

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

Holy Thursday to Pentecost

April 2 to May 23, 2026

Cycle A - Year 2

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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

The Lord Jesus, loving to the end, pours himself out completely in love. He asks us to follow him and to imitate him, giving ourselves completely in love for God and for one another. Strengthened by his love, let us open our hearts to love others with sacrificial love.

The Easter Triduum

Pastoral Note: The document of Pope 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 2, Holy Thursday, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper



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, says the Lord: 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:

The Bible has sometimes been called a great love story – and it is! God tells us in the Bible that he loves us and wants to bring us into union with himself. Throughout the Old Testament he repeatedly assures his Chosen People of his love for them and calls them into a covenant relationship with him. If that were all that God did – revealing his love for us by means of the law and the prophets, and by his care for us throughout history – it would already be a great and undeserved gift of love.

But we know that he went infinitely further than this. In the Incarnation, God himself came down to earth and lived among us, sharing our human nature. Jesus Christ is THE revelation of God's love. He shows us what love is, and he shows us that God loves us. In him, we see enfleshed the love which the Father has for us.

From the fall of Adam and Eve, God worked to restore humanity's relationship with him, which we had broken. We can see throughout the Old Testament countless instances in which the prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah who would deliver God's people into freedom. We have been reading such prophecies throughout this Holy Week.

We can also see many events and people in the Old Testament which prefigure Christ and his mission. Tonight's first reading, about the night of Passover, is one example. The unblemished sacrificial lamb served as food for the people, strengthening them for the journey which they were about to undertake. The blood of the lamb also saved the people from the “destructive blow” with which God struck the Egyptians.

It is astonishing to see for how long, and in how many ways, God had been preparing his people for the fullest revelation of his love in Jesus. And now we are in the most sacred days of the Church's Liturgical Year, in which we celebrate the culmination of God's self-revelation in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

We see Jesus in the Gospel taking off his outer garments and washing the feet of his disciples. This was the work of the lowest slave of a household, not the work of the master. In this action, Jesus shows us how he stripped himself of the glory of his divinity so as to come among us and wash us of our sins. He seeks nothing for himself, only to give life and healing to us. This is love. This is how God loves us. God *humbles himself* to wash us clean and restore our relationship with him.

In the second reading, St. Paul describes for us how Jesus then gave us his own Body and Blood as food and drink. And we know that he will go on to give his very life for us on the Cross tomorrow. What we will see in the events of the next few days is Christ living out the parable of the lost sheep, in which the shepherd of a hundred sheep goes in search of one lost one (cf. Lk 15:4-6). We see the astounding lengths to which he goes to find and rescue his lost sheep. In tonight's Gospel we read, "He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end." *To the end!* He loved us to the end of his life, to the end of his strength, to his last breath, to the last drop of his Blood. *This is the revelation of the Father's love for us!*

Tonight we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The word *Eucharist* comes from the Greek word for "thanksgiving." As we begin to see the unfathomable love which God has for us, and which he has shown us in Christ, our hearts should indeed be filled with gratitude! We are so amazed at such love that we hardly know how to take it in. Our natural response is to ask, in the words of today's Psalm, "How shall I make a return to the LORD / for all the good he has done for me?" Christ himself gives us the answer to that question in the Gospel Acclamation, "Love one another as I have loved you." Similarly, he tells us in the Gospel, "as I have done for you, you should also do."

How can we even begin to love as God loves us? We cannot, on our own strength. For us, it is impossible. But we are witnessing events throughout these days of the Triduum which show us that, for God, nothing is impossible, even enabling us to love as Christ loved. As the Israelites ate the flesh of the lamb and so gained strength for their journey, so we partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the Lamb of God, which gives us strength to follow him on the journey through our own dying to self and rising with him to a life of love.

We also take the hand of our Mother, Mary, as she leads us through these most sacred days. Loving as Jesus loves is not something that we make ourselves able to do; it is something which God has said that he will do in us, if we open ourselves to his grace. Therefore, let us often repeat with Mary, “Yes, Lord, let it be done to me according to your will!”

What “garments” of my pride am I being invited to strip away so that I can serve others more like Jesus did? How can I give all my strength, all my life in response to Jesus who gave the last drop of his Blood for my salvation? How do I express my gratitude when I see all that the Lord has done for me?

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

Notes

April 3, Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord



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

The passion narratives are proclaimed in full so that all see vividly the love of Christ for each person. In light of this, the crimes during the Passion of Christ cannot be attributed, in either preaching or catechesis, indiscriminately to all Jews of that time, nor to Jews today. The Jewish people should not be referred to as though rejected or cursed, as if this view followed from Scripture. The Church ever keeps in mind that Jesus, his mother Mary, and the Apostles all were Jewish. As the Church has always held, Christ freely suffered his passion and death because of the sins of all, that all might be saved. [From the website of the USCCB.]

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:

One way to enter into the mystery of this most sacred day is to go back to the beginning, to the fall of our first parents. God had created the world, and everything that he had created was good. He

placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and gave them dominion over all the animals and plants. He provided everything that they could want or need, including intimate friendship with himself. All this was his gift of love to them. And in his goodness, he gave them a way to make a return gift to him.

Anyone who loves feels the desire to show their love in some way to the one they love, but how could Adam and Eve show love to God? What could they give to him in return for all his goodness to them? God made a way for them to give him a gift of themselves. He asked them not to eat of the fruit of one tree in the middle of the garden – a way for them to make a gift of their will, submitting it to his will in a very small matter.

We know the tragic unfolding of this story. The serpent deceived the couple into believing that they would be better off trying to take by their own action the very gifts which God was giving them already. The serpent tempted them by telling them they could become like God. But they already *were* like God, created in his own image and likeness! By rejecting God's plan and following instead their own will, they brought down upon themselves and their descendants the terrible consequences of sin and death.

Let us pause for a moment and picture Adam and Eve in the moments right after their sin. As they realized what a grave offense they had committed against God, they would be absolutely devastated. The serpent had told them that when they ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes would be opened, and indeed they were – to pain and sorrow, betrayal, sadness, hate, envy, greed, mistrust, anger, discord and division, suffering and death. These were things which they had not known before. They had ruined everything, and they had little hope, since they were left “naked,” with no way to repair the breach they had caused in their relationship with God.

To appreciate what Jesus Christ did for us on Good Friday, we need to begin with the condition of hopeless despair which Adam and Eve experienced after the fall, for this is all we can ever arrive at if we, too, listen to the voice of the deceiver and follow the tragic path of sin walked by our first parents. To this day, the world continues to accept the same lie. It continues to distrust God's way and strives to take to

itself godlikeness by proudly grasping after power and glory. And we continue to experience all the disastrous consequences which flow from this rejection of God and his ways.

In his infinite love for us, God did not leave us in our sad fallen condition. He came to live among us in Jesus Christ. And on the final day of his earthly life, Jesus fully and completely broke the power of sin and death, rejecting the lie of the serpent and reconciling humanity with the Father. He did this precisely by doing the very opposite of what Adam and Eve had done. As they in the garden of Eden *rejected* the Father's will, he entered the garden of Gethsemane and *accepted* it absolutely and without reservation. As they grasped at power and glory by their own efforts, taking the fruit of the forbidden tree, he laid aside the glory of his divinity and submitted to being brutally tortured and finally put to death on the "tree" of the Cross. As they followed their own selfish desire to be "like God," he chose to love, and to love "to the end" (Jn 13:1).

As we ponder the Lord's Passion and Death, as we reflect on the Liturgy and the devotions of this holy day, the Lord is calling us to follow him in his way, for he knows that it is the only way to life. We too must put aside our proud, selfish desires for power and glory, for honor, for comfort, for acclaim, for wealth, for human wisdom, for a "good life" in this world. These cannot be our driving goals. God is love, and to be "like God" is to love. So he calls us to love, more and more. This is where we find our fulfillment. Jesus has made the way of love possible for us by his Death and Resurrection, but we must still choose to follow him.

God knows we are weak. He knows this way is hard for us. Indeed, it is impossible for us, left to ourselves. Therefore, the Letter to the Hebrews encourages us: "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." God knows our weakness, our fears, and our doubts. But he can certainly do in us what we are unable to do for ourselves – he can and will strengthen us with his mercy and grace so that we can walk with him.

Let us, then, firmly reject the temptation of our enemy to try to exalt ourselves into God's place. As we stand today at the foot of the Cross, let us continue to stay close to our Blessed Mother. Let us lean on her, and with her find the grace to say, "My trust is in you, O LORD; / I say, 'You are my God.'" Especially in moments of suffering and trials, let us beg for the grace to say with Jesus, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

What "forbidden fruit" am I still grasping for instead of trusting in God's gift? How am I trying to make myself "like God" through my own power rather than through Christ's way of humble love? Why is following Jesus in his Passion and Death the only way to eternal life?

Sorrowful Mother Mary, help me to remain at the foot of the Cross, rejecting the lies of the enemy and trusting wholly in the Father's love.

Notes

Pastoral Note: The Divine Mercy Novena

On Good Friday, we “look upon him whom we have pierced” (Jn 19:37). 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 4, 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:

Today we stand in silence before a sealed tomb. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, the long-promised Messiah of God, has been killed. For three years he traveled throughout Palestine teaching, curing the sick, and casting out the power of the enemy, but today his voice is silent. His hands, which have touched so many with healing, have been pierced with nails and now are lifeless and still. His feet, which have walked so far to bring hope to so many, have also been pierced with nails and walk no more. His heart, which has poured out so much love, has been pierced with a lance and beats no more. Jesus is dead. His body lies in the grave, with a great stone rolled over the opening.

In the eyes of the world, Jesus is a failure today. He may have done some impressive things and touched many lives, but in the end, it has come to nothing. Even his closest disciples have scattered and are hiding in fear. The Romans have crushed him as they have done to so many others. Now life seems to go on as before. What difference has Jesus really made? What has become of his promises? Just last Sunday great crowds were welcoming him to Jerusalem as a king: *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!* What hope! What anticipation! Something great was surely about to happen! And now, what a disappointment. What a sense of emptiness and hopelessness. What was it all for? Where is God in all this?

It is important for us to stop today and put ourselves in the place of Jesus' disciples on that first Holy Saturday. We need to become familiar with this "tomb" experience, because we have many such experiences in our own lives, and if we learn how to live in this "Holy Saturday" space, we will be able to pass through our own "tomb" experiences with much greater faith and hope.

From our natural, human perspective, the tomb is the end. Death is final. When someone dies, their story is over. But we need to learn to see differently, with the eyes of faith. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called people to repent, that is, to take on a *new* way of seeing and thinking. As the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts” (Is 55:8-9).

Jesus was not surprised to go through his Passion and be put to death. He knew very well that this was what would happen to him in Jerusalem, and he warned his disciples ahead of time. He also tried to prepare them to understand what was happening. In one of his final instructions to them he said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (Jn 12:24). He was teaching them that his death, far from being a failure, would in fact be his great victory over sin and death – and that it would produce very much fruit.

While Jesus walked around the Holy Land carrying out his ministry, he was able to teach and heal only those people who lived in that area at that time. Even those whom he was able to reach would eventually die; the effect of his actions seemed so limited. But when he gave himself up to death and allowed himself to be planted in the ground like a seed, how immeasurable was the effect! Indeed, the grace of his Passion and Death radiated out into all creation, throughout all time and space! The dimensions of human life, for every person who had lived and ever would live throughout history, were completely changed. Sin and death were robbed of their dominion. The power of the enemy was shattered for all time. Humanity was reconciled to God and the way to Heaven was opened up!

None of this was visible on that first Holy Saturday. All appeared empty and still, lifeless, as Jesus’ body lay in the tomb. But what looked like the end was in fact only a pause, an in-between moment: the victory *had* been won, and Christ *would* rise in glory on the following morning. What we come to understand is that the tomb, by the grace of God, can become a “womb” from which new life can spring forth. It is only after the seed is planted in the ground and dies that it bears much fruit.

We all face “tomb” moments in our lives, when it seems that things have fallen apart, hope has failed us, or tragedy has befallen us. These times can seem so dark and barren. We can feel that God has abandoned us, and we can be tempted to despair. But let us learn hope from this special day in the Church’s year. Here too, as throughout this Holy Week, let us remain close to our Mother Mary, asking her to strengthen us with her faith – she who waited in silence and in hope at the tomb. She knew sorrow, but she also knew in faith that God was doing in secret a great work. Let us have faith, with her, especially in our times of greatest suffering and trial, that God can and will bring forth new life from our dying, for “nothing will be impossible for God” (Lk 1:37).

How has the Season of Lent deepened my belief that death to my self-will produces much fruit in my spiritual life? What are the “tomb” experiences in my life? What fruit have I received through them? When I face my own “Holy Saturday” moments of darkness, how can I turn from visible failures to the secret work God is doing in the silence?

Mary, stay with me in my dark moments and teach me to trust in the new life to come.

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! Christ is alive, and we who are united with him by faith and Baptism are fully alive in him. Let us remain focused on the new life Jesus won for us and rejoice in it.

***Let Us Return to “Galilee” Where We First Encountered Jesus
and Rise to New Life With Him***
A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis

The night is drawing to a close and the first light of dawn is appearing upon the horizon as the women set out toward Jesus’ tomb. They make their way forward, bewildered and dismayed, their hearts overwhelmed with grief at the death that took away their Beloved. Yet upon arriving and seeing the empty tomb, they turn around and retrace their steps. They leave the tomb behind and run to the disciples to proclaim a change of course: Jesus is risen and *awaits them in Galilee*. In their lives, those women experienced Easter as a Pasch, a *passage*. They pass from walking sorrowfully towards the tomb to running back with joy to the disciples to tell them not only that the Lord is risen, but also that they are to set out immediately to reach a destination, Galilee. There they will meet the Risen Lord. The rebirth of the disciples, the resurrection of their hearts, passes through Galilee. Let us enter into this journey of the disciples from the tomb to Galilee.

The Gospel tells us that the women went “to see the tomb” (Mt 28:1). They think that they will find Jesus in the place of death and that everything is over, forever. Sometimes we too may think that the joy of our encounter with Jesus is something belonging to the past, whereas the present consists mostly of sealed tombs: tombs of disappointment, bitterness and distrust, of the dismay of thinking that “nothing more can be done,” “things will never change,” “better to live for today,” since “there is no certainty about tomorrow.” If we are prey to sorrow, burdened by sadness, laid low by sin, embittered by failure, or troubled by some problem, we also know the bitter taste of weariness and the absence of joy.

At times, we may simply feel weary about our daily routine, tired of taking risks in a cold, hard world where only the clever and the strong seem to get ahead. At other times, we may feel helpless and discouraged before the power of evil, the conflicts that tear relationships apart, the attitudes of calculation and indifference that seem to prevail in society, the cancer of corruption – there is a great deal of it, the spread of injustice, the icy winds of war. Then too, we may have come face to face with death, because it robbed us of the presence of our loved ones or because we brushed up against it in illness or a serious setback. Then it is easy to yield to disillusionment, once the wellspring of hope has dried up. In these or similar situations – each of us knows our own

plights, our paths come to a halt before a row of tombs, and we stand there, filled with sorrow and regret, alone and powerless, repeating the question, “Why?” That chain of “why”...

The women at Easter, however, do not stand frozen before the tomb; rather, the Gospel tells us, “they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples” (v. 8). They bring the news that will change life and history forever: Christ is risen! (v. 6). At the same time, they remember to convey the Lord’s summons to the disciples to go to Galilee, for there they will see him (cf. v. 7).

Let us ask ourselves today, brothers and sisters: what does it mean to go to Galilee? Two things: on the one hand, to leave the enclosure of the Upper Room and go to the land of the Gentiles (cf. *Mt* 4:15), to come forth from hiding and to open themselves up to mission, to leave fear behind and to *set out for the future*. On the other hand, and this is very beautiful, to *return to the origins*, for it was precisely in Galilee that *everything began*. There the Lord had met and first called the disciples. So, to go to Galilee means to return to the grace of the beginnings, to regain the memory that regenerates hope, the “memory of the future” bestowed on us by the Risen One.

This, then, is what the Pasch of the Lord accomplishes: it motivates us to move forward, to leave behind our sense of defeat, to roll away the stone of the tombs in which we often imprison our hope, and to look with confidence to the future, for Christ is risen and has changed the direction of history. Yet, to do this, the Pasch of the Lord takes us back to the grace of our own past; it brings us back to Galilee, where our love story with Jesus began, where the first call took place. In other words, it asks us to relive that moment, that situation, that experience in which we met the Lord, experienced his love and received a radiantly new way of seeing ourselves, the world around us, and the mystery of life itself.

Brothers and sisters, to rise again, to start anew, to take up the journey, we always need to return to Galilee, that is, to go back, not to an abstract or ideal Jesus, but to the living, concrete, and palpable memory of our first encounter with him. Yes, to go forward we need to go back, to remember; to have hope, we need to revive our memory. This is what we are asked to do: to remember and go forward! If you recover that first love, the wonder and joy of your encounter with God, you will keep advancing. So remember, and keep moving forward.

Remember your own Galilee and walk towards it, for it is the “place” where you came to know Jesus personally, where he stopped being just another personage from a distant past, but a *living person*: not some distant God but the God who is at your side, who more than anyone else knows you and loves you. Brother, sister, remember Galilee, your Galilee, and your call. Remember the Word of God who at a precise moment spoke directly to you. Remember that powerful experience of the Spirit; that great joy of forgiveness experienced after that one Confession; that intense and unforgettable moment of prayer; that light that was kindled within you and changed your life; that encounter, that pilgrimage... Each of us knows where our Galilee is located. Each of us knows the place of his or her interior resurrection, that beginning and foundation, the place where things changed. We cannot leave this in the past; the Risen Lord invites us to return there to celebrate Easter.

Remember your Galilee. Remind yourself. Today, relive that memory. Return to that first encounter. Think back on what it was like, reconstruct the context, time, and place. Remember the emotions and sensations; see the colors and savor the taste of it. For it is when you forgot that first love, when you failed to remember that first encounter, that the dust began to settle on your heart. That is when you experienced sorrow and, like the disciples, you saw the future as empty, like a tomb with a stone sealing off all hope. Yet today, brother, sister, the power of Easter summons you to roll away every stone of disappointment and mistrust. The Lord is an expert in rolling back the stones of sin and fear. He wants to illuminate your sacred memory, your most beautiful memory, and to make you relive that first encounter with him. Remember and keep moving forward. Return to him and rediscover the grace of God’s resurrection within you! Return to Galilee. Return to *your* Galilee.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us follow Jesus to Galilee, encounter him and worship him there, where he is waiting for each of us. Let us revive the beauty of that moment when we realized that he is alive and we made him the Lord of our lives. Let us return to Galilee, the Galilee of our first love. Let each of us return to his or her own Galilee, to the place where we first encountered him. Let us rise to new life!

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 5, 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, 12-1, 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) Mt 28:1-10 Why do you seek the Living One among the dead?
-



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 and Psalm 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!

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 ***Matthew 28:1-10***

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. Then the angel said to the women in reply, “Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ Behold, I have told you.” Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this 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.”

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:

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

This is our Psalm response for today, and it will be the Gospel Acclamation every day this week. This whole Octave of Easter is to be seen as one day, the glorious Day on which Jesus Christ rose from death to new life. In our Psalm today we also read, "By the LORD has this been done; / it is wonderful in our eyes."

We have just finished following Jesus through the events of Holy Week, from his entry into Jerusalem, through the Last Supper, the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and his Passion, Death, and Burial. Jesus was nailed to the Cross. He died and was buried. We spent yesterday in the tomb with him. Our normal expectation would be that his story is over. Nothing more can happen once a person is in the tomb. As the disciples on the road to Emmaus put it, “We were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel” – but apparently not, since the Romans executed him. So we might as well leave Jerusalem and go back to our everyday lives. And yet ... no! He is risen from the dead and is alive again!

We should try to enter into the experience of surprise at Jesus’ Resurrection. He was dead, and is now alive, walking around, talking to his followers, eating and drinking with them? He was laid in the tomb on Friday, really and completely dead, and now he has walked back out of the tomb alive on Sunday morning? How can this be? It sounds impossible. But as the angel announced to Mary at the Annunciation, “nothing will be impossible for God” (Lk 1:37) – even raising Jesus from death to life.

We will see throughout the coming week, as we read many accounts of the days following Jesus’ Resurrection, that people had all kinds of reactions to the news. Some doubted. Some walked away, probably in disappointment and unbelief. Some would not believe when told by others, but later did believe when Jesus appeared to them. Some obstinately refused to believe and denied the Resurrection. Many were no doubt too busy with their own affairs to take the time to see for themselves what had happened. And some, like Mary Magdalene, earnestly and lovingly searched for the Lord until they found him.

The important point is that Jesus’ Resurrection stands as an invitation and a challenge to me, now, today. *This* is the day that the Lord has made. I must decide today, and every day, what response I will make to the Good News of Jesus’ Resurrection. Is this just an interesting story which has little practical effect on my life? Do I doubt that Jesus *really* rose from the dead? Do I hold back in fear of what God might have in store for me if I choose to believe and follow him with my whole heart? Or can I believe that God really has done this surprising thing, brought new life where there was only death?

Why does this matter? Because, as St. Peter says in the first reading, “Everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.” Jesus did not die and rise as some sort of magic trick. He did it to reconcile humanity to the Father, to win forgiveness and eternal life for us. Only in him is there hope of everlasting glory. In our condition of sin and weakness, we are as good as dead when it comes to achieving the true purpose of life – communion with God. It is simply impossible for us. We experience this over and over throughout life, as we see all too often our inability to love as we would want to. But the God who raised Jesus from death to life can also raise us from death to life. We see plainly in the Resurrection of Christ that, truly, *nothing* is impossible for God, even transforming each of us into a likeness to Christ!

This is the joy of this Day, that we have a God who can and does win the victory over sin and death. And so St. Paul urges us, “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.” As Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into the glory of Heaven, so we, too, will be raised into glory with him. This is not only a story about Jesus and his disciples two thousand years ago. It is *our* story!

If we believe this, then Paul tells us what we must do: “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.” “Clear out the old yeast!” This is our response: believe and rejoice in what God has done, and in what he shows us that he can do. Clear out the doubt and fear. Clear out the self-will, the pride, the sensuality, the clinging to the old ways.

Both the angel at the tomb, and then Jesus himself, tell the two Marys in the Gospel, “Do not be afraid!” The Psalm tells us to “give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, / for his mercy endures forever.” We have no reason for fear. Our God is showing us clearly that he loves us so much that he is ready to lay down his own life to bring us into union with himself. He is showing us that his love is stronger than sin and death. No matter how difficult our situation might be, we can say with

the psalmist, “I shall not die, but live, / and declare the works of the LORD.” The dying into which we are called to enter with Christ is not to end in death; it is for a glorious resurrection!

Indeed, *this is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad!*

How does the “impossible” reality of the Resurrection challenge the way I view my own hopeless situations? What “old yeast” of my past am I still holding onto instead of letting God raise me to new life? In what ways is the Risen Lord inviting me to replace my fear with the surprise of his joy?

Mary, help me leave the tomb behind and walk always in the light of your Risen Son.

Notes

April 6, 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:

Today's Gospel is a continuation of yesterday's reading from Matthew. Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" went to Jesus' tomb early on Easter morning. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, and there was an angel sitting on it. The angel told the women not to fear, for Jesus was not in the tomb but had risen, just as he had said he would. Then the angel told them to go quickly and tell the disciples about Jesus' Resurrection. This is what they are doing at the beginning of today's Gospel.

It is very helpful for us, as we go through the days of this Easter Octave – which is really one long "Day" in the mind of the Church – to place ourselves in the experience of the followers of Jesus to whom he appears in the first days after he rose from the dead. Today we enter into the experience of these two Marys. They were grief-stricken at the Passion and Death of Jesus, and now they are coming to anoint his body according to Jewish burial customs. Instead of finding his dead body, they find an empty tomb, and an angel proclaiming to them that Jesus has risen from the dead. They are amazed and dumbfounded. What are they to make of all this? They can scarcely take it all in, but they do as the angel asked and set out to tell the disciples what the angel said.

Suddenly Jesus meets them and tells them, "Do not be afraid." This is his first word to them, and to us, after his Resurrection: *Do not be afraid*. Jesus repeats this over and over again in his Resurrection appearances. *Do not be afraid!*

First of all, do not be afraid of him, or of the Father. We have seen in the clearest way imaginable that we have a God who loves us "to the end" (Jn 13:1). He will go to any length to save us and bring us to glory with him. We have nothing to fear from him. On the contrary, we have everything to hope for from him!

He also tells us not to be afraid of the world or the evil one. His enemies in the world did their utmost to destroy him, finally nailing him to a cross and watching him die, but we see that he has risen from death to a new and glorious life. We can be certain that he has the power to bring us to the same victory over any attacks or obstacles which the world or the evil one can bring against us. St. Paul says this very well in his Letter to the Romans: "What will separate us from the love of

Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? . . . No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rm 8:35, 37-39).

The Resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate display of God’s power over sin and death. Sometimes we ask, when thinking about the possible consequences of some choice we must make, “What is the worst thing that could happen?” The worst thing that can happen to us in this life is that we suffer and die. But the Easter event shows us that even if we die, God is with us and can save us from death itself. This is the cause of our great joy – that we have a God who loves us and who can save us from anything which the world, the devil, or our own weakness can do to harm us.

After Jesus tells the two Marys not to be afraid, he tells them, “Go tell my brothers.” Now that they have experienced the great joy of the Resurrection, they are to share it with others. This is our call as well. As we enter into the joy and hope of this Easter Day, we allow that joy to shine out in our actions and words for those around us.

This is exactly what Peter is doing in the first reading. He has been filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and is now proclaiming the Resurrection of Jesus to crowds of people. This is the same Peter who, a few weeks earlier, denied Jesus three times and then went into hiding out of fear. Now he has left that fear behind and is boldly announcing, “God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses.” Having seen the risen Lord, he is no longer afraid.

We can learn from Peter’s example. We have received the same Holy Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation. We are celebrating the glorious Resurrection of Jesus. By the grace of God, we too can put aside our fears and place our trust in the power of our merciful God to raise us up from whatever trials we might face.

The words of Psalm 16, which Peter quotes in the reading, we can apply to ourselves. This is a prayer which we can return to again and again today:

*I set 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.*

How do the words of Jesus to the women, “Be not afraid!” give me strength and courage? What are my reactions – fear, joy, anxiety – when unexpected events happen in my life? How has my belief in the Resurrection transformed my life?

Mary, guide my steps from the darkness of fear into the brilliant light of your Risen Son.

Notes



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:

Today’s readings speak to us about the importance of recognizing the presence of Jesus in our lives. In the first reading, Peter is speaking to a crowd of Jewish people in Jerusalem. He tells them, “Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” He is saying that, even though they have been eagerly awaiting the coming of the promised Messiah for generations, they did not recognize him when he came. In fact, they handed their long-awaited Savior over to the Roman authorities to be crucified.

In the Gospel, Mary Magdalene is looking for Jesus. She does not find him in the tomb, so she stands nearby, weeping. Even when Jesus appears to her, she does not recognize him at first, but thinks he is the gardener. Like the people whom Peter is addressing, she does not recognize the very one for whom she is searching.

This shows us that it is easy to miss the Lord’s presence, even when he is very near to us. We have our own ideas of what his presence should be like, and when he does not conform to our ideas, we think that he is not with us. The Jews were expecting a great king who would save them from the Romans. Mary Magdalene was expecting a dead Jesus lying in the tomb. We often expect the presence of Jesus to feel a certain way,

or we expect that he will solve our problems, or that he will show himself to us in some specific manner. When he does not fulfill our expectations, we fail to recognize his presence and risk sinking into disappointment and even doubt.

The world certainly does not recognize the presence of Jesus, nor spend much time thinking about his Resurrection. For many people, Easter is little more than a chance to have a party and eat some extra candy. Even though it is the most important feast day of the Church's Liturgical Year, to most people it is far less important than Christmas. Even if they do think about Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday, by Monday morning they have forgotten all about that and are back to work, busying themselves with "more important" things. What worldly advantage is there, after all, in following Jesus, or in pondering his Death and Resurrection? What promotion does that get us, or cash bonus? How does it help us put food on the table, or keep a roof over our heads, or provide for our children? We are not very different from the crowds in Jesus' day, who were very happy to surround him when he was giving out loaves or healing sick people. But when he started talking about picking up the cross and following him in suffering and persecution, the crowds drifted away. What kind of Jesus are we looking for?

The people in the first reading are ready for a new beginning. When Peter tells them that they have failed to recognize the Messiah, they respond in humility, asking what they are to do. In the Liturgy this week, we will see other people angrily rejecting the Apostles' preaching. If we are too set in our own ways, too sure that we are correct in all our views, then we risk never coming to know Jesus more deeply. Peter tells us what we need to do: "Repent." We need to change our way of thinking. Instead of making up our own minds about what Jesus *should* be like, or how he *should* act in our lives, we need to allow him to show us who he really is, and who we are in him. Peter warns the people, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." We need to realize that the world's way of thinking, which we have all fallen into to some extent, is not going to help us find Jesus.

Mary Magdalene gives us a beautiful example of how we can come to know the Lord's presence with us. First of all, she is earnestly and whole-heartedly searching for Jesus. She rises very early and sets out to

find him. She is not afraid to go to the tomb, even though she knows that Pilate has stationed Roman soldiers there who might give her trouble. Although she does not recognize Jesus at first, she continues to seek him with an open heart. How wonderful it is that she recognizes him when he speaks her name! This is a way for us to follow. We too can search for the Lord's presence with an open heart. Sorrow and tears are not an excuse to stop our search for him. We ask the Lord in all humility to call us by name and to reveal his love and mercy for us. This is how we come to know the true joy of the Resurrection, by allowing Jesus to bring us into that joy with him.

We can be confident that the same Lord who appeared to Mary Magdalene and the Apostles wants to reveal himself to our hearts as well, and through us, to make his presence known in the world. Peter assures us: "The promise is made to you and to your children *and to all those far off*, whomever the Lord our God will call." Lord, help us who are *far off* to open our hearts to you, that you might fill us with the joy of your Risen Life!

How have my own ideas of what God should do blinded me to his actual presence right in front of me? In what ways am I seeking Jesus only for the "loaves" of worldly comfort rather than for the fruit of his Cross and Resurrection? What worldly mindset must I leave behind in order to more clearly hear Jesus calling my name today?

Mary, grant me your open heart and attentive spirit.

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:

As we ponder the Scriptures provided for us each day by the Church, we can benefit from putting ourselves in the place of the people in the readings. As we look at the people in today’s first reading and Gospel, we can reflect on how well they put into practice the Theme for this week: “Christ is risen! Christ is alive, and we who are united with him by faith and Baptism are fully alive in him. Let us remain focused on the new life Jesus won for us and rejoice in it.”

We begin by considering the two disciples who are on their way to Emmaus – walking away from Jerusalem. They describe how some of the women from their group went to Jesus’ tomb and found it empty but saw a vision of angels saying that he was alive. They also report that others went to the tomb and found it just as the women had reported. Clearly something unusual is going on here at least, and there is reason to wonder whether Jesus might be alive. Why are they walking away? They do not even wait a few days to see what God is doing. No wonder Jesus rebukes them: “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!”

We can get a clue about their state of mind from what they tell Jesus: “We were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel.” It sounds like they are saying, “We were hoping that, but evidently we were wrong. So we might as well leave and go back to our former life.” We reflected yesterday on how easily we miss the Lord when we cling to our own ideas of what he should be like. This is happening for these two disciples: they have their own idea about what it would mean for Jesus to “redeem Israel.” Of course, that is exactly what he did do! But since he did not do it in the way they were expecting, they do not recognize it.

However, as Jesus explains the Scriptures to them, they find their hearts burning within them, and they urge him to stay with them. In this way, he is gradually able to enlighten them until they are at last able to recognize him. Then they rush back to Jerusalem. Like them, we often fail to recognize Jesus' work in our lives because it does not happen the way we expect. But if we remain open and continually ask him to "stay with us" and reveal himself to us, he will open our eyes to see him.

The first reading presents us with many people of interest. First of all, a beggar, crippled from birth. Unable to walk, he must be carried by others to the temple gate. He does not even enter the temple but sits outside begging. This is a good representation of us in our sinfulness. Sin leaves us crippled, unable to walk in God's ways, and unable to enter the "temple" – that is, unable to come into the fullness of the presence of God and be united with him as we were created to do. But this man knows his need and is quick to ask for help. And when he is healed by the grace of Jesus Christ working through Peter, he jumps up and walks into the temple with Peter and John, praising God.

Like him, we are "crippled from birth," but we have been restored by the grace of God, won for us by the dying and rising of Jesus, which we are celebrating this week. Do we jump up and praise God for the wonderful work he has done in us? Do we rush into his presence? Peter told the man that he had no silver or gold to give. Christ did not come among us to give us silver and gold. He did not come to make us wealthy or comfortable or powerful in this life. He came, as our Theme says, to win for us a *new life* with him, not simply a better version of our old, worldly life. Are we sometimes not ready to rejoice in him because we were hoping for "silver and gold" from him rather than what he came to give us?

We also see in the reading the people who witness the miraculous healing of the crippled man. The reading says that "they were filled with amazement and astonishment at what had happened to him." But were their hearts changed? Or were they merely happy to talk about this spectacle for a few days before going back to their everyday lives, with no change? How about us? Do we enjoy the liturgies and celebrations of Holy Week and Easter as a nice diversion from our normal lives, but then go back to living exactly as we were before? *God himself suffered and died on a Cross for us, and then rose bodily from the tomb to new*

life on Easter. This is amazing and astonishing! How has following Christ through the events of these days changed our hearts and minds? Or will we simply go back to living exactly as we did before?

Finally, we can reflect on the witness of the Apostles Peter and John. They are completely changed by Jesus' Death and Resurrection, and by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. They are going into the temple to pray. Their lives now are centered on worship and praise of God, and on sharing the Good News of what he has done with all around them. They are continuing in themselves the mission of Christ. We see that, when the crippled man asks for alms, Peter and John look intently at him. They are eager to share with this man the grace which they have received.

Peter and John are the ones who most exemplify being "focused on the new life Jesus won for us and rejoicing in it." They show us how to live out the exhortation from today's Psalm: "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." Let us put aside, then, our expectations of how God *should* work in our lives, and lay down our worldly desires for wealth, power, and comfort. Then we will be able to recognize the Lord as he speaks to our hearts and to receive the power to continue his mission of bringing to the world the new life which he has won for us.

Lord, stay with us! Open our eyes and our hearts that we might recognize you and rejoice in your Risen Life!

How am I like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, walking away from God because his plan did not match my own? In what ways am I still begging for "silver and gold" when Jesus is offering me the far greater gift of a transformed life? How has the reality of the Resurrection changed my daily priorities? Or do I treat it with a temporary amazement that fades?

Mary, open my heart and eyes to the joy of Jesus' Resurrection.



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:

Throughout this week we repeat daily the same Gospel Acclamation: “This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.” All week we continue to celebrate the one glorious Day of Christ’s Resurrection from the dead. It is too big an event for us to take in all at once. We need a whole week to ponder it and let the light of this joyful Day sink ever deeper into our hearts.

Why are we rejoicing? God loves us, totally and completely. That in itself is astonishing, and even unexpected, if we think about it. The one who created the entire universe, who sustains all creation in being at each moment, loves each one of us personally. We are so small and insignificant to begin with, and we have rejected God by our sin. Who would expect him to care for us with such a tender and passionate love? The psalmist puts into words how surprising this is: “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?”

But God’s love for us goes far beyond anything that the psalmist could have imagined. We could never have known the depth of God’s love for us had he not come among us as a man. He revealed himself to us, teaching and healing and driving out demons, and then gave his life for us on the Cross. This is far more than surprising; it is completely astonishing! That God loves us is perhaps hard to believe, and that he is ready to forgive us and draw us to himself is wonderful enough. But that he will go to any extent, even to allow his creatures to beat him, spit on him, mock him, nail him to a cross and kill him – all to save us from our own sin and rejection of him? This is beyond anything we could ever have imagined or hoped for!

Furthermore, Easter shows us that God has complete power over death. Sin and death are no obstacle at all to God. Jesus was put into the tomb dead, and he walked out alive on the third day. This is amazing, and we see this amazement reflected in both readings for today. The

people are amazed at Peter's healing of a crippled man, and the disciples are amazed at Jesus' appearance among them. This God is not hindered by our crippled condition, or even by death! He has power to heal the crippled and raise the dead!

This, then, is the cause of our rejoicing. God loves each one of us completely and wants us to be united to him in love. He wants this in a way which we can hardly imagine, far beyond any conception we have of what it means for us to "want" something. And he has absolute power to bring it about, no matter how crippled or even "dead" our condition is. This is what this Easter Day shows us. Indeed, let us be glad and rejoice!

But we know that we do not always rejoice in God's love for us. Sometimes this is because of our ignorance. We are simply not aware of God's love and his presence with us. Peter tells the people in the first reading that he knows that this is why they denied Christ and gave him up to death: "Now I know, brothers and sisters, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did."

At other times, the problem is not ignorance but fear. Despite the many assurances we have received of God's love for us, we still fear him. Thus, the disciples in the Gospel are "startled and terrified" when Jesus appears to them. We can find God frightening. He is so far beyond us. Therefore, Jesus continually reassures those to whom he appears. He tells the disciples, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself." This encouragement is similar to what he so often says, "Do not be afraid." Everything that Jesus says and does is to reassure us that he will never condemn us or reject us. All that he does is *for* us, for our good.

There is another reason, however, why we do not always rejoice at God's presence with us: because we sometimes prefer to put ourselves first. We want to take God's place, deciding for ourselves how we should live. We want the power and glory which belong to God. Peter, quoting Moses, warns us not to choose this tragic path: "*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.*" It is not that God chooses to cut anyone off from eternal life. But those

who refuse to listen to Jesus, the true “prophet” who has come to show us the way to God, cut themselves off by their own choice. Peter tells the people, “The author of life you put to death.” When we reject God, by our own choice we kill ourselves; that is, we block the very grace he is giving us to lead us to life.

God has already put in motion his plan to bring us to himself. Peter tells the people that they have “the Christ already appointed” for them. God has already done all that needs to be done for our total restoration and glorification. If we are not sufficiently aware of this, we can turn to him and he will *open our minds to understand the Scriptures*, as he does for the disciples in today’s Gospel, and as he did earlier for the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. If we are still afraid, we can return again and again to his words to us, “Peace be with you,” and “Do not be afraid.” But if we are rejecting him out of our own selfishness and pride, then we should take to heart Peter’s words: “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment.”

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that we are to be witnesses of his amazing reconciling love. Let us, then, put aside anything which is hindering us from entering into the joy of this Easter Day, and rejoice in the astonishing and unstoppable love which our God has for us!

How can I allow the power of the Resurrection to penetrate my heart more deeply? What specific fear makes me feel startled by the presence of God instead of resting in his peace? As I ponder daily that Jesus has truly risen, how has the light and the joy of his victory changed me?

Mary, open my heart to the joy of Easter during this Season and forever.



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:

Our theme for this Octave of Easter states: “Let us remain focused on the new life Jesus won for us and rejoice in it.” To speak of a *new* life means that there must be an *old* life which the new one is replacing. The readings for today show us a contrast between the old life and the new.

We can begin by pondering this striking stanza from Psalm 118, which Peter quotes: “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.” Of course, this passage points to Jesus first of all. He himself is the “stone” which the “builders” – the leaders of the Jewish people – rejected, and who has become the cornerstone of God’s whole new temple.

But this passage also refers to all the ways of God, which the world rejects. The world has its own idea of how to build something great. It focuses on human gifts, such as intelligence, beauty, creativity, and knowledge. It also values wealth, power, and relationships with the “right” people. The world has little use for anyone who lacks these things, because they cannot help with the building of an earthly empire. And so the world rejects the poor, the weak, the little, the humble.

Among those who were doing well for themselves in the eyes of the world, we can include the “leaders, elders, and scribes” in the first reading. These were the men who were successful in their community. They had power and influence, and the respect of all. Yet, when they hear that Peter has cured a crippled man and is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they are “disturbed.” Confronted with a clear work of God, they are not joyful but upset, and they try to oppose this development. This is quite a contrast from the rest of the people, who, as we read on Wednesday, were “filled with amazement and astonishment” at the cure of the crippled man. These leaders of the people are stuck in the *old* life, and thus are rejecting God’s *new* way. But some five thousand men are converted and begin the new life of faith.

God simply does not work in the way that we expect him to. He does not work as the world does. No one, evaluating things from a worldly perspective, would have chosen Peter to be the “rock” upon

which to build the Church. He was a simple, uneducated, hot-tempered fisherman, with no particular connections, wealth, or influence. The Jewish elders are amazed that this simple man, who ran away in fear when they were condemning Jesus to death, is now standing fearless before them, boldly witnessing to Jesus and doing miracles in his name. How can this be?

We know the answer: Peter is “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Power from on high has been poured out upon him through the grace of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection. Peter’s actions are not based on his human strength, but on the power of the Spirit, who uses the weak, the humble, the simple, and the poor to do great works. God does not need human talents and earthly advantages to do his work. St. Paul knew this very well; he once wrote: “[The Lord] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:9-10).

What we see in these readings is that, in order to live the *new* life of Christ, we need to put on a new way of thinking. The *old* way of thinking – the world’s way, the way of relying on our strengths and human advantages – we must now leave behind. We need to embrace the very things we tend to reject: humility, putting others ahead of us, total dependence on God, childlikeness. These are the new “stones” which the Lord will use to build up his new temple in our hearts.

All week we have seen that people do not recognize Jesus at first. Mary Magdalene only knows him when he calls her name. The disciples going to Emmaus know him only after he has explained the Scriptures to them and broken bread with them. In yesterday’s Gospel, Jesus showed his hands and feet to the disciples so that they would know it was he. Again today the disciples do not know him until after he tells them to cast the net and they make a miraculous catch.

What this teaches us is that we cannot recognize Jesus, nor follow him in his new life, by our own efforts. He reveals himself and his ways to us – if we are open to him. He calls us by name. He opens the Scriptures to us. He shows us the depth of his love. He works little

miracles in our lives. But we must come to him and be open. Notice how ready and eager Peter is to respond to the Lord. As soon as recognizes Jesus, he leaps out of the boat and swims toward him. Peter teaches us the attitude – the zeal, joy, hope, love – with which to approach God.

We also need the humility to accept being surprised by God. He will not work in the way that we want or expect. He will not work in the world's *old* way. He continually surprises us – he shows up on land when we find ourselves in a boat. Let us keep our hearts open and ready to move with him into his new life as he continues to reveal himself to us.

Which worldly advantages am I building my life upon instead of making Christ my only cornerstone? How can I embrace my own weaknesses as the exact places where God wants to show his power? What specific habit of self-reliance must I abandon today to jump toward Jesus with Peter's zeal?

Mary, lead me to treasure the lowly path.

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, they 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, 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, 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, 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, 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:

This whole week has been one extended Easter Day, a Day of rejoicing in the brilliant light of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. For a moment, it seemed that the evil one was victorious over Jesus, and that sin and death would continue their reign. But on Easter morning we witnessed the glorious triumph of God over darkness. We can take to ourselves the words of today’s Psalm, “‘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.” Because of the great victory of Jesus, we know that we, too, shall not end in death, but have the hope of everlasting life with God: “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.”

What must we do in order to enter into this new life with God? Jesus himself tells us in John's Gospel. When people asked him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?", his answer was: "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent" (Jn 6:28-29). The Easter miracle is so astonishing, so beyond anything that we could have expected or have ever experienced, that it can be hard to believe. But faith is essential for us to have new life. This is one reason why Mother Church gives us seven weeks of Easter; we need that long to allow this great mystery of faith to sink into our hearts.

Today's Gospel gives us two examples of people having a hard time believing in Jesus' Resurrection, at least at first. Mary Magdalene tells the disciples that he has risen, but they do not believe her. Then the two who met him on the road to Emmaus return and tell the disciples the same thing, but the disciples do not believe these two either. Finally, Jesus comes to them himself and rebukes them for their hardness of heart.

We also find unbelief in the first reading. The Jewish leaders acknowledge that a "remarkable sign" has been done through Peter and John, but they cannot believe that this sign was the work of God, because Peter and John are "uneducated, ordinary men." As we saw in yesterday's meditation, they reject the very "stones" with which God has chosen to build, because they do not meet their expectations.

The difference between the disciples in the Gospel and the elders in the first reading is that the disciples are humble enough to recognize that they were wrong. They accept the rebuke of the Lord and take on his commission to go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel. But the Jewish leaders remain obstinate and refuse to consider that they might be seeing things wrongly. They are sure of themselves and their righteousness, and so do not leave any room in their hearts for God to work. They remain in their unbelief.

The question we can ask ourselves, then, is, do *I* believe in the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead? It is easy enough to say, "Yes, I do." But we need to examine our hearts more deeply. It is not merely a factual question about whether Jesus rose from the tomb two thousand years ago. Do we believe that Jesus truly has power over sin and death – *our* sin and death? Do we believe that he comes into our lives to

restore us by his own power, so that we, like the Apostles, can be witnesses to his new life in the world? Do we truly believe that our weaknesses and sins, our poverty and littleness, are no obstacle at all to him doing great things? That he can surely bring new life where it seems there is only barrenness and death? *This* is part of the Good News which he commissions us to spread: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”

Lord, help us to believe in your Resurrection with all our mind, heart, and soul. Help us to be witnesses to your saving love in the world.

When do I tend to cling to my own ideas and opinions and refuse to consider another's point of view? Were there times in my life that Jesus had to rebuke me for my hardness of heart? Do I believe with my entire being that Jesus rose from the dead, and has power over my sin and death, and has come to give me new life in the Spirit?

Mary, help me to believe in Jesus' Resurrection with all my mind, heart, and soul.

Notes