



Sunday, Apr 05, 2020

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Lord, have mercy

In any act of violence, there are victims and villains. As we meditate on Jesus' Passion, we can't ignore that Holy Week's villains may bear an uneasy resemblance to ourselves. We've often failed to champion the innocent. We may seek satisfaction in the peril of those who offend us. We endeavor to crush what we don't understand. We deny friends who seem too dangerous to claim. We avoid another's suffering to save ourselves. On Palm Sunday, we're the ones crying: "Crucify him!" Any way you can, support those who suffer most from the burdens of this pandemic.

TODAY'S READINGS: Procession: Matthew 21:1-11 (37); Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66 (38). "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard."

Monday, Apr 06, 2020

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Rise to the occasion

"The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ," the Catechism of the Catholic Church states. Never more so than at a time when death is ever present in our lives, of all the things Christians believe, the idea that the dead can be brought back to life requires the greatest leap of faith. Jesus helped his followers prepare for this mind-blowing concept by raising Lazarus from the dead—the last of his big miracles before his own death. It was an ultimate sign of his power and identity to leave them with. It helps us, too, get ready for the stunning reality that all who die will rise.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11 (257). "The chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus too, because many of the Jews were turning away and believing in Jesus because of him."

Tuesday, Apr 07, 2020

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Now is the time

It's not easy to admit when we have turned our hearts from God. As we make the journey of Christ's Passion in this season of the pandemic, it is time to release our grip on the sins that we cling to in fear or shame. Instead, let us cling to the mercy of Christ. Jesus himself faced many forms of sin, especially during his Passion, including betrayal, denial, and abandonment by his own friends. Yet the church says emphatically that at this dark hour, Jesus gives his life and "becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1851). Turn to Jesus in this time of great trial.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38 (258). "Will you lay down your life for me?"

Wednesday, Apr 08, 2020

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

I spy the darkness

Today is sometimes known as Spy Wednesday, a reference to today's gospel story of Judas plotting with the Sanhedrin to have Jesus arrested and put on trial. The word "spy" carries a meaning of laying a snare in keeping with the story. Most of us will be unable to worship together in person this sacred week, but perhaps you will be able to connect online for the traditional evening service called "Tenebrae." In this ceremony, which may

consist of hymns, readings, prayers, and reflections, such as "The Seven Last Words," a number of lighted candles are gradually extinguished to leave the assembly in total darkness. Then loud noises are made symbolizing the earthquake that followed the Crucifixion. Whether alone or connected with others, spend time today reflecting on the suffering and death of Jesus.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25 (259). "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me."

Thursday, Apr 09, 2020

HOLY THURSDAY; EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Wash "down" for supper

Jesus commanded his disciples to follow his example and wash each other's feet—though this year will be an exception—and laypeople, priests, and even popes have been doing it for centuries as a sign of humility and service. In 2015, Pope Francis made headlines when he broke norms and washed the feet of women and Muslims in Rome—proof positive that simple gestures (even ones that are 2,000 years old!) can be powerful acts of inclusion. Show your authority as a follower of Christ and make yourself meek to the excluded.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15 (39). "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet."

Friday, Apr 10, 2020

FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (GOOD FRIDAY); DAY OF ABSTINENCE

For God so loved the world

If not for love—a love worth dying for—the horror of Good Friday would make no sense, nor would the horror unfolding before our eyes daily. Jesus could have saved himself but chose not to. Jesus could have conquered evildoers with almighty power, but instead refused to answer violence with violence. "The cross is the school of love," wrote Saint Maximilian Kolbe. Because of Jesus, we know that real love expresses itself through sacrifice. What will you do today to honor the love of him who loved us most?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42 (40). "For this I came into the world."

Saturday, Apr 11, 2020

HOLY SATURDAY; EASTER VIGIL

Be on the watch

The Easter Vigil—not Easter Sunday or Christmas Day, but tonight's vigil—is the greatest of all church celebrations. Though your faith community has had to make other plans for this year, we can still marvel in our collective memory at the beauty of the service, which begins in darkness as the faithful keep vigil, "looking for the light of the Lord when he returns." As candles are extinguished, lights come up and scripture tells the stories of what God has done for us throughout time. Then new members are baptized and for the first time join everyone at the table of the Eucharist. This year more than ever, this is a night to remember. Celebrate it in your own special and memorable way.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 1:1-2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10 (41).



Sunday, Apr 12, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD (EASTER SUNDAY)

What do you see?

Once more, we arrive at the most significant void in sacred history: that empty tomb of Easter. What we see in this space defines the shape of our destiny. Do we view nothing or everything in this place? Is Jesus simply gone or restored to glory? Is death the end of us, or the start of something everlasting? Most of all, in this time of fearful illness and uncertainty, are we prepared to call Jesus Lord and to follow him through death into life? Or do we have other plans?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8; John 20:1-9 (42); gospel for p.m. Mass: Luke 24:13-35 (46). "Everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

Monday, Apr 13, 2020

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Put the Resurrection to work

Do we bravely race from the tomb toward new life as Mary Magdalene and Mary did, or burrow into timid cover? Consider the example of Henri Perrin, born this day in 1914. He was part of the French worker-priest movement where priests went to work in factories to bridge the abyss between the working class and the church. The Vatican grew alarmed by the political activism of the priests on behalf of labor, and stopped the experiment. The concerns of worker-priests were given new life in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, "On the Church in the Modern World," and later by Pope John Paul II, who demanded of priests that the "fumes of incense mix with those of industry." Reflect on what worker-justice concerns you can give new life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:14, 22-33; Matthew 28:8-15 (261). "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed."

Tuesday, Apr 14, 2020

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Our star witness

Mary of Magdala was first to witness and testify to Jesus' Resurrection. She is called "apostle to the apostles" for good reason. Mentioned by name in the gospels more often than most apostles, Mary traveled with Jesus and helped support his ministry financially. The question is, how do we witness to resurrection in our own life and times? In a world swept up by fear, contagion, and death, how can we witness to hope and to life? Let "the Magdalene" be an inspiration!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:36-41; John 20:11-18 (262). "Mary went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and then reported what he had told her."

Wednesday, Apr 15, 2020

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Call for backup

The miracles of Jesus did not end with Jesus' earthly sojourn. Today's reading from Acts describes Peter and John healing in

Jesus' name. What confidence that must have taken, to try healing a man lame from birth! The word *confidence* means "with trust." A nice way to understand the power of faith. Be a healing presence in a world in dire need of that, with the trust that Jesus has your back!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 3:1-10; Luke 24:13-35 (263). "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.'"

Thursday, Apr 16, 2020

THURSDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Eat, drink, and take heart

Where would Catholic culture be without food and drink? In today's gospel Jesus reassures his disciples that he is not a ghost by eating a piece of baked fish. Food is simple, basic, and necessary. While we practice safe distancing, we long to once again eat and drink together at the Eucharist, at parish dinners, at family meals. Every bite of baked fish can remind us of our Savior. Let your next meal drive out fear as it opens you to love, the way it did for Jesus' disciples 2,000 years ago.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 3:11-26; Luke 24:35-48 (264). "Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones."

Friday, Apr 17, 2020

FRIDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

No need to hide your solidarity

However did the fish symbol—two intersecting arcs—come to be associated with Jesus? Because his disciples were fishermen? Because of the miracle of the loaves and fishes? Because Catholics eat fish on Fridays? The letters of the Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, are an acronym for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." It was a secret symbol used by the persecuted early Christians. What outward sign of solidarity can you make with those who are persecuted for their faith today?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:1-12; John 21:1-14 (265). "Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you just caught.'"

Saturday, Apr 18, 2020

SATURDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

The news is still good

Do you ever think about how the followers of Jesus must have felt after his death? We see their situation through the lens of the Resurrection, but they thought his death was the end of everything. Those grief-stricken men and women were lost and afraid. Imagine their disbelief when some among them began to report that they had seen Jesus. Disbelief began to feel like hope as he continued to show up and even eat with them. That was the beginning. Two thousand years later, though grief-stricken and afraid once again, we still believe in that good news..

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:13-21; Mark 16:9-15 (266). "She went to announce the good news to his followers."



Sunday, Apr 19, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

Empty chairs, full hearts

On this day 25 years ago, 168 people died in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The footprint of the building is now ringed by trees providing a living threshold for ground made sacred by grief. A surviving wall records the names of those who lived through the tragedy, while a Field of Empty Chairs recalls the adults and children who perished. Violence created the need for this memorial. But the chairs, which become vigil lights of memory through each night, attest that a light shines in every darkness. Be that light.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31 (43). "They devoted themselves . . . to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers."

Monday, Apr 20, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

Give life the last word

Today is the 21st anniversary of the Columbine school shooting. How to cope with the sorrow and outrage of that incident and so many similar ones? We begin to rebuild our society when we allow the Spirit to flow through us and see the face of God in others. "Every human being . . . , however weak, is created 'in the image and likeness of God,'" Pope Benedict XIV said in Cameroon in 2009. "Every person must live! . . . Death will never have the last word!" Acknowledge the right of those around you to live, no matter their differences, their weakness or strengths, their failings or successes.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:23-31; John 3:1-8 (267). "You do not know where [the wind] comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Tuesday, Apr 21, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ANSELM, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Our Redeemer, in the flesh

In 1098, Saint Anselm wrote the treatise "Why the God-Man?" to champion a core Christian tenet: the Incarnation—the belief that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Incarnation is a big deal. Nearly every heresy tackled by the Early Church concerned errant beliefs about Jesus' true nature. No, we don't believe that Jesus was merely human (Arianism) or that he was all divine, only pretending to be human (Docetism). We believe that the second person of the Trinity took on human flesh to save us. Imagine that!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:32-37; John 3:7b-15 (268). "You must be born from above."

Wednesday, Apr 22, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

Give your sister some breathing space

"Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life. . . . This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." Thus opens *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical "On Care for Our Common Home." Do we really want to live in

darkness? Shine a light on what each of us can do to clean up the planet. And plant a tree for good measure!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 5:17-26; John 3:16-21 (269). "The light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light."

Thursday, Apr 23, 2020

MEMORIAL OF GEORGE, MARTYR

Face the dragon

The legend of Saint George the dragon slayer is a famous one, but it's not as rooted in historical fact as is the manner of his martyrdom. Yes, George had the courage to face a monster—but the monster was the Roman emperor Diocletian, whose persecution of Christians in the early 300s martyred not only George but well-known saints Sebastian, Agnes, Lucy, and Philomena, among countless others. George, a soldier, remained joyous even when tortured for his belief. What negative influences threaten your own joyous practice of Christian faith today—and are you willing to face them, as George was?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 5:27-33; John 3:31-36 (270). "One who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things."

Friday, Apr 24, 2020

MEMORIAL OF FIDELIS OF SIGMARINGEN, PRIEST, MARTYR

Clothes make the saint

Holding a law degree from Germany, Fidelis of Sigmaringen (1577-1622) was known as the "poor man's lawyer" who sometimes would give his destitute clients the clothes off his back. But he tired of the adversarial nature of the law profession, so he joined the Capuchin Friars. Ordained a priest in 1612, Fidelis was sent to Switzerland to convert Calvinist reformers. In violent reaction to his successful efforts, Fidelis was set upon and murdered. He was canonized in 1746 by Pope Benedict XIV. *Fidelis* means "faithful" in Latin. Exercise your faith today by donating clothes to the poor in memory of Fidelis.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 5:34-42; John 6:1-15 (271). "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world."

Saturday, Apr 25, 2020

FEAST OF MARK, EVANGELIST

Write the Good News with the ink of your life

Mark was an early follower of Jesus but not one of the 12 apostles. Most scholars think that he was the "John who is called Mark" referenced in Acts 12:12 who joined in mission work with Paul and Barnabas. Today's first reading mentions that he had a special sonlike relationship with Peter. Beyond that, little is known except that he used the gifts he had been given to write the shortest and earliest gospel a few decades after Jesus' death. His gospel became the inspiration for Matthew and Luke to write theirs. How will those who come after you take inspiration from your life and the way you shared the Good News?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Peter 5:5b-14; Mark 16:15-20 (555). "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation."



Sunday, Apr 26, 2020

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Three ways to foolishness—or faith

Some of us are quick to admit we don't need help in being foolish. We do this quite well on our own. Nonetheless, the story of the Emmaus travelers provides a checklist of choices that lead to boneheaded moves. First of all, they abandon hope too soon. Second, they separate from the community of faith. Third, they discount reports that Jesus is still being encountered. No wonder they didn't recognize Jesus when he was standing right next to them! Practice patience. Stay close. And seek the Lord while he may be found.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:14, 22-33; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35 (46). "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!"

Monday, Apr 27, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

Saints for all seasons

Six years ago today, Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II were both canonized. Commentators pointed out the apparent differences between these new saints: one known for his progressive outlook in convening Vatican II, one seen as upholding more traditional Catholic values. And yet their canonization was the perfect snapshot of what we believe the communion of saints to be—holy role models who are each unique unto themselves, demonstrating so many different ways to follow Christ. Ask John XXIII and John Paul II to pray for you today, requesting they guide your own distinct path to holiness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:8-15; John 6:22-29 (273). "Believe in the one he sent."

Tuesday, Apr 28, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PETER CHANEL, PRIEST, MARTYR

Exercise your right of redemption

Saint Peter Chanel is revered for having lived a courageous life as a missionary and having died a martyr's death in 1841 on the Oceania island of Futuna. The later remorse and repentance of his murderer Musumusu is also noteworthy. Having clubbed Chanel to death in 1841 on instructions from the king to "do what was necessary" to stop Chanel's evangelization, he later repented and was baptized. He asked to be buried outside the church where Chanel's remains were kept, so that the faithful would walk over his grave on their way to revere Chanel. Even your greatest errors in life can be redemptive.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 7:51—8:1a; John 6:30-35 (274). "The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Wednesday, Apr 29, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CATHERINE OF SIENA, VIRGIN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Speak up!

Preaching is a sacred art, whether at a podium or in everyday life, "to communicate the awe of the word," says Jonathan Edwards, one of the best-known Protestant preachers. A skilled preacher prays with scripture, studies, and reflects on the circumstances of the local and global community to inspire and challenge listeners.

Each of us has the capacity to preach the Good News. One of the great saints and a member of the Order of Preachers, Catherine of Siena advises us: "Preach the truth as if you had a million voices. It is silence that kills the world."

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 8:1b-8; John 6:35-40 (275). "Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word."

Thursday, Apr 30, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PIUS V, POPE

Set the bar high

Picture horse racing in St. Peter's Square. Hard to imagine how that worked, but it does give us an indication of the state of the papacy when reformer Pius V took charge in 1566. Though his stern demeanor and reforms did not endear him to comfortable Vatican insiders, he practiced what he preached, living and dressing simply and often walking barefoot. During a famine he used church resources to purchase corn from abroad and distributed it widely to the poor. He also spent heavily to improve the water supply and sewers of Rome. If you wish to hold others to high standards, be willing to start with yourself!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 8:26-40; John 6:44-51 (276). "The bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world."

Friday, May 01, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

Food for the soul's journey

What food does to the body is what the Eucharist does to the soul. It gives us energy, strength, defense against disease. It's intimate, partaken in relationship, in family, in community. It's a gift, shared in love. If you are what you eat, as the old saying goes, then it transforms us, makes us more like Christ. Finally, we take it with us, out of the church doors. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: "We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people."

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 9:1-20; John 6:52-59 (277); or Genesis 1:26—2:3 or Colossians 3:14-15, 17, 23-24; Matthew 13:54-58 (559). "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you."

Saturday, May 02, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ATHANASIUS, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Be an ideal person

It can feel lonely to fight for an ideal, including some of the ideals that the church has spoken up for in recent years: immigrant rights, racial justice, dignity of life from womb to tomb. Today is a good day to find inspiration and support in a soulmate: Saint Athanasius, who spent much of his energy as a bishop in the fourth century defending our core belief in the divinity of Christ as the Word made flesh. Hold fast to your ideals and continue to bring them to life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 9:31-42; John 6:60-69 (278). "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."