus. We will ponder these Resurrection witnesses today.

The empty tomb is a “negative witness.” The reasoning is that if the Lord had not risen, the tomb would not be empty. It should still contain his body that was buried there on Friday afternoon. As the Scriptures tell us, a heavy stone was placed over the entrance to the tomb. In Mark’s account, the women who came to the tomb on Sunday morning to anoint the dead body of Jesus were concerned about how they would be able to move the stone aside. But there was no need! The stone was already rolled back, and the body of Jesus was nowhere to be found.

The tomb is hard, cold and dark; it holds only death. Sin and sinfulness can be described as such too. They truly make our hearts hard and cold – “stony” – as the prophet Ezekiel describes a rebellious, sinful heart (Eze 36:26). Sin and sinfulness, which St. Paul describes as “the yeast of malice and wickedness,” lead only to death. Jesus, the Paschal Lamb, entered into the realm of death; he allowed himself to be buried in a tomb. This is how far he has gone in his desire to save us. He has taken upon himself the entire human experience, up to its farthest point, to the ultimate destiny of a life of sinfulness – darkness, hardness of heart, death.

But Christ has the last say! As we declare in the Easter Sequence, today we see with Mary Magdalene, “the tomb of Christ, who is living, the glory of Jesus’ resurrection; bright angels attesting, the shroud and napkin resting. Yes, Christ my hope is arisen.” The empty tomb is a Resurrection witness, telling us that sin does not reign, Christ does.

In addition to the empty tomb, and far surpassing it, is the revelation of the Risen Christ himself. He who reigns forever reveals himself as having conquered death. At first, the disciples do not recognize him. Even when Jesus draws near the two disciples and walks with them on the road to Emmaus, they do not recognize him. Maybe they are grief-stricken at Jesus' death? Maybe Jesus is transformed beyond recognition? Maybe the disciples simply do not have the capability to fathom the resurrection event? Whatever the reason, Jesus overcomes it by revealing himself as risen. In the Emmaus account, he reveals himself first through the Scriptures and then in the breaking of the bread.

Our own journey from the death of sin to the life of glory is based on, and is made possible by, the victorious mission of Jesus Christ. He journeys with us and reveals to us the glory that awaits us. But our sinful eyes fail to recognize him. Our feeble brains cannot fathom his Paschal Mystery. Our guilt drags us down. Thus, it is important to pay close attention to the ways the Risen Christ reveals himself. Do we notice that a heavy stone is rolled away from our hearts when we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Do we seek the company of Christian friends, as Mary Magdalene sought Simon Peter and the beloved disciple? Do we pay attention to the subtle details of Christ's work, as the beloved disciple did in noticing the burial clothes and the cloth that covered his head? Do we allow the Scriptures to make our hearts burn with love? Are we eager for the breaking of the bread, the Holy Eucharist?

We Christians are people of Easter faith. Despite our sinfulness, we are not stuck in a state which only leads to death. Rather, we draw near to Christ who is risen and truly alive. With Easter faith we experience the Lord's Resurrection, which moves us to transformation and to proclamation. Today's first reading gives us the example of Peter. He stands as a chosen witness, proclaiming that the Lord took upon himself suffering and death and was raised from the dead. As Easter people, we too are "witnesses chosen by God in advance." Our forty days of intense Lenten preparation brings us to this glorious Day of the Lord's Resurrection. Let us live with renewed and joyful faith, for "this is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. Alleluia!"

In the massive uncertainties and difficulties of life, do I cling to my faith in the Risen Lord? In what way does my feeble brain and sinful eyes fail to recognize him in my life? Does faith in the Resurrected Lord, move me to transformation and to proclamation?

Mary, fill my heart with the joy of Easter as I ponder on the mystery of the Resurrection.

Notes

April 5, Monday in the Octave of Easter



First Reading: Acts 2:14, 22-33

On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: “You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

“You who are children of Israel, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him:

*I saw the Lord ever before me,
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.
Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted;
my flesh, too, will dwell in hope,
because you will not abandon my soul to the nether world,
nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he poured forth the promise of the Holy Spirit that he received from the Father, as you both see and hear.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 16:1-2a, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

or *Alleluia.*

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the LORD, “My Lord are you.”
O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

or *Alleluia.*

I bless the LORD who counsels me;
 even in the night my heart exhorts me.
I set the LORD ever before me;
 with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.
or *Alleluia.*

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
 my body, too, abides in confidence;
because you will not abandon my soul to the nether world,
 nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.
or *Alleluia.*

You will show me the path to life,
 fullness of joys in your presence,
 the delights at your right hand forever.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.
or *Alleluia.*

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:24

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

 ***Gospel: Matthew 28:8-15***

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce the news to his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had happened. The chief priests assembled with the elders and took counsel; then they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep.’ And if this gets to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has circulated among the Jews to the present day.



Meditation:

In today's Resurrection account from the Gospel of Matthew, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" run from the empty tomb, "fearful yet overjoyed," to tell the disciples the astonishing news they received from the angel. Two facts immediately stand out: there were two of them and both were women. Matthew is fond of including more than one person in his narratives, where Mark often mentions just one. In the Scriptures, "two or three witnesses" is enough to validate a testimony; if all the witnesses recount the same the details, their testimony is more likely to be true. However, in the culture of that time, that both were women weakens the case. Still, scholars point out that the Gospel writers did not hide this otherwise "embarrassing" detail, a fact which reveals the authenticity of their account.

In this Gospel, both women testify to the two proofs of the Resurrection that we pondered yesterday: the empty tomb and the appearance of the Risen Lord. When the Lord appears to them, after admonishing them not to be afraid, he gives them clear instructions: "Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." "Brothers" here refers to the disciples to whom the two women were going anyway. But now they have much more to tell them – not only about the empty tomb, but about an encounter with the Risen Lord! The surprising part is, "go to Galilee." Why Galilee? Isn't Jerusalem the center of Jewish power? Why won't the Risen Lord reveal himself here in Jerusalem? Why go to Galilee?

We recall that the public ministry of Jesus started in Galilee (cf. Mt 4:12ff). One of the first things he did was begin to call his disciples (cf. Mt 4:18ff). So with this instruction that his disciples should meet him in Galilee, Jesus is inviting them back to the place of their first encounter.

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* ("God is Love"), Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*DCE* 1). Our being Christians, our being Easter people, is all about our encounter with the Risen Lord. In the instruction to meet him in Galilee, the Gospel further indicates the importance of the first encounter. This naturally leads us

to recall our Baptism, our first encounter with the Lord and the Church as Christians. It is not surprising, then, that the renewal of our baptismal vows is part of the Easter liturgy. Through this liturgical practice, the Church takes on the same mission as the two Marys, telling us Christians of the desire of the Risen Lord that we rekindle our first encounter with him as his disciples.

As the *Catechism* tells us, when we were baptized, we were incorporated into Christ and given a share in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly office (cf. CCC 897). A *priest* offers sacrifice and prayer on behalf of the people as Christ does. A *prophet* proclaims the truth and the Good News no matter the circumstances as Christ does. A *king* is a master of his desires and governs with justice and righteousness as Christ does.

Today's Psalm is a priestly prayer. In praying it, we plead to God to be our safe refuge. We rely on him as the source of our sure hope. We bless the Lord for all his goodness. We entrust ourselves to God who will not abandon our soul to the nether world nor allow us undergo corruption. St. Peter proclaims in today's first reading that this Psalm is also a prophetic prayer, and it is fulfilled in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter himself boldly testifies, like the two Marys, that the Lord is truly risen.

At the renewal of our Baptismal promises yesterday, we were asked to renounce sin and Satan. This is an expression of our kingly office, patterned after the Kingship of Christ. We exercise a share in his dominion over evil. In the second part of today's Gospel, the chief priests and elders show a contrary example. Instead of rejecting sin, they deliberately pursue it. They commit themselves to manipulation and deception. We who are baptized into Christ are called to be faithful and truthful, to bear witness to him by dealing with others always with integrity and a sense of justice. As we celebrate that the Lord is Risen, let us more actively live out our baptismal promises and serve as priests, prophets and kings, patterned after our glorious Risen Lord.

In praying, do I plead to God to be my safe refuge and to rely on him as the source of all good? As a Christian, how do I encounter the Risen Lord in my daily life? Am I faithful and truthful in witnessing to others the Resurrection with integrity and justice?

Mary, inspire me to live out more actively my baptismal promises and serve as priest, prophet and king, patterned after my glorious Risen Lord.

Notes

April 6, Tuesday in the Octave of Easter



First Reading: Acts 2:36-41

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the Jewish people, “Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.” He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

or ***Alleluia.***

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

or ***Alleluia.***

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,

To deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

or ***Alleluia.***

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.

May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

or ***Alleluia.***

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:24

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: John 20:11-18

Mary Magdalene stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the Body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni,” which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and then reported what he had told her.



Meditation:

Mary Magdalene appears in all four Gospels as the first witness of the empty tomb and of the Risen Lord. She was personally commissioned by Jesus to share the Good News with the Apostles – which is why we honor her as “the Apostle to the Apostles.” Today’s Gospel tells of Mary’s first encounter with the Risen Lord. As it happens with many of the first witnesses, she does not initially recognize him. Mary’s first impression is that Jesus is a gardener who may have taken away the Lord’s body. But why does she see him as a gardener? Why not mistake him as a graverobber? Or a rabbi? Or a random bystander?

Of the few stories that are found in all four Gospels, one is the account of the multiplication of the loaves, and another is the story of Jesus’ burial in a new tomb hewn out of rock. However, only John’s version of these two stories includes the detail of a *garden*. In his account about the loaves, he notes that: “there was a great deal of grass in that place” (Jn 6:10), describing a comfortable spot for people to recline while they eat. In John 19, the evangelist notes that: “...in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried” (v. 41). This detail tells us that it is important that we find ourselves, like Mary Magdalene, in a garden.

Mention of a garden in the Scriptures draws our attention to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2-3. It was in that garden that man was in an open and free relationship with God and constantly in his presence. The evangelist is taking us back to the very beginning. If yesterday's Gospel, with its mention of going to *Galilee*, drew us back to our Baptism, today's Gospel, with its mention of a *garden*, draws us further back, to our creation. Christ's Death and Resurrection are situated in a garden to show us that we are in the presence of a new creation, of which Mary is the first witness. As we celebrate and rejoice that the Lord is Risen, we are likewise invited to reclaim our birthright to be in an open, free, and intimate relationship with God – to be born again from above. We are reminded of our new identity as sons and daughters of God, who calls each of us by name, just as the Risen Lord did to Mary Magdalene.

However, despite this sublime truth about our new creation, we may be tempted to think that, because we are sinners or broken or weak or prone to failure, we are stuck in our old condition. How can we possibly reclaim our original innocence and purity? Today's readings show us the way.

The evangelist notes that Mary, after replying to the angels' question, "turned around." And when the Risen Lord called her by name, again Mary "turned." This repeated mention of turning is not only an indicator of Mary's physical movements in her search for the Lord, it also represents a spiritual movement for us all: a change of heart. As often as we fall, we must turn our hearts and minds back to the Lord. Just as Mary "turns" twice, there are two dimensions to our change of heart, our *metanoia*.

Today's first reading tells us about the first part of *metanoia*. St. Peter, in his proclamation on Pentecost, is simple and straightforward. When the people ask what they must do, he answers, "Repent and be baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins." Repentance, a pillar of our Lenten journey, is necessary in Easter as well – and for the rest of our lives. As often as we fall into sin, we are to rise again through the mercy of the Risen Lord. The Easter Octave is a fitting time to return to God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This whole week is "the day the LORD has made." The Octave ends on Divine Mercy Sunday, when the floodgates of God's Mercy are open to everyone.

But turning away from sin is only the first step; the second step is a turning towards God. We turn away from the evil of sin and turn towards the goodness of the Lord. Today's Psalm reminds us that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." His goodness includes 'delivering us from death and preserving us in spite of famine.' We can truly celebrate Easter by imitating St. Mary Magdalene, turning away from sin and turning towards him who calls each of us by name!

Will I accept the Risen Lord's invitation to be born again in an intimate relationship with him? Repentance was the pillar of my Lenten journey but do I realize it is necessary the rest of my life? Have I experienced that by turning away from the evil of sin I can turn to the goodness of God?

Mary, be at my side as I turn away from sin and turn to God who calls me by name.

Notes



First Reading: Acts 3:1-10

Peter and John were going up to the temple area for the three o'clock hour of prayer. And a man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called "the Beautiful Gate" every day to beg for alms from the people who entered the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk." Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the one who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with amazement and astonishment at what had happened to him.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 105:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8-9

Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord.

or *Alleluia.*

Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;
make known among the nations his deeds.
Sing to him, sing his praise,
proclaim all his wondrous deeds.

R. Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord.

or *Alleluia.*

Glory in his holy name;
rejoice, O hearts that seek the LORD!
Look to the LORD in his strength;
seek to serve him constantly.

R. Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord.

or *Alleluia.*

You descendants of Abraham, his servants,
sons of Jacob, his chosen ones!
He, the LORD, is our God;
throughout the earth his judgments prevail.

R. Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord.

or *Alleluia.*

He remembers forever his covenant
which he made binding for a thousand generations—
Which he entered into with Abraham
and by his oath to Isaac.

R. Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord.
or *Alleluia*.

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:24

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. *Alleluia, alleluia.*



Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his Body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he

went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?” So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the Eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



Meditation:

The Easter Triduum that we celebrated last week summarizes our whole faith, but it does not exhaust what it means to live what we have received. The Easter Octave and the whole Fifty Days of Easter show us how the new life that has burst forth from the tomb is passed on to us and extended to others. As the readings today show us, the Risen Lord meets us in our crippled and discouraged condition and fills our hearts with renewed strength and joy.

The two disciples leaving Jerusalem on Easter morning had been putting their hopes in Jesus, but now that he is dead, there seems to be no more reason to stay around. They have heard a report that Jesus is alive, but they do not want to risk being made fools of by some hysterical women, so as soon as the Sabbath is over, they leave town. They represent us when we are hurt or discouraged, when we feel we must isolate ourselves or escape somehow from the all-too-painful realities of life.

We might think that Jesus would not bother pursuing such men who are, after all, intent on getting away from him. We would simply let them go their way, and we expect Jesus to treat us as we would treat them. This is because we do not understand the way of love. Jesus does not give up on those who give up on him. He actually walks along with the two disciples as they leave. He does not abandon us. His love moves him to travel the road of life with us, whether we recognize him or not.

To their credit, the two disciples are at least open to dialogue with a stranger. They are bewildered and hurt, but not so hurt as to close their hearts. They even invite him to stay with them in Emmaus. Their

concern for his welfare shows that their hearts are reawakening to love. They show us again that hospitality to a stranger, even the least one, is an opening to meet Christ (cf. Mt 25:40). Only later do they realize that their whole time with this stranger has been a real encounter with the Risen Lord. First he warmed their hearts by means of the word of God, and then, even more strikingly, he revealed himself in the breaking of the bread. The structure of each Mass follows this pattern exactly, with the Liturgy of the Word followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We meet the Risen Lord Jesus at every Mass – but do we recognize him?

Like all who experience Easter faith, the two men pass from sorrow to joy through a personal encounter with the Risen Lord. In their joy, they rush back to evangelize the others – to tell them the good news. When they left town that morning, they felt they had nothing but heavy hearts; certainly they had nothing to give to others. Now they do have something to give: the Good News of Jesus risen, present in the breaking of the bread.

The crippled man sitting at the Beautiful Gate of the temple is better off than the two disciples were. At least he still has some hope of getting something. When Peter and John arrive, Peter makes the wonderful declaration: “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you!” The beggar could never have guessed what Peter meant. It seems Peter has less than the beggar; if he has no silver or gold, what can he possibly give him? He gives something much better than money, far more valuable: Jesus Christ. Soon the beggar is leaping for joy and praising the Lord.

Since we are born in a condition of sin, we can accurately say that we are all, like the beggar, “crippled from birth.” Our experiences of life in the world – disappointments and injustices – can leave us, like the two disciples, confused and bitter. Jesus meets us where we are, whether we are sitting in our weaknesses or running away in our fear. He comes to us, speaks to our hearts, and gives us new life. We may have no more silver or gold than we had before, but now we have the greatest treasure of all, faith in Jesus Christ. When we receive the gift of living faith and we open our hearts to the Lord, not only can we stand and walk, we can jump for joy as we run to share this new life, this priceless treasure, with others.

In my crippled condition, has the Risen Lord filled my heart with renewed strength and joy? When I am hurt or discouraged, do I feel like escaping from the all too painful realities of life? When I am confused, have I felt Jesus speaking to me in my heart and giving me new life?

Mary, awaken my heart to the presence of Jesus each day.

Notes



First Reading: Acts 3:11-26

As the crippled man who had been cured clung to Peter and John, all the people hurried in amazement toward them in the portico called “Solomon’s Portico.” When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, “You children of Israel, why are you amazed at this, and why do you look so intently at us as if we had made him walk by our own power or piety? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and denied in Pilate’s presence, when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, this man, whom you see and know, his name has made strong, and the faith that comes through it has given him this perfect health, in the presence of all of you. Now I know, brothers and sisters, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Christ already appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the times of universal restoration of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. For Moses said:

*A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you
from among your own kin;*

to him you shall listen in all that he may say to you.

*Everyone who does not listen to that prophet
will be cut off from the people.*

“Moreover, all the prophets who spoke, from Samuel and those afterwards, also announced these days. You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors when he said to Abraham,

In your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

For you first, God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 8:2ab, 5, 6-7, 8-9

O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

or ***Alleluia.***

O LORD, our Lord,

how glorious is your name over all the earth!

What is man that you should be mindful of him,

or the son of man that you should care for him?

R. O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

or ***Alleluia.***

You have made him little less than the angels,

and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him rule over the works of your hands,

putting all things under his feet.

R. O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

or ***Alleluia.***

All sheep and oxen,

yes, and the beasts of the field,

The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea,

and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

R. O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

or ***Alleluia.***

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:24

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Luke 24:35-48

The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way, and how they had come to recognize him in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”



Meditation:

The Church treats the Octave of Easter as one single day, the Day of the Resurrection. One sign of this is that we use the same alleluia verse every day throughout the Octave: “This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it” (Ps 118:24). We keep returning to the events of Easter Day, to allow the power of the risen life to penetrate us more deeply. The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a matter of what happened to his body in the tomb one day a long time ago; it is also about what is happening to us today. The word of God speaks to us in the present.

Today’s Gospel takes place late in the evening of Easter Sunday. The two disciples have left Emmaus without even finishing their supper, and rushed back the seven miles to Jerusalem, to tell the others about what happened, and “how they had come to recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread.” Suddenly Jesus appears again! He also rushed back to Jerusalem. In fact, he was with the two men the whole way back, though they could not see him and were not fully aware of his presence. This is one of main lessons of Easter: *the presence of Jesus in our midst*. If Jesus accompanies us when we run away, all the more is he with us when we act in his name. He remains with us as he promised, and he works through us as we share the Good News.

The reaction of the Apostles, however, is not “Alleluia, he is risen!” Rather, in their terror they think they are seeing a ghost. Jesus patiently takes steps to convince them that he is really and physically alive. When we are slow to believe, Jesus keeps working to convince us. Not only does he want us to know him, he also wants us to understand the meaning of the Scriptures. He equips us so that he can send us out to the world as his witnesses. We cannot be effective witnesses if we allow doubts to linger in our minds. We do not believe in a ghost, a myth, a

theory, or an ideology. We believe in Jesus Christ, who truly died and rose again, and who remains with us in the power of his Spirit.

Peter is one of the Lord's witnesses. At the Beautiful Gate of the temple he was so convinced of the power of Jesus at work through him that he was able to heal the lame beggar in Jesus' name. In today's reading, the people who recognize that a miracle has occurred are crowding around. Peter realizes that they do not know what the miracle really means. They seem to think that Peter did something on his own power. They need help to move from excitement and amazement to faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus explained the meaning of the Scriptures to the Apostles on Easter night, that they may believe, so now Peter does the same for the crowd, that they too may come to believe that Jesus is alive. He takes great pains to explain to them that this miracle is a sign that Jesus is a great healer and the promised Messiah, as foretold in the Scriptures. One aspect of being a witness is to be able to explain how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

One of the scriptural prophecies that Jesus emphasizes to the Apostles is this: "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day." Peter makes the same point to the crowd. In suffering, the Lord has taken on our sin; in rising, he has set us free from sin and given us new life. Peter's message – and the message of everyone who serves as the Lord's witness – is that now we can be free of sin in Jesus' name. The cure of a lame man is wonderful, but forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life is much more wonderful. Peter's words to the crowd are also addressed to us: "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment." When we repent and are converted, and our sins are wiped away, it is again Easter Day for us. We share in the risen life of the Lord. *This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. Alleluia!*

Am I allowing the power of the risen life to penetrate me more deeply during this Octave of Easter? Do I ponder on the patience of Jesus as he keeps on forming me daily to believe and trust him? Like Peter, am I a faithful witness who leads others to believe in the Risen Lord?

Mary, open my heart to the joy of God's word each day.

Notes



First Reading: Acts 4:1-12

After the crippled man had been cured, while Peter and John were still speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees confronted them, disturbed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They laid hands on Peter and John and put them in custody until the next day, since it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word came to believe and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

On the next day, their leaders, elders, and scribes were assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly class. They brought them into their presence and questioned them, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered them, “Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed. He 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.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118:1-2, 4, 22-24, 25-27a

The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.
or ***Alleluia.***

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

Let the house of Israel say:

“His mercy endures forever.”

Let those who fear the LORD say,

“His mercy endures forever.”

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.
or ***Alleluia.***

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

This is the day the LORD has made;
let us be glad and rejoice in it.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.
or ***Alleluia.***

O LORD, grant salvation!

O LORD, grant prosperity!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;

we bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has given us light.

***R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.
or Alleluia.***

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:24

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: John 21:1-14

Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.



Meditation:

Every day in the Octave of Easter we ponder another Gospel account of the appearances of the Risen Christ. The Church knows we can be slow to believe, so through the liturgy each day she guides us deeper into the mystery of the risen life we have received.

The appearance of Jesus on the shore of the lake takes place after seven of the Apostles, led by Peter, try to return to their former way of life, that is, fishing. Perhaps they feel some shame or discouragement over their unfaithfulness to Jesus in his time of trial, and this gives them the notion that they are not worthy to serve as his witnesses – in spite of the assurances Jesus gave them in his first two appearances. When we are feeling down, it is easy to think that the world will provide us with some relief, so we are tempted to go “fishing” for comfort where we do not belong.

The account of this third appearance of Jesus is rich with symbolism, but one of the central lessons it teaches us is the contrast between what we can accomplish on our own power, and what God can accomplish when we act in his power. We learn the difference between what we can do *in our own name* and what we can do *in the name of Jesus*. The difference could not be made more obvious to the fisherman-apostles. On their own, they fish all night and catch nothing. At daybreak, acting on the simple suggestion of a stranger on the shore, they make one cast and catch so many fish that they cannot even haul in the net! They quickly realize that this is no stranger. Though they failed to recognize him at first, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, after this abundant catch it is obvious to them: “It is the Lord!”

The event reminds the Apostles of a similar miracle Jesus worked some three years earlier, when he first called them to follow him as “fishers of men” (Lk 5:1-11). That time, Jesus was in the boat with them. This time, he stands on the shore, implying that they should be there also, with him. Peter suddenly realizes that he is not where he belongs. He is on the sea, while Jesus is on the land. He immediately abandons the boat, the nets, the fish, even his companions. He does not pay any attention to what he has left behind. He must be with the Lord!

When we are with Jesus, when we act in his name, our efforts bear fruit. There are one hundred fifty-three large fish in the net because the disciples simply obeyed the Lord’s word. The fish are concrete evidence

of what the Lord taught at the Last Supper, in the parable of the vine and the branches: “Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

Peter learned the lesson well this time. He left fishing forever and dedicated himself to “fishing for men,” the work of evangelization. We learn from the first reading what happened when he preached the Gospel to the crowds after the healing of the lame man. The results were phenomenal. Not one hundred fifty-three fish, but over five thousand men – from one afternoon of preaching!

The next day, Peter stands before Annas, Caiaphas, and the whole Sanhedrin – the very council that condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy. At the time of Jesus’ trial, Peter could not stand even before the innocent question of a servant girl. That was because he was still acting in his own name, on his own power. The result was that he was a shameful failure. Now he is an extraordinary model of courage. The interrogators ask: “By what name have you done this?” Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter responds simply and honestly: “It was done in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.” He goes on, speaking with astonishing conviction, “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.” Peter is trying to win them for Christ. He is fishing for their hearts, in the name of Jesus.

The lesson Peter learned is now being taught to us. If we waste our time fishing for fulfillment in the waters of the world, we will come up empty-handed. The world offers only useless enticements for the eye and for the flesh (cf. 1 Jn 2:16). The world exalts vain human power, and it uses the Holy Name only as a curse. Our life, now that we have accepted the gift of Easter faith, is built on divine power, the very “cornerstone” of reality, Jesus Christ. We rejoice in our powerlessness, for now we can know and bear witness to the power of Jesus’ name.

When I feel down, do I easily think that the pleasures of the world will give me comfort? When do I act on my own power rather than in the name of Jesus? Do I rejoice in my powerlessness, knowing that it is in Jesus’ power alone that I can bear witness?

Mary, teach me to rejoice in my powerlessness so that I may seek the strength of the Lord.

Notes



First Reading: Acts 4:13-21

Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary men, the leaders, elders, and scribes were amazed, and they recognized them as the companions of Jesus. Then when they saw the man who had been cured standing there with them, they could say nothing in reply. So they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, and conferred with one another, saying, “What are we to do with these men? Everyone living in Jerusalem knows that a remarkable sign was done through them, and we cannot deny it. But so that it may not be spread any further among the people, let us give them a stern warning never again to speak to anyone in this name.”

So they called them back and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Peter and John, however, said to them in reply, “Whether it is right in the sight of God for us to obey you rather than God, you be the judges. It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard.” After threatening them further, the Jews released them, finding no way to punish them, on account of the people who were all praising God for what had happened.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118:1, 14-15ab, 16-18, 19-21

I will give thanks to you, Lord, for you have answered me.

or *Alleluia.*

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

The joyful shout of victory
in the tents of the just.

R. I will give thanks to you, Lord, for you have answered me.

or *Alleluia.*

“The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD has struck with power.”

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.

Though the LORD has chastised me,
yet he has not delivered me to death.

R. I will give thanks to you, Lord, for you have answered me.

or *Alleluia.*

Open to me the gates of justice;

I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD;

the just shall enter it.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me

and have been my savior.

R. I will give thanks to you, Lord, for you have answered me.

or *Alleluia.*

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:24

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Mark 16:9-15

When Jesus had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either.

But later, as the Eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised. He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”



Meditation:

On the seventh day of the Octave of Easter, we ponder St. Mark’s summary of what happened on Easter Day. What stands out is the Apostles’ disbelief that Jesus is really alive. Even though he had told them he would rise on the third day, and even though three eyewitnesses – Mary Magdalene, Cleopas, and his companion – personally testify that they have seen him, the Apostles still stubbornly refuse to believe it. The other Gospel accounts of the Easter events portray the Apostles somewhat more positively, but the truth is that, at first, some of them simply did not believe. The best example is “doubting Thomas,” about whom we will reflect tomorrow.

It is not surprising that Jesus rebukes them “for their unbelief and hardness of heart.” What *is* surprising is that he does not seem to view their weakness of faith as an obstacle to their task as missionaries. Immediately after the rebuke, he still entrusts the Gospel to them: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” When the Apostles go forth as they have been commanded, they are humbly aware of their own failure to believe, and of the Lord’s mercy and patience. This experience will make them more merciful and patient evangelizers of those who, like themselves, resist even eyewitness testimonies.

This Gospel is a good preparation for tomorrow’s feast of Divine Mercy, which will conclude the Octave. When we see how merciful Jesus is to his slow-believing Apostles, especially to Thomas, we realize he is that merciful to us too, even though we have resisted him. He does not give up on us or reject us. When we need correction, he will rebuke us, just as he rebuked the Eleven. We experience the rebuke of the Lord in our conscience, where the truth of our own stubborn self-will or duplicity is exposed before our inner sight.

It can be painful to be pierced with the truth. The Apostles surely felt this kind of moral pain when Jesus appeared and reproved them for their unbelief. Ultimately, however, the pain is passing, while the light and freedom it brings remain. Correction is simply another manifestation of the Lord’s love and mercy, as he says clearly in the Book of Revelation: “Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent” (Rv 3:19). The call to repent of our sins of disbelief is part of the Good News which we are sent into the world to proclaim.

In the first reading, we see the situation reversed. Now Peter and John are the believers, testifying with great confidence to what they have seen and heard, and the priests and elders are the ones in stubborn disbelief. Why do the leaders not believe the Apostles? It seems that they simply cannot accept the testimony of “uneducated, ordinary men.” The Apostles are too lowly for them. It is true that the Apostles are beneath them in social standing, but that is not the point at all. Peter and John insist that they are not proclaiming themselves or acting in their own name; they are proclaiming the name of Jesus. Since they are

focusing not on themselves but on the Lord, no human court can intimidate them.

However, the elders consider Jesus beneath them too. This is the core of their problem. For Jesus, who emptied himself to make himself lower than us all, is actually far above us. He has been given “the name that is above every other name,” and now, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11).

The readings present us with two related questions: First, do we believe or disbelieve the testimony of the Apostles? In answer, we can affirm that we believe. We have already chosen the way of faith that has been handed down to us from the Apostles. The second question puts that decision to the test: Do we obey God or man? We believe in our hearts, but when it comes to bearing witness before men, we sometimes falter. Our need for human affirmation is strong. We are like Peter. When Jesus asked him what he believed, he testified, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” But when a servant girl questioned him, he outwardly denied what he knew in his heart.

In today’s secular world, there is a growing hostility to Christian faith. The world insists that it knows better than we do, and tries to silence the Gospel, either by intimidation or by force. Believers are looked down upon as “uneducated, ordinary men.” We declare with the Apostles that it is better for us to obey God than men. “It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard” – even if we will suffer for it. The disbelieving world needs the faithful witness of those who believe. We are called not only to believe in Jesus Christ in our hearts, but also testify to what we believe with our words and our lives.

In humility, can I accept correction as simply a manifestation of the Lord’s love and mercy for me? In my witnessing of Jesus, do I tend to focus too much on myself and not on him? Do I testify to others what I believe in with my words and my life?

Mary, inspire my words and actions to testify only in the Risen of the Lord.

Notes