

**PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS  
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**8 – 9 MAY 2021**



**SUNDAY REFLECTION**

Like Peter in today's First Reading, if we are to progress in our Easter faith we must be ready and willing to learn from experience – our own and that of others. The whole point of hearing the Scriptures repeatedly in the liturgy is that we should be confronted with the expression of others' experience of God and make that experience real in ourselves. The Cornelius story teaches us that relationship with God does not involve belonging to any nationality or culture. God transcends all cultures and the only 'race' which has any meaning in God's regard is the 'human' race, the one common 'root' of humankind. The unique and single condition of this relationship is 'fearing', that is, believing in God and doing what is right to one's fellow human beings. It should be stressed that this is one condition not two conditions: we believe in God by or in doing right towards others. For our God is a 'moral God, who is worshiped by good human behavior. It is also important to note that it is not simply by being that a person is in relationship with God but by believing and behaving well towards others. This means that all human beings, created in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) and infused with god's Spirit (Gen. 2:7), and before they have heard the 'good news', are already 'acceptable' to God; and when they actually behave according to God's will for them they are 'accepted' by Him. The difference between 'acceptable' and 'accepted' is crucial.

That our love for one another should be modelled upon or, more precisely, be the actualization of God the Father's love for us in giving His Son for us (Second Reading) and of Jesus Himself, the Son, giving Himself for us (Gospel) means that there can be no limit to our love, that is, our practical will for the happiness of one another. Although the 'one another' refers to members of the Church, both local and universal, the love in question is not exclusive or sectarian. For this love is God's own love for the whole world which, while reaching a certain level within the

actual Church, is directed to all human beings. Beginning as the Father's purely, gratuitous free, saving gift of Himself in His Son, reciprocated by the Son Himself, it is finally reciprocated by true believers who, thereby, become 'friends' of Jesus, of one another and of the Father – not just brothers and sisters, children of the same Father, but united by the love that is friendship. The same love which begins as 'agape' ends as 'philia'. We are not only 'loved' by God, but also 'friends' of God. It is this friendship which is the acme and the essence of the Christian life. This is the 'life' which the Father and the Son will for us, fellowship with them, membership of their family. As long as we do not regard and act towards all others as our 'friends' our Christian life is imperfect. The realization of the intrinsic dynamism of this love moving towards friendship should prevent us from selfish introspection, even contemplating our relationship with the Father and the Son in any way divorced from action. All our contemplation should be active, directed to the service of others. Contemplation and action form a seamless whole. We have to discern in our own situations precisely how we can serve others, remembering that, as Christians, our love of our fellows is not limited to their material needs but includes their total destiny as beings created in God's image and likeness, and, therefore, drawn to enjoy fully God's life. A world in which all men and women are true brothers and sisters, each individually and socially seeking the welfare of the others is not a utopia, a mirage or, even, an ultimately unattainable ideal; it is the reality to which God destines and calls the whole of humankind. If we do not 'see' this we have not even begun to understand what being a Christian is.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Jesus' commandment is that His disciples love one another, even to the point of laying down their lives, if necessary. What gifts of myself – my skills and talents, my time and resources – will best demonstrate my love for God's people?

## **READINGS FOR SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD 16 MAY '21**

**Acts 1:1-11:** Before Jesus is taken up to heaven He instructs the apostles about the kingdom and their mission to bear witness to Him.

**Eph. 1:17-23 or Eph. 4:1-13:** Growing to spiritual maturity and into the body of Christ is not about spectacular signs and wonders. Day by day, by responding to God's grace in the quiet and steady practice of virtues, we develop the gifts needed for the building of God's kingdom.

**Eph. 4:1-13:** We are all called to come to unity in our faith and become the perfectly mature person in the fullness of Christ.

**Mk. 16:15-20:** Before Jesus ascends to the right hand of God He commissions the apostles to take the Gospel to the whole of creation. This ending of St. Mark's Gospel underlines the exaltation of our Lord and the signs associated with the preaching of the Good News.

## **YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH**

### **St. Joseph was a Just man**

St. Matthew tells us that St. Joseph was "a just man" (Mt. 1:19). In biblical language this means one who is adorned with all the virtues. Matthew stresses the justice of St. Joseph when he describes the doubt that tormented him when Mary is "found to be with child" (Mt. 1:18-25).

We have already seen that Mary and Joseph were married, though not living together, at the time that Christ was conceived. In all probability Mary did not feel she had a right to inform Joseph of the mysterious event. Yet she was anxious for him to be informed, and knew he would be profoundly disturbed if he learned of her pregnancy and did not know of its miraculous origin.

This is exactly what came to pass. Joseph learned that his wife was with child, and knowing that he himself was not the natural father of the child, his mind was in a state of agonizing confusion.

Now that Joseph knew of the pregnancy of his wife, how did he account for this fact? Did he, as a few of the Fathers of the Church held, think that Mary had been raped or that she had committed adultery? Or are we to surmise that Joseph came to the conclusion that Mary had miraculously conceived a child by the power of God? Some have suggested a third possibility, namely, that St. Joseph admitted to himself that he did not know how this could have happened and that at first he simply did not know what to do.

The first opinion, that Joseph thought she had been unfaithful, is not acceptable to modern scholars. It is extremely unlikely that Joseph entertained such an opinion. He knew Mary to be the holiest person he had ever met and he was aware that his young wife was a woman of profound spiritual insight and totally committed to the faithful fulfillment of the will of God. Never for an instant could we imagine him questioning her innocence.

He would, under the circumstances, be much more likely to be sympathetic to the second opinion: that she had miraculously conceived a child by the power of God. Rather than harbor any suspicion against his wife, he would have been prepared to accept this possibility on blind faith. Nevertheless, it is not likely that he came to this conclusion. A miraculous virginal conception was unheard of. Such an event would never have entered the mind of man without the aid of a divine revelation.

Thus by a process of elimination we come to the third possibility: St. Joseph was baffled; he just did not know what to think. He was dumfounded.

Since Joseph was convinced of Mary's innocence, he naturally did not believe that he had an obligation of accusing Mary to the authorities who, in turn, would be obliged to have her stoned as an adulteress. All his feelings told him that Mary was more truly and fully good than any other person he had ever known. More than anything else he did not want to be separated from her. The heart has its reasons, said Pascal; it has reasons that cannot always be formulated in concepts, as we know from the teachings of the great mystics. And if ever that were true, it was true of the sentiments that Joseph experienced in wanting to take Mary to be his wife. 'The great mystical writers have described the condition of the soul that "feels" that it has been abandoned by God though it knows full well "by the obscure light of faith" that such is not the case. In the case of Saint Joseph it may well have been a mystical struggle that he was experiencing in which his deepest feelings and sentiments told him that he must never give Mary up, whereas reason (in the absence of any clear revelation from on high) made him suspect that he was obliged in conscience (a judgment of the practical intellect that is not *infallible* without a special revelation) to do the thing that he dreaded most — namely, to be forever divorced from Mary.

Surely he prayed for light. And waited. And God responded to his faith: "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying: Do not be afraid, Joseph, Son of David, to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit" Mt. 1:20).

We can easily imagine the joy that filled his heart. He determined to celebrate the solemnization of the marriage as soon as possible. As he reflected on the words of the angel there seemed to be more and more reason for happiness and joy, since the angel's words meant that Mary would be forever his, and it also meant that, in a way that was difficult to put into words, the Child was not completely a stranger to him but that it was *somehow* his Son. In this account of Matthew we would say, in current English, that there had arisen a first-class misunderstanding between Joseph and Mary, between husband and wife. And it is admirable what manliness Joseph exhibits in striving to overcome the misunderstanding according to the light of reason and of faith. Torn between his sentiments of love for Mary and the law of God as he knew it through the light of conscience, he was prepared to follow the only light on God's will that he had. He, like Abraham before him, was prepared to sacrifice what was dearest to him in all the world; but at the appropriate time God intervened (as always) to help the weakness of His servant.

As Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Isaac who was most dear to him because of the *signified* (clearly indicated) will of God (Gen. 22:1 ff), so Joseph was similarly concerned with responding to the will of God as he understood that will during the time of his doubt. This was not a theoretical question but a real existential spiritual trial that Joseph, the "just man", underwent.

Recalling that Joseph was probably only a teen-ager at the time sheds a great deal of light on the Scriptural mention of his justice. Not only was he trying to do what was just or fair, but this effort was prompted by his inner goodness, by his life-long generous fidelity to the will of God. Only a man open to the holiness of God would have struggled with the problem as did Joseph. Only such a man could have been tempted to make the mistake he did, namely, of selling himself short because he was convinced that it was the very thing God was demanding of him. An ordinary teen-ager — or for that matter, an ordinary man — would have been tempted to sell God short rather than himself.

The love that Abraham nourished towards his God was proven by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac; and God rewarded him by making him the "father of many". Abraham's descendent, Joseph, was rewarded even more amply for the selflessness and purity of his love. Through the words of the Angel he was told that he was to take Mary to be his wife and that he would be at least somehow the father of the Redeemer and, thereby, the spiritual father, in a much more profound sense than Abraham, of the people of God here on earth.

## **HAPPY ASCENSION THURSDAY SUNDAY!!???**

Depending on where you live next Sunday is one of the few days of the year that Catholics who follow the Ordinary Form of the Mass (The Novus Ordo) will be hearing different readings. Either they will hear the readings for the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord or those for the Seventh Sunday of Easter. Conversely, this Thursday they will hear the Ascension Day readings or the readings for Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter.

First and foremost the Feast of the Ascension is important in our faith journey and as we follow the important milestones in the life of Jesus Christ. It celebrates the bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven. Two of the evangelists give an account of the event:

“Then He led them {out} as far as Bethany, raised His hands, and blessed them. As He Blessed them He parted from them and was taken up to heaven.” Lk. 24:50-51

“So then the Lord Jesus, after He spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took His Seat at the right hand of God.” Mk. 16:19



For all Catholics, this day is a Holy Day of Obligation as emphasized in the Code of Canon Law #1246 section 1:

“Sunday, on which by apostolic tradition the paschal mystery is celebrated, must be observed in the universal Church as the primordial holy day of obligation. The following days must also be observed: the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Epiphany, the Ascension, the Body and Blood of Christ, Holy Mary the Mother of God, her Immaculate Conception, her Assumption, St. Joseph, St Peter and ST. Paul the Apostles and All Saints.”

#### **Why Thursday?**

Historically, this feast was celebrated on the Thursday, 40 days after Easter. How was this determined? The Book of Acts tells of Jesus appearing to His followers for 40 days after His Resurrection:

“After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” Acts 1:3

The 40th day after Easter Sunday will always be Thursday, therefore the Church, from very early on, celebrated Christ’s Ascension on this day.

#### **Why make a change?**

This decision has been the subject of much debate ever since it was made. Some hold that, in recent history, attendance at Ascension Thursday Masses had been steadily declining. Consequently, the USCCB petitioned the Holy See to transfer the day in accord with Canon Law:

“With the prior approval of the Apostolic See, however, the conference of bishops can Suppress some of the holy days of obligation or transfer them to a Sunday.”

Code of Canon Law #1246 Section 2

### **Who decides to move or not to move?**

The decision when to celebrate the Ascension is up to the *ecclesiastical province* which is a large archdiocese and other dioceses that are bound to it through geography or history. In the US, there is typically one *ecclesiastical province* per state in the Latin Rite. The Richmond Diocese is part of the province of Baltimore.

In the U.S. majority of the provinces have transferred the Solemnity of the Ascension to Sunday.

### **Traveling?**

For example an individual from The Richmond Diocese, where the Ascension has been transferred to Sunday travels to the Boston area where the feast is celebrated on Thursday. Is that individual obligated to attend the Ascension Mass on Thursday (in Boston) then again on Sunday when they return to Richmond? According to Canon Law, yes.

And the opposite? What if my friend from Boston visited me from Wednesday to Saturday? Well he is out of luck. He will celebrate the Sixth Thursday of Easter in Richmond, and then the Seventh Sunday of Easter in Boston. He will not celebrate the Ascension this year.

## **SANCTUARY LAMP**

As a boy attending St. Ambrose Parish, when I was the server for the 6:30 a.m. daily Mass, frequently I would arrive before the priest and the lights were still off. (Yes, back then the doors remained open 24/7.) You would walk into what seemed as a massive space with the shifting shadows caused by the votive candles, a bit spooky, but there was a single burning light that guided your way into the sanctuary that was rather comforting, the Sanctuary Light suspended from the ceiling in front of the high altar.

The General Instruction to the Roman Missal, a guide for how to celebrate Mass, states, "In accordance with traditional custom, near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should be kept alight to indicate and honor the presence of Christ."

This requirement, in turn grew out of, reflects the Jewish tradition of having a light burning in front of the Arc of the Covenant in the Temple's Holy of Holies as prescribed in Exodus 27:20-21:

And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

In Judaism, the sanctuary lamp is known by its Hebrew name, **ner tamid** (Hebrew: נֵר תָּמִיד), which is usually translated as "eternal flame" or "eternal light". Hanging or standing in front of the ark in every Jewish synagogue, it is meant to represent the menorah of the Temple as well as the continuously burning fire on the altar of burnt offerings in front of the Temple. It also symbolizes God's eternal presence and is therefore never extinguished. It is also intended to draw parallels between God and fire, or light, which is emphasized throughout the book of Exodus in the Torah. Additionally, it is often used to symbolize the light released from the shards of the receptacles that God used to create light and goodness.



Catholics have always shown their respect for the reservation of the Eucharist in the tabernacle. The church's guidelines for art and architecture states: The tabernacle "should be worthy of the Blessed Sacrament – beautifully designed and in harmony with the overall decor of the rest of the church. To provide for the security of the Blessed Sacrament the tabernacle should be 'solid,' 'immovable,' 'opaque' and 'locked.' The tabernacle may be situated on a fixed pillar or stand, or it may be attached to or embedded in one of the walls. A special oil lamp or a lamp with a wax candle burns continuously near the tabernacle as an indication of Christ's presence." Although sanctuary lamps have been red in many traditions, church documents do not specify a color.

The Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle was originally intended for the Communion of the sick and dying and for those unable to attend the Sunday celebration. "But as the appreciation of Christ's presence in the Eucharistic species became more developed, Christians desired through prayer to show reverence for Christ's continuing presence in their midst," states "Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship," the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's guide for worship spaces.

"In reverent prayer before the reserved Eucharist, the faithful give praise and thanksgiving to Christ for the priceless gift of redemption and for the spiritual food that sustains them in their daily lives. Here they learn to appreciate their right and responsibility to join the offering of their own lives to the perfect sacrifice of Christ during the Mass and are led to a greater recognition of Christ in themselves and in others, especially in the poor and needy. Providing a suitable place for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is a serious consideration in any building or renovation project," the book continues.

The sanctuary lamp is extinguished on Good Friday when the body of Christ is removed from the main church and relit at Easter.

## PRAYERS



The following two prayers were included in a letter by Pope Francis on 26 April 2020 which encouraged us to pray the Rosary. The two prayers are intended to be recited at the end of the Rosary. They can also be

### **First Prayer**

O Mary,

You shine continuously on our journey  
as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,  
who, at the foot of the cross,  
were united with Jesus' suffering,  
and persevered in your faith.

“Protectress of the Roman people”,  
you know our needs,  
and we know that you will provide,  
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,  
joy and celebration may return  
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,  
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father  
and to do what Jesus tells us.  
For he took upon himself our suffering,  
and burdened himself with our sorrows  
to bring us, through the cross,  
to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We fly to your protection,  
O Holy Mother of God;  
Do not despise our petitions  
in our necessities,  
but deliver us always  
from every danger,  
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.

### **Second Prayer**

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with



hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.

**A Prayer to St. Joseph before Work**

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thy example, O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life and in death. Amen.

(Composed by Pope St. Pius X)

**SCHEDULE SIXTH WEEK of EASTER  
SATURDAY 8 MAY - SUNDAY 16 MAY**

**Saturday 8 May Easter Week**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Easter Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II  
Intention: )**

**5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**Proper, Gloria, Creed, Easter Preface I & Eucharistic Prayer I  
Intention:**

**Sunday 9 May Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Easter Preface I & Eucharistic Prayer I  
Intention: Parish of St. Stephen, Martyr**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Easter Preface I & Eucharistic Prayer I  
Intention: Holy Souls in Purgatory**

**11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Easter Preface I & Eucharistic Prayer I  
Intention:**

**2:00 p.m. Brig Mass**

**Monday 10 May Day Off**

**Tuesday 11 May Easter Weekday**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Easter Preface II Eucharistic Prayer II  
Intention: Mike & Dina Sussilleaux**

**5:00 p.m. Meeting**

**6:00 p.m. Meeting**

**7:00 p.m. Meeting**

**Wednesday 12 May Easter Weekday Saints Nereus & Achilleus Martyrs  
Saint Pancras Martyr**

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper or Memorial Easter Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper or Memorial, Easter Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer III

Thursday 13 May Easter Weekday Our Lady of Fatima

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper or Memorial, Easter Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer II

Intention: Jose Demdam

5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass Proper or Memorial, Easter Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer II

Intention:

Friday 14 May Easter Weekday St. Matthias Apostle

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface of Apostles I& Eucharistic Prayer III

Intention: Special Intention

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Adoration & Confessions

### TODAY BEGINS THE NOVENA OF PENTECOST

Saturday 15 May Easter Weekday St. Isidore

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper or Memorial, Easter Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II

Intention: Priests, Seminarians & Holy Vocations

1:30 - 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Ascension & Eucharistic Prayer I

Intention: James Allen Neary II (Deceased)

Sunday 16 May Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Ascension & Eucharistic Prayer I

Intention: Parish of St. Stephen, Martyr

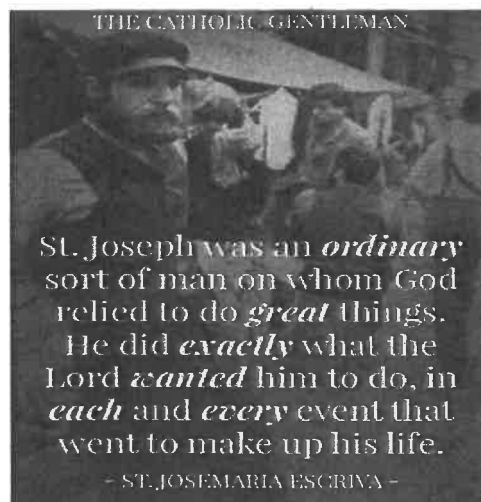
8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Ascension & Eucharistic Prayer I

Intention: Michael Curran (Deceased)

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Ascension & Eucharistic Prayer I

Intention: Gertrude Hindes (Deceased)

2:00 p.m. Brig Mass



**- ST. ANDRE BESSETTE**

*"When you  
invoke  
St Joseph,  
you don't  
have to  
say much.*

*Say,  
'If you  
were in  
my place,  
St. Joseph,  
what  
would  
you do?  
Well, pray  
for this  
on my  
behalf."*

