



## Sunday, May 03, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER; GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

### Follow the leader

When we were kids, playing “follow the leader” was easy. One child was designated as the pattern to imitate, and we just did whatever they did. In these days of crisis, it can seem harder to tell who the designated leader is. Is it the president or the pope, the pastor or the medical expert? Do we do what our parents advised, or listen to the recommendations of trusted friends? What do we do when media experts disagree? If we call ourselves Christians, then Christ is the ultimate authority for our values and criteria. Make a verse of scripture your daily companion.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; John 10:1-10 (49). “For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.”

## Monday, May 04, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Stand your ground

“The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger,” said Father Stanley Rother, and he didn’t, which made him a martyr in 1981 in civil war-torn Guatemala. Even though he knew his name was on a death list, this priest from Oklahoma stayed with the people he had been serving since 1968, during which time he built a farmer’s co-op, a school, a hospital, and a radio station. He was beatified in 2017. Learn more about this inspiration for faith in the book *The Shepherd Who Didn’t Run*.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 11:1-18; John 10:11-18 (279). “A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

## Tuesday, May 05, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Keep things in context

Catholics celebrate 50 days of Easter with a special emphasis on the Gospel of John. But with the Gospel of John comes a particular concern. At Mass, we hear—amid the evangelist’s poetic prose—some jarring references to “the Jews.” Historically, such language sadly led to a legacy of hate and harm. With anti-Semitism making headlines again, look to the short Vatican II document called *Nostra aetate*. It honors the Jewish people as our faithful forebears, tapping a truth right out of John 10: Jesus was an observant. Honor our religious ancestors by learning more about them.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 11:19-26; John 10:22-30 (280). “Jesus walked about in the temple area.”

## Wednesday, May 06, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Follow the Light

“This Little Light of Mine” has been young Christians’ joyful favorite for nearly a century. It has also been an anthem for civil and human rights movements. For people of faith, we who believe that Jesus has come into the world as light, the song serves as a directive to allow God’s light to shine through the example of our lives. Reflect today on the example you have set during difficult times. Have you given into darkness and despair or served as a beacon of hope and support for those around you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 12:24—13:5a; John 12:44-50 (281). “I have come into the world as light, to keep anyone who believes in me from remaining in the dark.”

## Thursday, May 07, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### A masquerade to take seriously

In today’s gospel Jesus says, “Whoever receives the one I send, receives me.” It is in keeping with our tradition to see the poor, the migrant, the refugee as sent by God to stretch our hearts and open us to the Good News. Mother Teresa often referred to seeing Jesus “in the distressing disguise of the poor.” Indeed, how distressing it is to see the suffering being endured by those with the least. Take a step today to “receive” Jesus in the disguise of the poor.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 13:13-25; John 13:16-20 (282). “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

## Friday, May 08, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Youthful mystic

Imagine growing up with a saint in your hometown! New Jersey native Teresa Demjanovich, honored today, was like many young people with responsibility for caring for aging parents while also getting an education and a job. She then became a religious sister but died just two years later at age 26. Known as a prayerful, holy woman, Teresa was deeply spiritual and considered a mystic. “Our heart is the compass that magnetically follows the north star of desire,” Teresa wrote. “To locate my treasure I have but to unearth the lodging of my desires.” As you pray this day, consider how God is leading you through your heart and desires.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 13:26-33; John 14:1-6 (283). “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.”

## Saturday, May 09, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Light a fuse!

Peter Maurin, who founded the Catholic Worker movement with Dorothy Day, was born on this day in 1877. He longed for a world where it would be easier for people to be good to each other. While he was the visionary, Day translated his ideals of justice into practical actions: a newspaper, houses of hospitality, and farms. He found “dynamite” in the gospels, which could solve the problems of society if someone would “blow the lid off.” Day lit the fuse, and their flame continues today in Catholic Worker houses.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 13:44-52; John 14:7-14 (284). “The one who believes in me . . . will do greater works than these.”



## Sunday, May 10, 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### Equal actions of the spiritually mature

There's some disagreement between those who consider prayer the number-one obligation for believers and those convinced that actions speak louder than words. Monastic leader Benedict of Clairvaux wrote his *Rule* to ensure his monks understood that *ora et labora*—prayer and labor—are partner activities in reaching spiritual maturity. Some people are clearly called to devote themselves primarily to spiritual matters in full-time religious vocations. Others can better serve elbow-deep in more worldly arenas. Try to balance the mix between spiritual rejuvenation and gritty action in your life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12 (52). "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table."

## Monday, May 11, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Be an advocate

Jesus promised to send his followers an advocate—the Holy Spirit—to come to our aid, to strengthen and plead our Christian cause and defend us from evil. (We can use all the help we can get in these trying times!) As part of our church's social teaching, Catholics are to be advocates for the poor. Add your voice to those urging policymakers to take action on critical issues from malnutrition to forced migration. Confrontglobalpoverty.org is a good place to start.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 14:5-18; John 14:21-26 (285). "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name."

## Tuesday, May 12, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PANCRAS, MARTYR

### A child shall lead us

Not much is known about Saint Pancras—other than he was martyred, like many Christians, by the Roman Emperor Diocletian around the year 303. Historic churches and a famous train station in London bear his name because Augustine of Canterbury brought devotion to Pancras with him to northern Europe. A truly defining characteristic of Pancras, though, is that he was only 14 when he was tortured and beheaded, putting him in the same "child saint" category as martyrs Maria Goretti, Agnes of Rome, and José Luis Sánchez del Río. How can your own faith benefit from a childlike trust?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 14:19-28; John 14:27-31a (286). "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

## Wednesday, May 13, 2020

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

### Pray as if your (eternal) life depends on it

Beginning May 13, 1917 and continuing through that fall, three children (Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta) of Fatima, Portugal reported several Marian apparitions. Much has been written about the message of Our Lady of Fatima, whose feast was added to the church calendar in 2002. The defining document on Fatima comes from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In sum: The apparitions did *not* predict the future or announce the

end of the world. They *did* "exhort" us to pray, because "prayer is the salvation for souls." Good advice in any guise!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 15:1-6; John 15:1-8 (287). "No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me."

## Thursday, May 14, 2020

FEAST OF MATTHIAS, APOSTLE

### Ready and willing

Not much is known about Matthias except that he replaced Judas as one of the 12 apostles. Tradition has it that he preached in the areas around Judea and possibly farther afield and was persecuted and martyred, but details are few and unreliable. Today's first reading tells us he stepped in when needed and agreed to join the apostles following Jesus' death and Resurrection. Like most Christians, he lived a life of quiet faithfulness without much glory. Be ready to step in to serve others. Never mind the glory.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15:9-17 (564). "Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles."

## Friday, May 15, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### That they might be one

The call to unity is woven throughout our Catholic faith. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes that we share with our ancestors in faith the conviction "that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others." Recent events bring this truth home in forceful ways. Today let's commemorate International Day of Families and Endangered Species Day, both of which are ways to help nurture our essential connectedness with each other and the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 15:22-31; John 15:12-17 (289). "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."

## Saturday, May 16, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Being Christian has a cost

Religious persecution was commonplace in the story of the Early Church. Two thousand years later, persecution of Christians continues. In a 2019 trip to the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome, Pope Francis remarked, "Still today Christians are persecuted—even more than in the first centuries." Play your part in stopping all religious persecution by expressing zero tolerance for it in your own backyard.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 16:1-10; John 15:18-21 (290). "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."



## Sunday, May 17, 2020

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### Hope is nourishing

Especially in these trying times, we may be tempted to dismiss hope as something akin to wishful thinking. Yet hope is a theological virtue, along with faith and love. These three put us into position for personal union with God. Hope, in particular, orients us perpetually in a Godward direction no matter where life takes us. As Cistercian monk Aelred of Rivaulx declared: “What is hope but food for the journey to support us in the miseries of this life?” Cultivate hope by weeding out habits of negativity and cynicism.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21 (55). “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.”

## Monday, May 18, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOHN I, POPE, MARTYR

### Lean on the Lord

Pope John I was frail when he was elected to the papacy in 523, and he did not survive imprisonment by a heretical king. From permanent disabilities to occasional illness, from aging to chronic fatigue to widespread viral infection, we all experience physical weakness at some point and know that it can feel like a prison. When we hit the limits of our bodies, our inner strength can wane too. At that time—and at any time—lean on the Lord to carry you through.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 16:11-15; John 15:26—16:4a (291). “The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.”

## Tuesday, May 19, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Always at our side and on our side

When Jesus promised his disciples the Holy Spirit, he used an interesting word. He called their holy helper a “paraclete,” the Greek word for *advocate*—literally “called to one’s side.” It was used in courts of law to describe an intercessor or counselor. From the Book of Job, we also know paraclete can mean “comforter.” What a rich, meaningful name to give that Spirit who guides us still—by our side even when we’re as clueless as can be.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 16:22-34; John 16:5-11 (292). “If I do not go, the Advocate will not come.”

## Wednesday, May 20, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BERNARDINE OF SIENA, PRIEST

### The best witness is a joyful heart

Do you know of someone whose energy and joy attracts followers of all kinds? Franciscan priest and theologian Saint Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444), whose feast we celebrate today, was one of those people. He was a human dynamo whose preaching drew thousands of fans throughout Italy even as he challenged them to practice voluntary poverty and denounced the sins of the day. His joyful eloquence defined his ministry and was impossible to ignore. Can you bring others to God through a joyful spirit?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 17:15, 22—18:1; John 16:12-15 (293).

“They were to seek God, yes . . . though he is not really far from any one of us.”

## Thursday, May 21, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

### This isn't goodbye

After listening to the nightly news, a friend recently (and understandably) gasped: “We need Jesus!” Most believers would agree. Which is perhaps why the Ascension doesn’t feel like an event we’re much inclined to celebrate. Jesus *departs*; this sounds like a terrible idea from every standpoint except the truth — because Jesus promises to send us his Spirit as an indwelling presence. If we still feel like orphans, remember Jesus’ words: “I am with you always.” See Jesus all around: in word and sacrament, in the assembly of faith, in the disadvantaged sister and brother.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20 (58). “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

## Friday, May 22, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Identify escape routes

During stressful times and increased family togetherness, such as global “stay-at-home” orders, domestic abuse increases. Special hotlines and secret havens are set up to assist victims, and abusers are encouraged to seek help as well. Saint Rita of Cascia, whose feast we celebrate today, was mentally and physically abused by her husband for years. In the Middle Ages, she had little recourse. She chose to respond with kindness, patience, and humility. Her virtues did little to change her husband’s behavior, but she did her best to escape her situation, at least spiritually. With the many resources available today, be aware of the signs of abuse and encourage loved ones to seek both physical and spiritual refuge.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 18:9-18; John 16:20-23 (295). “No one will take your joy away from you.”

## Saturday, May 23, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Here's to life

As we adjust to new ways of living, the Easter season offers much-needed hope. Resurrection changes everything, not only in salvation history but also here and now. Life coming out of death. That is the mystery of our faith, and the mystery of the world we live in. For every story of greed and ineptitude, there are many more stories of generosity and competence. Celebrate those victories. That is the life that comes out of death.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 18:23-28; John 16:23b-28 (296). “For the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have come to believe that I came from God.”





## Sunday, May 24, 2020

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### Right where you belong

We each have a need to belong that doesn't start with the playground or end with the work shift. Psychologist Abraham Maslow categorized the need to belong as number three on a hierarchy of essentials: right behind physical needs (food, clothing, and shelter) and safety. Catalog the people who are essential to your happiness and the social groups that include you as a member. Then consider this: God has chosen you to be one of God's people. And Jesus counts you as one who belongs especially to him.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 1:12-14; 1 Peter 4:13-16; John 17:1-11a (59). "They belonged to you, and you gave them to me."

## Monday, May 25, 2020

MEMORIAL OF GREGORY VII, POPE

### Cherish your freedoms

Pope Gregory VII fought hard for the separation of church and state because he lived in a time (11th century) when the church was subject to civil authorities, and abuses of power were rampant. In the face of enormous opposition, this great reformer extricated the church from the control of external rulers and strengthened the unity of the whole church under the centrality of the papacy. On this Memorial Day, remember that religious freedom is one of the founding principles of our country, worthy of the sacrifice of many. And one that our faith demands that we respect for all.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 19:1-8; John 16:29-33 (297). "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

## Tuesday, May 26, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PHILIP NERI, PRIEST

### God provides

It's fitting Philip Neri was canonized in 1622 with Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, and Teresa of Ávila. Ignatius was a friend, Francis was an influence, and Philip took to heart Teresa's quip: "From . . . sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us!" The affable Philip won over so many different kinds of people for Christ in 1500s Rome—using humor, humbleness, and holiness—that he's called, with Peter and Paul, an apostle of Rome. "Cast yourself into the arms of God," he said, "and be very sure that if he wants anything of you, he will fit you for the work and give you strength." That is comforting at a time when many of us feel stretched to the limit.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 20:17-27; John 17:1-11a (298). "I revealed your name to those whom you gave me."

## Wednesday, May 27, 2020

MEMORIAL OF AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY, BISHOP

### Look for God in unexpected places

Lest Saint Augustine of Canterbury be confused with Saint Augustine of Hippo: the two are not the same. Augustine of Hippo was a fourth-century doctor of the church. Augustine of

Canterbury was a sixth-century Benedictine missionary sent by Pope Gregory the Great to Christianize the British Isles. He is known as the "Apostle to the English," and his legacy includes an approach to evangelization and conversion that shows a respect for indigenous practices. Rather than condemning, he consecrated and incorporated popular Anglo-Saxon rites into Christianity. What practices from popular culture today might we consecrate into contemporary Christian practice?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 20:28-38; John 17:11b-19 (299). "As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world."

## Thursday, May 28, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Celebrate our finest gifts

Shavuot, or the Feast of Weeks, which our Jewish friends observe today, has a connection to the Catholic Solemnity of Pentecost. Just as Pentecost this Sunday comes seven weeks after Easter, Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks after Passover. In the biblical era, important dates for planting and harvesting were marked by religious holidays. Shavuot celebrated the wheat harvest seven weeks after Passover. Christians thank God for the abundant gift of the Holy Spirit.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 22:30; 23:6-11; John 17:20-26 (300). "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."

## Friday, May 29, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Keeping the peace

In 1972, Pope Saint Paul VI declared, "If you want peace, work for justice." Today we observe the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. The U.N. deploys peacekeepers around the world to provide "a unique and dynamic instrument . . . to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace." The work of Catholic social justice organizations like Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Worker, and Cross Catholic Outreach go a step further by "tending the sheep" of the poor, the oppressed, the refugee, the dispossessed. Do your part today to support the social outreach of your church.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 25:13b-21; John 21:15-19 (301). "Tend my sheep."

## Saturday, May 30, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

### Just do it!

Some argue that "believing the right things" is enough of a response to the call to discipleship. But Jesus emphasized *doing*. Orthopraxy (right practice) goes hand in hand with orthodoxy (right belief). In this time of global suffering, our faith response is required. It flows out of our faith *assent*, but we can't stop with professions of faith. Take your faith out to meet the great need you find around you today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 28:16-20, 30-31; John 21: 20-25 (302). "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written."



## Sunday, May 31, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

### The Spirit is still at work

The traditional Pentecost hymn is “Veni Sancte Spiritus” (“Come, Holy Spirit”). It’s called the Golden Sequence—a sequence being a prayer that precedes the gospel reading. It became part of the Pentecost liturgy in the 16th century but was written earlier, probably by Cardinal Stephen Langton of Canterbury around the year 1200. It’s tempting to treat the Mass as something that fell from heaven as is. Liturgy is a collaborative effort, woven across centuries—and evolving still. Put your unique stamp on it.

TODAY’S READINGS: Day: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23 (63). “Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

## Monday, Jun 01, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

### Sing of Mary

Today’s celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary is still new for the Catholic Church, having been decreed by Pope Francis in 2018. But Mary’s tender loving care has been sung throughout the ages. Yes, we experience her maternal protection for each and every one of us. But it’s another thing to honor her universally as protectress of the Mystical Body of Christ. That’s why this memorial comes when it does: the day after Pentecost Sunday—the birthday of the church. Let us honor Mary in the manner of the decree, as “Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of the Redeemed”—namely, Christ’s mother and ours.

TODAY’S READINGS: Genesis 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14; John 19:25-34 (572A). “Behold, your mother.”

## Tuesday, Jun 02, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MARCELLINUS AND PETER, MARTYRS

### Take notice

Today’s rather obscure saints from the early church are included in the Roman Martyrology, a catalog of saints who suffered martyrdom during the era of persecution of early Christians. While some claim Catholicism places too much emphasis on suffering and death, recent events suggest there is a deeper wisdom at work in the Martyrology. In times of crisis, heroic witness often involves willingness to suffer or perhaps even die for a worthy cause. Honor martyrs past and present for their witness.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Peter 3:12-15a, 17-18; Mark 12:13-17 (354). “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

## Wednesday, Jun 03, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CHARLES LWANGA AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

### And the youth shall lead us

The world today is blessed with many young people willing to take a stand on major issues of our time. They work to end violence in schools and on our streets, protect lives, and ensure that future generations and the earth will thrive. Today in the church we honor a group of teens and 20-somethings who stood up for one another amid the threat of violence and death. Charles Lwanga and his 21 companions were martyred in Uganda in 1886

because their Catholic faith opposed the ruling king’s violent ways. In light of your faith, when and where are you called to take a stand?

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Timothy 1:1-3, 6-12; Mark 12:18-27 (355). “I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have.”

## Thursday, Jun 04, 2020

### Not worth fighting about

Timothy was a peacemaker in the early church. He urged members of newly formed congregations to work out their differences rather than foster needless division. Sadly church life (Catholic and otherwise) still involves far too many stories of division—sometimes over the smallest things. Whatever your community’s issue might be, be a voice for reasonable compromise.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Mark 12:28-34 (356). “Tell them in the name of God that there must be no wrangling about words: all that this ever achieves is the destruction of those who are listening.”

## Friday, Jun 05, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BONIFACE, BISHOP, MARTYR

### Aging can bring strengths

The COVID-19 crisis highlights the health risks older folks face. At the same time, it has led occasionally to examples of ageism—the tendency to see someone as weak or infirm simply because of their age. Saint Boniface would have none of that. Traversing the rugged terrain of what is now Germany during the wild and untamed Middle Ages, he continued his tireless evangelization efforts well into his 70s. In fact, only martyrdom could bring his ministry to a close. “Respect your elders” means respecting their ability to continue making meaningful contributions.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Timothy 3:10-17; Mark 12:35-37 (357). “From all these things the Lord delivered me.”

## Saturday, Jun 06, 2020

MEMORIAL OF NORBERT, BISHOP

### Humble pie belongs on every menu

Saint Norbert was a key figure in reforming the medieval church and monastic life. An ascetic at heart, he wore the simplest garb and walked barefoot even in winter. Having been appointed archbishop of Magdeburg in 1126 against his wishes, he arrived at the episcopal residence only to be met by a doorman who took him to be a beggar and turned him away! Church officials quickly explained the error to the doorman, but Norbert turned to him and said, “You were right the first time.” A healthy sense of humility will take each of us far.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Mark 12:38-44 (358). “Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury.”