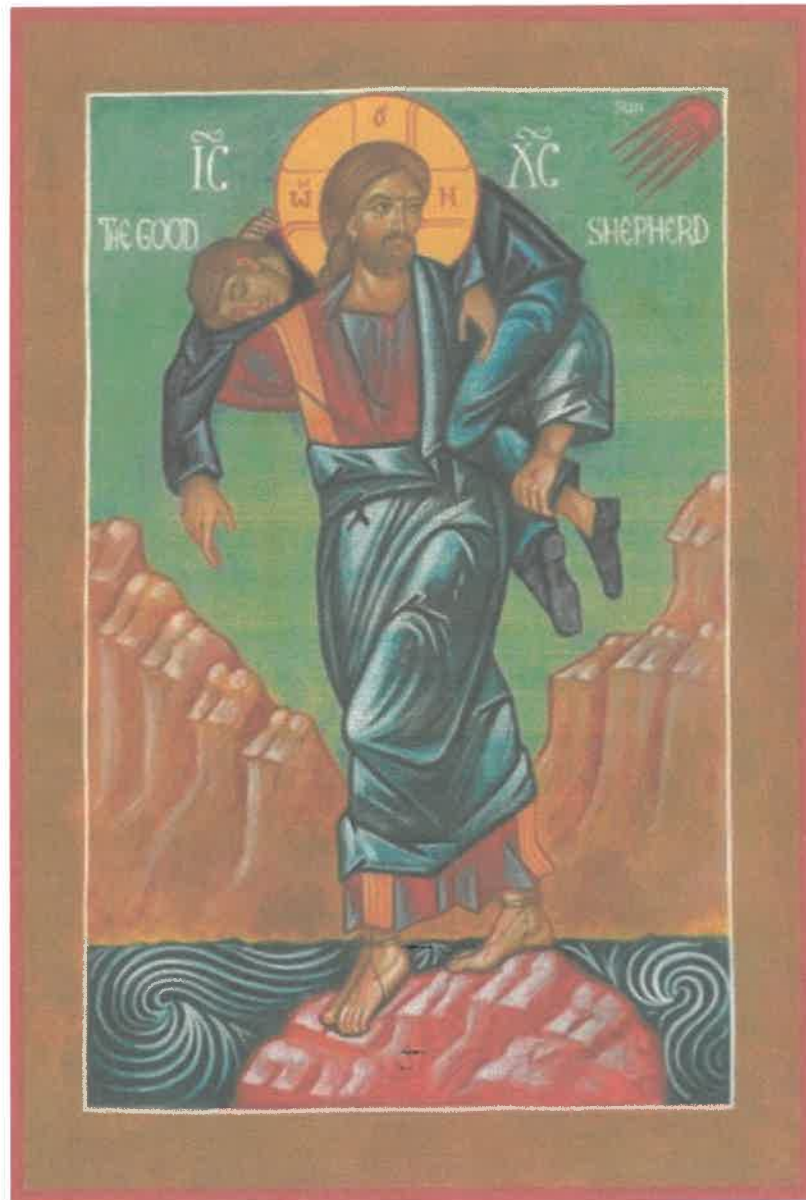


PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

24 – 25 APRIL 2021



SUNDAY REFLECTION

We are baptized 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' Today's liturgy invites us to reflect on the action of the divine Persons in our lives. It also urges us to review our fidelity to the promises made at baptism and at confirmation. Acting out of His infinite goodness and love, God the Father created us in His own image and likeness. Through baptism He adopted us. The second reading reminds us that we are now children of God. We are urged to reflect on God's boundless love. His love to us has been great. We ought to take John's words to heart and spend some time each day thinking about it

and our responsiveness to it. Faith enables us to have some understanding of our tremendous dignity. It does more. It gives a foretaste of the beatific vision which will be ours when we receive the fullness of eternal life.

While we are on earth there is work to be done. We may not remain aloof. The Christian community and each of the baptized are duty bound to radiate the glory of the resurrection. The first reading draws attention to Peter's docility to the Holy Spirit. We too are empowered by the same Spirit to follow the apostle's example. God expects each of us to do so with courage and enthusiasm.

In the gospel passage Jesus presents Himself as the good shepherd. His presence in the world is another expression of the Father's great love for us. Jesus was not sent to condemn the world but to lead all people to eternal life. He is a leader not a driver. Today He presents Himself as one who is utterly committed to the work assigned to Him by His Father. He defends and loves His flock to the point of self-sacrifice.

Jesus said 'My own know Me.' He is speaking of an intimate personal knowledge. Surely His words are an incentive to deepen our personal loving relationship with our good shepherd.

The power and love of God in Jesus and through the Holy Spirit are presented to us in today's readings. As Peter gives witness to the healing power of the living God, his words are guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. We can ask what healing we allow the Lord to bring to others through us? How well do we leave ourselves open to and listen to the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in varied circumstances of our own lives? And, in a world which often challenges or rejects the values of the kingdom, how brave are we in speaking out for those values before those who question them?

As God's children we are reminded in the Second Reading that we reflect the divine already. This honor is shared by all of us as children of the Father. The reading challenges us to live our lives accordingly, filled with the love that is His commandment. It is a love not just to be experienced but to be lived as an example for others. The truth of this love, the truth of the quality of our relationship with God, is to be seen in how we live out His commandments in the decisions and choices of our everyday lives.

If we accept Jesus as our guide and leader, our Good Shepherd, then we identify ourselves as members of one flock. Our unity and shared dignity is affirmed in this, just as the Second Reading affirmed our common status as children of God. The passage serves as a reminder as to who we should follow in our lives – the good Shepherd who genuinely cares for us the members of His flock, and not the false shepherds who will desert us in times of difficulty. In the decisions we make for our lives and for the life of our community, how much do we rely on the Lord and His teachings to guide us?

And it is important to also keep in mind that we are not the only flock. The love and leadership, the guidance offered by Jesus is for all. For those in other folds too. We are His witnesses to this.



STEWARDSHIP: To be good stewards we must be good shepherds, willing to lay down our lives for those committed to our care, not mere hired hands who run off, “leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf.”

READINGS FOR FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

2 MAY '21

Acts 9:26-31: After his meeting with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul tries to join the community in Jerusalem, but they are suspicious of him as their former persecutor, until Barnabas takes his part.

1 Jn. 3:18-24: John encourages us to have confidence in the Lord, who is greater and has more understanding of us than we have ever imagined.

Jn. 15:1-8: Jesus reveals Himself as the vine and His disciples as the branches. It is the Father who cares for the vine and, by pruning its branches, makes it healthy to bear abundant fruit.

PASCHAL CANDLE

The Paschal candle that Deacon Kevin led the procession into the church at the Easter Vigil is a dominant symbol for the Easter Season as it stands in the sanctuary. Tall, bright, decorative, stately, it creates the first light for the faithful and dispels the darkness which belies our sins. The Easter candle (Paschal candle) first announced the news of the resurrection as the Deacon proclaimed the Exultant. This was followed by the Glory to God, the Alleluia, not heard throughout the Lenten Season, the Gospel, the homily, and of course, the Eucharist. All join to make the same proclamation. Christ is risen!

So important is this message that it takes fifty days to celebrate. The Easter candle burns in our churches every day during these seven weeks, proclaiming: Christ is risen, and we too are called, to share in that resurrection.

There are two other very significant occasions when this Easter candle is lit and given a prominent place in our liturgies throughout the year: baptisms and funerals.

Whenever infants are baptized, we light the Easter candle. The resurrection of Christ foreshadows our own resurrection. Baptism incorporates us into the body of Christ and gives us a share in His resurrection.

Whenever the baptismal waters are poured, the Easter candle burns bright. Parents and godparents light a baptismal candle from the Easter candle. In doing so they symbolically accept the responsibility of keeping the flame of faith alive in the heart of the newly baptized teaching them the faith and how to live it out in the circumstances of everyday life. Parents carry this candle home, where it may shine on baptismal anniversaries to symbolize the first news of the risen Christ.

We also light the Easter candle at funerals. In the midst of our grief, we call upon the symbols which enliven our faith. Several images of baptism reappear at the funeral; the sprinkling with Holy Water, the placing of a white pall (symbolizing the white garment worn at baptism) over the casket and the lighting of the Easter candle. Christ rose from the dead so that we too might pass from death to life. Every death reminds us of Easter. And every Easter gives us hope that death is not the end, by the passage from darkness to eternal light.

THE YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH

Over the next couple of weeks it may prove helpful to look a little more closely at the theological significance of St. Joseph, this individual who receiving very little attention in sacred scripture.

A Theological Introduction

By Michael D. Griffin, O.C.D

The splendid manifestation of devotion to Saint Joseph that have occurred in ever-increasing measure during the last one hundred years call for a word of explanation. How can we explain this phenomena? Christian piety calls for more than enthusiasm in its devotion to a saint; it needs to be nourished with a better understanding of the rich insights that have been unlocked by exegetes and theologians, as well as the reflections of the saints. In view of the enormous spiritual advantages they derived from this devotion, the insights of the latter command our attention and respect.

How often the heart anticipates conclusions later drawn by learned theologians! Herein lies the greatness of the heart. But, conversely, the heart is often unsure and filled with doubts. In the case of devotion to Saint Joseph, has this not often been the case? Many love him spontaneously and deeply, but wonder if their belief and faith are tempered with the appropriate measure of discretion.

The interests of a saint are best served by steering a safe course between the danger of exaggerating his importance on the one hand, and the possibility of minimizing his greatness on the other. His true position in salvation history will, it is hoped, emerge from the study of the following: his place in Sacred Scripture; the writings of theologians; devotion to saint Joseph as proposed by the Church.

1. St. Joseph in Scripture

Sacred Scripture is the most authentic source we have for the study of the importance and significance of Saint Joseph in the present economy of salvation. The Magisterium of the

Church, the universal and proximate norm of all truth, bases its love for, and devotion to Saint Joseph on the data given in the pages of the inspired word of God.

What does Sacred Scripture tell us about Saint Joseph? Does it tell us very much? It would be misleading to gauge his importance by the number of words assigned to him in the sacred narrative. As is so often the case in the Bible, a few seemingly simple remarks say more than we can comprehend in a lifetime of study and reflection. True, the Bible does not give us an exhaustive picture of the saint, but then neither does it contain a definitive biography of Christ or his Mother. Sacred Scripture, however, does tell us all that we need to know about Saint Joseph, as well as the mission assigned him in the life of the people of God.

The following points are the main facts in the life of Saint Joseph that Sacred Scripture proposes as historically true.

St. Joseph was married to Mary, the Mother of God

When the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary announcing that she was to become the Mother of God, she was, according to the account given by St. Luke, "espoused to a man named Joseph". The wording of the text is common to all modern versions of the Bible. Commenting on this text, scripture scholars warn us that the word "espoused" is not to be equated with the word "engagement". The words espousal and engagement are allied terms that are related to marriage, but they are not perfectly synonymous. The word espousal refers to the making of vows of marriage rather than to the ceremonies that surround the wedding; it implies that the couple have, in the strict legal sense, entered upon the state of wedlock. Engagement, on the other hand, connotes only the "promise" of one day entering the state of matrimony, providing the present desires and wishes of the couple endure. Thus, to understand the phrase of Saint Luke "espoused to a man named Joseph" as meaning that Mary was engaged to him at the time, would not do justice to the text. St. Luke is simply saying that Mary and Joseph were already married when Mary became the Mother of God.

Why, then, does St. Luke use the word "espoused" instead of the word "married"? Would it not have been clearer and more simple for him to use the second?

It must be remembered that according to the Jewish custom of the time there were two steps that lead to marriage as we understand it today. First, the couple exchanged their *matrimonial consent* in a special ceremony. Today we would say they pronounced their marriage vows. In virtue of this they were joined together as man and wife in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the law. From that time they had all the rights and privileges accorded to husbands and wives. According to Jewish law if the man died, the woman was considered as his widow and was entitled to his inheritance. If the woman was unfaithful to him, she would be punished as an adulteress; neither could she remarry without first obtaining a bill of divorce.

The second step was the *solemnization* of the marriage or the celebration of the wedding festivities. According to the means of the couple, the wedding feast was celebrated as elaborately as possible. The man would come to the home of the bride and in public procession he would escort her to his home. Then they would begin their life together.

This second part of the ceremony took place many months after the exchange of the wedding vows. And it is for this reason that St. Luke tells us that they were "espoused" at the time of the

Annunciation. The meaning is clear. At the time of the apparition of the Angel they were not living together as man and wife for the wedding festivities had not as yet taken place, but they were married in the eyes of God since they had already exchanged matrimonial consent. How old St. Joseph was at the time he married Mary is a question of great interest to the modern mind because of the conflicting ideas expressed on this subject. For many centuries the idea prevailed that Joseph was an old man of eighty years when he married. Even today in some of our churches there are still statues and pictures that would appear to corroborate this view.

It is interesting to note that the earliest known paintings or pieces of sculpture in the catacombs show Joseph as a young man, probably no more than twenty-five years old. This trend continued until the fourth century. But from that time almost to modern times, Mary's husband is pictured as a man of advanced years. This raises the interesting question of why Joseph suddenly became an octogenarian in Christian art. There can be no doubt but that the change was deliberately introduced. In the fourth century the perpetual virginity of Mary was under attack, and by way of implication it was asserted that Joseph was the natural father of Christ. This claim was a serious distortion of divine revelation and was promptly refuted by the bishops of those times. History tells us that heresies die slowly and there follows a period of time in which there is a danger that the false doctrine will reappear. Hence the artists of the times were convinced that it was not advisable to depict Joseph as a young man for fear that the faithful would imagine him to be the natural father of Christ. Portraying him as a very old man, they thought, was the best way of upholding belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary and Joseph. This trend continued well into the twentieth century.


In recent decades there has been a change in thinking among religious artists. The modern artist, sensitive to the preferences of modern man, now prefers to represent Joseph as a strong and vigorous young man. This healthy trend accords with modern scriptural scholarship and has helped thinking Christians to reject as worthless fables many of the legends about St. Joseph that are contained in the apocryphal literature, especially the *Gospel of Pseudo Matthieu* and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*.

The belief that Mary was about fifteen years old when she became the Mother of Christ is very widely held by scripture scholars. Now who could seriously imagine God inspiring Mary to marry a man who was nearly eighty years old? How could he have been a real companion to her? Would he not have been more like a great-grandfather? Furthermore, the gospel assures us that the contemporaries of the holy family thought that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus. Is it likely that people would have come to such a conclusion had Joseph already been a very old man?

In addition, how could such an old man have worked as a carpenter to support his wife and child? Could he have taken the long journeys related in the gospel? How could he have protected his family on such trips? It is not necessary to portray Joseph as a decrepit old man in order to affirm his virginity, for virginity comes from virtue and the grace of God and not from debilitating old-age.

Is it possible to be more specific about his age at the time of his marriage? Yes, scholars of oriental history assure us that most Jewish men married when they were sixteen years old; they rarely deferred marriage beyond twenty-four. Thus in all likelihood Joseph was married when he was in his late teens.

To be continued next week



Novena to St. Joseph

O St. Joseph whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, I place in you all my interest and desires. O St. Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession and obtain for me, from your divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So that having engaged here below, your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of Fathers. O St. Joseph, I never weary contemplating you, and Jesus asleep in your arms; I dare not approach while he reposes near your heart. Press Him in my name and kiss His fine head for me, and ask Him to return the Kiss when I draw my dying breath. St. Joseph, patron of departing souls, pray for me. *Amen.*

The Prayer of Parents to St. Joseph for the Children



O Glorious St. Joseph, to you God committed the care of His only begotten Son amid the many dangers of this world.

We come to you and ask you to take under your special protection the children God has given us born and unborn.

Through holy baptism they become children of God and members of His Holy Church.

We consecrate them to you today, that through this consecration they may become your foster children.

Guard them, guide their steps in life, form their hearts after the hearts of *Jesus and Mary.*

St. Joseph, who felt the tribulation and worry of a parent when the Child Jesus was lost, protect our dear children for time and eternity.

May you be their father and counsellor. Let them, like Jesus, grow in age as well as in wisdom and grace before God and men.

Preserve them from the corruption of this world and give us the grace one day to be united with them in heaven forever.

Amen.

**SCHEDULE FOURTH WEEK of EASTER
SATURDAY 24 APRIL - SUNDAY 2 MAY**

Saturday 24 Apr Easter Week St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen Priest / Martyr

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper or Memorial, Easter Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II
Intention: Norma Bariso (Deceased)**

9:30 a.m. First Communion Retreat

1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Fourth Sunday of Easter

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

Sunday 25 Apr Fourth 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: Tom Emsley (Deceased)**

2:00 p.m. Brig Mass

Monday 26 Apr Day Off

6:00 p.m. Meeting

Tuesday 27 Apr Easter Weekday

**8:30 a.m. Mass Easter Preface II Eucharistic Prayer II
Intention:**

6:00 p.m. Meeting

Wednesday 28 Apr Easter Weekday St. Peter Chanel Priest, Martyr

St. Louis Mary de Montfort Priest

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
Intention:**

Thursday 29 Apr Easter Weekday St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin, Doc. Of Church

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

5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

**6:30 p.m. Mass Proper, Easter Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer II
Intention: Sharon**

Friday 30 Apr Easter Weekday St. Pius V Pope

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

5:00 p.m. Adoration & Confessions

Saturday 1 May Easter Weekday St. Joseph the Worker

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

10:00 a.m. First Communion Mass

1:00 p.m. First Communion Mass

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Fifth Sunday of Easter

Proper, Gloria, Creed, Easter Preface I & Eucharistic Prayer I

Sunday 2 May Fifth Sunday of Easter

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

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

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

2:00 p.m. Brig Mass

*St. Dominic
de
Guzman*

*"A man who governs his passions is master
of the world. We must either rule them, or
be ruled by them. It is better to be
the hammer than the anvil."*

*I am not capable of doing big
things, but I want to do everything,
for the greater glory of God.*

St. Dominic, Saint of the Church