

Sunday, Apr 04, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD (EASTER SUNDAY)

Race to understanding

Does it matter who gains insight first, so long as we all get there? Competition is overrated, which may be why evangelists don't agree on who arrives at the tomb first. Mark reports that Mary Magdalene; Mary, mother of James; and Salome got there at dawn. Matthew asserts it was the Magdalene and the "other Mary." Luke claims it was Mary Magdalene; James' mother, Mary; Joanna; and assorted "others." In John, the Magdalene arrives alone. You may be a cradle Catholic, or this may be your first Easter. Welcome to the recognition that death doesn't have the final say.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8; Victimae Paschali Laudes; John 20:1-9 or Mark 16:1-7 (42, 41) or, at an afternoon or evening Mass, Luke 24:13-35 (46). *"They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first."*

Monday, Apr 05, 2021

EASTER MONDAY

Weave a life of meaning

Everyone knows the joy of creating—whether it be a work of art, a meal, or a family. It's a way of expressing ourselves, sharing our love, and using our talents to serve. It's also a consolation during tough times. Maybe you took up some new, creative pastimes during the pandemic. Saint Maria Crescentia Höss, whose feast is today, was a weaver in 18th-century Bavaria before she became a nun, and when she was assigned to servitude and living in a cubbyhole in the monastery, she kept weaving. Maybe that helped sustain her until she eventually rose to be elected the mother superior. Holy creativity can feed your soul.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:14, 22-33; Matthew 28:8-15 (261). *"They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage."*

Tuesday, Apr 06, 2021

EASTER TUESDAY

Sing the Octave

Happy Octave of Easter—the eight days between, and including, Easter Sunday and Divine Mercy Sunday. By relishing the Resurrection for eight whole days instead of just one, the church declares it the cornerstone of belief. What's more: In contrast to the Christmas Octave, we observe no other feast days during Easter Octave, keeping the Resurrection our only focus. Why eight? Christianity's Jewish roots feature ritual celebrations that end on the eighth day—a week, when you count both the first and last days. Make every day this week a "mini-Easter," as our church intends. Sing Alleluia for eight days.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 2:36-41; John 20:11-18 (262). *"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'"*

Wednesday, Apr 07, 2021

EASTER WEDNESDAY

Pray for all who heal a world in pain

On April 7, 1948, the World Health Organization was established as a leading global health authority within the United Nations system. In 2021, the WHO counts 7,000 members from 150 countries. It declares that the health of all people is essential to attaining peace and security, and among other things chooses a particular health theme each year to mark its anniversary. Past

themes include mental health, maternal and childcare, and climate change. Mindful that the world's aging population is living longer, the WHO set this year's theme as "Aging and Health." On this Easter Wednesday, as we take note of the healing miracles within the early Christian community, ask the Lord to bless all who work to safeguard the health of humanity.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 3:1-10; Luke 24:13-35 (263). *"And a man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple."*

Thursday, Apr 08, 2021

EASTER THURSDAY

Keep it going

We are still in the Octave of Easter, the eight days following Easter. The Octave is meant to keep the celebration going, to keep savoring the joy of the Resurrection. The gospel for each day focuses on the Risen Christ. In the early church, those who were baptized at the Easter Vigil would continue wearing their white garments all week in recognition of the life-changing, festive event. You've likely been changing your clothes during the Octave, but try keeping your focus on the Resurrection. Meditate on a time that God has blessed you with new life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 3:11-26, Luke 24:35-48 (264). *"He stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"*

Friday, Apr 09, 2021

EASTER FRIDAY

It all adds up

Numbers play a key role throughout salvation history: Yahweh, the one true God; the 5,000 fed; the cock crowing three times; the Triduum; the Trinity; and the third time Jesus appears to his disciples after his death, which we read about in today's beautiful gospel story of Jesus cooking breakfast for his disciples on the seashore. Numerologists love to explore all the hidden meanings packed in the biblical numbers. But the gospel message is actually quite simple. Jesus alone feeds us. Remember that next time you are looking for sustenance elsewhere.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:1-12; John 21:1-14 (265). *"Jesus said to them, 'Come, have breakfast.'"*

Saturday, Apr 10, 2021

EASTER SATURDAY

Faith takes time

What would you think if you heard that someone you knew was dead had risen from the grave? It's no wonder the disciples doubted the story. No less a witness than Mother Teresa of Calcutta expressed serious doubts about God's existence over the course of her life. "Where is my faith?" she wrote. "There is nothing but emptiness." And she's a saint! So when loved ones stop going to church and express doubts about God—or if you yourself face such doubts—accept it as a part of the spiritual journey each of us walks. Keep praying and be patient. Faith takes time and hits dry spells. But in God's heart, there's all the time in the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:13-21; Mark 16:9-15 (266). *"When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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Sunday, Apr 11, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER; DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

Hold onto the holy memories

It's unlikely that those who survive the pandemic will look back on these days with much nostalgia. Sickness and loss, fear and division, stress and isolation: The consequences will be with us for a generation. Yet emerging from the tragedy were also instances of humanity, decency, and heroism that echoed the time of the first apostles. We've shared food, masks, information, errands, toilet paper, songs. We've gathered on balconies and in virtual rooms. We've found ways to pray and to encourage. This Divine Mercy Sunday, give thanks for those who have helped you through this and every crisis.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31 (44).
"No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common."

Monday, Apr 12, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Stand with those who stood for you

Though you may not remember it, your Baptism was an extremely important day in your life—the beginning of your life in Christ. Your godparents represented you that day, speaking on your behalf if you were a baby. Perhaps later you became a godparent to others. Whether you're still close or have drifted apart over time, reach out to your godparents or godchildren and reminisce about that day. Talk about the role you have played in each other's spiritual life and pray together for deepening conversion. Promise to keep on praying for each other in our ever-growing identity as children of God.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:23-31; John 3:1-8 (267). *"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."*

Tuesday, Apr 13, 2021

MEMORIAL OF MARTIN I, POPE, MARTYR

The dilemma of indifference

The Eastern Church began exploring monotheletism, the notion that Jesus had only a divine will, despite being both human and divine, in the 600s. Pope Martin I issued a reprimand, opposing this heresy. This angered the Eastern emperor, who had the sickly Martin dragged to Constantinople for trial. The pontiff was beaten, starved, and exiled, leading to his death. But Martin also blamed a Western Church that never came to his rescue. "I am surprised at the indifference," he wrote, of "those who belong to the church of Saint Peter." Ask for Martin's intercession today, for all who suffer indifference.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:32-37; John 3:7b-15 (268). *"The community of believers was of one heart and mind."*

Wednesday, Apr 14, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Let your life be your witness

How do you live your faith? Some days may be harder than others, but rarely, if ever nowadays, will the effort to be a faithful follower of Jesus land someone in jail or cost them their life. Yet that was the fate of the early disciples who insisted on proclaiming the stories of Jesus' life, death, and rising. There are 20th-century martyrs as well (Blessed Stanley Rother, Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, the martyrs of El Salvador among others), but faith calls

all of us to kindness to all people, fairness in the face of injustice, trust in God's promised Spirit, and a constant willingness to see the face of God in our neighbors. Do people recognize you as a follower of Jesus by the way you live?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 5:17-26; John 3:16-21 (269). *"The men whom you put in prison are in the temple area and are teaching the people."*

Thursday, Apr 15, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Be up to the tax at hand

Taxes are due today, an obligation that few people savor and yet all of us rely on. Catholics can feel proud to promote the common good by paying taxes for schools, roads, parks, healthcare, and other social benefits. In their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. bishops go even further, saying: "The tax system should be continually evaluated in terms of its impact on the poor." If you feel disheartened by the paperwork or the cost of taxes, take heart that despite any flaws in the system, taxes help build the commonwealth.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 5:27-33; John 3:31-36 (270). *"The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him."*

Friday, Apr 16, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

A God of his word

Poor communication is the main reason relationships fail. If it isn't clear what is being promised, then it is easy to become disillusioned when expectations aren't met. People who lose faith in God often point to God's untrustworthiness: They asked for something and didn't receive it. Hence, they conclude that God is not to be trusted. But remember the promise of God is love. Look around; wherever you see love—even a love lost—you see God's promise fulfilled. As Saint Augustine put it: "What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of others." Help embody God's love today.

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 17, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Call a deacon

The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek word *diákonos*, meaning "one who serves at table," found in today's first reading. The office of deacon endured for several centuries after its origin in Acts. But eventually the diaconate was reduced to a temporary stage of ordination to the priesthood. After Vatican II the permanent diaconate was revived. Today many men, most married although some single, enter the diaconate through the sacrament of Holy Orders. They serve their parishes and assist their pastors in many ways both social and liturgical. Perhaps you know someone who would make a good deacon. Give him a call.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:1-7; John 6:16-21 (272). *"It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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Sunday, Apr 18, 2021

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Each one teach one

Each of us walks through miracles eventually. Maybe we know it at the time and praise God heartily. Or perhaps we only look back later, realize the road's on fire behind us, and shiver. Sooner or later, we all experience the mystery of grace that carries us over obstacles, through dangers, and ferries us to safety. We are witnesses of these things. And even if we're reluctant to "talk religion" to friends, coworkers, and strangers, we'll inhabit hours when it's time to tell what we know about Divine Providence. Be attentive for when your testimony is required.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; 1 John 2:1-5a; Luke 24:35-48 (47). *"You are witnesses of these things."*

Monday, Apr 19, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Seek a way to serve

Saint Timon, whose feast is today, is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (6:5) as one of seven deacons chosen by the apostles to assist in ministering to the community of believers in Jerusalem. As the apostles concentrated on preaching, the deacons assisted in providing for the material needs of the community. This focus on both word and deed, or evangelization and service, continues to be the hallmark of Christian discipleship. As the church teaches in *Lumen Gentium*, "Each one of the faithful must willingly hear the word of God and accept God's Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace." What will you do to continue the work of love that begins and ends with God?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:8-15; John 6:22-29 (273). *"What can we do to accomplish the works of God?"*

Tuesday, Apr 20, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Seek the light in learning

On this day in 1303, Sapienza University of Rome was instituted by Pope Boniface VIII. Sapienza, boasting such famous alumni as Maria Montessori and Federico Fellini, is considered the first pontifical university—an institution approved by the Vatican and committed to teaching theology, philosophy, and canon law. Today, all pontifical universities are governed by the document *Veritatis Gaudium*, a 2017 update written by Pope Francis. It begins: "The joy of truth expresses the restlessness of the human heart until it encounters and dwells within God's Light, and shares that Light with all people." How will you share God's light today?

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 21, 2021

MEMORIAL OF ANSELM, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Love the questions

How would you define the term *theology*? Google it and you find it described as the critical study of the nature of God or the divine. Saint Anselm (1033-1109) said it another way: "Theology is faith seeking understanding." Every time you try to understand how God allows suffering, or wonder how it is that God loves every human being, or try to understand if God truly hears your prayers, you are doing the work of theology. As a French Benedictine monk

and later archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm was a wise and learned teacher who challenged the secular power of kings. Your life may not seem extraordinary, but the pursuit of knowledge about God belongs to you as well. Don't be afraid of the questions. Ask for grace to allow the questions to help your faith grow.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 8:1b-8; John 6:35-40 (275). *"Everyone who . . . believes in him (the Son) may have eternal life."*

Thursday, Apr 22, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Prepare your heart for encounter

Today's first reading about Philip explaining scripture to a receptive Ethiopian is a beautiful example of something that Pope Francis often emphasizes: the need for openness when we encounter another, especially someone different from us. In homilies, speeches, and documents, the Holy Father tells us we are called to encounter Jesus, to allow ourselves to be changed and shaped by that encounter, and to bring the same attitude to our dealings with people. Pray for the grace of openness toward the people you encounter today.

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, Apr 23, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Be the change

Prior to his conversion, Saint Paul, who earlier in life was known by his Hebrew name Saul, was most definitely no saint. He not only disliked those who followed Jesus, he attacked them. So what happened? He encountered Jesus the Christ. Jesus did not put Paul through what fiction refers to as a "mind wipe," or erasure of former personality and memory. Jesus called Paul to stop and see clearly the truth of his mindset and actions. And then Paul put in the work. This is something we all have to do—put in the work—especially when our dislike of those who are different leads to harm.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 9:1-20; John 6:52-59 (277). *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"*

Saturday, Apr 24, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Stay the course

Followers of Jesus have been disputing the meaning of the eucharistic meal and Jesus' instructions to "eat my flesh and drink my blood" ever since the words were first uttered. Many could not look beyond a literal interpretation of the words to see the powerful symbolism of the image of the paschal lamb offered for the sins of the community at Passover. So they simply walked away. Now that the sacrifice has been accomplished and Easter season is well underway, will you turn away as well, or are you with those who stayed with Jesus because, like Peter, you have come to believe that he has the words of eternal life?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 9:31-42; John 6:60-69 (278). *"Many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him."*

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Sunday, Apr 25, 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

Live with purpose

Collecting a paycheck may be important to make a living, but will it alone make a life? Some Catholics hear the invitation to choose a different path. They're nudged by family members, religion teachers, and homilists. They have opportunities to learn about priesthood and apostolic life, about missions and monasteries and cloisters. They'll encounter members of Third Orders and engage in service projects that put them in touch with those consecrated to spreading the Good News. On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, let's be sure to issue the invitation—and to receive it.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 4:8-12; 1 John 3:1-2; John 10:11-18 (50).

"No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down on my own."

Monday, Apr 26, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Nothing need limit your devotion

The life of Saint Rafael Arnáiz Barón was interrupted by illness. Having endured a pandemic, we know what that's like—we've seen lives cut short by disease and we ourselves have had to put some of our own living on hold. Rafael was born in Spain in 1911 and died at 27. He was a talented artist and studied architecture, then decided to become a Trappist. Severe complications from diabetes prevented him from taking vows as a monk. He accepted God's will, joined as an oblate instead, and died young of his illness. In him you can find an example of surrender, trust, and devotion in the face of loss and disappointment that makes him a model for our times a century later.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 11:1-18; John 10:1-10 (279). *"Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."*

Tuesday, Apr 27, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Plant the seeds of belief

The Syrian city of Antioch played a pivotal role in the growth of the early church. A cross-cultural safe haven, it was here that many of Jesus' first followers—all of them Jewish—took refuge after Stephen was martyred, fleeing Jerusalem as they too became targets. Antioch was a cosmopolitan hothouse, its Jews enjoying friendly interactions with the city's many Gentiles. Once new Jews arrived, bearing witness to Jesus, local Gentiles couldn't help but be intrigued. Soon, the fledgling church of Antioch began evangelizing Gentiles intentionally, planting the seed of belief in unexpected places. Where might you plant such seeds?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 11:19-26; John 10:22-30 (280). *"It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians."*

Wednesday, Apr 28, 2021

MEMORIAL OF PETER CHANEL, PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, MISSIONARY, MARTYR

Let your life bring light to others

There is good reason that Peter Chanel (1803-41) is the patron saint of Oceania. A parish priest from France who later joined the Marist missionaries, Peter was missioned to Western Oceania to convert people who worshipped other gods. Peter's missionary method was low key: He learned the language of the people and cared for their sick. For a few years, all was fine until small groups of native people began to be baptized, in particular, the son and daughter of the island king. Peter was then considered a threat to

the island's power elite. On this day in 1841 he was murdered. That is not the end of Peter's story, however. Within two years of his death, the entire island had become Catholic. How do you bring the light of faith to people around you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 12:24—13:5a; John 12:44-50 (281). *"I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness."*

Thursday, Apr 29, 2021

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

Not how long a life is, but how good

Saint Catherine of Siena led a remarkable life for a person of any era but particularly for a woman of the 14th century who only lived 33 years. Mystic, nurse, Dominican, counselor, arbitrator, writer, ambassador—she was all these things. Ordinary people came to her for spiritual counsel and advice in conflicts, leading her to eventually settle fierce church disputes, becoming a confidante of popes. Central to her strength was her union with Christ, which she wrote about in the classic, *The Dialogue*. Find a quiet moment today to—like Catherine—commune with Jesus, who offers wisdom and strength to all.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 13:13-25; John 13:16-20 (282). *"Whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."*

Friday, Apr 30, 2021

EASTER WEEKDAY

Try a little tenderness

When God became flesh and dwelt among us, a revolution was started. Not a military coup that some people expected, but a revolution that would strike deep at the heart. This "revolution of tenderness," as Pope Francis called it in *Evangelii Gaudium*, urges each and every one of us to give of ourselves, to be part of community, to serve, and to be reconciled in our relationships with others. In what ways can you respond to Jesus' call to a revolution of tenderness?

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 01, 2021

MEMORIAL OF JOSEPH THE WORKER

Wanting for a job

Today's memorial honors Saint Joseph the carpenter, standing in solidarity with all working people on the traditional "May Day" dedicated to laborers around the world. At this time last year, more than 30 million Americans had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, the largest unemployment crisis in the country's history. Many of those jobs have not returned and likely are gone forever. What can you and your faith community do to support those whose livelihoods were lost to the virus?

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 1:26—2:3 or Colossians 3:14-15, 17, 23-24; Matthew 13:54-58 (559); Acts 13:44-52; John 14:7-14 (284). *"If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."*

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