



SUNDAY REFLECTION

We are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, discouraged, bewildered, uncomprehending, not realizing that Jesus is with us at every moment of our lives. Until, that is, He breaks bread. The Eucharist may appear to be only what we do, just as the disciples thought that they were offering hospitality to a stranger. But, in reality, it is Jesus' action in, with and through us. It is He who feeds us with the word of the scriptures and who invites us to participate in His life, death and resurrection through the sacrament of bread and wine. We celebrate the Eucharist by responding to this reality, not only in words and gestures but also and especially by assimilating God's word in faith and actualizing, here and now and throughout our daily lives, the meaning of Jesus' breaking of bread, that is, the service of humankind.

"When He opened His disciples' eyes, Jesus at once vanished. He removed His visible presence, and left but a memorial of Himself. He vanished from sight that He might be present in a sacrament. In order to connect His visible presence with His invisible presence, He manifested Himself for one instant to their open eyes; manifested Himself, if I may so speak, while He passed from His hiding-place of sight without knowledge, to that of knowledge without sight."

(St. John Henry Cardinal Newman)

STEWARDSHIP: The disciples on the road to Emmaus walked and talked with Jesus all day long, but it was not until they offered Him hospitality and He blessed and broke the bread that

they recognized Him. Simple acts of loving kindness still reveal the presence of God in our midst.

READINGS FOR TODAY

Acts 2:14,22-33: Peter gives witness to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, in fulfillment of the prophecy of David that God's holy one would not be allowed to experience corruption

1 Pt. 1:17-21: We are freed from a useless way of life by the ransom paid in the precious blood of the lamb that is Christ.

Lk. 24:13-35: The disciples' hearts burn within them as they talk with the stranger on the road to Emmaus and they recognize the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread.

READINGS FOR FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

3 MAY '20

Acts 2:14, 36-41: It is from Christ that we receive forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1 Pt. 2:20-25: Christ suffered for us, offering us an example to follow.

Jn. 10:1-10: Jesus is the gate through and by which we enter into salvation.

SEASON OF EASTER

We are approaching the midpoint of the Easter season as we celebrate the Third Sunday of Easter. What is the purpose of this season of the Church calendar? What does it mean to ourselves?

Length. The Easter Season is fifty days, not forty days, like Lent, or four weeks or slightly less, like Advent. The Easter Season extends from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. It is sometimes known as the "Festival of Weeks," seven weeks of seven days (49 days), plus one, the fiftieth day, Pentecost.

The Octave of Easter. The first eight days of the Easter Season are known as the Octave of Easter. Easter is the greatest Christian feast, so great, in fact, that it cannot be celebrated adequately on a single one day. All eight days from Easter Sunday to the Second Sunday of Easter are considered solemnities, the Church's highest ranking feast, and each day is celebrated with festivity and joy.

The Easter Novena. The last nine days of the Easter Season extend from Ascension Thursday to Pentecost Sunday, a novena, Latin for "nine." Jesus instructed his disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait ... [because] in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4,5). The nine days from Ascension to Pentecost are a novena, a period of prayer before the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Easter Liturgical Color. The liturgical color for the Easter Season is white. Gold is not a liturgical color, but it may be used to accent the white. Together, they are symbols of joy and glory, as well as the Resurrection.

The Easter Liturgical Word. The special word for the Easter Season is Alleluia. It is used for the dismissal from Mass, and it is added to the antiphons and responses for the

Liturgy of the Hours. It is only found in the Book of Revelation (19:1,3,4,6), and it is an exclamation of great joy that means “Praise God!” the sentiment of the Easter Season.

Easter Eating. The self-denial of Lent is set aside during the Easter Season. It is not a time of fasting, but rather a season of celebration, a time for “a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines” (Is 25:6). Jesus once said that “As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast” (Mk 2:19b), and because Jesus was with his disciples for forty days from his Resurrection to his Ascension (Acts 1:3), it was not a time of fasting then, and so it is not a time of fasting now.

The Major Easter Symbol. The foremost symbol of Easter is the Christ Candle, also known as the Easter Candle or the Paschal Candle. It represents the Risen Christ who is the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12; see also 1:4-5,9 and 12:46). The candle is given a prominent location during the Easter Season, usually in the sanctuary or somewhere in the front of the church, and after Pentecost it is moved back to its usual place.

The Easter Sacraments. The Easter Sacraments are the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Because these sacraments are celebrated at the Easter Vigil when catechumens and candidates are welcomed into the Church, they are also featured throughout the Easter Season. It is the preferred season to celebrate Baptisms within Sunday Mass, and the ideal time to celebrate First Holy Communion as well as Confirmation.

Easter Scripture Texts. The gospels of the Easter Season focus on the appearances of Jesus after his Resurrection, near his tomb, in the Upper Room, on the road to Emmaus, and along the Sea of Galilee. The featured New Testament book throughout the Easter Season for both the first reading on Sundays and every weekday is the Acts of the Apostles, a powerful statement that the risen Christ remains alive and well within the Christian Community. The second readings on the Sundays of Easter are taken from the first letter of Peter in Year A, the first letter of John in Year B, and the Book of Revelation in Year C.

The Easter Season – beginning on Easter Sunday and continuing for 50 days – is an opportunity for us to cultivate a spirit that defines who we are as Christians. So what does living the spirit of the Easter season mean in practical terms? Here are three concrete suggestions.

Live with Joy

Joy is a deep-down gladness that cannot be taken away, even in the midst of sorrow. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus teach us that suffering is transformed through faith in the Risen Christ. With this faith, we are able to hold on to an enduring sense of joy even in the

midst of the sadness we experience from the loss of a loved one, a failure to achieve an important goal, or a setback during recovery from an illness.

Live without Fear

The Resurrection teaches us that God can overcome anything, even death. When the Risen Christ appears to the women at the tomb and later to his disciples, his first words are “Do not be afraid!” (Mt 28:5, 10) These words speak to our hearts, helping us cope with the fear from the loss of a job, a serious illness, or a crumbling relationship. Our faith allows us to trust that God can overcome our most serious problems.

Live with New Eyes

Easter means to live with a sense of newness. Just as the return of spring lifts our spirits and makes us feel like the whole world is new, the Resurrection of Jesus makes “all things new.” (Rev. 21:5) The Easter spirit is a spirit of renewal that enables us to show up at work with a positive attitude, to renew relationships that have been taken for granted, and to express appreciation and affection to those closest to us. It means to see the world through new eyes—God's eyes.

We can use these 50 days to cultivate an Easter spirit that enables us to be truly Christian: embracing joy, living without fear, and seeing the world again—as if for the first time.

Resurrection Symbols

The butterfly is only one of several traditional symbols of the Resurrection. The most popular symbol is the egg, which seems to be lifeless but then breaks open to release new life. The lily is another common symbol. A dry and lifeless-looking bulb blossoms into one of the most beautiful flowers on earth. Another symbol of the Resurrection comes from Greek mythology. The phoenix was a bird that fell to earth and burned, and yet from its ashes arose another bird. Jesus' executioners destroyed his earthly life, but a new and more glorious life came about as a result of his resurrection. Artists sometimes show this as an eagle rising out of a flame. Appearing in the ancient catacombs of the early Church is another symbol of the Resurrection, the peacock. The peacock has a spectacularly beautiful tail, which loses its beauty during the molting season. But when the molting season ends, a new and more beautiful tail appears. The allusion in this symbol is to the fact that through the Resurrection Christ's life became more beautiful than ever.

STATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION STATIONS OF LIGHT VIA LUCIS

We are all familiar with the Stations of the Cross. This has been a popular devotion which has thrived throughout the second Millennium of Christianity. Sometimes referred to by its Latin name, the Via Crucis is usually prayed on Fridays and perhaps on Sundays during the Forty Days of Lent, on the weekdays of Holy Week and on Good Friday. Many use it as a private devotion during the entire year. In the early centuries of the Church, pilgrims made a penitential journey to Jerusalem to walk and pray the Stations of the Cross, known as the “via dolorosa” (the way of sorrow). This practice is still carried out by pilgrims to the Holy Land.

The Via Lucis, the “Way of Light,” emerges for Triduum liturgies in the same spirit of devotion. Also known as the Stations of the Resurrection, this devotion parallels the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary just as the Via Crucis complement the Sorrowful Mysteries. These stations were discovered in the Catacombs of St. Callistus in Rome.

The Via Lucis is particularly suited for the Easter Season leading up to Pentecost. In a fashion similar to the Via Crucis and the four passion narratives, the Via Lucis reflects upon the final chapters of each of the four gospels, which narrate the appearances of the Risen Lord from Easter to Pentecost. Fourteen “Stations of Light” have been identified.

Called to be Crucifers and Lucifers

At the head of every liturgical procession are important ministers: light bearers (lucifers) And a cross bearer (crucifer). They not only lead us into becoming a worshipping assembly, but also they remind each one of us of our essential identity and our mission to carry the light and the cross which were entrusted to us at our baptism.

The Via Crucis reminds us that we are called to be crucifers. We take up the cross with the Risen Lord who teaches us and accompanies us through the challenges of daily life. The Via Lucis, a contemporary rediscovery of an ancient devotion, highlights the continuing presence of the Risen Lord, as we recognize His guidance and leadership through the events of our living. Walking the Via Lucis makes us lucifers, light bearers in a darkened world. This insight gives a whole new positive meaning to the name “Lucifer” that was limited previously only to Catholic literary traditions/ link with the name of the leader of the fallen angels.

Our celebration of the liturgy is meant to be the source and spring as well as the journey through the valleys and mountaintops of our faith. The devotional itinerary through the Via Crucis and Via Lucis echoes the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Walking the Via Crucis and the Via Lucis helps us to identify with the Lord who always walks ahead, behind and all around us.

REFLECTIONS THIRD WEEK OF EASTER

Seeking Jesus

Monday of the Third Week of Easter

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.” (Jn. 6:26-27)

This Scripture goes straight to the heart of our priorities in life. What are you working for? Are you working hard for the “food that perishes” and only working slightly for the “food that endures for eternal life?” Or vice versa?

For some reason, we can easily become obsessed with working for the “things” of this world. In the passage above, people were looking for Jesus because He had fed them the day before and they were hungry again. They were looking for food, literally. Jesus gently rebukes them, taking this as an opportunity to point out the real reason they should be seeking Him. The real reason is that He wants to provide the spiritual food of eternal life. What is the food Jesus wants you to seek? That’s a question you must let our Lord answer in your heart.

There are two key questions we should ponder here so as to let Him answer us. First, "What do I want in life?" Spend time with that. Spend time all by yourself and try to be honest with this question. What do you want? What is your heart's desire? If you are honest and if you let yourself face your desires you will most likely find that you have some desires, or even many, that are not put in your heart by Christ. Recognizing what these desires are is the first step to discovering what the true food is that Jesus wants to give you.

The second key question is this: "Are you seeking Jesus for the right reason?" When we are sick we seek a doctor for a cure. When a child is hurt, this child often runs to a parent for comfort. This is OK. We do the same. When we are lost and confused we often turn to God for answers and help. But, ideally, we will eventually seek God for more than just healing or comfort. We will ultimately seek God for the reason of love. We will seek Him simply because we love Him and want to love Him all the more.

Reflect, today, upon your desire to seek Jesus, or lack thereof. When you can begin to seek out Jesus simply because you love Him and want to love Him more, you are on the right road. And as you walk down that road, you find it is a road of the utmost delight and fulfillment.

Jesus, help me to seek You. Help me to seek You for the help and healing I need. But more than that, help me to seek You out of love. My Jesus, I do love You. Help me to love You more. Jesus, I trust in You.

Hunger and Thirst for the Eucharist

Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

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." (Jn. 6:35)

Wouldn't it be nice if you were never hungry or thirsty again? What's fascinating is that Jesus uses these very natural human experiences to teach us about Himself. He uses natural hunger and thirst to teach us that we long to be satisfied spiritually. And there is only one way to satiate these spiritual longings...through Him.

It is a good spiritual practice to reflect upon your natural longings as an analogy for your spiritual longings. Naturally speaking, we regularly get hungry and thirsty. We eat and drink, but several hours later we hunger and thirst again. This is a cycle we cannot avoid. Our body continually craves food and drink.

The same is true on a spiritual level. We cannot pray once and satisfy our spiritual longings forever. We cannot simply believe in Jesus and then be satisfied forever. Why? Because prayer and unity with Jesus is something that must take place daily throughout your day.

The Eucharist offers insights into this hunger and thirst in that it provides us with our "daily" food. It is a gift that we must daily seek. Some of the Sacraments are given to us only once (Baptism and Confirmation). But the Eucharist is a gift that we must continually consume and long for. The fact that we must continually go to Mass and receive the Eucharist tells us that our Christian life is not something that can be fulfilled by one definitive decision. Rather, it's something that needs daily nourishment and fulfillment.

What do you do to satisfy this Christian longing each and every day? Perhaps you cannot attend Mass every day, but do you seek to fulfill your Christian desire for Christ each and every day? Do you seek Him who is the Bread of Life every day? Do you seek to satiate your thirst with Christ each and every day?

Loving Jesus and following Him is a decision that must be renewed not only each day, it must also be renewed throughout your day. It must be renewed as often as you become physically hungry and thirsty.

Reflect, today, upon these natural longings you have for food and drink to continually remind yourself of your much deeper spiritual longing for Christ. Praying to Him, listening to Him and receiving Him into your soul is the food that satisfies like nothing else. Jesus is the true Bread of Life and your true Spiritual Drink. He is what you are made for. Let Him satisfy your deepest desires in life!

Lord, I do long for You. I long to be satisfied. Help me to turn to You at all times and in all things. Help me to always remember that You are what I need and You alone satisfy. Jesus, I trust in You.

Never Rejected, Always Loved!

Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

“I will not reject anyone who comes to me.” (Jn. 6:37)

This little line says much about our Lord’s Divine Mercy. It is a line repeated often in St. Faustina’s Diary of Divine Mercy and it’s a statement that many people need to hear.

Why is this important to hear? Because, very often, we can carry the burden of rejection. Without even realizing it, there are many who have experienced rejection in their life and, as a result, are afraid to be vulnerable in a relationship out of fear of being hurt. Once you have been hurt in a relationship, you proceed with caution. This hurt can come from a family member, spouse, friend or anyone we’ve tried to reach out to in love only to receive hurt and rejection. And that hurts.

Jesus’ words are especially important because they help to reassure us that Jesus is trustworthy. It is true that we can come to Him, open our hearts to Him, become completely vulnerable to Him, and He will treat us with the utmost tenderness, respect, kindness and care. Jesus will treat us with more care than we even treat ourselves!

Reflect upon these words of Jesus today. Say them over and over. “I will not reject anyone who comes to me.” Know that He wants you to come to Him and to open your heart to Him completely. Doing so will allow Him to **manifest His love for you and enable you to trust Him beyond what you ever imagined possible.**

Lord, I want to come to You in my sufferings and rejection. I know You are the Divine Healer and will bring comfort to my soul. Help me to trust You and to let You love me. Jesus, I trust in You.

Drawn to Jesus

Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

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.” (Jn. 6:44)

This Scripture passage reveals to us a wonderful spiritual principle we need to understand and live if we are to grow close to God. It’s the principle of being drawn to Jesus by the Father.

First of all, it’s important to understand the first part of what Jesus says: “No one can come to me unless...” This tells us that coming to Jesus in faith, growing in that faith, and growing in our love of God is not something we can do on our own. Coming to faith

is a response to God’s action in our life.

This is important to understand if we wish to establish an authentic relationship with Christ because it reveals to us the fact that we have to let God take the first step in that relationship. When we let Him do this, it's our responsibility to then respond.

Of course this does not mean we just sit back in a passive way waiting for God to reach out. God is constantly reaching out, constantly speaking and constantly drawing us to Himself. So our first responsibility is to tune into His gentle "wooing." This comes in the form of gentle promptings of grace inviting us to turn more completely to Him and to surrender more fully each and every day.

In our busy world it's so very easy to let ourselves become distracted by the many competing voices. It's easy to hear the pulling, and even pushing, of the world and all its enticements. The world has become quite good at penetrating our short attention spans and offering quick satisfactions that ultimately leave us empty.

But God's voice and His invitation are quite different. They are found in interior silence. However, we need not be in a monastery in order to achieve this interior silence. Rather, it's achieved by faithful periods of prayer each day, and a formed habit of turning to God in all things. It's achieved when we respond to God's calling, and then do it again, and again, and so forth. This builds a habit of being drawn, hearing, responding and being drawn in even closer so as to respond again.

Reflect, today, upon how well you listen to God. Try to find at least a few minutes (or more) of silence today. Close your eyes and listen. Listen to God speaking to you. When He draws you, respond to Him with much generosity. This is the best choice you can make each day!

Lord, please draw me in, draw me close and help me to recognize Your voice. As I hear You calling, help me to respond to You with much generosity. My life is Yours, dear Lord. Help me to desire You all the more. Jesus, I trust in You.

The Conviction of Jesus

Friday of the Third Week of Easter

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." (Jn. 6:52-53)

Certainly this passage reveals much about the Most Holy Eucharist, but it also reveals the strength of Jesus to speak the truth with clarity and conviction.

Jesus was facing opposition and criticism. Some were upset and challenging His words. Most of us, when we find ourselves under the scrutiny and wrath of others, will back down. We will be tempted to be overly concerned about what others say about us and about the truth we may be criticized for. But Jesus did exactly the opposite. He did not give in to the criticism of others. It's inspiring to see that, when Jesus was faced with the harsh words of others, He responded with even greater clarity and confidence. He took His statement about the Eucharist being His Body and Blood to the next level by saying, "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." This reveals a man of the utmost confidence, conviction and strength.

Of course, Jesus is God, so we should expect this from Him. But nonetheless, it is inspiring and reveals the strength we are all called to have in this world. The world we live in is filled with opposition to the truth. It's opposed to many moral truths, but it is also opposed to many of

the deeper spiritual truths. These deeper truths are things such as the beautiful truths of the Eucharist, the importance of daily prayer, humility, abandonment to God, putting God's will above all things, etc. We should be aware of the fact that the closer we grow to our Lord, the more we surrender to Him, and the more we proclaim His truth, the more we will feel the pressure of the world trying to steal us away.

So what do we do? We learn from the strength and example of Jesus. Whenever we find ourselves put in a challenging position, or whenever we feel as though our faith is being attacked, we must deepen our resolve to be all the more faithful. This will make us stronger and turns those temptations we face into opportunities for grace!

Reflect, today, upon the way that you react when your faith is challenged. Do you back down, give into fear and allow the challenges from others to affect you? Or do you strengthen your resolve when challenged and allow persecution to purify your faith? Choose to imitate the strength and conviction of our Lord and you will become a greater visible instrument of His grace and mercy.

Lord, give me the strength of Your conviction. Give me clarity in my mission and help me to serve You unwaveringly in all things. May I never cower when faced with the challenges of life but always deepen my resolve to serve You with all my heart. Jesus, I trust in You.

The Profound Teaching of the Holy Eucharist

Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (Jn. 6:66-68)

What a perfect response from Peter. The context of this story is quite fascinating and revealing. Jesus had just completed His beautiful and profound discourse on the Holy Eucharist stating clearly that His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink and that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life in you.

As a result of His teaching on the Eucharist there were many who "returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with Him." In other words, Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist was difficult for many to accept and believe.

Interestingly, after Jesus speaks this profound teaching on the Eucharist, and after many leave Him as a result, He does not backpedal or change what He said. Instead, He asks His Apostles if they wish to leave also.

This question by Jesus to the Apostles is important to understand. By asking it of them in a very direct way, Jesus is giving them complete freedom to choose. He does not pressure them to believe what He just taught. This is significant because the level of detachment that Jesus offers is a way of inviting a completely free acceptance, on the part of the Apostles, of His glorious teaching on the Eucharist. They are truly free to accept or reject it. It is this freedom that allows them to radically deepen their faith in Jesus.

Peter speaks up and gives a wonderful response. "Master, to whom shall we go?" These words of Peter reveal clearly two things. First, this was a difficult situation in that people were walking away from Jesus. But secondly, Peter and the other Apostles were aware that they must believe despite the difficulty. Just because many left Jesus and refused to accept His words was

no reason for the Apostles to leave Him, also. In fact, we can hear in Peter's words a manifestation of faith that they have come to believe in Jesus so completely that leaving Him would be utter foolishness. Where would they go? Why would they leave? Peter reaffirms his faith in Jesus even though following Him at that moment was not the "popular" thing to do. Reflect, today, upon your own level of commitment to Jesus. Know that you are completely free to follow Him or to leave Him. But if you choose to follow Him, do not do it half way. Know that Jesus' words are powerful, challenging and demanding. He wants you to believe in Him and follow Him with your whole heart and with profound commitment. Jesus alone has the words of eternal life and we must accept and believe those words with all our might.

Lord, to whom else shall I go if I do not follow You? You and You alone are the one whom I choose to believe in and follow. Help me to embrace all that You have taught and help me to freely choose You each and every day of my life. Jesus, I trust in You.

PRAYERS

A Prayer for Protection in Time of Pandemic

O Mary, you always brighten our path as a sign of salvation and of hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who, at the Cross, took part

In Jesus' pain while remaining steadfast in faith.

O loving Mother, you know what we need, and we are confident you will provide

For us as at Cana in Galilee.

Intercede for us with your Son Jesus, the Divine Physician, for those who have fallen ill,

For those who are vulnerable, and for those who have died.

Intercede also for those charged with protecting the health and safety of others and

For those who are tending to the sick and seeking a cure.

Help us, O Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we

Are told by Jesus, who took upon Himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows,

So as to lead us, through the Cross, to the glory of the Resurrection. Amen

Under thy protection we seek refuge, O Holy Mother of God.

In our needs, despise not our petitions, but deliver us always from

All dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

(Adapted from the prayer of Pope Francis)

SCHEDULE FOR THIS WEEK

Monday – Saturday 27-30 April 1 May

Daily Mass 8:30 a.m. Live streamed

Wednesday 29 April

Feast of St. Catherine of Siena Doctor of the Church

Service 7:00 p.m. Live streamed

Friday 1 May

First Friday Benediction & Adoration 7:00 p.m. Live streamed

