

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

April 2021

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH

StThomasWestSpringfield.org

One Minute Meditations

For His love

Each day, offering our very best to God raises all of our efforts to the level of a prayer. He rewards our dedication with peace, joy, and awareness of His presence in all that we do.

Choose companions well

Delilah had to know the secret of Samson's strength but God had forbidden him to reveal it. *"And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death"* (Judges 16:16). He gave in and it was his undoing. Don't let anyone – friend or family – pressure you into violating God's commandments.



Hold hope

"When a man has died, were he to live again, all the days of my drudgery I would wait, until my relief should come" Job 14:14. Despite all his misery, Job clung to the one truth that also gives us hope – salvation. God offers the hope of being with Him forever.



Open the gifts of Easter throughout the year

Easter is the highest Sunday throughout the year, but each Sunday is a chance to celebrate a "little Easter." We can live the gifts of the Resurrection each Sunday of the year:

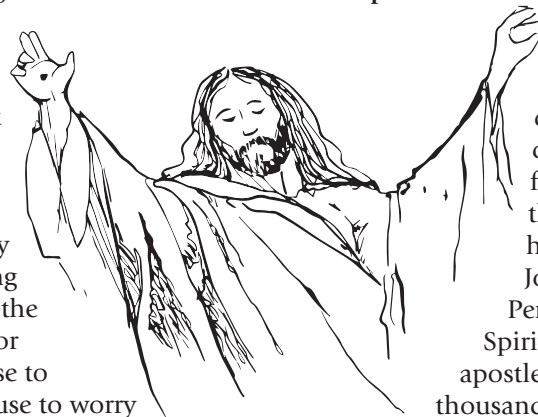
Death doesn't have the last word. Easter means that we can face each day with joy, knowing that Jesus paved the way to Heaven for those who choose to follow Him. Refuse to worry about earthly matters and share your joy with friends, family, colleagues.

Jesus offers peace the world can't give. Jesus ascended to Heaven and left everything behind. We follow his example when we detach from worldly concerns and care more about God's

will than our own. If we seek God before everything else, we can join Him in His Heavenly kingdom.

We place our faith in the Holy Spirit. "Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him" (Pope St. John Paul II). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to bring thousands to Baptism. Call upon the Holy Spirit to help you bring Jesus to others through words, actions, and compassion.

Forgiveness is ours for the asking. Jesus bore the punishment for our sins. That means no matter what we have done, Jesus is ready to forgive. All we have to do is ask.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics bless themselves with holy water?

The practice of blessing oneself with holy water harkens back to the washing rituals of the Old Testament Jews, who had to bathe before entering the temple.

Today, when we bless ourselves with

holy water, it brings to mind our own baptism. It was at our baptism that our souls were washed clean of original sin and we were officially made members of the Church. We also received the gift of faith.

In blessing ourselves, we renew our baptismal promise.



Cast looks toward Heaven throughout the day

St. Therese of Lisieux confided that, "For me prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." Adding short, heartfelt prayers to our daily activities can help us glance toward Heaven throughout the day:

The Jesus Prayer – "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Try repeating it 100 times a day.

"Teach me, O Lord, to do your will, for you are my



God." Say this when beginning a chore, task, or project.

"May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace." A prayer for the souls in Purgatory.

"Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like yours." Pray this for humility and love.

"Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ." She is always willing to help.

"Thy will be done." It's what Jesus said.

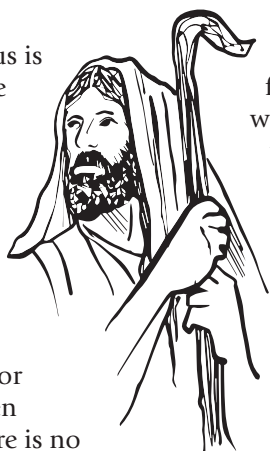
from Scripture

John 10:11-18, Jesus Is the Good Shepherd

This Gospel tells of our relationship with God. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are His flock.

Today society tells us that it is good be independent and answer to no one. We are encouraged to please ourselves and follow our own desires. However, there is no one to turn to for guidance and comfort when circumstances go bad. There is no shepherd.

In Jesus' day, a shepherd lived with the sheep, cared for them, and even put himself at risk to keep them safe. He



tended them in a flock for safety, to protect them from predators. The shepherd was trusted and familiar, so that the sheep knew His voice and followed him but no other.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd for all of humanity. In this Gospel Jesus defined the role of a shepherd. He predicted how he would fill that role by giving His life for His sheep. But he looked beyond the sheepfold of Israel. His hope is to have one flock and one shepherd for the whole world. That flock is the Church which he founded.

Q & A Why should I participate in Mass if it's not required?

In many dioceses around the country, the obligation to attend Mass in person remains lifted while the pandemic lasts. Still, finding ways to celebrate the Eucharist – in person, if it can be done safely, or online – has spiritual benefits during difficult times.



"Do this in memory of me" is the only direct order Jesus gave to

His followers. That means God is the one who initiates this encounter with us. And when God asks us to do something, it is smart to do it.

Sanctify the day. Participating in Mass on Sunday still helps to fulfill the Third Commandment obligation to keep holy the Sabbath day and sanctify the day.

You're a baptized person needed by your community. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). We help worship God just by being there.

You get "take out." The homily gives the Gospel relevance to our lives. Then we have something to act on in the coming week.

Feasts & Celebrations

April 4 – Easter Sunday. The solemnity that marks Jesus' Resurrection. It is the most important feast in the Church year.

April 11 - St. Stanislaus (1079). As Bishop of Krakow in 1072, St. Stanislaus attempted to reform the violent and depraved king of Poland, Boleslas II. When his efforts failed, he excommunicated the king. In retaliation, Boleslas murdered the saint as he said Mass.

April 11 – Divine Mercy Sunday. In 1931, Jesus appeared to St. Faustina

and asked that the Sunday after Easter become the "Feast of Mercy." Jesus promised that anyone who honors him as the King of Mercy and prays The Chaplet of Divine Mercy – the prayer he gave to St. Faustina – will receive special graces and great mercy.

April 21 – St. Anselm (1109). A native of Italy, St. Anselm initially enjoyed a luxurios life at court. After his mother died, he became a monk in France and reluctantly became bishop of Canterbury, England. He was exiled for rebuffing the king's interference in Church matters.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)