

# THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 26, 2020

## MASS READINGS

MONDAY: ACTS 6:8-15, PS 119, JN 6:22-29  
TUESDAY: ACTS 7:51-8:1A, PS 31, JN 6:30-35  
WEDNESDAY: ACTS 8:1B-8, PS 66, JN 6:35-40  
THURSDAY: ACTS 8:26-40, PS 66, JN 6:44-51  
FRIDAY: ACTS 9:1-20, PS 117, JN 6:52-59  
SATURDAY: ACTS 9:31-42, PS 116, JN 6:60-69  
**NEXT SUNDAY: FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER-RDGS: ACTS 13:14, 43-52, PS 100, REV 7:9, 14B-17, JN 10:27-30.**

## MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS  
TUESDAY: RAYMOND BROWN  
WEDNESDAY: FERRITER FAMILY  
THURSDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS  
FRIDAY: POOR SOULS  
SATURDAY: RAYMOND BROWN  
SUNDAY: FOR THE PARISH

## MEMORIAL FLOWERS

All members of St. Ann's parish, families-living & deceased: Bennett families & Rayman families. Dick Livingston. Jack & Timothy Ruppert. Elbert & Leona Richard. Mary Laughead. Polley & Schuback families. Donald Springgate. Marvin Anthrop. Jody Geller.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

*"Feed my lambs."*

The above may remind us of not so distant events in which our Holy Father, after the manner of St. Peter, declared his love for Christ, accepted the arduous task of servant of the servants of God, and pledged to "feed His sheep". We know however, that by virtue of our baptismal promises we too have some share in this ministry in that we first begin by "feeding" ourselves with the bread of God's word. We do this through initially through prayer. We engage in that necessary daily task of feeding on the word of Scripture as we find ourselves selecting a small passage, perhaps one that has some personal importance to us. We first read it slowly and just under our breath. We then spend some moments thinking about it, letting it digest, so to speak, and once we are finished offer a prayer of thanks for having been nourished in such a fashion. A simple and yet time-tried practice known as the *Lectio Divina*. In this simple process we sit alone with the word knowing that it will begin a powerful work in us. We may not be fully aware of precisely what is going on within us, and that is fine, after all it is the Lord who wishes to bring about the transformation which makes us pleasing to himself. We cannot do this on our own no matter how hard we try. We will soon find that changes do occur and that we are ready to begin "feeding" others, not in the same manner. They must engage in this action on their own, in their own inner rooms. Our feeding will rather be by way of personal example and direction. Here is where fasting and works of mercy enter in. These three "pillars of the interior life" follow us throughout our lives; they are not just for Lent. Fasting is that ability to discern, to subordinate everything under our goal as persons and that is life as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Fasting teaches us how to take the many persons, places and things of this world and "order them aright" as the psalmist reminds us. To see how each can assist us toward our goal of life with God in eternity. We know from experience how we admire people who seem disciplined especially in their chosen activity, whether sport or study, and how they can put all things in their proper order for the sake of their goal. It is the same with believers and the Kingdom. All things must serve that one goal of reaching the Kingdom as God wishes all of us to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And so we must live our lives by discerning what is of greater value and how each and everything can serve that one purpose for which we were created. Next comes works of mercy. Here we find that our prayer life has indeed prepared us to be more patient, more forgiving and more able to witness to Christ by helping "the least of the brethren". Here we have the insight to perceive the opportunities which abound each day whether large or small to bring Christ to other through our words and actions and thus become the ambassadors of that very Kingdom in which we are joyful and hopeful citizens. Until, one day we all find ourselves surrounded by those who have gone before and giving glory and honor and praise to the Lamb who was slain. Alleluia.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 26, 2020



### *Seek First God's Kingdom*

Seek first the kingdom of God  
And His righteousness for your life,  
Do not be anxious for what you lack,  
Your needs, God will provide

For God knows when we come to Him  
Just what are our pressing needs,  
He will satisfy our hungry mouths  
While our hungry hearts, He feeds

Store up treasures in heaven above  
Where moth and rust won't decay  
And where the value will not decrease  
For it's eternal and does not fade

And as we do this, we will find,  
Our worries soon will cease  
And in our souls there's a quietness  
Where we will know God's peace.

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### **Store your treasure in heaven, not on earth (Matthew 6:19-34)**

Not only are we to ask God for our daily provision, but we also are warned against stockpiling material wealth and other treasures on earth:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt. 6:19-21)

“Treasures in heaven” is not a vaporous reference to kindly thoughts in God’s heart or some such platitude. God’s kingdom will ultimately rule on earth. “Treasures in heaven” are things of worth in God’s coming kingdom, such as justice, opportunity for everyone to be productive, provision for everyone’s needs, and respect for the dignity of every person. The implication is that we would do better to invest our money in activities that transform the world, than in securities that protect our accumulated surplus.

Is it wrong, then, to have a retirement portfolio or even to care about the material things of this world for ourselves or for others? The answer is again both no and yes. The no comes from the fact that this passage is not the only one in the Bible speaking to questions of wealth and provision for those who are dependent on us. Other passages counsel prudence and forethought, such as, “Those who gather little by little will increase [wealth]” (Proverbs 13:11b), and, “The good leave an inheritance to their children’s children” (Proverbs 13:22). God guides Joseph to store up food for seven years in advance of a famine (Genesis 41:25-36), and Jesus speaks favorably in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30, which will be discussed later) of investing money. In light of the rest of Scripture, Matthew 6:19-34 cannot be a blanket prohibition.

But the yes part of the answer is a warning, summed up beautifully in verse 21, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” We might expect this sentence to run the other way, “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.”

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 26, 2020

But Jesus' actual words are more profound. Money changes the heart more than the heart decides how to handle money. Jesus' point is not "You tend to put your money into things that matter to you," but, "the possessions you own will change you so that you care more about them than about other things." Choose carefully what you own, for you will inevitably begin to value and protect it, to the potential detriment of everything else.

We may call this the "Treasure Principle," namely, that treasure transforms. Those who invest their deepest treasure in the things of this world will find they are no longer serving God but money (Matt. 6:24). That can lead to anxiety coming from the uncertainties of money (Matt. 6:25-34). Will it be eroded by inflation? Will the stock market crash? Will the bonds default? Will the bank fail? Can I be sure that what I've saved will be enough to handle anything that could possibly happen?

The antidote is to invest in ways that meet people's genuine needs. A company that provides clean water or well-made clothes may be investing in the kingdom of God, whereas an investment that depends on politically motivated subsidies, overheated housing markets, or material shortages may not. This passage in Matthew 6 is not a rule for portfolio management, but it does tell us that our commitment to the ways and means of God's kingdom extends to how we manage such wealth as we have.

The question, then, is what kind of attention you should pay to material needs and the accumulation of resources. If you pay anxious attention, you are foolish. If you let them displace your trust in God, you are becoming unfaithful. If you pay excessive attention to them, you will become greedy. If you acquire them at the expense of other people, you are becoming the kind of oppressor against whom God's kingdom is pitched.

How are we to discern the line between appropriate and inappropriate attention to wealth? Jesus answers, "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you" (Matt. 6:33). First things first. Despite our large capacity for self-deception, this question can help us observe carefully where our treasure has put us. That will tell us something about our hearts.

*Theology of Work Project, Inc.,*

## How to *Agape* Love

Marina Spinelli — [The Harvard Ichthus](#)

The primary vocation of every person is to love, to strive for an *agape* love that extends beyond a *philia* love. The Catholic encyclical entitled *Deus Caritas Est: God Is Love* by Benedict XVI offers definitions for these different Greek words for "love." According to Benedict, *philia* refers to "the love of friendship." [1] The more profound word for love, *agape*, refers to "love grounded in and shaped by faith." [2] Benedict calls *agape* love the "typically Christian" type of love. [3] This type of love, this utter perfection of love, may seem illusory, overwhelming, unattainable; for this reason, God gives us another vocation, a secondary vocation, [4] to guide our fulfillment of this primary vocation. This relationship between the primary and secondary vocations is made especially evident in the life of the disciple Peter.

The disciple Peter, like so many of us, struggles to differentiate between *philia* and *agape* love in the following passage from John:

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He then said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep' (Jn 21:15-17, NASB)."

Unfortunately, much of Peter's conflict in differentiating between the two definitions of "love" is lost in the English translation that *The New American Standard Bible* provides. In order to recover this conflict, we must consider the original Greek text. According to Fr. Timothy Matkin in his article "Lost in Translation," the original Greek text of the passage does, in fact, employ the two different Greek words for "love": *philia* and *agape*. [5]

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 26, 2020

The first time that Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?” the word for love is *agape*. Peter responds, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,” using *philia* as the word for love. Jesus again asks using *agape* and Peter again responds using *philia* the second time. The third time that Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?” Jesus changes his word for “love” to *philia*, which is the same word that Peter again responds with when he says, “Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.” The passage notes that Peter is “distressed” when Jesus questions him the third time. This distress arises, in part, due to the repetitive nature of Jesus’ questions. More significantly, though, Peter is distressed because Jesus has suddenly changed his word for “love,” making Peter aware that there is a distinction between *philia* love and *agape* love.[6] Peter realizes that Jesus, verbally at least, lowers his standards, or at least meets Peter where he is at, a point at which he cannot yet verbally proclaim his *agape* love.

In helping him distinguish the two types of love, Jesus also foreshadows Peter’s secondary vocation, which is that of the priesthood. By asking Peter to tend and feed his sheep, Jesus hints that Peter’s role in the Church will be as the first priest, the first Pope, the shepherd of the sheep, God’s people. Jesus confirms Peter’s secondary vocation to the priesthood elsewhere in Scripture when he says:

“And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:18-19).

Jesus’ asking Peter to “feed my lambs,” “tend my sheep,” and “feed my sheep” in response to Peter’s inability to verbally declare *agape* love for Jesus is not a random list of requests. Rather, the list of requests is Jesus’ attempt to bring Peter to declare *agape* love through obedience towards him and his commands: if he can’t *say* he *agape* loves Jesus, perhaps he can *show* he does through faithful devotion to his life-long work. Earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that obedience, specifically the keeping of God’s commandments, is God’s love language.[7] Jesus says to his apostles, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). The original Greek text shows that the word for “love” in this verse is *agape*. Obedience, as God’s love language, is the way in which He best receives our love for Him, and therefore, is the way in which we should strive to express our love for Him. Reciprocally, obedience is also the way in which God communicates His love for us. Jesus says to his apostles, “If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it” (Jn 14:14).

Peter’s feeding and tending of Jesus’ sheep represents both Peter’s obedience to Jesus and Peter’s acknowledgement of his own secondary vocation. Considered together, these demonstrate Peter’s fulfillment of his primary vocation to *agape* love, even though he is incapable of verbalizing this fulfillment. According to Jesus’ statement, “Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves [*agape*] me,” Peter does indeed attain *agape* love (Jn 14:21). By acknowledging his secondary vocation to the priesthood through obedience towards Jesus’ requests, Peter also demonstrates an understanding that his secondary vocation offers guidance for, even a means to, achieving *agape* love.

Fulfilling our primary vocation to love, an endeavor so seemingly illusory, overwhelming, unattainable, becomes much more tangible, manageable, and attainable when we, like Peter, come to view our secondary vocations as means to fulfilling this primary vocation. Our respective secondary vocations are numerous and varied. Our secondary vocations might refer to our states in life, whether the priesthood, religious life, Holy Matrimony, or chaste single life. Our secondary vocations might also refer to our professional callings, whether in medicine, law, engineering, education, business, entertainment, or any other field. We can obey God, and thus love Him, therefore fulfilling our primary vocation, by objectively fulfilling our secondary vocations. Still, it helps that we are aware of, even if we do not fully understand, the centrality of love, *agape* love, in our lives and in our relationship with God. For it is out of love that God provides us with our secondary vocations, and it is for the (ultimate) purpose of love that we carry out our secondary vocations. Fulfilling the secondary vocations that God calls us to is also proof of a certain degree of obedience to God’s commandments for our lives.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 26, 2020

We should be mindful, always, that we carry out our particular secondary vocations not out of our own wanting or choosing, but rather because it is God's will for our lives. When we keep this obedience and a yearning to love in our hearts and minds, the complexity of fulfilling our primary vocation to *agape* love decreases. With these two things in mind, we are prepared to love God and all of our neighbors, at which point we proceed to carry out our secondary vocations. We intend to obey, to love, and then we do whatever it is we are called to do. That is how we *agape* love.



### St. Thomas Aquinas

**I** am the Good Shepherd. Surely it is fitting that Christ should be a shepherd, for just as a flock is guided and fed by a shepherd so the faithful are fed by Christ with spiritual food and with his own body and blood. The Apostle said: You were once like sheep without a shepherd, but now you have returned to the guardian and ruler of your souls. The prophet has said: As a shepherd he pastures his flock.

Christ said that the shepherd enters through the gate and that he is himself the gate as well as the shepherd. Then it is necessary that he enter through himself. By so doing, he reveals himself, and through himself he knows the Father. But we enter through him because through him we find happiness. Take heed: no one else is the gate but Christ. Others reflect his light, but no one else is the true light. John the Baptist was not the light, but he bore witness to the light. It is said of Christ, however: He was the true light that enlightens every man. For this reason no one says that he is the gate; this title is Christ's own. However, he has made others shepherds and given that office to his members; for Peter was a shepherd, and so were the other apostles and all good bishops after them.

Scripture says: I shall give you shepherds according to my own heart. Although the bishops of the Church, who are her sons, are all shepherds, nevertheless Christ refers only to one person in saying: I am the Good Shepherd, because he wants to emphasize the virtue of charity. Thus, no one can be a good shepherd unless he is one with Christ in charity. Through this we become members of the true shepherd.

The duty of a good shepherd is charity; therefore Christ said: *The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep*. Know the difference between a good and a bad shepherd: the good shepherd cares for the welfare of his flock, but the bad shepherd cares only for his own welfare.

The Good Shepherd does not demand that shepherds lay down their lives for a real flock of sheep. But every spiritual shepherd must endure the loss of his bodily life for the salvation of the flock, since the spiritual good of the flock is more important than the bodily life of the shepherd, when danger threatens the salvation of the flock. This is why the Lord says: The good shepherd lays down his life, that is, his physical life, for his sheep; this he does because of his authority and love. Both, in fact, are required: that they should be ruled by him, and that he should love them. The first without the second is not enough.

Christ stands out for us as the example of this teaching: If Christ laid down his life for us, so we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.