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Lectio Divina

English | April 2026 | carmelites.org.au

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¹ Cover Image: Holy Week in Seville, Spain. Fr. William J. Harry, O.Carm.

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

God our Father,

when the hour of Your Son Jesus had come to accept suffering and death out of love of You and His saving love for us, He did not refuse that suffering and deep pain.

In the hour of trial that we may have to pass through, do not let us become rebellious but keep us trusting in You, for You save us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 26: 14-25

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, my appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered and prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so."

Reflection

Yesterday the Gospel spoke of the betrayal of Judas and of the denial of Peter. Today, it speaks once again of the betrayal of Judas. In the description of the Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the failure of the disciples is strongly stressed. Despite having lived three years together with Jesus, not one of them defends Jesus. Judas betrays Him, Peter denies Him, and the others flee. Matthew narrates everything, not to criticize or to condemn, neither to discourage the readers, but to underline that acceptance and the love of Jesus exceed the defeat and the failure of the disciples! This way of describing the attitude of Jesus was a help for the Communities at the time of Matthew. Because of the frequent persecutions, many were discouraged and had abandoned the community and asked themselves: "Will it be possible to return? Will God accept and forgive us?" Matthew responds by suggesting that we can break the relationship with Jesus, but Jesus never breaks it with us. His

love is greater than our infidelity. This is a very important message which we get from the Gospel during Holy Week.

- Matthew 26: 14-16: The Decision of Judas to betray Jesus. Judas took the decision after Jesus did not accept the criticism of the disciples concerning the woman who wastes a very expensive perfume only to anoint Jesus (Mt 26: 6-13). He went to the chief priest and asked: "What are you prepared to give Me if I hand Him over to you?" They agreed on the sum of thirty silver pieces. Matthew recalls the words of the Prophet Zechariah to describe the price agreed upon (Zc 11, 12). At the same time, the betrayal of Jesus for thirty silver coins recalls the sale of Joseph by his brothers, decided by the buyers for twenty coins (Gn 37: 28). It also is reminiscent of the price of thirty coins to be paid for the wounding of a slave (Ex 21: 32).
- Matthew 26: 17-19: The preparation for the Passover. Jesus was coming from Galilee. He did not have a house in Jerusalem. He spent the night in the Garden of Olives (cf. Jn 8: 1). In the days of the feast of the Passover the people of Jerusalem increased three times in number because of the enormous number of pilgrims who went there from all parts. For Jesus it was not easy to find a big room to celebrate the Passover together with the pilgrims coming from Galilee. He ordered His disciples to find a person in whose house He had decided to celebrate the Passover. The Gospel does not offer any other information and allows the imagination to complete what is missing in the information. Was this a person known by Jesus? A relative? A disciple? Throughout the centuries the imagination of the Apocrypha has tried to complete this information, but with little credibility.
- Matthew 26: 20-25: The announcement of the betrayal of Judas. Jesus knew that He will be betrayed. Although Judas did things secretly. Jesus knew. But despite that, He wants to act fraternally with the group of friends to which Judas belongs. When all were together for the last time, Jesus announces who is the traitor "Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with Me will betray Me." This way of announcing the betrayal renders even clearer the contrast. For the Jews, the communion around the table, to dip the hand together in the same dish, was the maximum expression of intimacy and trust. In this way, Matthew suggests that despite the betrayal made by someone who was a friend, the love of Jesus is greater than the betrayal!

What strikes us in the way in which Matthew describes these facts? Between the denial and the betrayal there is the institution of the Eucharist (Mt 26: 26-29): the betrayal of Judas first (Mt 26: 20-25); the denial of Peter and the flight of the disciples, afterwards (Mt 26: 30-35). Thus, he stressed for us the incredible love of Jesus, which exceeds the betrayal, the denial, and the flight of the friends. His love does not depend on what others do for Him.

Personal Questions

- It seems obvious that Judas will betray Jesus from our reading the Gospel but put yourself there at the time. Would you have suspected a member of your

close group to do this? How would you interpret the indications Jesus was giving at the time?

- In Holy Week it is important to reserve some moments to become aware of the unbelievable gratuity of God's love for me.

Concluding Prayer

Sing to God, play music to His name, build a road for the Rider of the Clouds, rejoice in Yahweh, dance before Him.

Father of orphans, defender of widows, such is God in His holy dwelling. (Ps 68: 4-5)

Thursday, April 2, 2026

Thursday of Holy Week: Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

LECTIO

Initial Prayer

"When You speak, Lord, the nothingness beats in life: the dry bones become living persons, the desert flourishes... When I get ready to pray, I feel dry, I do not know what to say. Evidently, I am not in harmony with Your will, my lips are not in tune with my heart, my heart does not make an effort to get in tune with yours. Renew my heart, purify my lips so that I can speak with You as You want me to, so that I can speak with others as You wish, so that I can speak with myself, with my interior world, as You wish." (*L. Renna*)

The Reading of the Gospel - John 13: 1-15

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world, and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to

them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

Moments of Prayerful Silence

In a loving listening, words are not necessary, because silence also speaks and communicates love.

MEDITATIO

Preamble to the Passover of Jesus

The passage of the Gospel of today is inserted in a literary whole which includes chapters 13-17. At the beginning we have the account of the Last Supper which Jesus shares with His disciples, during which He fulfills the gesture of the washing of the feet (13: 1-30). Then Jesus interweaves a long dialogue of farewell with His disciples (13: 31 – 14: 31). Chapters 15-17 have the function to further deepen the previous discourse of the Master. Immediately after this, Jesus is arrested (18:1-11). In any case, these events narrated in 13: 17, 26 are joined in 13: 1 with the Passover of Jesus. It is interesting to note this last annotation: from 12: 1 the Passover is no longer called the Passover of the Jews, but of Jesus. From now on, it is He, the Lamb of God who will liberate people from sin. The Passover of Jesus is one that aims to liberate us: a new exodus which permits us to go from darkness to light (8: 12), and which will bear life and feast in humanity (7: 37).

Jesus is aware that He is about to conclude His journey toward the Father and, therefore He is about to bring to an end His personal and definitive exodus. Such a passage, going to the Father, takes place through the Cross, the central moment in which Jesus will surrender His life for the good of all humanity. It is striking when the reader becomes aware how the Evangelist John knows how to present the person of Jesus well, while He is aware of the last events of His life and therefore, of His mission. So as to affirm that Jesus is not crushed or overcome by the events which threaten His life, but that He is ready to give His life. Before, the Evangelist has remarked that His hour had not arrived; but now in the account of the washing of the feet He says that He is aware that His hour is close at hand. Such a conscience is at the basis of the expression of John: "After having loved those who were His in the world, He loved them to the end" (v. 1). Love for "His own," for those who form the new community, has been evident while He was with them, but it will shine in an eminent way in His death. Jesus shows such a love in the gesture of the washing of the feet, which in its symbolical value shows the continuous love which is expressed in service.

The Washing of the Feet

Jesus is at an ordinary supper with His disciples. He is fully conscious of the mission which the Father has entrusted to Him: the salvation of humanity depends on Him. With such an awareness He wishes to show "to His own," through the washing of the feet, how the work of salvation of the Father is

fulfilled and to indicate in such a gesture the surrender of His life for the salvation of all. It is the will of Jesus that we be saved, and a longing desire leads Him to give up His life and to surrender. He is aware that the Father gives Jesus complete freedom of action.

Besides, Jesus knows that His true provenance and the goal of His itinerary is God; He knows that His death on the Cross, the maximum expression of His love, is the last moment of His journey of salvation. His death is an “exodus”; it is the climax of His victory over death, in His surrender (giving His life) Jesus reveals to us the presence of God as the fullness of life and exemption from death.

With this full consciousness of His identity and of His complete liberty Jesus is prepared to fulfill the great and humble gesture of the washing of the feet. Such a gesture of love is described with a great number of verbs (eight) which render the scene absorbing, enthralling and full of significance. The Evangelist, in presenting the last action of Jesus toward His own, uses this rhetorical figure of the accumulation of verbs without repeating himself in order that such a gesture remains impressed in the heart and mind of His disciples and of every reader and in order that a commandment may always be remembered, not forgotten. The gesture fulfilled by Jesus intends to show that true love is expressed in tangible actions of service. Jesus removes His garments and ties around His waist a towel or apron, a symbol of service. He shows them that love is expressed in service, in giving one’s life for others as He has done.

At the time of Jesus, the washing of the feet was a gesture which expressed hospitality and welcome towards the guests. In an ordinary way it was done by a slave or also by the wife, and also the daughters toward their father. Besides, it was the custom that such a rite of the washing of the feet should be done before they sat at table and not during the meal. Such an insertion of Jesus’ action intends to stress or underline how singular or significant His gesture was. And thus, Jesus gets down to wash the feet of His disciples. The repeated use of the apron which Jesus tied around His waist underlines the attitude of service which is a permanent attribute of the person of Jesus. In fact, when He finishes the washing of the feet, Jesus does not take off the towel which He used as an apron. Such a detail intends to underline that the service-love does not end with His death. This minute detail shows the intention of the Evangelist to underline the significance and importance of the gesture of Jesus. By washing the feet of His disciples Jesus intends to show them His love, which is one with that of the Father (10:30.38). This image with which Jesus reveals God is really shocking: He is not a sovereign who resides exclusively in Heaven, but He presents himself as the servant of humanity in order to raise it to the divine level. From this divine service flows, for the community of believers, that liberty which comes from the love which renders all its members as “lords” (free) because they are servants. It is like saying that only liberty creates the true love. From now on, service which the believers will render to others will have the purpose of restoring the relationship among people in whom equality and liberty are a consequence of the practice of reciprocal service. Jesus, with His gesture intends to show that any domination over another is contrary to the attitude of God who, instead, serves people to raise them to himself. The pretension of superiority of one person over another no longer has any sense, because the community founded

by Jesus does not have any pyramidal characteristics, but horizontal dimensions, in which each one is at the service of others, following the example of God and of Jesus.

In synthesis, the gesture which Jesus fulfilled expresses the following values: the love toward brothers and sisters demands expression in fraternal acceptance, hospitality, and permanent service.

Peter's Resistance

The reaction of Peter before the gesture of Jesus is expressed in attitudes of surprise and protest. There is also a change in the way in which he related to Jesus: Peter calls Him "Lord" (13: 6). In such a title Jesus is recognized as having a level of superiority which is in conflict with the "washing" of the feet, an action which belongs, instead, to an inferior subject. The protest is expressed energetically by the words: "Are You going to wash my feet?" In Peter's eyes this humiliating gesture of the washing of the feet seemed to him as an inversion of values which regulate the relationship between Jesus and others: the first one is the Master, Peter is a subject. Peter disapproves the equality which Jesus wants to create among people.

To such misunderstanding Jesus responds inviting Peter to accept the sense of washing his feet as a witness of His love toward him. More precisely, He wants to offer him a concrete proof of how He and the Father love him.

But Peter in his reaction does not give in: he categorically refuses that Jesus should get down at his feet. It is not acceptable that Jesus abandons His position of superiority to render himself equal to His disciples. Such an idea of the Master disorients Peter and leads him to protest. Not accepting the service of love of his Master, he neither accepts that He dies on the cross for him (12: 34; 13: 37). It seems to say that Peter is far away from understanding what is true love, and such an obstacle is an impediment so that Jesus can show it to him by His action.

In the meantime, if Peter is not ready to share the dynamics of love which manifests itself in reciprocal service he cannot share the friendship with Jesus and truly runs the risk of excluding himself.

Following the admonition of Jesus "If I do not wash you, you can have no share with Me" (v. 8), Peter adheres to the threatening words of the Master, but without accepting the profound sense of the action of Jesus. He shows himself open, ready to let Jesus wash his feet, not only the feet, but also his hands and head. It seems that it is easier for Peter to accept Jesus' gesture as an action of purification or ablution rather than as a service. But Jesus responds that the disciples have become pure ("clean") at the moment when they accepted to allow themselves to be guided by the Word of the Master, rejecting that of the world. Peter and the disciples no longer need the Jewish rite of the purification but to allow themselves to have their feet washed by Jesus; or rather to allow themselves to be loved by Him, conferring them dignity and liberty.

The Memorial of Love

At the end of the washing of the feet Jesus intends to give His action a permanent validity for His community and at the same time to leave to it a

memorial or commandment which should always regulate the fraternal relationships.

Jesus is the Lord, not in domination, but in so far as He communicates the love of the Father (His Spirit) which makes us children of God and qualified to imitate Jesus who freely gives His love to His own. Jesus intended to communicate such an interior attitude to His own, a love which does not exclude anyone, not even Judas who is about to betray Him. Therefore, if the disciples call Him Lord, they have to imitate Him; if they consider Him Master, they have to listen to Him.

Some Questions to Meditate On

- He got up from the table: How do you live the Eucharist? In a sedentary way or do you allow yourself to be moved to action by the fire of the love which you receive? Do you run the risk that the Eucharist in which you participate is lost in contemplative Narcissism, without leading to the commitment of solidarity and sharing?
- He removed His outer garments: when you go from the Eucharist to daily life, do you know how to remove the garments of your own benefit, your calculations, personal interests to allow yourself to be guided by an authentic love toward others?
- Taking a towel He wrapped it around His waist: this is the image of the "Church of the apron." In the life of your family, of your ecclesial community, do you walk on the street of service? Are you directly involved in the service to the poor and to the least? Do you know how to see the face of Christ who asks to be served and loved in the poor?

ORATIO

Psalm 116 (114-115), 12-13; 15-16; 17-18

The Psalmist who finds himself in the time and in the presence of the liturgical assembly sings his sacrifice of thanksgiving. Voltaire who had a special predilection for v. 12 expressed himself as follows: "What can I offer to the Lord for all the gifts which He has given me?"

What return can I make to Yahweh for His generosity to me?

I shall take up the cup of salvation and call on the name of Yahweh.

Costly in Yahweh's sight is the death of His faithful. I beg You, Yahweh!

I am Your servant, I am Your servant and my mother was Your servant;

You have undone my fetters.

I shall offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of Yahweh.

I shall fulfill my vows to Yahweh, witnessed by all His people

Final Prayer

Fascinated with the way in which God expressed His love toward His own, Origin prayed as follows:

Jesus, come, my feet are dirty.

Become a servant for me, pour the water in the basin; come, wash my feet.

I know it, what I am saying is daring, but I fear the threat of Your words:

“If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me.” Wash then my feet, so that I may have a share with you. (*Homily 5 on Isaiah*)

And Saint Ambrose having an ardent desire to correspond to the love of Jesus, expresses himself as follows:

Oh, my Lord Jesus, allow me to wash Your sacred feet;

You got them dirty when You walked in my soul... But where will I take the water from the fountain to wash Your feet?

In lacking that I only have the eyes to weep:

bathing Your feet with my tears, do in such a way that I myself remain purified. (*Treatise on Penance*).

Friday, April 3, 2026

Good Friday: The Passion of the Lord

Recollection in Prayer – *Statio*

Come, You who refresh us, the soul’s delightful guest, come take away all that is mine, and pour into me all that is yours.

Come, You who are the nourishment of every chaste thought, source of all mercies, sum of all purity.

Come and burn away all that in me is cause of my not being able to be consumed by You. Come, Spirit, who are ever with the Father and the Bridegroom, and rest over the brides of the Bridegroom.

(St. Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi, O. Carm., in La Probatione ii, 193-194.)

A Prayerful Reading of the Word – *Lectio*

Gospel Reading - John 18: 1 – 19: 42

Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered. Judas his betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees and went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, “Whom are you looking for?” They answered him, “Jesus the Nazorean.” He said to them, “I AM.” Judas his betrayer was also with them. When he said to them, “I AM,” they turned away and fell to the ground. So he again asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” They said, “Jesus the Nazorean.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I AM. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.” This was to fulfill what he had said, “I have not lost any of those you gave me.”

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?" So the band of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards seized Jesus, bound him, and brought him to Annas first. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Now the other disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered the courtyard of the high priest with Jesus. But Peter stood at the gate outside. So, the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high priest, went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and brought Peter in. Then the maid who was the gatekeeper said to Peter, "You are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire that they had made, because it was cold, and were warming themselves. Peter was also standing there keeping warm.

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask me? Ask those who heard me what I said to them. They know what I said." When he had said this, one of the temple guards standing there struck Jesus and said, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing there keeping warm. And they said to him, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" Again, Peter denied it. And immediately the cock crowed.

Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning. And they themselves did not enter the praetorium, in order not to be defiled so that they could eat the Passover. So, Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?" They answered and said to him, "If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." At this, Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law." The Jews answered him, "We do not have the right to execute anyone," in order that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled that he said indicating the kind of death he would die.

So, Pilate went back into the praetorium and summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who

belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" When he had said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at Passover. Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this one but Barabbas!"

Now Barabbas was a revolutionary. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly.

Once more Pilate went out and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So, Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, "Behold, the man!" When the chief priests and the guards saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." Now when Pilate heard this statement, he became even more afraid, and went back into the praetorium and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" Jesus did not answer him. So, Pilate said to him, "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason, the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." Consequently, Pilate tried to release him; but the Jews cried out, "If you release him, you are not a Friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*. It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king!" They cried out, "Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So, they took Jesus, and, carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, *Golgotha*. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews." Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews'." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So, they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be," in order that the passage of Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots. This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple

there whom he loved he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. (*Here pause for a short time.*)

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. For this happened so that the Scripture passage might be fulfilled: Not a bone of it will be broken. And again another passage says: They will look upon him whom they have pierced.

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So, he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom.

Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by.

Reflecting on the Word – Meditatio

A Key to the Reading:

- **Jesus Master of His Fate**

I would like to suggest that we meditate in the spirit of Mary, at the foot of the cross of Jesus. She, the strong woman who understood the full meaning of this event of the passion and death of the Lord, will help us cast a contemplative glance at the crucified (Jn 1: 5–27). We are looking at chapter 19 of John's Gospel, which begins with the scene of the scourging and the crowning with thorns. Pilate presents "Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews" to the chief priests and to the guards who call for His death on the cross (Jn 1:). Thus, Jesus begins the way of the cross towards Golgotha, where He will be crucified. In the story of the Passion according to John, Jesus reveals himself as master of himself and in control of all that is happening to Him. John's text is full of phrases that point to this theological fact, that Jesus offers His life. He actively, not passively, endures the events of the passion. Here are just some examples putting the stress on some phrases and words. The reader may find other examples: Knowing everything that was to happen to

Him, Jesus came forward and said: "Who are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said, "I am He!" Now Judas the traitor was standing among them. When Jesus said to them "I am He," they moved back and fell on the ground. He asked them a second time, "Who are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus replied, "I have told you that I am He. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go." This was to fulfill the words He had spoken, "Not one of those You gave me have I lost." (Jn 1: 9)

"Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe" (Jn 1:), Jesus replied, "You would have no power over me at all, if it had not been given you from above." (Jn 1: 1).

On the cross too, Jesus takes an active part in His death, He does not allow himself to be killed like the thieves whose legs were broken (Jn 1: 1-33) but commits His spirit (Jn 1:0). The details recalled by the Evangelist are very important: Seeing His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing near her, Jesus said to His mother, "Woman, this is your son." Then to the disciple He said, "This is your mother." (Jn 1: 6-27).

These simple words of Jesus bear the weight of revelation, words that reveal to us His will: "this is your son" (v. 26); "this is your mother" (v. 27). These words also recall those pronounced by Pilate on the Lithostrotos: "This is the man" (Jn 1:). With these words, Jesus on the cross, His throne, reveals His will and His love for us. He is the lamb of God, the shepherd who gives His life for His sheep. At that moment, by the cross, He gives birth to the Church, represented by Mary, her sister (or sister-in-law) Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, together with the beloved disciple (Jn 1: 5).

- **Beloved and faithful disciples**

The fourth Gospel specifies that these disciples "stood by the cross" (Jn 1:5-26). This detail has a deep meaning. Only the fourth Gospel tells us that these five persons stood by the cross. The other Evangelists do not say so. Luke, for instance, says that all those who knew Him followed the events from a distance (Lk 2:9). Matthew also says that many women followed these events from afar. These women had followed Jesus from Galilee and served Him. But now they followed Him from afar (Mt 2:5-56).

Like Matthew, Mark gives us the names of those who followed the death of Jesus from afar (Mk 1:0-41). Thus only the fourth Gospel says that the mother of Jesus and the other women and the beloved disciple "stood by the cross." They stood there like servants before their king. They are present courageously at a time when Jesus has already declared that "it is fulfilled" (Jn 1:0). The mother of Jesus is present at the hour that finally "has come." That hour foretold at the wedding feast of Cana (Jn 2:1 ff). The fourth Gospel had remarked then that "the mother of Jesus was there" (Jn 2:1). Thus the person that remains faithful to the Lord in his destiny, he/she is a beloved disciple. The Evangelist keeps this disciple anonymous so that each one of us may see him/herself mirrored in the one who knew the mysteries of the Lord, who laid his head on Jesus' chest at the last supper (Jn 13:25).

Questions and Suggestions to Direct our Meditation and Practice

- Read once more the passage of the Gospel and look in the Bible for the texts mentioned in the key to the reading. Look for other parallel texts that may help us penetrate deeper into the text presented for our meditation.
- In spirit, and with the help of the prayerful reading of John's text, visit the places of the Passion, stop on Calvary to witness with Mary and the beloved disciple the events of the Passion.
- What struck you most?
- What feelings does this story of the Passion arouse in you?
- What does the fact that Jesus actively bears His passion mean for you?

Oratio

O Eternal Wisdom, Infinite Goodness, Ineffable Truth, You who probe hearts, Eternal God, help us to understand that You can, know and want to! O Loving and Bleeding Lamb, crucified Christ, fulfill in us that which You said: "Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8: 12). O perfect light, from whom all lights proceed! O light for whom light was created, without whom all is darkness and with whom all is light. Light up, light up, do light up! Let Your whole will penetrate all the authors and collaborators You have chosen in this work of renewal. Jesus, Jesus love, Jesus, transform us and make us conform to You. Uncreated Wisdom, Eternal Word, sweet Truth, silent Love, Jesus, Jesus Love!

(St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, O. Carm., in The Renewal of the Church, 90-91.)

Contemplatio

Repeat frequently and calmly these words of Jesus when He offered himself:

"Father into Your hands I commend my spirit"

Saturday, April 4, 2026

Holy Saturday – No Services

Sunday, April 5, 2026

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection

Let us invoke the Holy Spirit

Lord Jesus Christ, today Your light shines in us, source of life and joy. Send the Spirit of love and truth, so that, like Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, we too

may discover and interpret in the light of the Word, the signs of Your divine presence in our world. May we welcome these signs in faith that we may always live in the joy of Your presence among us, even when all seems to be shrouded in the darkness of sadness and evil.

The Gospel Reading – John 20: 1-9

A Key to the Reading:

For John the Evangelist, the resurrection of Jesus is the decisive moment in the process of His glorification, inextricably linked with the first phase of this glorification, His passion and death.

The event of the resurrection is not described in the spectacular and apocalyptic details of the synoptic Gospels. For John, the life of the Risen One asserts itself silently, in the discreet and irresistible power of the Spirit.

The state of the faith of the disciples is announced, "While it was still dark" and begins through the vision of the material signs that recall the Word of God. Jesus is the great protagonist of the story, but He does not appear personally.

The Text:

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So, she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So, Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

A Subdivision of the Text for a Better Understanding:

- Verse 1: introduction and events prior to the situation;
- Verse 2: Mary's reaction and the first announcement of the newly discovered fact;
- Verses 3-5: the immediate reaction of the disciples and the interaction among them.
- Verses 6-7: verification of the event announced by Mary;
- Verses 8-9: the faith of the other disciple and its relationship to the Sacred Scriptures.

A Moment of Interior and Exterior Silence

to open our hearts and make room within for the Word of God:

- A slow re-reading of the whole passage;
- I too am in the garden: the empty sepulchre is before my eyes;
- I allow Mary Magdalene's words to echo within me
- I too run with her, Peter and the other disciple;
- I allow myself to be immersed in the joyful wonder of faith in Jesus Christ, even though, like them, I do not see Him with my bodily eyes.

The Gift of the Word to Us

- *Chapter 20 in John*: This is quite a fragmented text where it is clear that the editor has intervened several times to put the stress on some themes and to unify the various texts received previously from (at least three) preceding sources.
- *The day after the Sabbath*: it is "the first day of the week" and, in Christian circles, inherits the sacredness of the Jewish Sabbath. For Christians it is the first day of the new week, the beginning of the new time, the memorial day of the resurrection called "the day of the Lord" (*dies Domini*).

Here and in verse 19, the Evangelist adopts an expression that is already traditional for Christians (e.g.: *Mk 16:2, 9; Acts 20:7*) and is older than the expression that later became characteristic of the first evangelization: "the third day" (e.g.: *Lk 24:7, 46; Acts 10:40; 1Cor 15:4*).

- *Mary Magdalene*: This is the same woman as the one present at the foot of the cross with other women (19: 25). Here she seems to be alone, but the words in verse 2 ("*we do not know*") show that the original story, worked on by the Evangelist, told of more women, as is true of the other Gospels (cf. *Mk 16:1-3; Mt 28:1; Lk 23:55-24:1*).

However, the synoptics (cf. *Mk 16: 1; Lk 24: 1*), do not specify the reason for her visit to the sepulchre, seeing that it implied that the rite of burial had already been carried out (19:40); perhaps, the only thing missing is the funereal lamentation (cf. *Mk 5:38*). In any case, the fourth Evangelist reduces to a minimum the story of the discovery of the empty sepulchre so as to focus the attention of the reader on what comes after.

- *Early, while it was still dark*: Mark (16:2) says something different, but from both we understand that it was the very early hours of the morning, when the light is very weak and still pale. Perhaps John stresses the lack of light in order to contrast symbolically the *darkness* - lack of faith and *light* - welcoming of the Gospel, of the resurrection.
- *The stone had been taken away from the tomb*: the Greek work is generic: the stone had been "taken away" or "removed" (different from: *Mk 16: 3-4*).

The verb to "take away" recalls *Jn 1: 29*: the Baptist points Jesus out as "Lamb

who takes away the sin of the world." Perhaps the Evangelist wishes to recall the fact that this stone, "taken away," flung away from the sepulcher, is the material sign that death and sin have been "taken away" by the resurrection of Jesus?

- *So she ran and went to Peter and the other disciple:* Mary Magdalene runs to those who share her love for Jesus and her suffering for His atrocious death, now made worse by this new discovery. She turns to them, perhaps because they were the only ones who had not run away with the others and remained in contact with each other (cf. 19: 15, 26 - 27). She wants to share at least with them this final pain of the outrage committed against His body.

We see how Peter and the "beloved disciple" and Mary Magdalene are characterized by a special love that unites them with Jesus: it is indeed reciprocal love that makes them capable of sensing the presence of the loved person.

- *The other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved:* is someone who appears only in this Gospel and only beginning with chapter 13, when he exhibits great intimacy with Jesus and deep understanding with Peter (13: 23-25). He appears at every decisive moment of the passion and of the resurrection of Jesus but remains anonymous and many theories have been advanced on his identity. He is probably the anonymous disciple of the Baptist who follows Jesus together with Andrew (1: 35, 40). Since the fourth Gospel never speaks of John the apostle and keeping in mind that this Gospel recounts details clearly known to an eyewitness, the "disciple" has been identified with John the apostle. The fourth Gospel has always been attributed to him even though he may not have materially written it, yet the origin of this particular tradition is that this Gospel and other writings are attributed to John. This also explains why he is someone who is somewhat idealized, "*The one whom Jesus loved.*" It is clear that this is an addition, not from the apostle, who would not have dared boast of having such a close relationship with the Lord, but from His disciples who wrote most of the Gospel and who coined this expression after reflection on the clearly privileged love between Jesus and him (cf. 13: 25; 21: 4, 7). Where we read the simpler expression "the other disciple" or "the disciple," obviously the editors did not make the same addition.

They have taken the Lord out of the tomb: these words, which recur in verses 13 and 15, show that Mary was afraid that body-snatchers had taken the body, a thing common then, so much so that the Roman Emperor had to promulgate severe decrees to check this phenomenon. In Matthew (28: 11-15), the chief priests use this possibility to discredit the resurrection of Jesus and, eventually, to justify the lack of intervention on the part of the soldiers who guarded the tomb.

- *The Lord:* the title "Lord" implies an acknowledgement of divinity and evokes divine omnipotence. That is why this term was used by Christians for the risen Jesus. Indeed, the fourth Evangelist uses this term only in Paschal stories (see also 20: 13).

- *We do not know where they have laid Him:* these words recall what happened to Moses, whose place of burial was unknown (Deut 34: 10). Another implicit reference is to the words of Jesus Himself when He says that it is impossible to know where He is going (7: 11, 22; 8: 14, 28, 42; 13: 33; 14: 1-5; 16: 5).
- *They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter...but he did not go in:* This passage shows the anxiety that these disciples were living through. The fact that the "other disciple" stopped is more than just a gesture of politeness or respect towards someone older; it is the tacit acknowledgement that Peter, within the apostolic group, held a place of pre-eminence, even though this is not stressed. It is, therefore, a sign of communion. This gesture could also be a literary device to move from the event in terms of faith in the resurrection to the following and peak moment in the story.

It is also possible that it shows hesitation or fear. As their faith was under strain at this moment, there may have been a hesitation when confronted with confirming the situation one way or the other. Would there be something to further chip at his faith or not? It could be a confirmation of what they had hoped, or nothing at all.

- *The linen cloths lying and the napkin...rolled up in a place by itself:* although the other disciple did not go in, he had already seen something. Peter, crossing the entrance of the sepulchre, discovers the proof that no theft of the body took place: no thief would have wasted time to unfold the body, spread the cloths in an orderly fashion (*on the ground* would be translated better by "spread out" or "laid carefully on the floor") and then to roll up the napkin in a place by itself. Such an operation would have been complicated also because the oils with which the body had been anointed (especially myrrh) acted like glue, causing the cloths to stick perfectly and solidly to the body, almost as what happened to mummies. Besides, the napkin is folded; the Greek verb can also mean "rolled," or it could indicate that that piece of light cloth had, in large part, preserved the form of the face over which it had been placed, almost like a mortuary mask. The cloths are the same as those cited in Jn 19: 40.

Everything is in order in the sepulchre, even though the body of Jesus is not there, and Peter was well able to see inside the sepulchre because the day was breaking. Different from Lazarus (11: 44), then, Christ rises, abandoning completely His funerary trappings. Ancient commentators note that, in fact, Lazarus had to use the cloths again for his definitive burial, while Christ had no further use of them because He was not to die again (cf. *Rm* 6: 9).

- *Peter...saw...the other disciple...saw and believed:* at the beginning of the story, Mary Magdalene also "saw." Although some translations use the same verb, the original text uses three different verbs (*theorein* for Peter; *blepein* for the other disciple and Mary Magdalene; *idein*, here, for the other disciple), allowing us to understand that there is a growth in the spiritual depth of this "seeing" that, in fact, culminates in the faith of the other disciple.

The anonymous disciple had certainly not seen anything other than what

Peter had observed. Perhaps he interprets what he sees differently from others because of the special relationship of love he had with Jesus (Thomas' experience is emblematic, 29: 24-29). In any case, as indicated by the tense of the Greek verb, his is still an initial faith, so much so that he cannot find ways of sharing this experience with Mary Magdalene or Peter or any of the other disciples (there is no further reference to this).

However, for the fourth Evangelist the double "see and believe" is quite meaningful and refers exclusively to faith in the resurrection of the (cf. 20: 29), because it was impossible to believe truly before the Lord had died and risen (cf. 14: 25-26; 16: 12-15). The double vision-faith, then, characterizes the whole of this chapter, and "the beloved disciple" is presented as a model of faith who succeeds in understanding the truth about God through material (cf. also 21: 7).

- *As yet they did not know the Scripture*: this obviously refers to all the other disciples. Even for those who had lived close to Jesus, it was difficult to believe in Him. For them, as for us as well, the only gateway that allows us to cross the threshold of authentic faith is knowledge of the Scriptures (cf. *Lk 24: 26-27; 1Cor 15: 34; Acts 2 :27-31*) in the light of the events of the resurrection.

Questions to Direct Our Reflection and Its Practice

- What, in the concrete, does it mean for us "to believe in Jesus the Risen One"? What difficulties do we encounter? Does the resurrection solely concern Jesus or is it really the foundation of our faith?
- The relationship that we see between Peter, the other disciple and Mary Magdalene is clearly one of great communion in Jesus. In what persons, realities, or institutions do we today find this same understanding of love and the same "common union" founded on Jesus? Where can we read the concrete signs of the great love for the Lord and "His own" that inspired all the disciples?
- We see three levels of growth in faith here: Mary, who sees but does not go deeper and instead asks for help to learn more, the other disciple, who is energetic and enthusiastic, yet stops short of totally being immersed in the truth, and Peter, who goes in entirely, to be fully involved in the truth within. These can represent different levels in the growth of one's faith as well. Where am I in this and who best represents my approach to being fully involved in the Lord?

Let Us Pray Asking for Grace and Praising God

A Hymn Taken from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians (paraphrase of 1: 17-23).

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your

hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe, according to the working of His great might which He accomplished in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and He has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Closing Prayer

The liturgical context is of great importance in praying this Gospel and the event of the resurrection of Jesus, which is the hub of our faith and of our Christian life. The sequence that characterizes the Eucharistic liturgy of today and of the whole week leads us to praise the Father and the Lord Jesus.

*Christians, to the Paschal Victim
Offer sacrifice and praise.
The sheep are ransomed by the Lamb;
and Christ, the undefiled
has sinners to His Father reconciled.
Death with life contended:
Combat strangely ended!
Life's own Champion, slain,
Yet lives to reign.
Tell us Mary:
say what you see upon the way.
The tomb the living did enclose;
I saw Christ's glory as He rose!
The angels there attesting;
Shroud with grave-clothes resting.
Christ, my hope, has risen:
He goes before you into Galilee.
That Christ is truly risen from the dead
we know.
Victorious king,
your mercy show.*

We may conclude our prayer also with this lively invocation by a contemporary poet, Marco Guzzi:

*Love, Love, Love!
I wish to feel, live and express all this Love,
Which is a joyful commitment in the world
and a happy contact with the others.
Only You free me, only You release me.
And the snows fall to water
the greenest of valleys in creation.*

Monday, April 6, 2026

Within the octave of Easter

Opening Prayer

Our living God,
our heart is glad and rejoices and we feel secure in our faith
that we have a living person to believe in, Jesus Christ, who is risen from the
dead. Let Him show us the path of life, let us live in the joy of His presence and
give us the grace to make us witnesses, so that we can proclaim with our whole
life that Jesus is our risen, living Lord now and for ever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 28: 8-15

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce the news to his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had happened. The chief priests assembled with the elders and took counsel; then they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep.' And if this gets to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has circulated among the Jews to the present day.

Reflection

Easter! Today's Gospel describes the experience of the Resurrection which the disciples of Jesus had. At the beginning of his Gospel, in presenting Jesus, Matthew had said that Jesus is the Emmanuel, God with us (Mt 1: 23). Now, at the end, he communicates and increases this certainty of faith, because he proclaims that Jesus is risen (Mt 28: 6) and that He will be with us always, until the end of time! (Mt 28: 20). In the contradictions of life, this truth is questioned and contested very much. Opposition is not lacking. The enemies, the chief priests of the Jews, defended themselves against the Good News of the Resurrection and sent word to say that the body had been stolen by the disciples (Mt 28: 11-13). This also happens today: on the one side, the effort of many people to live and to witness to the resurrection; on the other side, so many evil people who fight against the resurrection and against life. In the Gospel of Matthew, the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus is told in symbolic language, which reveals the hidden sense of the events. Matthew speaks about the earthquake, of lightning and of the angels who announce the victory of Jesus over death (Mt 2-4). It is an apocalyptic language, very common at that time, to announce that finally the world had been transformed by the

power of God! The hope of the poor, who reaffirmed their faith, was fulfilled: "He is alive in our midst!"

- Matthew 28: 8: The joy of the Resurrection overcomes fear. On Sunday morning, the first day of the week, two women went to the tomb, Mary of Magdala and Mary of James, also called the other Mary. All of a sudden, the earth trembled and an angel appeared as lightning. The guards who were guarding the tomb were so shaken up with fear that they were like dead men. The women were frightened but the angel encouraged them, announcing the victory of Jesus over death and sending them to go join the disciples of Jesus in Galilee. And in Galilee they would be able to see Him again. Everything began there; they received the great revelation of the Risen Lord. The joy of the Resurrection began to overcome fear. Thus, the announcement of life and resurrection begins in this way.
- Matthew 28: 9-10: Jesus appears to the women. The women left quickly. There is a mixture of fear and of joy. These are sentiments typical of those who have a profound experience of the mystery of God. Suddenly, Jesus himself went to meet them and said to them, "Rejoice!" And they fell on their knees and adored Him. It is the attitude of the one who believes and accepts the presence of God, even if it surprises and goes beyond the human capacity to understand. Now, Jesus Himself orders them to go and join the brothers in Galilee: "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see Me".
- Matthew 28: 11-15: The astuteness or guile of the enemies of the Good News. The opposition itself which Jesus had to face during His life, springs up again now after His Resurrection. The chief priests meet and give money to the guards. They should spread the news that the disciples have robbed the body of Jesus, and this in order to avoid everything which is said about the Resurrection. The chief priests do not accept the Good News of the Resurrection. They prefer to believe that it is an invention on the part of the disciples – men and women – of Jesus.
- The significance of the testimony of the women. The presence of the women at the death, at the burial, and at the resurrection of Jesus is significant. They are witnesses to the death of Jesus (Mt 27: 54-56). At the moment of the burial, they remain sitting before the tomb and therefore, they can render witness of the place where Jesus was buried (Mt 27: 61). Now, on Sunday morning, they are there once again. They know that the empty tomb is truly the tomb of Jesus! The profound experience of death and resurrection which they had, transformed their lives. They themselves become qualified witnesses of the Resurrection in the Christian communities. This is why they receive the order to announce, "Jesus is alive! He has risen from the dead!"

Personal Questions

- How do I experience the Resurrection in my life today?

- Does the Resurrection transform me in any way?
- Today, what is the mission of our community as disciples of Jesus? Through what in the Resurrection can we draw force and strength and courage to fulfill our mission?

Concluding Prayer

I bless Yahweh, who is my counselor, even at night my heart instructs me.
I keep Yahweh before me always, for with Him at my right hand, nothing can shake me. (Ps 16: 7-8)

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

O God of life,
we profess our faith in Jesus and recognize Him as our Lord and Savior. Make us listen to Him when He speaks His good news to us for it is a message of life. May we also hear His voice when He cries out to us in people in need or simply when He speaks to us in people who express to us their joys and hopes, their love and their faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 20: 11-18

Mary Magdalene stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the Body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "*Rabbouni*," which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and then reported what he had told her.

Reflection

Today's Gospel describes the apparition of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. The death of her great friend prompts Mary to lose her sense of life. But she does not give up her search. She goes to the tomb in order to meet again the one whom death

has taken away. There are moments in our life in which everything crumbles. It seems that everything is finished. Death, disasters, pain and suffering, disillusionments, betrayals: so many things which may cause us to feel lost, as if standing on firm ground, and which can lead us to fall into a deep crisis. But other things also happen. For example, suddenly we meet a friend again, and that can give us hope anew and can make us discover that love is stronger than death and defeat. The Lord allows desolation, but He also provides consolation as we need it.

Chapter 20 in John's Gospel, besides the apparitions of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, also speaks about diverse episodes which indicate the richness of the experience of the Resurrection: (a) to the beloved disciple and to Peter (Jn 20: 1-10); (b) to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20: 11-18); (c) to the community of disciples (Jn 20: 19-23) and (d) to the Apostle Thomas (Jn 20: 24-29). The purpose of the writing of the Gospel is to lead people to believe in Jesus, and believing in Him, to have life (Jn 20: 30-31).

In the way of describing the apparition of Jesus to Mary Magdalene one is aware of the different stages of the road that she had to follow, of the sorrowful search until the time of the encounter at Easter. These are also the stages through which we all have to pass, throughout our life, in seeking God and living the Gospel.

- John 20: 11-13: Mary Magdalene weeps, but she seeks. There was a very strong love between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. She was one of the few persons who had the courage to remain with Jesus up to the moment of His death on the Cross. After the obligatory rest on Saturday, she goes back to the tomb to be in the place where she had seen her beloved for the last time. But, surprisingly, the tomb is empty! The angels ask her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" and her response is, "They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put Him!" Mary Magdalene looked for Jesus, that Jesus whom she had known for three years.
- John 20: 14-15: Mary Magdalene speaks with Jesus without knowing Him. The disciples at Emmaus saw Jesus but they did not recognize Him. She thinks that Jesus is the gardener. And just as the angels had done, Jesus also asks, "Why are you weeping?" and He adds, "Whom are you looking for?" The response: "If you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him and I will go and get Him". She was still looking for the Jesus of the past, the same one of three days before. And it is precisely the image of the Jesus of the past which prevents her from recognizing the living Jesus, who is present before her.
- John 20: 16: Mary Magdalene recognizes Jesus. Jesus pronounces her name: "Mary!" This was the signal to recognize Him: the same voice, the same way of pronouncing her name. She answers, "Master!" Jesus had returned the same as the one who had died on the cross. The first impression was that death was only a painful incident on the journey, but now everything has again become as before. Mary embraces Jesus strongly. He was the same Jesus whom she had known and loved. And thus is fulfilled what the Parable of the Good

Shepherd said: "He calls them by name and they recognize His voice". "I know My sheep and My sheep know Me" (Jn 10: 3, 4, 14).

- John 20: 17-18: Mary Magdalene receives the mission to announce the resurrection to the apostles. In fact, it is the same Jesus, but the way of being together with her is not the same as before. Jesus tells her, "Do not cling to me, because I have not as yet ascended to the Father!" He goes toward the Father. Mary Magdalene has to let Jesus go and assume her mission: to announce to the brothers that He, Jesus, has ascended to the Father. Jesus has opened up the way for us and thus, once more, God is close to us.

Personal Questions

- Have you ever had an experience which gave you the feeling of loss and death? What was it like? What gave you new life and gave you back the hope and joy of living?
- What is the change that took place in Mary Magdalene throughout the dialogue? Mary Magdalene was looking for Jesus in a certain way and found Him in a different way. How does this take place in our life?
- Do we also look for Jesus in the past, as a historical figure, when He is present right before us in the poor and outcasts we meet every day? What can we do to be more aware of Him in those that we meet today?
- Has Jesus ever called to me as I faced someone who was poor and outcasts? Did I recognize my name as He called me through that person and that opportunity to see Him?

Concluding Prayer

We are waiting for Yahweh; He is our help and our shield, for in Him our heart rejoices, in His holy name we trust.

Yahweh, let Your faithful love rest on us, as our hope has rested in You. (Ps 33: 20-22)

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

God our Father,

You are a God not of the dead nor of those paralyzed by their fears and limitations but the God of the living.

Raise us up and make us walk forward in joy and hope as companions on the road of Him whom you raised from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord for ever.

Gospel Reading - Luke 24: 13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his Body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the Eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection

Today's Gospel speaks to us of a very well know episode, of the apparition of Jesus to the disciples at Emmaus. Luke writes in the year 80 AD for the communities of Greece, which for the most part were made up of converted Gentiles. The years 60's and 70's had been most difficult ones. There had been the great persecution of Nero in the year 64 AD. Six years later, in the year 70, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. In the year 72, in Masada, in the desert of Judah, there was the massacre of the last rebellious Jews. In those years, the Apostles, witnesses of the Resurrection, disappeared gradually. People began to feel tired on the journey. From where could they draw the strength so as not to

get discouraged? How to discover the presence of Jesus in such a difficult situation? The story of the apparition of Jesus to the disciples at Emmaus tries to give a response to all these anguishing questions. Luke wants to teach the communities how to interpret Scripture to be able to rediscover the presence of Jesus in life.

- Luke 24:13-24: 1st Step: to get away from reality. Jesus meets the two friends in a situation of fear and lack of faith. The force of death, the cross, had killed the hope in them. This was the situation of many people at the time of Luke, and is also the predicament of many people today. Jesus gets close to them and walks by their side. He listens to their conversation and asks, "What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?" The dominant ideology of the government and of the official religion of the time prevent them from seeing. "Our hope had been that He would be the one to set Israel free." What is the conversation of people who suffer today? The first step is this one: get close to the people, listen to their reality, feel their problems: be capable of asking questions which will help the people to look at reality from a more critical perspective.

- Luke 24:25-27: 2nd step: use the Bible to enlighten life. Jesus uses the Bible and the history of people to illuminate the problem which made the two friends suffer, and to clarify the situation in which they are living. He also uses it to place them in the whole plan of God which came from Moses and the prophets. Thus, He indicates that history had not escaped from God's hand. Jesus uses the Bible not as a doctor who knows everything, but rather like a companion who comes to help friends and to remind them of what they had forgotten. Jesus tries to awaken their memory: "Foolish and slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into His glory?"

This is the second step: With the Bible, help people to discover the wisdom which already exists in them, and transform the cross, a sign of death, into a sign of life and of hope. What prevented them from walking now becomes for them strength and light on the journey. How can we do this today?

- Luke 24: 28-32: 3rd step: to share in community. The Bible in itself does not open their eyes. It only makes their heart burn. What opens the eyes and makes them see is the breaking of the bread, the communal gesture of sharing, and the celebration of the Supper. At the moment in which both recognize Jesus, they are born anew, and Jesus disappears. Jesus does not take possession of his friends' road. He is not paternalistic. Risen, the disciples are capable of walking alone.

The third step is the following: to know how to create a fraternal environment of faith, of celebration and of sharing, where the Holy Spirit can act. It is He who makes us discover and experience the Word of God in life, which leads us to understand the meaning of the words of Jesus (Jn 14: 26; 16: 13).

- Luke 24: 33-35: 4th step: The result: To resurrect means to go back to Jerusalem. The two of them, courageously, get back on the road to go to

Jerusalem, where the same forces of death, which had killed Jesus and had killed their hope, continue to be active. But now everything has changed. If Jesus is alive, then there is in Him and with Him a stronger power than that which killed Him. This experience makes them resurrect! Truly, everything has changed. There is return and not flight! Faith and not unbelief! Hope and not despair! Critical conscience and not fatalism in the face of power! Liberty and not oppression! In one word: life and not death! Instead of the bad news of the death of Jesus, the Good News of his Resurrection! Both of them experience life and life in abundance! (Jn 10: 10). This is a sign that the Spirit of Jesus is acting in them!

Personal Questions

- Both of them say, “We were hoping, but...!” Have you ever been in a situation of discouragement which led you to say, “I was hoping, but...!”?
- How do you read, use and interpret the Bible? Have you ever felt your heart burning when reading and meditating on the Word of God? Do you read the Bible alone or are you part of a Bible group?
- Considering these steps, and the way Jesus enlightened these disciples, how would you help a friend who was losing hope or faith?

Concluding Prayer

Give thanks to Yahweh, call on His name, proclaim His deeds to the peoples! Sing to Him, make music for Him, recount all His wonders! (Ps 105: 1-2)

Thursday, April 9, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty God and Father,
Jesus died for us on the cross and You raised Him from the dead.
We have not seen the marks of the nails in His hands nor touched the wound in His side, but we believe that He is alive and present here among us.
Open our hearts to His word and let us touch Him in the bread of the Eucharist, that He may raise us above our sins and change us into new people.
May we thus bear witness to Your risen Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 24: 35-48

The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way, and how they had come to recognize him in the breaking of bread. While they were still

speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them. He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Reflection

In these days after Easter, the Gospel texts narrate the apparitions of Jesus. At the beginning, in the first years after the death and the Resurrection of Jesus, the Christians were concerned with defending the Resurrection through the apparitions. They themselves, the living community, were a great apparition of the Risen Jesus. But in the measure in which the criticism of the enemies against the faith in the Resurrection increased, and that internally, and as there arose criticism and doubts concerning diverse functions in the community (cf. 1 Co 1: 12), they began to recall the apparitions of Jesus. There are two types of apparitions:

- (a) those which stress the doubts and the resistance of the disciples in believing in the Resurrection, and
- (b) those who call attention to the orders of Jesus to the disciples – men and women – conferring some mission to them.

The first ones respond to criticisms from the outside. These show that Christians are not naïve and credulous persons who accept everything and anything. Au contraire! They themselves had many doubts in believing in the Resurrection. The others respond to the criticism from within and establish the community functions and tasks, not on human qualities which are always debatable, but on the authority and orders received from the Risen Jesus. The apparitions of Jesus in today's Gospel put together two different aspects: the doubts of the disciples and the mission to announce and to forgive received from Jesus.

- Luke 24: 35: The summary of the story of Emmaus. Returning to Jerusalem, the two disciples found the community together and they shared with them the experience that they had lived. They told them what had happened along the road and how they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. The community gathered, and in turn, shared the apparition of Jesus to Peter. This was a reciprocal sharing of the experience of the Resurrection, as it also happens today when the communities gather to share and celebrate their faith, their hope and their love.

- Luke 24: 36-37: The apparition of Jesus causes great fright in the disciples. At this moment, Jesus becomes present among them and says, "Peace be with you!" This is the most frequent greeting of Jesus: "Peace be with you!" (Jn 14: 27; 16: 33; 20: 19, 21, 26). But the disciples, upon seeing Jesus, were frightened and did not recognize Him. Before them is Jesus in person, but they think that they are seeing a ghost, a phantasm. They cannot believe it. It is now the encounter between Jesus of Nazareth and the Risen Jesus.
- Luke 24: 38-40: Jesus helps them to overcome fear and unbelief. Jesus does two things to help the disciples overcome fear and unbelief. He shows them His hands and His feet, saying, "It is I Myself!", and tells them to touch His body saying, "A ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have!" Jesus shows His hands and feet because on them is the sign of the nails (cf. Jn 20: 25-27). The Risen Christ is Jesus of Nazareth, the same one who was nailed to the Cross and not a phantasm Christ as the disciples imagined when they saw Him. He orders them to touch His body, because the Resurrection is the Resurrection of the whole person, body and soul. The Resurrection has nothing to do with the theory of the immortality of the soul, which the Greeks taught.
- Luke 24: 41-43: The other gesture to help them overcome unbelief. But it does not suffice! Luke said that they could not believe because their joy was so great that they became dumbfounded. Jesus asks them to give Him something to eat. They offer Him some fish and He eats before them, to help them to overcome doubt.
- Luke 24: 44-47: A key to understanding the new significance of the Scripture. One of the greatest difficulties of the first Christians was that of accepting the Crucified as the promised Messiah, because the Law taught that a crucified person was a "person cursed by God" (Deut 21: 22-23). For this reason, it was important to know that Scripture had already announced that "Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that in His name, conversion and forgiveness of sins would be preached to all peoples." Jesus shows them what had already been written in the Law of Moses, in the prophets and in the psalms. Jesus risen from the dead, alive in their midst, becomes the key to opening to them the total significance of Sacred Scripture.
- Luke 24: 48: You are witnesses of this. In this last order is enclosed the whole mission of the Christian communities: to be witnesses to the Resurrection, in such a way that the love of God which accepts us and forgives us will be manifested, and which wants us to live in community as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters with one another.

Personal Questions

- Sometimes unbelief and doubt beset the heart and weaken the certainty that faith gives us concerning the presence of God in our life. Have you ever experienced this? How have you overcome it?

- Our mission is that of being witnesses to the love of God revealed in Jesus. Am I a witness to this love?
- Can I identify those things in my life which cast doubt on my faith? How do I defend against these attacks?

Concluding Prayer

What are human beings that You spare a thought for them, or the child of Adam that You care for him? (Ps 8: 4)

Friday, April 10, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Our God and Father,

through our risen Lord, Your Son Jesus Christ, You have given us a message of hope and a person to live for.

Free our faith from triviality and routine and fill us with His Spirit of courage, that we may learn to live with the insecurities of the change of renewal ever-demanded by the gospel and by the needs of the times.

May our Christian living bear witness to the name of Him by whom we are saved, Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 21: 1-14

Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the

bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

Reflection

Chapter 21 of the Gospel of Saint John seems like an appendix which was added after the Gospel had already been written. The conclusion of the previous chapter (Jn 20: 30-31) makes one suspect that it is an addition. However, whether it is an addition or not, it is the Word of God, which presents to us the beautiful message of the Resurrection on this fifth day of Easter week.

- John 21: 1-3: The fisherman of men returns to be a fisherman of fish. Jesus has died and has risen. After three years of life together with Jesus, the disciples returned to Galilee. A group of them find themselves together at the lakeshore. Peter goes back to the past and says: "I am going fishing!" The others answer: "We will come with you!" Thus, Thomas, Nathanael, John and James together with Peter go to the boat to go fishing. They go back to the life of the past as if nothing had happened. But something did happen. Something was taking place! The past did not return! "We have caught nothing!" They return to shore, tired. This had been a night filled with frustration.
- John 21: 4-5: The context of the new apparition of Jesus. Jesus was on the shore, but they did not recognize Him. Jesus asks, "Little children, have you anything to eat?" They answer, "No!" In the negative response they realize that the night had been deceiving because they had caught nothing. They had been called to be fishermen of men (Mk 1: 17; Lk 5: 10), and they go back to be fishermen of fish. But something had changed in their life! The experience of three years with Jesus produces in them an irreversible change. It was no longer possible to return to the past as if nothing had happened, as if nothing had changed.
- John 21: 6-8: "Throw the net out to the right of the boat and you will find something." They did something which perhaps they had never done in their life. Five experienced fishermen obey a carpenter who orders them to do something which is in contrast to their experience. Jesus, that unknown Person, who is on the shore, orders them to throw the net on the right side of the boat. They obey; they throw the net and behold the unexpected result. The net was full of fish! How was this possible? How to explain this surprise so unexpected, unforeseen! Love makes one discover. The beloved disciple says, "It is the Lord". This intuition clarifies everything. Peter jumps into the water to get close to Jesus very quickly. The other disciples follow him, pulling the boat, and dragging the net full of fish.
- John 21: 9-14: The kindness of Jesus. Coming ashore, they saw a charcoal fire which had been lit by Jesus, where He was roasting fish and bread. He asked them to take some of the fish they had caught, and immediately Peter went to the boat and towed the net containing one hundred and fifty-three fish. A great number of fish and the net did not break. Jesus calls the multitude,

“Come and eat!” He had the kindness to prepare something to eat after a disappointing night during which they had caught nothing: a very simple gesture which reveals something of God’s love for us. “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14: 9). None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, “Who are you?” because they knew He was the Lord. Recalling the Eucharist, John the Evangelist contemplates: “Jesus stepping forward took the bread and gave it to them.” Thus, he suggests that the Eucharist is the privileged place for the encounter with the Risen Jesus.

Personal Questions

- Has it ever happened to you that someone told you to throw the net to the right side of your life, to do something contrary to your experience? Did you obey and throw in the net?
- The kindness of Jesus. How is your kindness in the small things of life?
- Do you recognize Jesus only after signs and miracles, or do you see Him in the simple acts of life, such as making a meal?

Concluding Prayer

Give thanks to Yahweh for He is good, for His faithful love endures for ever. Let those who fear Yahweh say, “His faithful love endures for ever.” (Ps 118)

Saturday, April 11, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Our God and Father,
Your Son Jesus lived among us, flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood.
He died for our sake and You raised Him back to life.
May we experience His love and His presence to such an extent that we can never stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard, and that people may give glory to You, our God. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.
Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 16: 9-15

When Jesus had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either. But

later, as the Eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised. He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."

Reflection

Today's Gospel is part of a broader literary unit (Mk 16: 9-20) which presents a list or summary of diverse apparitions of Jesus:

- (a) Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, but the disciples do not accept her testimony (Mk 16: 9-11);
- (b) Jesus appears to the disciples, but the others do not accept their testimony (Mk 16: 12-13);
- (c) Jesus appears to the eleven; He criticizes their lack of faith and orders them to announce the Good News to all (Mk 16: 14-18);
- (d) Jesus ascends to heaven and continues to cooperate with the disciples (Mk 16: 19-20).

Besides this list of apparitions in the Gospel of Mark, there are other lists of apparitions which do not always coincide among themselves. For example, the list kept by Paul in the Letter to the Corinthians is very different (1 Cor 15: 3-8). This variety shows that at the beginning the Christians were not concerned with proving the Resurrection by means of the apparitions. For them faith in the Resurrection was so evident and alive that there was no need to prove it. A person sunbathing on the shore is not concerned with showing that the sun exists, because she herself, sun burnt, is the evidence of the existence of the sun. The communities, existing amid the immense Empire, were a living proof of the Resurrection. The list of the apparitions began to appear later, in the second generation, to refute the criticism of opponents.

- Mark 16: 9-11: Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, but the other disciples do not believe her. Jesus first appears to Mary Magdalene. She goes to announce this to the others. To come into the world, God wanted to depend on the womb of a young girl 15 or 16 years old, called Mary of Nazareth (Lk 1: 38). To be recognized alive in our midst, He wants to depend on the announcement of a woman who had been liberated from seven devils, also called Mary, of Magdala! (This is why she was called Mary Magdalene). But the others did not believe her. Mark says that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. In the list of apparitions, recorded in the letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15: 3-8), the apparitions of Jesus to the women are not mentioned. The first Christians had difficulty believing in the testimony of women. It is shameful!
- Mark 16: 12-13: Jesus appears to the disciples, but the others do not believe them. Without too many details, Mark refers to an apparition of Jesus to two disciples, "while they were on their way into the country." This is perhaps a reference to the apparition of Jesus to the disciples at Emmaus, narrated by Luke (Lk 24: 13-35). Mark insists on saying that "the others did not believe them either".

- Mark 16: 14-15: Jesus criticizes the unbelief and orders them to announce the Good News to all creatures. For this reason, Jesus appears to the eleven and reproaches them because they did not believe the people who had seen Him in His resurrected body. Once again, Mark refers to the resistance of the disciples in refusing to believe the testimony of those who have experienced the Resurrection of Jesus. Why? Probably to teach three things: in the first place, that faith in Jesus passes through the faith in the people who give witness; in the second place, that nobody should be discouraged when doubt or unbelief arises in the heart; in the third place, to refute the claim of those who said that the Christian is naïve and accepts any news uncritically, because the eleven had great difficulty accepting the truth of the Resurrection!
- Today's Gospel ends with the sending forth: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Gospel to all creation!" Jesus confers upon them the mission to announce the Good News to all creatures.

Personal Questions

- Which of these: Mary Magdalene, the two disciples of Emmaus, or the eleven disciples, had the greatest difficulty believing in the Resurrection? Why? With whom do I identify?
- What can convince people of the presence of Jesus in our midst?

Concluding Prayer

May God show kindness and bless us, and make His face shine on us.
Then the earth will acknowledge Your ways, and all nations Your power to save.
(Ps 67: 1-2)

Sunday, April 12, 2026

Second Sunday of Easter

Opening Prayer

Father, who on the Lord's day gather Your people to celebrate the One who is the First and the Last, the living One who conquered death, grant us the strength of Your Spirit so that, having broken the chains of evil, calmed our fears and indecisions, we may render the free service of our obedience and love, to reign in glory with Christ.

LECTIO

A Key to the Reading:

We are in the so-called “book of the resurrection” where we are told, in a not-so-logical sequence, several matters concerning the risen Christ and the facts that prove it. In the fourth Gospel, these facts take place in the morning (20: 1-18) and evening of the first day after the Saturday and eight days later, in the same place and on the same day of the week. We are before an event that is the most important in the history of humanity, an event that challenges us personally. “If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless... and you are still in your sins” (1Cor 15: 14, 17) says Paul the apostle who had not known Jesus before His resurrection, but who zealously preached Him all his life. Jesus is sent by the Father. He also sends us. Our willingness to “go” comes from the depth of the faith we have in the Risen One. Are we prepared to accept His “mandate” and to give our lives for His Kingdom? This passage is not just about the faith of those who have not seen (the witness of Thomas), but also about the mission entrusted to the Church by Christ.

A Suggested Division of the Text to Facilitate its Reading:

- John 20: 19-20: appearance to the disciples and showing of the wounds
- John 20: 21-23: gift of the Spirit for the mission
- John 20: 24-26: special appearance to Thomas eight days later
- John 20: 27-29: dialogue with Thomas
- John 20: 30-31: the aim of the Gospel according to John

Gospel Text – John 20: 19-31

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe." 26 Eight days later, His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side; do not be faithless, but believing." 28 Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

A Moment of Silence

to allow the Word to enter into our hearts

MEDITATIO

A Few Questions to Help in Our Meditation:

Who or what drew my interest and wonder in the reading? Is it possible for someone to profess being Christian and yet not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus? Is it so important to believe in the resurrection? What would be different if we stopped at His teaching and witness of life? What does the gift of the Spirit for the mission mean to me? How does Jesus' mission in the world continue after the Resurrection? What is the content of the missionary proclamation? What value has Thomas' witness for me? What are, if any, my doubts concerning the faith? How do I meet them and still carry on? Am I able to give reasons for my faith?

Comment:

- *In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week:* the disciples are living through an extraordinary day. For the community, at the time of the writing of the fourth Gospel, the day after the Sabbath is already "the Lord's day" (Rev 1: 10), Dies Domini (Sunday), and is more important than the Sabbath was in the tradition of the Jews.
- *The doors were closed:* a detail which shows that the body of the risen Jesus, even though recognizable, is not subject to the ordinary laws of human life.
- *Peace be with you:* this is not just a wish, but the actual peace promised to them when they were saddened by His departure (Jn 14: 27; 2Thess 3: 16; Rom 5: 3), the messianic peace, the fulfillment of the promises made by God, freedom from all fear, victory over sin and death, reconciliation with God, fruit of His passion, free gift of God. This peace is repeated three times in this passage as well as in the introduction (20: 19) further on (20: 26) in the exact same way.
- *He showed them His hands and His side:* Jesus provides evident and tangible proof that he is the one who was crucified. Only John records the detail of the wound in the side caused by the spear of a Roman soldier, whereas Luke mentions the wound of the feet (Lk 24: 39). In showing his wounds, Jesus wants to say that the peace he gives comes from the cross (2Tim 2: 1-13). They are part of his identity as the risen One (Ap 5: 6).
- *The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord:* This is the same joy expressed by the prophet Isaiah when he describes the divine banquet (Is 25: 8-9), the eschatological joy foreshadowed in the farewell speech and that no one can take away (Jn 16: 22; 20: 27). Cfr. also Lk 24: 39-40; Mt 28: 8; Lk 24: 41.
- *As the Father sent me, so am I sending you:* Jesus is the first missionary, "the apostle and high priest of the faith we profess" (Rev 3: 1). After the experience

of the cross and the resurrection, Jesus' prayer to the Father comes true (Jn 13: 20; 17: 18; 21: 15, 17). This is not a new mission, but the mission of Jesus extended to those who are His disciples, bound to Him like branches are bound to the vine (15: 9), so also they are bound to His Church (Mt 28: 18-20; Mk 16: 15-18; Lk 24: 47-49). The eternal Son of God was sent so that "the world might be saved through Him" (Jn 3: 17) and the whole of His earthly existence, fully identified with the saving will of the Father, is a constant manifestation of that divine will that all may be saved. He leaves as an inheritance this historical project to the whole Church, especially to ordained ministers within that Church.

- *He breathed on them*: this action recalling the life-giving breath of God on man (Gen 2: 7), does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament. It marks the beginning of a new creation
- *Receive the Holy Spirit*: after Jesus was glorified, the Holy Spirit was bestowed (Jn 7: 39). Here the Spirit is transmitted for a special mission, whereas at Pentecost (Acts 2) the Holy Spirit comes down on the whole people of God.
- *For those whose sins you forgive they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained*: we find the power to forgive or not forgive sins also in Matthew in a more juridical form (Mt 16: 19; 18: 18). According to the Scribes and Pharisees (Mk 2: 7), and according to tradition (Isa 43: 25), God has the power to forgive sins. Jesus gives this power (Lk 5: 24) and passes it on to his Church. In our meditation, it is better not to dwell on this text's theological development in church tradition and the consequent theological controversies. In the fourth Gospel the expression may be taken in a wide sense. Here it is a matter of the power of forgiving sins in the Church as salvation community and those especially endowed with this power are those who share in the apostolic charism by succession and mission. In this general power is included the power to forgive sins also after baptism, what we call "the sacrament of reconciliation" expressed in various forms throughout the history of the Church.
- *Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve*: Thomas is one of the main characters of the fourth Gospel and his doubting character, easily discouraged, is emphasized (11: 16; 14: 5). "One of the twelve" is by now a stereotyped expression (Jn 6: 71), because in fact they were only eleven. "Didymus" means "the Twin", and we could be his "twins" through our difficulty in believing in Jesus, Son of God who died and rose again.
- *We have seen the Lord!* When Andrew, John and Philip had found the Messiah, they had already run to announce the news to others (Jn 1: 41-45). Now there is the official proclamation by eye-witnesses (Jn 20: 18).
- *Unless I see the holes that the nails made in His hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into His side, I refuse to believe*: Thomas cannot believe the eye-witnesses. He wants to experience the event himself. The fourth Gospel is aware of the difficulty that some may have in believing in the Resurrection (Lk 24: 34-40; Mk 16: 11; 1Cor 15: 5-8),

especially those who have not seen the risen One. Thomas is their (and our) interpreter. He is willing to believe, but he wants to resolve personally any doubt, for fear of being wrong. Jesus does not see in Thomas an indifferent sceptic, but a man in search of truth and satisfies him fully. This is, however, an occasion to express an appreciation of future believers (verse 29).

- *Put your finger here, look, here are My hands. Give Me your hand; put it into My side. Doubt no longer but believe!* Jesus repeats the words of Thomas and enters into a dialogue with him. He understands Thomas' doubts and wishes to help him. Jesus knows that Thomas loves Him and therefore has compassion for him because Thomas does not yet enjoy the peace that comes from faith. Jesus helps him to grow in faith. In order to enter deeper into this theme, see the parallels in: 1Jn 1-2; Ps 78: 38; 103: 13-14; Rom 5: 20; 1Tim 1: 14-16.
- *My Lord and my God!* This is a profession of faith in the risen One and in his divinity as is also proclaimed in the beginning of John's Gospel (1:1). In the Old Testament "Lord" and "God" correspond respectively to "Yahweh" and "Elohim" (Ps 35: 23-24; Rev 4: 11). It is the fullest and most direct paschal profession of faith in the divinity of Jesus. In Jewish circles these terms had greater value because they applied to Jesus texts concerning God. Jesus does not correct the words of Thomas as He corrected the words of the Jews who accused Him of wanting to be "equal to God" (Jn 5: 18ff) thus approving the acknowledgement of His divinity.
- *You believe because you can see Me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe!* Jesus cannot stand those who look for signs and miracles in order to believe (Jn 4: 48) and He seems to take Thomas to task. Here we must remember another passage concerning a more authentic faith, a "way of perfection" towards a faith to which we must aspire without the demands of Thomas, a faith received as gift and as an act of trust, like the exemplary faith of our ancestors (Rev 11) and of Mary (Lk 1: 45). We, who are two thousand years after the coming of Jesus, are told that, although we have not seen Him, yet we can love Him and believing in Him we can exult with "an indescribable and glorious joy" (1Pet 1:8).
- *These (signs) are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through His name.* The fourth Gospel, like the other Gospels, does not mean to write a complete biography of Jesus, but only to show that Jesus was the Christ, the awaited Messiah, the Liberator, and that He was the Son of God. Believing in Him means that we possess eternal life. If Jesus is not God, then our faith is in vain!

ORATIO

Psalm 118 (117)

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His steadfast love endures for ever!
Let Israel say,

"His steadfast love endures for ever." Let the house of Aaron say,
"His steadfast love endures for ever." Let those who fear the LORD say, "His
steadfast love endures for ever."

I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me.

The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.

Hark, glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

This is the Lord's doing;

it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech Thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech Thee, give us success!

CONTEMPLATIO

Closing Prayer

I thank You Jesus, my Lord and my God, that You have loved me and called me, made me worthy to be Your disciple, that You have given me the Spirit, the One sent to proclaim and witness to Your resurrection, to the mercy of the Father, to salvation and pardon for all men and women in the world. You truly are the way, the truth and the life, the dawn without a setting, the sun of justice and peace. Grant that I may dwell in Your love, bound to You like a branch to its vine. Grant me Your peace so that I may overcome my weaknesses, face my doubts and respond to Your call and live fully the mission You entrusted to me, praising You forever, You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, April 13, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord God, our Father,

You are not far away from any of us, for in You we live and move and exist and You live in us through Your Holy Spirit. Be indeed with us, Lord, send us Your Holy Spirit of truth and through Him deepen our understanding of the life and message of Your Son, that we may accept the full truth and live by it consistently.

We ask You this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 3: 1-8

There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that You do unless God were with Him.'

Jesus answered, 'In all truth I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without

being born from above.' Nicodemus said, 'How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?'

Jesus replied, 'In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

Reflection

The Gospel today presents part of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

Nicodemus appears several times in the Gospel of John:

(Jn 3: 1-13; 7: 50-52; 19: 39). He was a person who held a certain social position. He was a leader among the Jews and formed part of the supreme tribunal, called the Sanhedrin. In the Gospel of John, he represents the group of Jews who were pious and sincere, but who did not understand everything which Jesus said and did. Nicodemus had heard about the signs and the wonderful things that Jesus did, and he was struck, amazed. He wanted to speak with Jesus in order to understand better. He was a cultured person, who thought he believed the things of God. He expected the Messiah with the Book of the Law in his hand to verify if the novelty announced by Jesus would arrive. Jesus makes Nicodemus understand that the only way to understand the things of God is to be born again! Today this same thing happens. Some, like Nicodemus, accept as new only what agrees with their ideas. What does not agree with their ideas is rejected and considered contrary to tradition. Others allow themselves to be surprised from facts and are not afraid to say, "I have been born anew!"

- John 3: 1: A man called Nicodemus. Shortly before Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, the Evangelist was speaking of the imperfect faith of certain persons who were interested only in the miracles of Jesus (Jn 2: 23-25). Nicodemus was one of these people. He had good will, but his faith was still imperfect. The conversation with Jesus helped him to perceive that he had to advance in order to be able to deepen his faith in Jesus and in God.
- John 3: 2: 1st question of Nicodemus: the tension between what is old and what is new. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a prominent person among the Jews and with good common sense. He went to meet Jesus at night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that You do unless God were with him." Nicodemus gives an opinion of Jesus according to arguments which he, Nicodemus himself, has within himself. This is already important, but it is not enough to know Jesus. The signs which Jesus works can arouse a person and awake some interest in the person. They can generate curiosity, but they do not generate greater faith. They do not make one see the Kingdom of God present in Jesus. For this reason it is necessary to advance, to take one more step. What is this step?

- John 3: 3: Jesus' response: "You must be born again!" In order that Nicodemus can see the Kingdom present in Jesus, he should be born again, from above. Anyone who tries to understand Jesus only from his arguments alone does not succeed in understanding Him. Jesus is much greater. If Nicodemus remains only with the catechism of the past in his hand, he will not manage to understand Jesus. He should open his hand completely. He should set aside his own certainties and his security and abandon himself totally. He should make a choice between, on the one hand, the security which comes from organized religion with its laws and traditions and, on the other hand, launch himself into the adventure of the Spirit which Jesus proposes to him.
- John 3: 4: 2nd question of Nicodemus: How can anyone who is already old be born again? Nicodemus does not give in and returns with the same question with a certain irony: "How can a man be born when he is old? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born again?" Nicodemus takes Jesus' words literally and, because of this, he understands nothing. He should have realized that the words of Jesus had a symbolic sense.
- John 3: 5-8: Jesus' answer: To be born from above, to be born from the Spirit. Jesus explains what it means to be born from above or to be born again. It is "To be born from water and the Spirit". Here we have a very clear reference to Baptism. Through the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, the Evangelist invites us to review our Baptism. He gives the following words: "What is born of human nature is human, what is born of the Spirit is Spirit". Flesh means that which is born only from our ideas. What is born from us is within our reach. To be born of the Spirit is another thing! The Spirit is like the wind. "The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going; so it is with anyone who is born of the Spirit". The wind has within itself a direction, a route. We perceive the direction of the wind, for example, the North wind or the wind coming from the South, but we do not know, nor can we control the cause why the wind moves in this or that direction. This is the way the Spirit is. "No one is the master of the Spirit" (Eccl 8: 8). What characterizes the wind best, the Spirit, is liberty. The wind, the Spirit, is free, He cannot be controlled. He acts on others and nobody can act on him. His origin is a mystery. The boat must first find the route of the wind. Then it has to place the sails according to that route. That is what Nicodemus should do and what we should all do.
- A key to understanding better the words of Jesus on the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew language uses the same word to say wind and spirit. As we have said the wind has within it a route, a direction: the North wind, the wind from the South. The Spirit of God has a route, a project, which already manifested itself in creation. The Spirit was present in creation under the form of a bird which flew over the waters of the chaos (Gen 1: 2). Year after year, He renews the face of the earth and sets nature through the sequence of the seasons (Ps 104: 30; 147: 18). The same is also present in history. He makes the Red Sea move back (Ex 14: 21) and He gives quails to the people to eat (Num 11: 31). He accompanies Moses and, beginning with him, He distributes the leaders of the people

(Num 11:24-25). He took the leaders and took them to carry out liberating actions: Othniel (Judg 3: 10), Gideon (Judg 6: 34), Jephthah (Judg 11: 29), Samson (Judg 13: 25; 14: 6, 19; 15:14), Saul (1Sam 11: 6), and Deborah, the prophetess (Judg 4: 4). He is present in the group of the prophets and acts in them with the force which is contagious (1Sam 10: 5-6, 10). His action in the prophets produces envy in the others. But Moses reacts, "If only all Yahweh's people were prophets, and Yahweh had given them His spirit!" (Num 11: 29).

- All along the centuries the hope grew that the Spirit of God would have oriented the Messiah in the realization of God's project (Isa 11: 1-9) and it would have descended upon all the people of God (Ezek 36: 27; 39: 29; Isa 32: 15; 44: 3). The great promise of the Spirit appears in various ways in the prophets of the exile: the vision of the dry bones, risen by the force of the Spirit of God (Ezek 37: 1-14); the effusion of the Spirit of God on all the people (Joel 3: 1-5); the vision of the Messiah-Servant who will be anointed by the Spirit to establish the right on earth and announce the Good News to the poor (Isa 42: 1; 44: 1-3; 61: 1-3). They perceive a future, in which people, always more and more, are reborn thanks to the effusion of the Spirit (Ezek 36: 26-27; Ps 51: 12; cf. Isa 32: 15-20).
- The Gospel of John uses many images and symbols to signify the action of the Spirit. Just like in creation (Gen 1: 1), in the same way the Spirit descended upon Jesus "like a dove, coming from heaven" (Jn 1: 32). It is the beginning of the new creation! Jesus pronounces the words of God and communicates to us His Spirit (Jn 3: 34). His words are spirit and life (Jn 6: 63). When Jesus announces that he is going to the Father, He says that He will send another Consoler, another defender, so that He can remain with us. He is the Holy Spirit (Jn 14: 16-17). Through His Passion, death and resurrection, Jesus obtains for us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through Baptism all of us receive this same Spirit of Jesus (Jn 1: 33). When He appears to the Apostles, He breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (Jn 20: 22). The Spirit is like the water which springs up from persons who believe in Jesus (Jn 7: 37-39; 4: 14). The first effect of the action of the Spirit in us is reconciliation: "If you forgive anyone's sins they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins they are retained" (Jn 20: 23). The Spirit is given to us in order that we may remember and understand the full meaning of the words of Jesus (Jn 14: 26; 16: 12-13). Animated by the Spirit of Jesus we can adore God anywhere (Jn 4: 23-24). Here is realized the liberty of the Spirit of whom Saint Paul speaks: "Where the Spirit is, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3: 17).

Personal Questions

- How do you react to new things which present themselves; like Nicodemus or do you accept God's surprises?
- Jesus compares the action of the Holy Spirit to the wind (Jn 3: 8). What does this comparison reveal to me about the action of the Spirit of God in my life?

Have you already had some experience which has given you the impression of being born again?

Concluding Prayer

I will bless Yahweh at all times, His praise continually on my lips.
I will praise Yahweh from my heart; let the humble hear and rejoice. (Ps 34: 1-2)

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

All praise and thanks be to You, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have given us Your risen Son to be alive in our communities.
Make us see Him with eyes of faith, that He may unite us, heart and soul. May His dynamic presence among us move us to become with Him, each other's bread of life, that no one among us may hunger for food or help when in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 3: 7b-15

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to him, 'How can this happen?' Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Reflection

Today's Gospel speaks about the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus had heard people speak about the things Jesus did, and he was struck, surprised. He wishes to speak with Jesus to be able to understand better. He thought he knew the things of God. He lived with the booklet of the past in his hand to see if this agreed with the newness announced by Jesus. In the conversation, Jesus says that the only way in which Nicodemus could understand the things of God was to be born again! Sometimes we are like Nicodemus: we only accept as something new what agrees with our old ideas.

Other times, we allow ourselves to be surprised by facts and we are not afraid to say, "I am born anew!"

When the Evangelists recall the last words of Jesus, they have in mind the problems of the communities for which they write. Nicodemus' questions to Jesus reflect the questions of the communities of Asia Minor at the end of the first century. For this reason, Jesus' answers to Nicodemus were, at the same time, a response to the problems of those communities. At that time, the Christians followed the catechesis in this way. Most probably, the account of the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus formed part of the baptismal catechesis, because He says that the people must be reborn of water and the Spirit (Jn 3: 6).

- John 3: 7b-8: Born from above, born anew, again, and born of the Spirit. In Greek, the same word means anew, again and from above. Jesus had said, "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3: 5). And He adds, "What is born of human nature, is human (flesh); what is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (Jn 3: 6). Here "flesh" means that which is born only from our own ideas. What is born from us has our own mark, our own measure. To be born of the Spirit is another thing! And Jesus once again reaffirms what He had said before: "One has to be born from above (born again)." That is, one must be reborn of the Spirit who comes from above. And He explains that the Spirit is like the wind. Both in Hebrew and in Greek, the same word is used to say spirit and wind. Jesus says, "The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." The wind has within it a direction. We are aware of the direction of the wind, for example, the wind of the North and the wind of the South, but we do not know nor do we control the cause why the wind moves in one direction or another. The Spirit is like this. "No one is the master of the Spirit" (Eccl 8: 8). That which best characterizes the wind, the Spirit, is liberty. The wind, the Spirit, is free; it cannot be controlled. It acts on others, and nobody can act on it. Its origin is the mystery; its destiny is the mystery. The fisherman has, in the first place, to discover the direction of the wind. Then he should place the sails according to that direction. This is what Nicodemus should do and what all of us should do.
- John 3: 9: Question of Nicodemus: How is that possible? Jesus does nothing more than summarize what the Old Testament taught concerning the action of the Spirit, of the holy wind, in the life of the People of God and which Nicodemus, Teacher and Doctor, should know. And just the same, Nicodemus is frightened in hearing Jesus' response and acts as if he was ignorant: "How is that possible?"
- John 3: 10-15: Jesus' answer: Faith comes from witness and not from miracle. Jesus changes the question: "You are the Teacher of Israel and you do not know these things?" For Jesus, if people believe only when things are according to their own arguments and ideas, then faith is not perfect. Faith is perfect when it is the faith of one who believes because of the witness. He leaves aside his own arguments and gives himself, because he believes in the one giving witness.

Personal Questions

- Have you had some experience in which you have had the impression of being born again? What did it consist of?
- Jesus compares the action of the Holy Spirit with the wind. What does this comparison of the action of the Spirit of God reveal in our life? Have you already set the sails of your life in sync with the wind of the Spirit?
- The action of the Holy Spirit, like the wind, is often not like a hurricane, but rather like a small voice (1Kgs 19: 11) – a whisper of the wind. Am I attentive enough to hear when the Holy Spirit speaks to me so softly?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted; He helps those whose spirit is crushed. Though hardships without number beset the upright, Yahweh brings rescue from them all. (Ps 34: 18-19)

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
You loved the world - that is us - so much that You gave us Your only Son to save us from ourselves and to give us eternal life. Do not condemn us, Lord, do not leave us to ourselves and to our little schemes but give us Your Son now to stay with us and to make love and justice and peace ever new realities among us, Your people reborn in Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 3: 16-21

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

Reflection

John's Gospel is like a fabric or cloth made of three different, but similar, threads. The three of them are so well combined with one another that, sometimes, it is not possible to understand when one goes from one thread to the other.

(a) The first thread is the facts and words of Jesus during the thirty years, preserved by the eye-witnesses who kept the things which Jesus did and taught.

(b) The second thread is the facts of the life of the community. Because of their faith in Jesus and convinced of His presence among them, the communities enlightened their path with the words and the gestures of Jesus. This has some impact on the description of the facts. For example, the conflict of the communities with the Pharisees at the end of the first century marks the way of describing the conflicts of Jesus with the Pharisees.

(c) The comments made by the Evangelist are the third thread. In some passages it is difficult to perceive when Jesus ceases to speak and the Evangelist begins to weave his own comments. The text of today's Gospel, for example, is a beautiful and profound reflection of the Evangelist on the action of Jesus. The people can hardly notice the difference between when Jesus speaks and when the Evangelist does. In any case, both of them are Word of God.

John 3: 16: God loved the world. The word world is one of those words used more frequently in the Gospel of John: 78 times! It has several meanings. In the first place world may signify the earth, the space inhabited by human beings (Jn 11: 9; 21: 25) or also the created universe (Jn 17: 5, 24) World can also mean the people who inhabit this earth, all of humanity (Jn 1: 9; 3: 16; 4: 42; 6: 14; 8: 12). It can also mean a large group of people, as when we speak of "the whole world" (Jn 12: 19; 14: 27). Here, in our text the word world also has the sense of humanity, all human beings. God so loves humanity that He gave His only Son. The one who accepts that God reaches down to us in Jesus has already passed through death and has eternal life.

John 3: 17-19: The true sense of judgment. The image of God which appears in the three verses is that of a Father full of tenderness and not of a severe judgment. God sends His Son not to judge and condemn the world, but in order that the world may be saved through Him. The one who believes in Jesus and accepts Him as the revelation of God is not judged, because he is already accepted by God. And the one who does not believe in Jesus has already been judged. He excludes himself. And the Evangelist repeats what he had already said in the Prologue: many people do not want to accept Jesus, because His light reveals the evil which exists in them (cf. Jn 1: 5, 10-11).

John 3: 20-21: To practice truth: In every human being, there is a divine seed, a trait of the Creator. Jesus, the revelation of the Father, is a response to this deepest desire of the human being. The one who wants to be faithful to what he has deepest in him accepts Jesus. It is difficult to find a broader ecumenical vision than the one expressed in these three verses in the Gospel of John. To complete the significance of the word world in the Fourth Gospel. Other times the word world means that part of humanity opposed to Jesus and to His message. There the word world assumes the meaning of "enemies" or "opponents" (Jn 7: 4,7; 8: 23, 26; 9: 39; 12: 25). This world which is contrary to the

practice of the liberty of Jesus, is directed by the enemy, or Satan, also called the “prince of this world” (Jn 14: 30; 16: 11). It represents the Roman Empire and, at the same time, also those Jews responsible for driving out the followers of Jesus from the synagogue. This world persecutes and kills the communities, causing tribulations for the faithful (Jn 16: 33). Jesus will liberate them, conquering the prince of this world (Jn 12: 31). Therefore, world means a situation of injustice, of oppression, which generates hatred and persecution against the communities of the beloved disciple. The persecutors are those people who have the power, the leaders, both of the Empire and of the synagogue. Lastly, world means all those who practice injustice using the name of God (Jn 16: 2). The hope which the Gospel gives to the persecuted communities is that Jesus is stronger than the world. This is why He says: “In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous, I have conquered the world!” (Jn 16: 33)

Personal Questions

- God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Has this truth penetrated the depth of your heart? Can we imagine sacrificing someone we love for a cause?
- The most ecumenical truth that exists is the life which God has given us and for which He has given His only Son. How do I live ecumenism in my daily life?
- It is clear at the end of this passage that “belief in His Son” does not just mean verbal acknowledgement. Believing also means believing the way of life He points us to by following every instruction and motivation He shares with us. Do we seek to know the wants, motivations, and actions He shares with us to live, and do we fulfill them?

Concluding Prayer

I will bless Yahweh at all times, His praise continually on my lips.
I will praise Yahweh from my heart; let the humble hear and rejoice. (Ps 34: 1-2)

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Season of Easter

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
Your Son Jesus Christ came from You and bore witness to the things He had heard and seen.
He could not but bear witness to You.
Give us the Spirit of Your Son, we pray You, to speak Your word and to live it, that we may show Christ, Your living Word, to those who have not seen Him.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 3: 31-36

The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things. But the one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever does accept his testimony certifies that God is trustworthy. For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

Reflection

During the month of January, we meditated on John 3: 22-30, which shows us the last witness of John the Baptist concerning Jesus. It was a response given by him to his disciples, in which he reaffirms that he, John, is not the Messiah, but rather his precursor (Jn 3: 28). On that occasion, John utters that beautiful phrase which summarizes his witness: "It is necessary that He grow greater and I grow smaller!" This phrase is the guide for all those who want to follow Jesus. The verses of today's Gospel are again a comment of the Evangelist in order to help the communities to better understand the importance of the things that Jesus did and taught. Here, we have another indication of those three threads of which we spoke before.

- John 3: 31-33: A refrain which is always repeated. Throughout the Gospel of John, there often appears conflict between Jesus and the Jews who challenge the words of Jesus. Jesus speaks of what He hears from the Father. He is total transparency. His enemies, not opening themselves to God and because they cling to their own ideas here on earth, are not capable of understanding the deep significance of the things that Jesus lives, does and says. Ultimately, this is the evil one which pushes the Jews to arrest and condemn Jesus.
- John 3: 34: Jesus gives us the Spirit without reserve. John's Gospel uses many images and symbols to signify the action of the Spirit. As in Creation (Gen 1: 1), in the same way the Spirit descends on Jesus "like a dove, come from Heaven" (Jn 1: 32). It is the beginning of the new creation! Jesus repeats the words of God and communicates the Spirit to us without reserve (Jn 3: 34). His words are Spirit and life (Jn 6: 63). When Jesus is about to leave this earth, He says that He will send another Advocate, another defender, to be with us forever (Jn 14: 16-17). By his Passion, Death and Resurrection, Jesus obtains for us the gift of the Spirit. Through baptism all of us have received this same Spirit of Jesus (Jn 1: 33). When He appeared to the apostles, He breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (Jn 20: 22). The Spirit is like the water which springs from the people who believe in Jesus (Jn 7: 37-39; 4: 14). The first effect of the action of the Spirit in us is reconciliation: "If you forgive anyone's sins they will be forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained!" (Jn 20: 23). The Spirit is given to us to recall and understand the full significance of the

words of Jesus (Jn 14: 26; 16: 12-13). Animated by the Spirit of Jesus we can adore God in any place (Jn 4: 23-24). Here is fulfilled the liberty of the Spirit of which Saint Paul speaks: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3: 17).

- John 3: 35-36: The Father loves the Son. He reaffirms the identity between the Father and Jesus. The Father loves the Son and places all things in His hand. Saint Paul will say that the fullness of divinity dwells in Jesus (Col 1: 19; 2: 9). This is why the one who accepts Jesus and believes in Jesus has eternal life, because God is life. The one who does not accept and believe in Jesus, places himself outside.

Personal Questions

- Jesus communicates the Spirit to us, without reserve. Have you had any experience of this Spirit in your life?
- He who believes in Jesus has eternal life. What does it mean to believe? If one proclaims someone is a king, but does not follow this king's commands, is there really belief there is a king? Using this parallel, what does it really mean to believe?

Concluding Prayer

Proclaim with me the greatness of Yahweh; let us acclaim His name together.
Taste and see that Yahweh is good.
How blessed are those who take refuge in Him. (Ps 34: 3, 8)

Friday, April 17, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, your Son Jesus fed those who followed Him in the desert, and they received as much as they wanted. May we know and be convinced that He can fill our own emptiness not just with gifts that fill our need of the moment but with Himself, and may we accept Him eagerly, for He is our Lord forever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 1-15

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered

him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

Reflection

The reading of John today places before us two signs or miracles: the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6: 1-15) and walking on the water (Jn 6: 16-21). Then the long discourse on the bread of life is mentioned (Jn 6: 22-71). John places this fact close to the feast of the Passover (Jn 6: 4). The central issue is the confrontation between the old Passover of the Exodus and the new Passover which takes place in Jesus. The discourse on the bread of life will explain the new Passover which takes place in Jesus.

- John 6: 1-4: The situation. In the ancient Passover, the multitude crossed the Red Sea. In the new Passover, Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee. A great crowd follows Moses. A great crowd follows Jesus in this new exodus. In the first exodus, Moses goes up to the mountain. Jesus, the new Moses, also goes up to the mountain. The crowds follow Moses who presents great signs. The crowds follow Jesus because they have seen the signs that He worked on behalf of the sick.
- John 6: 5-7: Jesus and Philip. Seeing the multitude, Jesus confronts the disciples with the hunger of the people and asks Philip, "Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?" In the first exodus, Moses obtained food for the hungry people. Jesus, the new Moses, will Himself provide the same thing. But Philip, instead of looking at the situation in the light of the Scripture, looked at it according to the system and replies, "Two hundred *denarii* would not buy enough!" One *denarius* was the minimum salary for one day. Philip is aware of the problem and recognizes his inability to solve it. He complains but presents no solution.
- John 6: 8-9: Andrew and the boy. Andrew, instead of complaining, seeks a solution. He finds a boy who has five loaves of bread and two fish. Five barley loaves and two fish were the daily ration of food for the poor. The boy hands over his daily ration of food! He could have said, "Five loaves of bread and two fish, what is this for all these people? It will serve nothing! Let us divide all this among ourselves, between two or three people," but instead, he has the

courage to give the five loaves of bread and the two fish to feed 5000 people (Jn 6: 10) One who does this is either a fool or has much faith, believing that out of love for Jesus, all are ready to share their food as the boy did!

- John 6: 10-11: The multiplication. Jesus asks the people to sit down on the ground. Then He multiplies the food, the ration of the poor. The text says, "Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were sitting there; He then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted." With this phrase, written in the year 100, John recalls the action of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11: 23-24). The Eucharist, when it is celebrated as it should be, will lead people to share as it impelled the boy to give all his ration of food to be shared.
- John 6: 12-13: The twelve baskets of what was left over. Number twelve connotes the totality of the people with their twelve tribes. John does not say whether fish were also left over. He is interested in recalling the bread as a symbol of the Eucharist. The Gospel of John does not have the description of the Last Supper, but describes the multiplication of the loaves, symbol of what would happen in the communities through the celebration of the Eucharistic Supper. If among the Christian people there was a true and proper sharing, there would be abundant food and twelve baskets would be left over for many other people!
- John 6: 14-15: They want to make Him king. The people interpret Jesus' gesture, saying, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" The people's intuition is correct. Jesus in fact, is the new Moses, the Messiah, the one whom the people were expecting (Deut 18: 15-19). But this intuition had been corrupted by the ideology of the time which wanted a great king who would be strong and a dominator. This is why, seeing the sign, the people proclaim Jesus the Messiah and ask to make him King! Jesus realizes what could happen, and He withdraws and goes to the mountain alone. He does not accept this way of being Messiah and waits for the opportune moment to help the people to advance a step farther.

Personal Questions

- With regard to the problem of hunger in the world, do you act as Philip, as Andrew or like the boy?
- The people wanted a Messiah who would be a strong and powerful king. Do we want a powerful Messiah in our life too, to take away all of our problems? Or do we submit as He did and accept what God has given us and follow rather than conquer?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear?

Yahweh is the fortress of my life, whom should I dread? (Ps 27: 1)

Saturday, April 18, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord God, also in our day we need men and women filled with the Spirit of love and service who are attentive to the needs of people.

Let them listen even to the unspoken cries of people too timid to voice their poverty and distress and help without condescension their brothers and sisters of Christ, for He is our Lord for ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 16-21

When it was evening, the disciples of Jesus went down to the sea, embarked in a boat, and went across the sea to Capernaum. It had already grown dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea was stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they began to be afraid. But he said to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid." They wanted to take him into the boat, but the boat immediately arrived at the shore to which they were heading.

Reflection

Today's Gospel narrates the episode of the boat on the agitated sea. Jesus is on the mountain, the disciples in the sea, and the people on the land. By his way of describing the facts, John tries to help the communities discover the mystery which envelops the person of Jesus. He does it by recalling texts from the Old Testament which refer to the Exodus.

At the time when John wrote, the small boat of the communities had to face a contrary wind both on the part of the converted Jews who wanted to reduce the mystery of Jesus to prophecies and figures of the Old Testament, and on the part of some converted Gentiles who thought that it was possible to have an alliance between Jesus and the Empire.

- John 6: 15: *Jesus on the mountain*. Having seen the multiplication of the loaves, the people conclude that Jesus is the awaited Messiah, because according to the hope of the people of the time, the Messiah would have repeated the gesture of Moses: feeding the people in the desert. For this reason, according to the official ideology, the crowds thought that Jesus was the Messiah, and, because of this, they wanted to make Him king (cf. Jn 6: 14-15). This request of the people was a temptation for Jesus as well as for the disciples. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus obliges the disciples to get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake (Mk 6: 45). He wanted to prevent them from getting contaminated with this ideology. This is a sign that the "yeast of Herod and of the Pharisees" was very strong (Mk 8: 15). Jesus faces the temptation with prayer on the mountain.

- John 6: 16-18: *The situation of the disciples*. It was already night. The disciples went down near the sea; they got into the boat and headed toward Capernaum, on the other side of the sea. John says that it was already dark and that Jesus had not arrived as yet. On the one hand he recalls the Exodus: to cross the sea in the midst of difficulties. On the other, he recalls the situation of the communities in the Roman Empire: with the disciples, they were living in the dark, with a contrary wind, and the sea was agitated, and Jesus seemed to be absent!
- John 6: 19-20. *Change of the situation*. Jesus approaches them walking on the water of the sea of life. The disciples are afraid. As happens in the story of Emmaus, they did not recognize Him (Lk 24: 28). Jesus gets close to them and says, "It is I! Do not be afraid!" For those who know the story of the Old Testament, here again John recalls some very important facts:
 - (a) He recalls the crowd, protected by God, crossing the Red Sea without fear.
 - (b) He recalls that God, when calling Moses, declares His name, saying, "I am!" (Ex 3: 15).
 - (c) He recalls also the Book of Isaiah which presents the return from exile as a new Exodus, in which God repeats many times, "I am!" (cf. Is 42: 8; 43: 5, 11-13; 44: 6, 25; 45: 5-7).
- For the People of the Bible, the sea was the symbol of the abyss, of chaos, of evil (Rev 13: 1). In Exodus the people go across toward liberty, facing and conquering the sea. God divides the sea with His breath and the crowds cross the sea, which is dry land. (Ex 14: 22). In other passages the Bible shows God who conquers the sea (Gen 1: 6-10; Ps 104: 6-9; Prov 8: 27). The sea was an immense part of nature, more powerful than man, and at any time or turbulence could swallow up those on it. To conquer the sea means to have control over even the most powerful nature on earth. In this passage Jesus reveals His divinity by dominating and conquering the sea, preventing the boat and His disciples from being carried away by the waves. This way of evoking or recalling the Old Testament, of using the Bible, helped the communities to recognize the presence of God in Jesus and in the facts of life. "Do not be afraid"!
- John 6: 22. They reached the desired port. They want to take Jesus into the boat, but it was not necessary, because the boat touched the shore where they were headed. They reached the desired port. The psalm says, "He reduced the storm to calm, and all the waters subsided. He brought them overjoyed at the stillness, to the port where they were bound." (Ps 107: 29-30).

Personal Questions

- On the mountain: Why does Jesus seek to be alone to pray after the multiplication of the loaves? What is the result of His prayer?

- How is life like the sea? Does it scare us?
- Is it possible today to walk on the water of the sea of life? How?

Concluding Prayer

Shout for joy, you upright; praise befits the honest.
Give thanks to Yahweh on the lyre, play for Him on the ten-stringed lyre. (Ps 33: 1-2)

Sunday, April 19, 2026

Third Sunday of Easter

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that You read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, You helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create silence in us so that we may listen to Your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading – Luke 24: 13-35

A Key to Guide the Reading:

Let us read the text where Luke presents Jesus as interpreting the Scriptures. As we read, let us seek to discover the various steps taken by Jesus in the process of this interpretation, from the moment He meets the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, to the time the disciples meet with the community in Jerusalem.

A Division of the Text to Assist a Careful Reading:

- Lk 24: 13-24: Jesus tries to find out what it is that is making the two disciples distressed.
- Lk 24: 25-27: Jesus sheds the light of Scripture on the situation of the two disciples.
- Lk 24: 28-32: Jesus shares the bread and celebrates with the disciples.

- Lk 24: 33-35: The two disciples go to Jerusalem and share their experience of the resurrection with the community.

The Text:

13-24: Now that very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus Himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. He said to them, 'What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?' They stopped, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered Him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' He asked, 'What things?' They answered, 'All about Jesus of Nazareth, who showed Himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and had Him crucified. Our own hope had been that He would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have now gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they could not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared He was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of Him they saw nothing.'

25-27: Then He said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into His glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, He explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about Himself.

28-32: When they drew near to the village to which they were going, He made as if to go on; but they pressed Him to stay with them saying, 'It is nearly evening, and the day is almost over.' So He went in to stay with them. Now while He was with them at table, He took the bread and said the blessing; then He broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; but He had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as He talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

33-35: They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, 34 who said to them, 'The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon.' 35 Then they told their story of what had happened on the way and how they had recognized Him at the breaking of bread.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may enter into us and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- What part did you like best in this text? Why?
- What steps did Jesus take in interpreting the Scriptures from the time He met the two friends on the road up to the time the disciples went to the community in Jerusalem?
- In what type of situation does Jesus meet the two disciples?
- What are the similarities and the differences between our present situation and that of the two disciples? What factors create a crisis of faith in our day and are the cause of sadness?
- What was the effect of Jesus' reading of the Bible on the life of the two disciples?
- Which points in the interpretation made by Jesus are a critique of our way of reading the Bible, and which are a confirmation?

A Key to the Reading

for those who wish to go deeper into the text.

The Context in Which Luke is Writing:

- Luke is writing in about the year 85 for the Greek community of Asia Minor, who were living in difficult circumstances, due to factors both external and internal. Internally, there were divergent tendencies that made life together difficult: ex-Pharisees who wanted to impose the law of Moses (Acts 15: 1); those who followed John the Baptist more and who had not even heard of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19: 1-6); Jews who used the name of Jesus to drive out demons (Acts 19: 13); and those who said they were followers of Peter, others of Paul, others of Apollo, and others of Christ (1Cor 1:12). Externally, persecution by the Roma Empire was growing (Rev 1: 9-10; 2: 3, 10, 13; 6: 9-10; 12: 16) plus the insidious infiltration of the dominant ideology of the Empire and of the official religion, much the same way communism today infiltrates all aspects of our life (Rev 2: 14, 20; 13: 14-16).
- Luke is writing to these communities that he may give them a sure direction in the midst of their difficulties and so that they may find the strength and light in living out their faith in Jesus. Luke writes a two volume work: the Gospel and Acts, and he has the same general aim, "to learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received" (Lk 1: 4). One of his specific aims is to show, through the beautiful story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, how the community ought to read and interpret the Bible. In reality, those walking the streets of Emmaus were the communities (and all of us). Each of us is and all of us together are companions of Cleophas (Lk 24: 18). With him we walk the streets of life, seeking a word of support and of guidance in the Word of God.

- The way Luke narrates the meeting of Jesus with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, tells us how the communities of his time used the Bible and practiced what we today call Lectio Divina or Prayerful Reading of the Bible. They used three steps in interpreting the Bible:

The Steps or Aspects Used in the Process of Interpreting the Scriptures:

- ***First step: Start from facts*** (Lk 24: 13-24):

Jesus meets the two friends who are experiencing feelings of fear and dispersion, of lack of trust and dismay. They were fleeing. The force of death, the cross, had killed in them all hope. Jesus approaches them and walks with them. He listens to their conversation and says: "What matters are you discussing as you walk along?" The prevailing ideology prevents them from understanding and having a critical conscience.

"Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free, but..." (Lk 24: 21). What do those who suffer talk about today? What matters today put our faith in a state of crisis?

The first step is this: to approach people, listen to reality, problems; be capable of asking questions that help to look at reality more critically.

- ***Second step: Make use of the Bible*** (Lk 24: 25-27)

Jesus uses the Bible, not in order to give lessons on the Bible, but to shed light on the problem worrying the two friends, and thus shed light on the situation they were experiencing. With the help of the Bible, Jesus leads the two disciples into God's plan and shows them that God has not allowed history to go astray. Jesus does not use the Bible as an expert who knows everything, but as a companion who wishes to help his friends to remember things they had forgotten, namely, Moses and the Prophets. Jesus does not give his friends the feeling of being ignorant, but seeks to create an ambient within which they can remember and thus arouse their memory.

The second step is this: with the help of the Bible, to shed light on the situation and transform the cross, symbol of death, into a symbol of life and of hope. In this manner, that which prevents us from seeing, becomes light and strength along our way.

- ***Third step: Celebrating and sharing in community*** (Lk 24: 28-32)

The Bible alone does not open their eyes but makes their hearts burn! (Lk 24: 32). What opens the eyes of the friends and allows them to discover the presence of Jesus is the sharing of the bread, the communitarian gesture, the celebration. As soon as they recognize Jesus, He disappears. And they then experience the resurrection; they are reborn and walk on their own. Jesus does not take over His friends' journey. He is not paternalistic. Now that they are risen, the disciples can walk on their own two feet.

The third step is this: we must know how to create a prayerful and fraternal

atmosphere where the Spirit is free to act. It is the Spirit who allows us to discover and experience the Word of God in our lives and leads us to understand the meaning of Jesus' words (Jn 14: 26; 16: 13). It is especially at this point of the celebration that the practice of basic ecclesial communities, sustained by the margins of the world, help us religious once more to come across and drink from the ancient well of Tradition.

- **Aim: To rise and go towards Jerusalem** (Lk 24: 33-35)

Everything has changed in the two disciples. They themselves rise, regain courage and go back to Jerusalem, where the forces of death that killed Jesus are still at work, but where also there are the forces of life in the sharing of the experience of the resurrection. Courage in place of fear. Return in place of flight. Faith in place of its absence. Hope in place of despair. A critical conscience in place of fatalism before power. Freedom in place of oppression. In a word, life in place of death! And in place of the news of the death of Jesus, the Good News of his Resurrection!

This is the aim of reading the Bible: to experience the presence of Jesus and of His Spirit in our midst. It is the Spirit who opens our eyes to the Bible and to reality and draws us to share the experience of the Resurrection, as it is true even to this day, in community meetings.

The New Way of Jesus: A Prayerful Reading of the Bible:

- * Often, it is not possible to understand whether the use of the OT in the Gospels comes from Jesus or an explanation given by early Christians who sought to express their faith in Jesus in this way. However, what cannot be denied is the frequent and constant use of the Bible by Jesus. A simple reading of the Gospels shows us that Jesus found His bearings in the Scriptures in the performance of His mission and in instructing His disciples and the crowd.
- At the root of Jesus' reading of the Bible is his experience of God as Father. His intimate relationship with the Father gives Jesus a new criterion, which places Him in direct contact with the author of the Bible. Jesus looks for meaning at the very source. He does not go from the writings to their root, but from the root to the writings. The comparison of the photo, as described in the Lectio Divina of Easter Sunday, helps us to shed light on this topic. As by a miracle, the photo of the harsh face was lit up and acquired traits of great tenderness. The words, born of the lived experience of the son, transformed everything, without changing anything (see Lectio Divina for Easter Sunday).
- Thus, looking through the photos of the Old Testament, people in the time of Jesus, formed an idea of a very distant God, harsh, difficult to contact, whose name could not even be mouthed. But Jesus' words and actions, born of His experience as Son, without changing even one word (Mt 5:18-19), transformed the whole meaning of the Old Testament. The God who seemed to be so distant and harsh acquires the features of a Father full of tenderness, always present, ready to welcome and liberate! This Good News of God,

communicated by Jesus, is the new key to a re-reading of the whole of the Old Testament. The New Testament is a re-reading of the Old Testament done in the light of the new experience of God, revealed by Jesus. This different way of shedding light on life in the light of the Word of God, creates many conflicts for Him, because it renders the small of this world critical, while it makes the great uncomfortable.

- When interpreting the Bible to the people, Jesus revealed the traits of God's face, the experience that He experienced of God as Father. To reveal God as Father was the source and aim of the Good News of Jesus. By His attitude, Jesus manifests God's love for His disciples. He reveals the Father and incarnates His love! Jesus was able to say, "To have seen Me is to have seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). Hence, the Father's Spirit was also with Jesus (Lk 4: 18) and went with Him everywhere, from the incarnation (Lk 1: 35) to the beginning of his mission (Lk 4: 14), even to the end, his death and resurrection (Acts 1: 8).
- Jesus, interpreter, educator and master, was a meaningful person in the life of His disciples. He influenced their lives forever. To interpret the Bible does not mean just to teach truth for the other to live by. The content that Jesus wished to convey was not limited to words but included actions and His way of relating to people. The content is never separate from the person who communicates it. The goodness and love that emerge from His words are part of the content. They are His nature. Good content without goodness is like spilt milk.

Psalm 23 (22)

God is Our Inheritance Forever, the Lord is my Shepherd;

I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters;

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil;

for Thou art with me;

Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Thou anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May Your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice what Your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your

mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, April 20, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Our living God,
we hunger for lasting life and happiness and the fulfillment of all our hopes.
Satisfy all our hungers through your Son Jesus Christ, who is our bread of life.
And when he has filled us with himself, may he lead and strengthen us to bring
to a waiting world the food of reconciliation and joy, which you alone can give to
the full.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 22-29

The next day, the crowd that remained across the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not gone along with his disciples in the boat, but only his disciples had left. Other boats came from Tiberias near the place where they had eaten the bread when the Lord gave thanks. When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal." So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent."

Reflection

In today's Gospel we begin the discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6: 22-71), which is extended during the next six days, until the end of the week. After the multiplication of the loaves, the people follow Jesus. They had seen the miracle; they had eaten and were satiated and wanted more! They were not concerned about looking for the sign or the call of God that was contained in all of this. When the people found Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum, He had a long conversation with them, called the Discourse of the Bread of Life. It is not really a discourse, but it is a series of seven brief dialogues which explain the meaning of the multiplication of the bread, symbol of the new Exodus and of the Eucharistic Supper.

It is good to keep in mind the division of the chapter in order to understand better its significance:

- 6: 1-15: the great multiplication of the loaves
- 6: 16-21: the crossing of the lake, and Jesus who walks on the water
- 6: 22-71: the dialogue of Jesus with the people, with the Jews and with the disciples
 - 1st dialogue: 6: 22-27 with the people: the people seek Jesus and find Him in Capernaum
 - 2nd dialogue: 6: 28-34 with the people: faith as the work of God and the manna of the desert
 - 3rd dialogue: 6: 35-40 with the people: the true bread is to do God's will.
 - 4th dialogue: 6: 41-51 with the Jews: the complaining of the Jews
 - 5th dialogue: 6: 52-58 with the Jews: Jesus and the Jews.
 - 6th dialogue: 6: 59-66 with the disciples: reaction of the disciples
 - 7th dialogue: 6: 67-71 with the disciples: confession of Peter

The conversation of Jesus with the people, with the Jews, and with the disciples is a beautiful dialogue, but a demanding one. Jesus tries to open the eyes of the people in a way that they will learn to read the events and discover in them the turning point that life should take. It is not enough to follow behind miraculous signs which multiply the bread for the body. Man does not live by bread alone. The struggle for life without mysticism does not reach the roots. The people, while speaking with Jesus, always remain more annoyed or upset by his words. But Jesus does not give in, neither does He change the exigencies. The discourse seems to be a funnel. In the measure in which the conversation advances, fewer people remain with Jesus. At the end only the twelve remain there, but Jesus cannot trust them either! Today the same thing happens. When the Gospel begins to demand commitment, many people withdraw and go away.

- John 6: 22-27: People look for Jesus because they want more bread. The people follow Jesus. They see that He did not go into the boat with the disciples and, because of this, they do not understand what He had done to reach Capernaum. They did not even understand the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. People see what has happened, but they cannot understand all this as a sign of something more profound. They stop only on the surface; in being satisfied with the food. They look for bread and life, but only for the body. According to the people, Jesus does what Moses had done in the past: to feed all the people in the desert. According to Jesus, they wanted the past to be repeated. But Jesus asks the people to take a step more and advance. Besides working for the bread that perishes, they should work for the imperishable food. This new food will be given by the Son of Man, indicated by God Himself. He brings life which lasts forever. He opens for us a new horizon on the sense of life and on God.

- John 6: 28-29: Which is God's work? The people ask: what should we do to carry out this work of God? Jesus answers that the great work of God asks us to "believe in the one sent by God". That is, to believe in Jesus!

Personal questions

- The people were hungry, they eat the bread, and they look for more bread. They seek the miracle and do not seek the sign of God which was hidden in that. What do I seek more in my life: a miracle or a sign or the meaning?
- Keep silence within you for a moment and ask yourself: "To believe in Jesus: What does this mean for me specifically in my daily life?"
- What do I really work for in my life? Food that perishes or food that endures? Am I not committed and do a little of both, "just in case"?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, I tell You my ways and You answer me; teach me Your wishes.
Show me the way of Your precepts, that I may reflect on Your wonders. (Ps 119: 26-27)

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, generous Father,
You have given us Your Son Jesus that we may relive with Him and like Him His passion and His resurrection. Through Jesus, give us the courage to place ourselves into Your hands in the trials of life and in death, that one day we may see Your glory and at Your right hand Your Son Jesus Christ, who lives with You forever.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 30-35

The crowd said to Jesus: "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat." So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." So they said to Jesus, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

Reflection

The discourse of the Bread of Life is not a text to be discussed and dissected, but rather it should be meditated on and pondered. This is why, even if it is not fully understood, we should not be concerned. This text of the *Bread of Life* demands a whole life to meditate on it and deepen it. People have to read it, meditate it, pray it, think about it, read it again, repeat it and ponder it, as one does with a good sweet in the mouth. We turn it and turn it in the mouth until it is finished. The one who reads the fourth Gospel superficially may have the impression that John always repeats the same thing. Reading it more attentively, one becomes aware that it is not a question of repetition. The author of the fourth Gospel has his own way of repeating the same theme, but always at a higher and more profound level. It seems to be like a winding staircase. By turning, one reaches the same place, but always at a higher level or a more profound one.

- John 6: 30-33: What sign will you yourself do, the sign which will make us believe in you? People had asked: What should we do to carry out the work of God? Jesus responds: "The work of God is to believe in the one who was sent", that is to believe in Jesus. This is why people formulate a new question: "Which sign do you do so that we can see and can believe? Which work do you do?" This means that they did not understand the multiplication of the loaves as a sign from God to legitimize Jesus before the people, as the one sent by God! They continue to argue: In the past our fathers ate the manna which Moses gave them! They called it "bread from Heaven" (Ws 16: 20), that is, "bread of God". Moses continues to be the great leader in whom to believe. If Jesus wants the people to believe in Him, He should work a greater sign than Moses. "What work do you do?"

Jesus responds that the bread given by Moses was not the true bread from heaven. Coming from on high, yes, but it was not the bread of God, because it did not guarantee life to anyone. All of them died in the desert (Jn 6: 49). The true bread of heaven, the bread of God, is the one which conquers death and gives life! It is the one which descends from Heaven and gives life to the world. It is Jesus Himself! Jesus tries to help the people to liberate themselves from the way of thinking of the past. For Him, fidelity to the past does not mean to close up oneself in the ancient things and not accept renewal. Fidelity to the past means to accept the newness which comes as the fruit of the seed which was planted in the past.

- John 6: 34-35: Lord, gives us always of that bread! Jesus answers clearly: "I am the bread of life!" To eat the bread of heaven is the same as to believe in Jesus and accept to follow the road that He teaches us, that is: "My food is to do the will of the one who has sent me and to complete his work!" (Jn 4: 34). This is the true food which nourishes the person, which transforms life and gives new life. This last verse of today's Gospel (Jn 6: 35) will be taken back as the first verse of tomorrow's Gospel (Jn 6: 35-40)

Personal Questions

- Hungry for bread, hungry for God. Which of these two predominates in me?

- Jesus says: "I am the bread of life". He takes away hunger and thirst. Which of these experiences do I have in my life?

Concluding Prayer

Lord turn Your ear to me, make haste. Be for me a rock-fastness, a fortified citadel to save me. You are my rock, my rampart; true to Your name, lead me and guide me! (Ps 31: 1-2)

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

God, our Father,
You are our faithful God, even in days of trial for the Church and for each of us personally; You stay by our side, even if we are not aware of Your presence. Give us an unlimited trust in You and make us ever more aware that Your Son Jesus is the meaning of our lives and that He nourishes us with Himself, today and every day, for ever.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 35-40

Jesus said to the crowds, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen me, you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day."

Reflection

- John 6: 35-36: I am the bread of life. The people, enthusiastic with the perspective of having bread from heaven of which Jesus speaks and which gives life forever (Jn 6: 33), ask: "Lord, give us always that bread!" (Jn 6: 34). They thought that Jesus was speaking about some particular kind of bread. This is why, the people, interested in getting this bread, ask: "Give us always of this bread!" This petition of the people reminds us of the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Jesus had said that she could have had within her a spring of living water, welling up to eternal life, and she, in an interested way, asks: "Lord, give me of that water!" (Jn 4: 15). The Samaritan woman is not aware that Jesus is not speaking about material water. Just as the people

were not aware that Jesus was not speaking of material bread. Because of this, Jesus responds very clearly: "I am the bread of life! No one who comes to Me will ever hunger; no one who believes in Me will ever thirst". To eat the bread of heaven is the same as believing in Jesus. And to believe that He has come from heaven as a revelation of the Father. It is to accept the way which He has taught. But the people, in spite of having seen Jesus, do not believe in Him. Jesus is aware of the lack of faith and says: "You have seen Me and you do not believe".

- John 6: 37-40: To do the will of Him who sent me. After the conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus had said to his disciples: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me!" (Jn 4: 34). Here, in the conversation with the people on the bread from heaven, Jesus touches on the same theme: "I have come from heaven not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me that I should lose nothing of all that He has given to me; but that I should raise it up on the last day". This is the food which people should look for: to do the will of the Heavenly Father. And this is the bread which nourishes the person in life and gives him/her life. Eternal life begins here, a life which is stronger than death! If we were ready to do the will of the Father, we would have no difficulty to recognize the Father present in Jesus.
- John 6: 41-43: The Jews complained. Tomorrow's Gospel begins with verse 44 (John 6: 44-51) and skips verses 41 to 43. Verse 41 begins with the conversation with the Jews who criticize Jesus. Here we will give a brief explanation of the meaning of the word Jews in the Gospel of John in order to avoid a superficial reading of it, avoiding the sentiment of anti-Semitism. First of all, it is well to remember that Jesus was a Jew and continues to be a Jew (Jn 4: 9). His disciples were Jews. The first Christian communities were all Jewish who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. It was only later, little by little, that in the communities of the beloved disciple, Greeks and Christians began to be accepted on the same level as the Jews. They were more open communities. But this openness was not accepted by all. Some Christians who came from the group of the Pharisees wanted to keep the "separation" between Jews and Pagans (Acts 15: 5). The situation was critical after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. The Pharisees became the dominating religious current in Judaism and began to define the religious directives or norms for the whole People of God: to suppress worship in the Greek language; to adopt solely the biblical text in Hebrew; to define or determine the list of sacred books, and eliminate the books which existed only in the Greek translation of the bible: Tobias, Judith, Esther, Baruch, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus and the two Books of the Maccabees: to segregate or separate the foreigners; not eat any food suspected to be impure or which had been offered to the idols. All these norms assumed by the Pharisees had repercussions on the communities of the Jews which accepted Jesus as Messiah. These communities had already journeyed very much. The openness for the Pagans was now irreversible. The Greek bible had already been used for a long time. Thus, slowly, a reciprocal separation grew between Christianity and Judaism. In the years 85-90 the

Jewish authorities began to discriminate against those who continued to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (Mt 5: 11-12; 24: 9-13). Those who continued to remain in the faith in Jesus were expelled from the Synagogue (Jn 9: 34). Many Christian communities feared this expulsion (Jn 9: 22) because it meant to lose the support of a strong and traditional institution such as the Synagogue. Those who were expelled lost the legal privileges that the Jews had conquered and gained throughout the centuries in the Empire. The expelled persons lost even the possibility of being buried decently. It was an enormous risk. This situation of conflict at the end of the first century had reflections of the conflict of Jesus with the Pharisees. When the Gospel of John speaks of the Jews he is not speaking of the Jewish people as such, but he is thinking much more of those Pharisee authorities which were expelling the Christians from the Synagogues in the years 85-90, the time when the Gospel was written. We cannot allow this affirmation about the Jews to make anti-Semitism grow among Christians.

Personal Questions

- What do I know about Judaism – the religion of Jesus, its history and its beliefs?
- What do I know, or what can I learn, about the various groups within Judaism at the time of Jesus, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and so on? With that deeper understanding, can I use it to better understand the life of Jesus?
- To eat the bread of heaven means to believe in Jesus. How does all this help me to live the Eucharist better?

Concluding Prayer

Acclaim God, all the earth, sing psalms to the glory of His name, glorify Him with your praises, say to God, "How awesome You are!" (Ps 66: 1-3)

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Father,

You draw all people to You who believe in Your Son Jesus Christ. Faith, Lord, faith it is that we need.

Give it to us, we pray You, a living faith that we can encounter today Jesus Christ, Your Son, in Your word that You speak to us in the bread that You offer us, and in the food that we can give and can be to one another, in Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Lord, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit now and forever.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 44-51

Jesus said to the crowds: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world."

Reflection

Up until now the dialogue had been between Jesus and the people. From now on, the Jewish leaders begin to enter into conversation and the discussion becomes more tense.

- John 6: 44-46: Anyone who opens himself to God accepts Jesus and His proposal. The conversation becomes more demanding. Now, it is the Jews, the leaders of the people who complain: "Surely, this is Jesus, son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. How can He say: I have come down from heaven?" (Jn 6: 42). They thought they knew the things of God. But, in reality, they did not know them. If we were truly open and faithful to God, we would feel within us the impulse of God which attracts us toward Jesus and we would recognize that Jesus comes from God, because it is written in the Prophets: "They will all be taught by God; everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned from Him, comes to me."
- John 6: 47-50: Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead. In the celebration of the Passover, the Jews recalled the bread of the desert. Jesus helps them to take a step ahead. Anyone who celebrates the Passover, recalling only the bread that the fathers ate in the past, will die as all of them did! The true sense of the Passover is not to recall the manna which falls from heaven, but to accept Jesus, the new Bread of Life and to follow the way which He has indicated. It is no longer a question of eating the meat of the paschal lamb, but rather of eating the flesh of Jesus, so that the one who eats it will not die, but will have eternal life!
- John 6: 51: Anyone who eats of this bread will live forever. And Jesus ends saying: "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread that I shall give is My flesh for the life of the world." Instead of the manna and the paschal lamb of the first exodus, we are invited to eat the new manna and the new paschal lamb that was sacrificed on the cross for the life of all.
- The new Exodus. The multiplication of the loaves takes place close to the Passover (Jn 6: 4). The feast of the Passover was the prodigious remembrance

of the Exodus, the liberation of the people from the clutches of Pharaoh. The whole episode which is narrated in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John has a parallel in the episodes related to the feast of the Passover, whether as liberation from Egypt or with the journey of the people in the desert in search of the promised land. The discourse of the Bread of Life, in the Synagogue of Capernaum, is related to chapter 16 of the Book of Exodus which speaks about the Manna. It is worthwhile to read all of chapter 16 of Exodus. In perceiving the difficulties of the people in the desert we can better understand the teaching of Jesus here in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. For example, when Jesus speaks of a “food which does not perish, which endures for eternal life” (Jn 6: 27) He is recalling the manna which produced worms and became rotten (Ex 16: 20). As when the Jews “complained” (Jn 6: 41), they do the same thing as the Israelites in the desert, when they doubted of the presence of God in their midst during their journey across the desert (Ex 16: 2; 17: 3; Nb 11: 1). The lack of food made the people doubt about God and they began to complain against Moses and against God. Here too, the Jews doubt God’s presence in Jesus of Nazareth and begin to complain (Jn 6: 41-42).

Personal Questions

- Does the Eucharist help me to live in a permanent state of Exodus? Am I succeeding?
- Anyone who is open to truth finds the response in Jesus. Today, many people withdraw and do not find any response. Whose fault is it? Is it of the persons who know how to listen? Or is it the fault of us, Christians, who do not know how to present the Gospel as a message of life?
- How is one “drawn by the Father”? In what way is this part of evangelization?
- The Pharisees were acting out the norms of their times, as well as being keepers of tradition. Not all were eye-witnesses of Jesus’ miracles. What was their culpability? What is the balance between discerning God in our presence and avoiding being swayed by every new belief to come along? This is even more important in the age of “Internet information”.

Concluding Prayer

Come and listen, all who fear God, while I tell what He has done for me. To Him I cried aloud, high praise was on my tongue. (Ps 66: 16-17)

Friday, April 24, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Our living and loving God,
how could we know the depth of Your love if Your Son had not become flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood?

How could we ever have the courage to live for one another and if necessary to die if He had not given up His body and shed His blood for us?

Thank you for letting Him stay in the eucharist with us and making Himself our daily bread.

Let this bread be the food that empowers us to live and die as He did, for one another and for You, our living God, for ever and ever.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 52-59

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his Flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Reflection

We are almost at the end of the discourse of the Bread of Life. Here begins the part of the greatest polemic. The Jews close themselves to, and begin to discuss, the affirmations of Jesus.

- John 6: 52-55: Flesh and Blood: the expression of life and of the total gift. The Jews react: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" The feast of the Passover was close at hand. After a few days everybody would have eaten the meat of the paschal lamb in the celebration of the night of the Passover. They did not understand the words of Jesus, because they took them literally. But Jesus does not diminish the exigencies, He does not withdraw or take away anything of what He has said and He insists: "In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat My flesh and drink My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me and I live in that person". What gives life is not to celebrate the manna of the past, but rather to eat this new bread which is Jesus, His flesh and His blood. Participating in the Eucharistic Supper, we assimilate His life, His surrender, His gift of self. "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and you do not drink His Blood you will not have life in you". They should accept Jesus as the Crucified Messiah, whose blood will be poured out.

- John 6: 56-58: Whoever eats My flesh, will live in Me. The last phrases of the discourse of the Bread of Life are of the greatest depth and try to summarize everything which has been said. They recall the mystical dimension which surrounds the participation in the Eucharist. They express what Paul says in the letter to the Galatians: “It is no longer I, but Christ living in me (Ga 2: 20). And what the Apocalypse of John says: “If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person’s side” (Rev 3: 20). And John himself in the Gospel: “Anyone who loves Me will keep my word, and My Father will love him and We shall come to him and make a home in him” (Jn 14: 23). And it ends with the promise of life which marks the difference with the ancient Exodus: “This is the bread which has come down from heaven. It is not like the bread our ancestors ate, they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.”
- John 6: 59: The discourse in the Synagogue ends. The conversation between Jesus and the people and the Jews in the Synagogue of Capernaum ends here. As it has been said before, the discourse of the Bread of Life offers us an image of how the catechesis of that time was, at the end of the first century, in the Christian communities of Asia Minor. The questions of the people and of the Jews show the difficulties of the members of the communities. The answer of Jesus represents the clarification to help them to overcome the difficulties, to deepen their faith, and to live more intensely the Eucharist which was celebrated above all in the night between Saturday and Sunday, the day of the Lord.

Personal Questions

- Beginning with the discourse on the Bread of Life, the celebration of the Eucharist receives a very strong light and an enormous deepening. Does this clarify the role of the Eucharist in my life?
- To eat the flesh and blood of Jesus is the commandment that he leaves. How do I live the Eucharist in my life? Even if I cannot go to Mass every day or every Sunday, my life should be Eucharistic. How do I try to attain this objective?
- Eucharistic Adoration is available in many parishes and highly recommended by Popes St John Paul II, Benedict, and Francis, among others. “In many places, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is also an important daily practice and becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness” (*Encyclical Letter: Ecclesia De Eucharistia*). Do I take the time to sit and just “be” with Him when I can?

Concluding Prayer

Praise Yahweh, all nations, extol Him, all peoples, for His faithful love is strong and His constancy never-ending. (Ps 117: 1-2)

Saturday, April 25, 2026

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
there is much in us that obscures Your word and keeps us from being truly Your Church. We pray You today:
Call us, as once You called Mark, to speak and live Your word.
Inspire us through Your Spirit and teach us to live in the hope that Your kingdom will come and remain among us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, now and for ever.

Gospel Reading - Mark 16: 15-20

Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

Reflection

Today's Gospel forms part of the appendix of the Gospel of Mark (Mk 16: 9-20) which presents a list of some apparitions of Jesus: to Magdalene (Mk 16: 9-11), to the two disciples who were walking out in the country (Mk 16: 12-13) and to the twelve apostles (Mk 16: 14-18). This last apparition, together with the description of the Ascension into Heaven (Mk 16: 19-20), forms the Gospel for today.

- Mark 16: 14: The signs which accompany the announcement of the Good News. Jesus appears to the eleven disciples and reproaches them for not believing the persons who had seen Him resurrected. They did not believe Mary Magdalene (Mk 16: 11), nor the two disciples on the road out in the country (Mk 16: 13). Several times, Mark refers to the resistance of the disciples to believing the witness of those who experienced the resurrection of Jesus. Why does Mark insist so much on the lack of faith of the disciples? Probably to teach two things: First, that faith in Jesus goes through faith in persons who give witness. Second, that no one should be discouraged when there is doubt in the heart. Even the eleven disciples doubted!
- Mark 16: 15-18: The mission to announce the Good News to the whole world. After having criticized the lack of faith of the disciples, Jesus confers their mission to them: "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned". To those who had the courage to believe in the Good News and who are baptized, Jesus promises the following signs: they

will cast out devils, they will speak new languages, they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed if they drink deadly poison, and they will lay their hands on the sick who will recover. This happens even today. To cast out devils is to fight against the force of evil which destroys life. The life of many people improves because they entered into the community and have begun to live the Good News of the presence of God in their life.

- To speak new languages: it means to begin to communicate with others in a new way. Sometimes we meet a person whom we have never seen before, and we care deeply for them and their situation, even though we don't know them well. This happens because we speak the same language, the language of love.
- Deadly poison will not harm them: there are many things that poison life together in community. There is gossip which destroys the relationship between persons. The one who lives in the presence of God does not participate in these things and is able to not be disturbed by this terrible poison.
- They cure the sick. Wherever there is a clear and lively knowledge of God's presence, there is also a special care given to the excluded and marginalized, especially the sick. What can help cure is that the person feels accepted and loved.
- Mark 16: 19-20: Through the community, Jesus continues His mission. Jesus Himself, who lives in Palestine and accepts the poor of His time, revealing the love of the Father to them, continues to be alive in our midst in our community. Through us, He wants to continue His mission to reveal the Good News of God's love to the poor. Even up to this time the resurrection takes place, and it impels us to sing: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ, who will separate us?" No power of this world is capable of neutralizing the force that comes from faith in the Resurrection (Rm 8: 35-39). A community which wants to be a witness of the Resurrection should be a sign of life and should struggle against the forces of death in such a way that the world may be a favorable place for life. Above all, in parts of the world such as Latin America and the Middle East, where the life of people is in danger because of the system of death which has become common there, the communities should be a living proof of the hope which overcomes the world without fear of being happy!

Personal Questions

- How do these signs of God's presence take place in my life?
- What are the signs of the presence of Jesus in our midst that convince people the most today?
- Do I proclaim the Gospel through my words and actions every day, or just sometimes?

Concluding Prayer

I shall sing the faithful love of Yahweh for ever, from age to age my lips shall declare Your constancy, for You have said: love is built to last for ever, You have fixed Your constancy firm in the heavens. (Ps 89: 1-2)

Sunday, April 26, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection. Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading – John 10: 1-10

A Key to the Reading:

This Sunday's Gospel presents us with the familiar image of the Good Shepherd. When speaking of the sheep of God's flock, Jesus uses several images to describe the attitude of those who look after the flock. The text of the liturgy is taken from verses 1 to 10. In our commentary we add verses 11 to 18 because these contain the image of the "Good Shepherd" and help us better understand the sense of verses 1 to 10. During the reading, try to pay attention to the various images or similes that Jesus uses to present to us the way a true shepherd ought to be.

A Division of the Text as a Help to the Reading:

The text contains three interrelated similes:

- John 10: 1-5: The simile of the bandit and the shepherd
- John 10: 6-10: The simile of the door of the sheepfold
- John 10: 11-18: The simile of the good shepherd

The Text:

1 'In all truth I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a bandit. 2 He who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; 3 the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all those that are his, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. 5 They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.'

6 Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he was saying to them. 7 So Jesus spoke to them again: In all truth I tell you, I am the gate of the sheepfold. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep took no notice of them. 9 I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: such a one will go in and out and will find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. 12 The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; 13 he runs away because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. 16 And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, one shepherd. 17 The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as I have power to lay it down, so I have power to take it up again; and this is the command I have received from my Father.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection

- What part of the text most touched you? Why?
- What images does Jesus apply to himself? How does he do that and what is their significance?
- In this text, how many times does Jesus use the word life and what does he say about life?
- Pastor-Pastoral. Do our pastoral actions carry on from the mission of Jesus-Pastor?
- How can we acquire a clear view of the true Jesus of the Gospels?

To Enter Deeper Into the Theme

The Context Within Which the Gospel of John Was Written:

This is a further example of the way John's Gospel was written and organized. Jesus' words on the Shepherd (Jn 10: 1-18) are like a brick placed in an already built wall. Just before this text, in John 9: 40-41, Jesus was speaking the blindness of the Pharisees. Immediately after, in John 10: 19-21, we come across the conclusion of the discussion on blindness. Thus, the words concerning the Good Shepherd show how to remove such blindness. This brick renders the wall stronger and more beautiful.

- John 10: 1-5: The simile of the bandit and the shepherd

Jesus begins his discourse with the simile of the gate: "I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe!" To understand this simile, we need to remember what comes after. In those days, shepherds took care of the sheep during the day. At night, they brought the sheep into a large sheepfold or common enclosure, well protected against thieves and wolves. All the shepherds within a region brought their flocks there. There was a guard who watched over the flock throughout the night. In the morning the shepherd would come and knock on the gate and the guard would open the gate. The shepherd then called the sheep by name. The sheep recognized the voice of their shepherd and so they got up and followed him to pastures. The sheep of other shepherds would hear the voice, but stayed where they were, because they did not recognize the voice. Every now and then there was the danger of an attack. Thieves went into the sheepfold through a kind of loophole by removing stones from the wall around and stole the sheep. They did not enter by the gate, because the guard was there watching.

- John 10: 6-10: The simile of the gate of the sheepfold

Those who were listening, the Pharisees, (Jn 9: 40-41), could not understand what "entering by the gate" meant. Jesus explains: "I am the gate! All others who have come are thieves and brigands". To whom do these hard words of Jesus refer? Considering his way of speaking about brigands, he was probably referring to religious leaders who dragged people after them, but did not fulfil their expectations. They were not interested in the welfare of the people, but rather in their money and their own interests. They deceived people and abandoned them to their fate. The basic criterion for discerning between the shepherd and the brigand is the defense of the life of the sheep. Jesus says: "I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full!" To enter by the gate, means imitating Jesus' attitude of defending the life of his sheep. Jesus asks people to take the initiative by not following those who pretend to be shepherds and who are not interested in their lives.

- John 10: 11-15: The simile of the Good Shepherd

Jesus changes the simile. First, he was the gate, now he is the shepherd.

Everyone knew what a shepherd was like, how he lived and worked. But Jesus is not just any shepherd, he is the good shepherd! The image of the good shepherd comes from the Old Testament. When Jesus says that he is the Good Shepherd, he is presenting himself as the one who comes to fulfil the promises of the prophets and hopes of the people. He insists on two points:

(a) In defending the life of his sheep, the good shepherd gives his life.

(b) In the mutual understanding between shepherd and sheep, the Shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep know their shepherd.

- The false shepherd who wants to overcome his blindness, has to confront his own opinion with that of the people. This is what the Pharisees did not do. They looked down on the sheep and called them cursed and ignorant people (Jn 7: 49; 9: 34). On the other hand, Jesus says that the people have an infallible perception in knowing who the good shepherd is, because they recognize his voice (Jn 10: 4) “My own know me” (Jn 10: 14). The Pharisees thought they could discern the things of God with certainty. In truth they were blind.
- The discourse on the Good Shepherd includes two important rules for removing pharisaic blindness from our eyes:
 - (a) Shepherds are very attentive to the reaction of the sheep so that they may recognize the voice of the shepherd.
 - (b) The sheep must be very attentive to the attitude of those who call themselves shepherds so as to verify whether they are really interested in the lives of the sheep and whether they are capable of giving their lives for their sheep. What about today’s shepherds?
- John 10: 16-18: Jesus’ aim: one flock and one shepherd
Jesus opens out the horizon and says that there are other sheep that are not of this sheepfold. They will not hear Jesus’ voice, but when they do, they will realize that he is the Shepherd and will follow him. Here we see the ecumenical attitude of the community of the “Beloved Disciple”.

Further Comments:

The Image of the Shepherd in the Bible:

In Palestine, people largely depended on raising sheep and goats for their living. The image of the shepherd who leads his sheep to pasture was well known to all, just as today we all know the image of the driver of a coach or of a train. It was common to use the image of the shepherd to illustrate the function of one who ruled and led the people. The prophets criticized kings because they were shepherds who did not take care of their flock and did not lead the flock to pasture (Jer 2: 8; 10: 21; 23: 1-2). Such criticism of bad shepherds grew in the measure that, through the fault of kings, the people saw themselves dragged into slavery (Ez 34: 1-10; Zac 11: 4-17).

Before the frustration experienced because of the lack of leadership on the part of the bad shepherds, there grew the desire or the hope of one day having a shepherd who would be good and sincere and who would be like God in the way of leading his people. Thus, the Psalm says, "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want!" (Ps 23: 1-6; Gen 48: 15). The prophets hope that, in some future time, God himself would be the shepherd who would lead his flock (Is 40: 11; Ez 34: 11-16). They also hope that at such a time, the people would be able to recognize the voice of their shepherd: "Listen today to his voice!" (Ps 95: 7). They hope that God will come as a Judge to judge the sheep of the flock (Ez 34: 17). They wish and hope that one day God will raise good shepherds and that the Messiah would be a good shepherd for the people of God. (Jer 3: 15; 23: 4). Jesus turns this hope into reality and presents himself as the Good Shepherd, different from the brigands who were despoiling the people. He presents himself as a Judge, who, at the end, will judge as a shepherd who will separate the sheep from the goats (Mt 25: 31-46). In Jesus is fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah who says that the good shepherd will be persecuted by the bad shepherds who are disturbed by his denunciations: "I am going to strike the shepherd so that the sheep may be scattered!" (Zec 13: 7). Finally, Jesus is everything: he is the gate, the shepherd and the lamb!

The Community of the Beloved Disciple: Open, Tolerant and Ecumenical:

The communities lying behind the Gospel of John were made up of various groups. Among them there were open-minded Jews with a critical view of the Temple of Jerusalem (Jn 2: 13-22) and the law (Jn 7: 49-50). There were Samaritans (Jn 4: 1-42) and pagans (Jn 12: 20) who became converts, both with their historical origins and cultural customs, quite different from those of the Jews. Even though they were made up of such different groups, John's communities will see the following of Jesus as a concrete lived love in solidarity. By respecting each other's differences, they will be aware of the problems arising from pagans and Jews living together, problems which troubled other communities at the time (Acts 15: 5). Challenged by the realities of their own time, the communities sought to deepen their faith in Jesus, sent by the Father who wishes that all should be brothers and sisters (Jn 15: 12-14, 17) and who says: "In my Father's house there are many mansions!" (Jn 14: 2). This deepening facilitated dialogue with other groups. Then there were open, tolerant and ecumenical communities (Jn 10: 16).

Psalm 23 (22)

Yahweh is My Shepherd

Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit.

He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name.

Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger, for you are at my side.

Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over.
Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life.
I make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen

Monday, April 27, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, Father of all,
you sent your Son Jesus Christ among us to reveal to us that you care about people and that your love extends to all, without any distinction of race or culture.
Give us a great respect for all people, whatever way they come, and let your Church embrace all cultures, that Jesus may truly be the Lord and Shepherd of all, now and for ever.

Gospel Reading - John 10: 11-18

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as I have power to lay it down, so I have power to take it up again; and this is the command I have received from my Father.

Reflection

The Gospel today presents the parable of the Good Shepherd. It is the continuation of the Gospel which we read yesterday (Sunday). It is difficult to

understand the first part without the second. This is why we prefer to comment briefly on both (Jn 10: 1-18). The discourse on the Good Shepherd presents three comparisons linked among themselves:

- 1st comparison: Jesus speaks of the shepherd and of the thieves (Jn 10: 1-5)
 - 2nd comparison: Jesus is the door of the sheep (Jn 10: 6-10)
 - 3rd comparison: Jesus is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10: 11-18)
- John 10, 1-5: 1st comparison: to enter by the door and not by somewhere else. Jesus begins the discourse with the comparison of the door: “Anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate is a thief and a bandit! He who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock!” At that time, the shepherds took care of the flock the whole day. When night arrived, they lead the sheep to a great community sheepfold, which was well protected against thieves and wolves. All the shepherds of the same region took their flocks there. A gatekeeper took care of them the whole night. The following day, early in the morning, the shepherd would go there, knocked with his hands on the gate and the gatekeeper would open. The shepherd would go in and call the sheep by name. The sheep recognized the voice of their shepherd would get up and go out following him to go to the pasture. The sheep of the other shepherds heard the voice, but would not move, because for them it was an unknown voice. From time to time, there was the danger of being attacked. The bandits would enter by a side path or jumped over the wall of the sheepfold, made of one rock on top of the other, in order to rob the sheep. They did not enter by the gate because the gatekeeper was there.
 - John 10: 6-10: 2nd comparison: Jesus is the door. The audience, the Pharisees (Jn 9: 40-41), did not understand what it meant “to go in through the door.” Jesus then explained: “I am the gate of the sheepfold. All who have come before me are thieves and bandits”. Of whom is Jesus speaking in this phrase which is so hard? Probably, he was referring to the religious leaders who drew the people behind them, but they did not respond to their expectations. They were not interested in the good of the people, but only in their own interest and in filling their pockets. They deceived the people and abandoned them to a worse situation. To enter through the gate is to act as Jesus acted. The fundamental criterion to discern who is shepherd and who is a thief is the defense of the life of the sheep. Jesus asks the people not to follow the persons who present themselves as shepherds, but who have no interest for the life of the people. “I have come in order that they have life and life in abundance!” This is the criterion!
 - John 10: 11-15: 3rd comparison: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus changes the comparison. First, he was the door of the flock. Now he is the Shepherd of the sheep. Everyone knew what a shepherd was and how he lived and worked. But Jesus is not just any shepherd but, he is the Good Shepherd! The image of the Good Shepherd comes from the Old Testament. Saying that he is the Good Shepherd, Jesus presents himself as the one who comes to fulfil the

promises of the prophets and the expectations of the people; for example, the beautiful prophecy of Ezekiel (Ex 34, 11-16). There are two points on which Jesus insists:

(a) in the defense of the life of the sheep: the Good Shepherd gives his life for the life of the sheep.

(b) In the mutual knowledge between the shepherd and the sheep: The shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep know the shepherd.

Jesus says that the people have a particular perception and know who the Good Shepherd is. This was what the Pharisees did not accept. They despised or rejected the sheep and said they were damned and ignorant (Jn 7: 49; 9: 34). They thought they had the right and apt view to discern the things of God. In truth, they were blind. The discourse on the Good Shepherd teaches two rules to cure this type of blindness, which is quite frequent:

(i) to pay special attention to the reaction of the sheep, because they know the voice of the shepherd.

(ii) To be very attentive to the attitude of the one who calls himself the shepherd to see if his interest is the life of the sheep, or not, and if he is capable to give his life for the life of the sheep.

- John 10: 16-18: The goal which Jesus wants to attain: one only flock and one only Shepherd. Jesus opens the horizon and says that he has other sheep that do not belong to this flock. They have not as yet heard the voice of Jesus, but when they hear it, they will become aware that he is the shepherd and will follow him. This is the Ecumenical universal dimension.

Personal Questions

- Shepherd – Pastoral. Does the Pastoral ministry in my Parish imitate the mission of Jesus as shepherd? And in my pastoral ministry which is my attitude? Am I a shepherd as Jesus?
- Have you had the experience of having been deceived by a false shepherd? How did you succeed in overcoming this?

Concluding Prayer

As a deer yearns for running streams, so I yearn for you, my God.

I thirst for God, the living God; when shall I go to see the face of God? (Ps 42: 1-2)

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord God, our Father,
the Spirit of Jesus calls us, as He called Your Son, to abandon our old selves and our old world to be free for new life and growth. Forgive us our fear and hesitations, lead us out of our worn-out phrases and habits, and our self-made certainties, steep us in the gospel of Your Son, that His good news may become credible in our times and our world.
We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 10: 22-30

The feast of the Dedication was taking place in Jerusalem. It was winter. And Jesus walked about in the temple area on the Portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you and you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify to me. But you do not believe, because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Reflection

Chapters one to twelve of the Gospel of John are called "The Book of Signs". In these chapters we have the progressive revelation of the mystery of God in Jesus. In the measure in which Jesus makes this revelation, adherence and opposition grow around Him according to the idea which each one has of the Messiah. This way of describing the activity of Jesus not only serves to tell how adherence to Jesus took place at that time, but also how this should take place in us today, as His followers and readers. At that time, all expected the coming of the Messiah and they had their criteria of how to recognize Him. They wanted Him to be like they imagined that He should be. But Jesus does not submit Himself to that requirement. He reveals the Father as the Father is and not as His listeners would want Him to be. He asks for conversion in the way of thinking and of acting. Today, each one of us has his/her own likes and preferences. Sometimes we read the Gospel to see if we find in it a confirmation of our desires. Today's Gospel presents some light concerning this.

- John 10: 22-24: The Jews question Jesus. It was cold; it was Winter (v. 22). It was the Feast of the dedication which celebrated the purification of the temple done by Judah Maccabee (2M 10: 1-10). It was a very popular Feast with much light. Jesus was out on the square of the Temple, in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews said: "How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly." They wanted Jesus to define Himself and that they could verify, according to their own criteria, if Jesus was or was not the Messiah. They wanted some proof. It is the method of one who feels that he

dominates the situation. The new ones must present their credentials. Otherwise, they have no right to speak or to act.

- John 10: 25-26: Response of Jesus: the works that I do are My witness. The response of Jesus is always the same: "I have told you, but you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine". It is not a question of giving proofs. It would be useless. When a person does not want to accept the witness of someone, there is no proof which is valid which will lead the person to change and think differently. The basic problem is the disinterested openness of the person toward God and toward truth. Where this openness exists, Jesus is recognized by His sheep. "The sheep that belong to Me listen to My voice". Jesus will say these words before Pilate (Jn 18: 37). The Pharisees lacked this openness.
- John 10: 27-28: My sheep listen to My voice. Jesus repeats the parable of the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and they know Him. This mutual understanding – between Jesus who comes in the name of the Father and the persons who open themselves to truth – is the source of eternal life. This union between the Creator and the creature through Jesus exceeds every threat of death: "They will never be lost, and no one will ever steal them from My hand!" They are safe and secure, and, because of this, they are in peace and enjoy full freedom.
- John 10: 29-30: The Father and I are one. These two verses refer to the mystery of the union between Jesus and the Father: "The Father, for what He has given Me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from My Father's hand. The Father and I are one". These and other phrases make us guess or have a glimpse at something of the greatest mystery: "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14: 9). "The Father is in Me and I am in the Father" (Jn 10: 38). He is one with the Father in mind, will, and action. This union between Jesus and the Father is not something automatic, but rather it is the fruit of obedience: "I always do what pleases My Father" (Jn 8: 29; 6: 38; 17: 4). "My food is to do the will of the Father" (Jn 4: 34; 5: 30). The Letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus learned obedience from the things that He suffered (Heb 5: 8). "He was obedient until death and death on the Cross" (Ph 2: 8). The obedience of Jesus is not a disciplinary one, but rather it was prophetic. He obeys to be totally transparent, and thus, to be the revelation of the Father. Because of this, He could say: "The Father and I are one!" It was a long process of obedience and of incarnation which lasted 33 years. It began with Mary's YES (Lk 1: 38) and ended with: "It is all fulfilled!" (Jn 19: 30).

Personal Questions

- Is my obedience to God, disciplinary or prophetic? Do I reveal something of God or am I only concerned about my own salvation?

- Jesus does not submit Himself to the exigencies of those who want to verify if He is the Messiah. Is my faith sufficient or do I ask for “signs” in order to satisfy my belief?
- Am I personally fed by doing the will of the Father? Is this “doing” only on Sunday, or occasionally, or at every moment throughout my day?

Concluding Prayer

May God show kindness and bless us, and make His face shine on us.
Then the earth will acknowledge your ways, and all nations your power to save.
(Ps 67: 2-3)

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
through Your Son Jesus Christ You assure us that He came not to condemn us but to bring us life, a life worth living, a life that is rich and refreshing us and our world with love and a spirit of service.
Let Jesus stay with us as the light in which we see all that is good and worth living for and let us share in His life that has no end. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 12: 44-50

Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day, because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say as the Father told me.”

Reflection

Today’s Gospel presents to us the last part of the Book of Signs (from 1 to 12), in which the Evangelist draws up a balance. Many believed in Jesus and had the courage to manifest their faith publicly, but they were afraid to be expelled from the Synagogue and many did not believe: “Though they had been present when He gave so many signs, they did not believe in Him; this was to fulfill the words

of the prophet Isaiah: “Lord, who has given credence to what they have heard from us? And who has seen in it a revelation of the Lord’s arm?” (Jn 12: 37-38). After this confirmation, John looks back on some of the central themes of his Gospel:

- John 12: 44-45: To believe in Jesus is to believe in Him who sent Him. This sentence is a summary of the Gospel of John. It is the theme that appears and reappears in many ways. Jesus is so united to the Father that He does not speak in His own name, but always in the name of the Father. He who sees Jesus, sees the Father. If you want to know God, look at Jesus. God is Jesus!
- John 12: 46: Jesus is the light who comes into the world. Here John comes back to what he had already said in the prologue: “The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone (Jn 1: 9). “The light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it” (Jn 1: 5). Here he repeats: “I have come into the world as light, to prevent anyone who believes in Me from staying in the dark anymore”. Jesus is a living response to the great questions which move and inspire the search of the human being. It is a light which enlightens the horizon. It makes one discover the luminous side of the darkness of faith.
- John 12: 47-48: I have not come to condemn the world. Getting to the end of a stage, a question arises: “How will judgment be? In these two verses the Evangelist clarifies the theme of judgment. The judgment is not done according to threats, with maledictions. Jesus says, “If anyone hears My words and does not keep them faithfully, it is not I who shall judge such a person, since I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world. Anyone who rejects Me and refuses My words has his judge already: the word itself that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. The judgment consists in the way in which the person defines himself through his choices and actions in relation to Him.
- John 12: 49-50: The Father commanded Me what to say. The last words of the Book of Signs are a summary of everything that Jesus says and does up until now. He reaffirms what He affirmed from the beginning: “For I have not spoken of My own accord, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and what to speak, and I know that His commands mean eternal life. And, therefore, what the Father has told Me is what I speak.” Jesus is the faithful reflection of the Father. For this reason, He does not offer proofs or arguments to those who provoke Him to legitimize His credentials. It is the Father who legitimates Him through the works that He does, and in referring to works, He does not refer to great miracles, but to all that He says and does, even the most minute thing. Jesus Himself is the sign of the Father. He is the walking miracle, the total transparency. He does not belong to Himself, but is entirely the property of the Father. The credentials of an ambassador do not come from Him, but from the One He represents. They come from the Father.

Personal Questions

- John draws up an account of the revealing activity of God. If I made an account of my life, what would reveal the activity of God in me?
- Is there something in me which condemns me?

Concluding Prayer

Let the nations rejoice and sing for joy, for You judge the world with justice, You judge the peoples with fairness, You guide the nations on earth.
Let the nations praise You, God, let all the nations praise You. (Ps 67: 4-5)

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Easter Time

Opening Prayer

All-powerful God,
Your Son Jesus reminds us today that we are no greater than You and our servant, Jesus, our Lord and master.
Give us the love and endurance to serve You and people without waiting for awards or gratitude and to accept the difficulties and contradictions which are part of the Christian life and which are normal for followers of Him who bore the cross for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - John 13: 16-20

When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me. From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

Reflection

Beginning today, every day for several weeks, except on feast days, the Gospel of each day is taken from the long conversation of Jesus with the disciples during the Last Supper (Jn 13 to 17). In these five chapters which describe the farewell of Jesus, the presence of those three threads which we had spoken before is seen. Those threads knit and compose the Gospel of John: the word of Jesus, the word of the community and the word of the Evangelist who writes the last redaction of the Fourth Gospel. In these chapters, the three threads are intertwined in such a way that the whole is presented as a unique fabric or cloth with a rare

beauty and inspiration, where it is difficult to distinguish what is from one and what is from the other, but where everything is the Word of God for us. These five chapters present the conversation which Jesus had with His friends on the evening when He was arrested and put to death. It was a friendly conversation, which remained in the memory of the beloved disciple. Jesus seems to want to prolong this last encounter, this moment of great intimacy. The same thing happens today. There is conversation and more conversation. There is the superficial conversation which uses many words and reveals the emptiness of the person, and there is the conversation which goes to the depth of the heart and remains in the memory. All of us, once in a while, have these moments of friendly living together, which expand the heart and constitute strength in moments of difficulty. They help us to trust and to overcome fear. The five verses of today's Gospel draw two conclusions from the washing of the feet (Jn 13: 1-15). They speak

- (a) of service as the principal characteristic of the followers of Jesus, and
- (b) the identity of Jesus as the revelation of the Father.

- John 13: 16-17: The servant is not greater than his master. Jesus has just finished washing the feet of the disciples. Peter becomes afraid and does not want Jesus to wash his feet. "If I do not wash you, you can have no share with Me" (Jn 13: 8). It is enough to wash the feet; there is no need to wash the rest (Jn 13: 10). The symbolic value of the gesture of the washing of the feet consists in accepting Jesus as Messiah Servant, who gives Himself for others, and to reject a Messiah as glorious king. This gift of self, servant of all, is the key to understanding the gesture of the washing of the feet. To understand this is the root of the happiness of a person: "Knowing these things, you will be blessed if you put them into practice". But there were some people, even among the disciples, who did not accept Jesus in this role. They did not want to be the servants of others. They likely wanted a glorious Messiah, king and judge, according to the official ideology. Jesus says: "I am not speaking about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. but what Scripture says must be fulfilled: He who shares My table takes advantage of Me!" John refers to Judas, whose betrayal will be announced immediately afterward (Jn 13: 21-30).
- John 13: 18-20: I tell you this now, before it happens, so that you may believe that I AM HE. It was on the occasion of the liberation from Egypt at the foot of Mount Sinai that God revealed His name to Moses: "I am with you!" (Ex 3: 12), "I am who I am" (Ex 3: 14). "I Am" or "I AM" has sent me to you!" (Ex 3: 14). The name Yahweh (Ex 3: 15) expresses the absolute certainty of the liberating presence of God at the side of His people. In many ways and on many occasions this same expression *I Am* is used by Jesus (Jn 8: 24; 8: 28; 8: 58; Jn 6: 20; 18: 5, 8; Mk 14: 62; Lk 22: 70). Jesus is the presence of the liberating face of God in our midst.

Personal Questions

- The servant is not greater than his master, nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. This is an ultimate statement of humility. As a messenger

of the Gospel in the world, do I take credit for my abilities and gifts which come from God and claim them as my own, rather than crediting them to God?

- Jesus knew how to live together with people who did not accept Him. Do I?
- How can I make of my life a permanent service to others?

Concluding Prayer

I shall sing the faithful love of Yahweh forever, from age to age my lips shall declare Your constancy, for You have said: love is built to last forever, You have fixed Your constancy firm in the heavens. (Sal 89: 1-2)