

SUNDAY REFLECTION

The good news of Easter is that Jesus is within us, both as individuals and as a community, giving us life through His Spirit and uniting us with God our Father. Therefore, in a profound sense we are the disciples behind those closed doors on that first Easter evening. Jesus comes to us continually and stands in our midst, giving us His peace and joy, inspiring us with His Spirit, forming us into a new person, commissioning us as His representatives. The Eucharist is the sign of this reality, or sacrament par excellence of this invisible but permanent presence. At the Eucharist we actualize this presence as a union with God the Father, through Jesus in the Holy Spirit, and, thereby, with our fellow celebrants here at this Mass and then, at the deepest level, with all our fellow human being everywhere. Every celebration changes us, making us more united as a human family in God. May the life of Jesus become visible in our daily lives so that we may become His authentic witnesses. Let us go forward to love and serve the Lord, because the Mass is not ended.

STEWARDSHIP: “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believed,” Jesus says in today’s Gospel. For those who have not seen to believe, however, we must be good stewards of our faith, living it joyfully and sharing it generously. Then, in our time too, “men and women in great numbers” will be “added to the Lord.”

St. John Vianney

“Our faults are like a grain of sand beside the great mountain of the mercies of God.”

READINGS THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

5 MAY ‘19

Acts 5:27-32, 40-41: The apostles find themselves on trial before the Sanhedrin. Peter takes the opportunity to proclaim the basic teachings about Jesus.

Rv. 5:11-14: All creation unites in praise of God and the Lamb.

Jn. 21:1-19: The risen Jesus appears to the disciples in Galilee. Peter’s denials are forgiven and Jesus commissions him as shepherd of the flock.

Pope St. Gregory I

“The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep, that He might convert His Body in our sacrament, and satisfy the sheep whom He had redeemed with the nourishment of His own flesh.”

INTENTION FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

The Church in Africa, a Seed of Unity. That the Church in Africa, through the commitment of its members, may be the seed of unity among her peoples and a sign of hope for this continent.

THEME FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

May is the month of Mary; devotion to the Blessed Mother throughout May originated in Rome in the 18th century to counter immorality and infidelity among students at a college there. It has spread through most of the Latin Church now. Because the North American holiday of Mother’s Day falls in May, Catholics take this time to recall and try to emulate Mary’s role as mother. Therefore devotion to Mary in the month of May focuses both on Mary as a role model for Christian mothers, and Mary’s ever lasting chastity and purity, and her fidelity to God’s will.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY:

The world was in the midst of the Great Depression in 1931 and the memories of World War I were still very much alive in the minds of Europeans when in Poland a sister of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), is said to have been personally visited by Jesus.

According to her diary, which was listed on the Index of Forbidden Books for more than 20 years, an image was revealed to her of the risen Lord, from whose heart shone two rays, one red (representing blood) and the other “pale” (symbolizing water), with the words “Jesus, I trust in you” at the bottom. Faustina wrote in her diary that Jesus told her, “I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish.”

When she was canonized in 2000 under the direction of fellow countryman Pope John Paul II, he proclaimed that the Second Sunday of Easter would henceforth be known as Divine Mercy Sunday, thereby widely promoting the devotional practices associated with Faustina’s visions, already popular in many communities.

St. Faustina, a poorly educated daughter of a humble Polish family, kept a 600-page diary of the apparitions she claimed continued for years. Her entries focus on God’s mercy, the call to accept God’s mercy and to be merciful, the need for conversion, and the call to trust in Jesus. It had been Jesus’ own wish, she wrote, to establish a feast day: “I [Jesus] desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls. . . . I am giving them the last hope of salvation; that is, the Feast of My Mercy.”

Among the practices associated with the devotion are its novena, the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy (a series of prayers organized similarly to a rosary), the Hour of Great Mercy (a time of prayer traditionally celebrated at 3 p.m.), and the plenary indulgence granted to those who receive the Eucharist and celebrate reconciliation on Divine Mercy Sunday.

But the road to the universal recognition and institutionalization of the devotion was anything but smooth. Since Sister Faustina’s diary, which she claimed Jesus Himself had asked her to keep, had been previously listed on the Index of Forbidden Books, it curtailed the exercise of the devotional practices. Detractors claimed that her writing contained theological errors, while her defenders attribute mistakes to a faulty translation from Polish to Italian. While the diary is no longer on the Index and her canonization has officially put away concerns regarding the orthodoxy of her writings, critics remain.

The celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday is an opportunity to reflect on the theme of how God’s mercy can overcome sin and, as the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments states, “a perennial invitation to the Christian world to face, with confidence in divine benevolence, the difficulties and trials that mankind [sic] will experience in the years to come.”

What is the Divine Mercy image?

The Divine Mercy image is a depiction of Jesus based on a vision that St. Faustina had in 1931. There have been a number of paintings made of this image. The original, is not the most popular one today.

A basic explanation of the image is:

Jesus is shown in most versions as raising His right hand in blessing, and pointing with His left hand on His chest from which flow forth two rays: one red and one white (translucent).

The depictions often contains the message "Jesus, I trust in You!" (Polish: *Jeżu ufam Tobie*).

The rays streaming out have symbolic meaning: red for the blood of Jesus (which is the Life of Souls), and pale for the water (which justify souls) (from Diary - 299). The whole image is symbolic of charity, forgiveness and love of God, referred to as the "Fountain of Mercy".

According to the diary of St Faustina, the image is based on her 1931 vision of Jesus [[source](#)].

How is the Divine Mercy devotion linked to the Scripture readings for the Second Sunday of Easter?

The Divine Mercy image depicts Jesus at the moment He appears to the disciples in the Upper Room, after the Resurrection, when He empowers them to forgive or retain sins.

This moment is recorded in John 20:19-31, which is the Gospel reading for this Sunday in all three yearly Sunday liturgical cycles (A, B, and C).

This reading is placed on this day because it includes the appearance of Jesus to the Apostle Thomas (in which Jesus invites him to touch His wounds). This event occurred on the eighth day after the Resurrection (John 20:26), and so it is used on the liturgy eight days after Easter. (It also, however, includes the appearance of Jesus to the disciples on Easter evening, a week earlier, in which he empowered them to forgive or retain sins.)

How did Jesus empower the apostles to forgive or retain sins and how does this relate to the sacrament of confession?

That part of the text reads:

[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."

He thus gave them a special empowerment with the Holy Spirit to forgive or retain sins.

It relates directly to it. Jesus empowered the apostles (and their successors in ministry) with the Holy Spirit to *either* forgive *or* retain (not forgive) sins. Because they are empowered with God's Spirit to do this, their administration of forgiveness is efficacious--it really removes sin rather than just being a symbol of forgiveness a person is already thought to have obtained. Because they are instructed to forgive *or retain*, they must discern which they are to do. This means that they need to know about the sin and whether we are truly repentant of it. As a result, we must tell them about the sin and our sorrow for it. Hence: confession. And the Church Fathers understood Christ's ministers as having this power.

EASTER SYMBOLS EGGS

The Story of Mary Magdalene and the First Easter Egg

Mary Magdalene has a special place among Jesus' disciples.

It was St. Mary Magdalene's great love for Christ that kept her standing at the foot of the Cross, weeping and grief-stricken, until her Savior died. It was her heartbreak pain of loss that drove her to His tomb at the first light of day in order to anoint His body. As a reward for her great love and faithfulness, she is the privileged person to whom Jesus first appeared on Easter Sunday morning; she was the very first witness of the Resurrection.

It was Mary Magdalene, a woman, who went and told the Apostles that Jesus had risen from the dead; for this she is called "Apostle to the Apostles."

After Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, Mary Magdalene continued her mission as an evangelizer, contemplative, and mystic in the heart of the Church.

According to tradition, after Jesus' Ascension into heaven, the Magdalene---a wealthy woman of some importance---boldly presented herself to the Emperor Tiberius Caesar in Rome to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ, with an egg in hand to illustrate her message.

Holding the egg out to him, she exclaimed for the first time what is now the universal Easter proclamation among Christians, "Christ is risen!"

The emperor, mocking her, said that Jesus had no more risen than the egg in her hand was red. Immediately, the egg turned red as a sign from God to illustrate the truth of her message. The Emperor then heeded her complaints about Pilate condemning an innocent man to death, and had Pilate removed from Jerusalem under imperial displeasure.

Why would Mary Magdalene bring an egg to talk about Jesus with the Roman Emperor?

In another tradition, it is said that Mary Magdalene brought a basket of white boiled eggs with her on Easter morning to the tomb of Jesus---perhaps as a meal for herself and the others as they waited for someone to roll the stone away. When she arrived at the site of the Resurrection, finding the stone already rolled away, she also found that the eggs in her basket had turned into bright shades of color.

Perhaps this is why she brought an egg to the Emperor; did she expect that Jesus would perform a similar miracle for her egg as He had done on that first Easter morning?

While we do not know if these stories are true with absolute certainty, we do know that the tradition of handing out red eggs at Easter is one that originated among Christians in Apostolic times. And we often find Mary Magdalene depicted in icons holding a red egg. Moreover, the story fits into the various cultural traditions already surrounding the symbol of the egg.

For many cultures, even before the time of Christianity, the egg was a symbol of creation, spring, and rebirth. After the resurrection of Christ, the egg took on a new meaning for Christians and became a symbol of new life breaking forth while leaving the empty tomb behind. Perhaps this became even more pronounced due the account of Mary Magdalene. Eggs were what helped people to understand a new theological truth---the resurrection of the dead, and a new religion---Christianity---built around the first Resurrection.

As a symbol of Christ's resurrection, the Easter egg then became a symbol for the rebirth of all mankind at the resurrection on the Last Day due to the merits of Jesus Christ. "Easter eggs" were shared with one another as a joyful symbol of Christian hope.

EASTER EGG DECORATION

Painting boiled Easter eggs is a beloved ancient tradition for Eastern Catholic churches as well as Orthodox. The eggs are often dyed red to represent the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed on the cross.

The Easter eggs are then carried to the church in baskets to be blessed by the priest (often with other foods to be eaten for the Easter feast) at the end of the Easter vigil before being distributed to the faithful. Historically, Christians would abstain from eating eggs during a strict Lent, so Easter was the first chance to eat eggs again after a long period of abstinence. The egg represented the sealed Tomb of Christ, and cracking the shell represented Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

In some cultures it is also common to paint wooden Easter eggs and hand them out as gifts to friends and family.

Thus the connection of eggs with Easter and the Resurrection is a historic one in the heart of the Church, and as is always the case with ancient Christian customs, an excellent way to catechize the faithful and celebrate a shared Christian culture with family and friends.

If you have family traditions with the Easter egg, please share in the comments below!

PRAYERS

A Prayer to be a Vessel of Mercy

Heavenly Father, thank You that by Your Holy Spirit You have bestowed on each of Your children different spiritual gifts, (or just one special gift..) that by Your grace is to be used for the encouragement and edification of the whole body of Christ. Thank You Lord for the way that You have gifted each of us in a very special and precious way, enabling us.. by Your grace, to make a unique contribution, to the furtherance of Your plans and purposes in the body of Christ - that He is all in all. Father, You have given me a special heart of love toward my brothers and sisters in Christ.. and although I am not gifted to teach, or to carry out some of the more overt gifts of the Spirit, I do wonder if You are developing in me the precious gift of encouragement, mercy and love towards my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Lord I pray that if You are taking me down this route, that You would use me as a sanctified vessel, that not only to pour out mercy and love without measure on other people, but that You would use me to encourage others to show the same mercy and forgiveness to their brothers and sisters in the body of Christ - and in the wider world beyond. Lord I know that in and of myself I have nothing that commends me for this special ministry of mercy and edification, for I know that without Christ I can do nothing - but praise God that in Christ I can do all things - for He gives me the strength. May I be pliable clay in the Potter's hand and permit You to shape me into the person that You would have me be and use me in Your way and in Your time to Your praise and glory, in Jesus name I pray, Amen

Prayer of Thanks for God's Mercy

Dear Father God, I praise and thank You for Your loving-kindness and great mercy which is new every morning and remains steadfast and sure throughout the day - to strengthen and hold. Thank You for the glory of the cross.. knowing that I was a estranged from Your heart of love and an outcast from the kingdom of heaven. Words cannot describe the wonderment that You sent Your only begotten Son to come to earth as a Man - and to live a life of rejection and sorrow, and to suffer and die for me on the cross of Calvary - so that I might be forgiven of all my sins and live with You eternally in heaven.

Thank You Father that although I was unworthy to approach You glorious throne, and enslaved in the kingdom of darkness, yet in Your mercy and grace You stooped down to me and lifted me out of the Satan's bondage and from the cesspit of sin, and seated me together with Christ in heavenly places and showered me with Your undeserved grace and favor. Thank You that I am now one of Your redeemed children, in Jesus' name I pray, Amen

A Prayer of Saint Augustine to the Blessed Virgin
For the Remission of Our Sins and Reconciliation

Many Christians, even Catholics, think that devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a late, perhaps medieval development. But from the earliest days of the Church, Christians have revered Mary and sought her intercession.

In this prayer, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) illustrates both Christian reverence for the Mother of God and the proper understanding of intercessory prayer. We pray to the Blessed Virgin so that she might present our prayers to God and obtain forgiveness from Him for our sins.

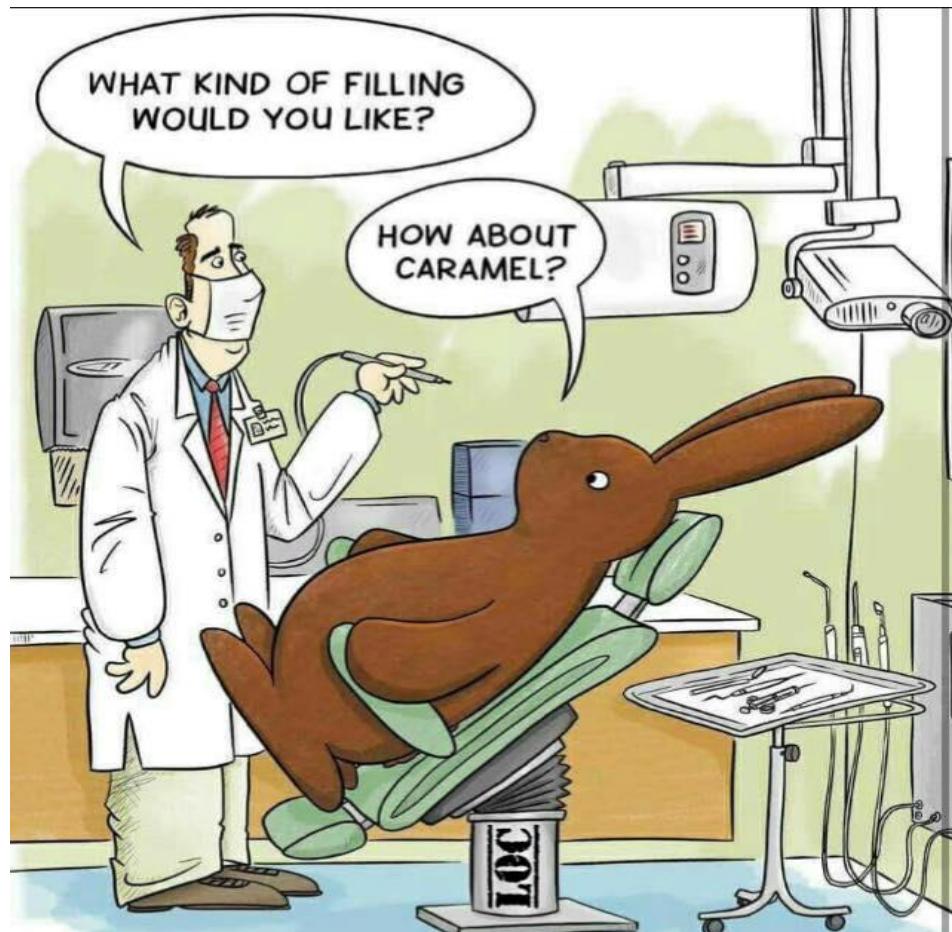
Prayer of Saint Augustine to the Blessed Virgin

O blessed Virgin Mary, who can worthily repay thee thy just dues of praise and thanksgiving, thou who by the wondrous assent of thy will didst rescue a fallen world? What songs of praise can our weak human nature recite in thy honor, since it is by thy intervention alone that it has found the way to restoration. Accept, then, such poor thanks as we have here to offer, though they be unequal to thy merits; and receiving our vows, obtain by thy prayers the remission of our offenses. Carry thou our prayers within the sanctuary of the heavenly audience, and bring forth from it the antidote of our reconciliation. May the sins we bring before Almighty God through thee, become pardonable through thee; may what we ask for with sure confidence, through thee be granted. Take our offering, grant us our requests, obtain pardon for what we fear, for thou art the sole hope of sinners. Through thee we hope for the remission of our sins, and in thee, O blessed Lady, is our hope of reward. Holy Mary, succor the miserable, help the fainthearted, comfort the sorrowful, pray for thy people, plead for the clergy, intercede for all women consecrated to God; may all who keep thy holy commemoration feel now thy help and protection. Be thou ever ready to assist us when we pray, and bring back to us the answers to our prayers. Make it thy continual care to pray for the people of God, thou who, blessed by God, didst merit to bear the Redeemer of the world, who liveth and reigneth, world without end. Amen.

Atheism

The belief that there was **nothing** and nothing happened to nothing and then nothing magically exploded for no reason, creating everything and then a bunch of everything magically rearranged itself for no reason what so ever into self-replicating bits which then turned into dinosaurs.

Makes perfect sense.





*"I'm sorry to have to tell you this, Pfifer, but after April,
we'll no longer be needing an office Easter-bunny."*