

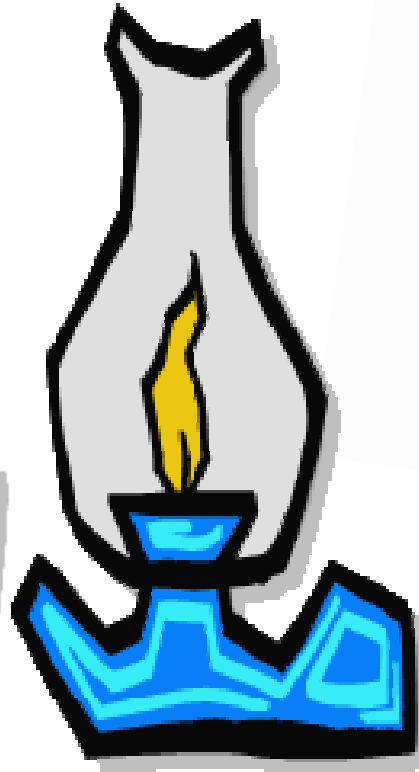
The Year of Mercy

The Light

of
St. Michael
the Archangel
Roman Catholic
Church
Lake Jackson,
Texas

Jesus said, "I am the
light of the world.
Whoever follows me will
never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of
life."

John 8:12



Adult Faith Formation

Spring 2016

(March — May 2016)



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Happy Easter! In this year, the Jubilee of Mercy, we hope you are having the best Lenten season ever.

We give a big congratulations to Fr. Leo on the coming 51st Anniversary of his ordination. And wish a very Happy Mother's Day to all members of our parish.

In this issue, you'll find, in *Clergy's Corner*, Fr. Leo, message for this Year of Mercy, and

Fr. Giovanni, invitation to reconcile with others. In *From the Deacon's Desk*, Deacon Gary explains the meaning of the decorations in the Church during this Lenten season and how our God is a God of second chances. In *Woman of the Year*, we salute our own JoAnn Forse for her outstanding service to the Brazosport area. In *A Conversion Story*, Adele Baxter shares about her conversion to Catholicism. In *Did You Know?* Richard Keistler continues his reflections on the Holy Rosary.

The *Liturgical Season* features the insights, from Pope Benedict XVI homilies from 2008, several excerpts from Magnificat, two from Elizabeth Betczynski, on the solemnities and feasts that we celebrate this season. In *From the Vatican*, we have excerpts from Pope Francis' homilies from recent dates. In *The Saints* we feature two saints that we celebrate this season. We also include a list of Bible Studies and Prayer Groups that you may consider joining.

Your comments are welcome. Please do not hesitate to contact the editors or any of the team members. On behalf of the Adult Faith Formation team we wish you a very **Happy Easter!**

Margarita Prinz

Happy Mother's Day!

Congratulations!

Fr. Leo - May 27
51st Anniversary of Ordination

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Jubilee Year (December 8, 2015—November 20, 2016)



Explanation of the Motto and the Logo (Year of Mercy)

The motto and the logo come together to offer a synthesis of the ideal underlying the Jubilee Year.

The **motto** *Merciful Like the Father* (taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (cfr. Lk 6:37-38).

The **logo**, the work of Jesuit Father Marko I. Rupnik, is in itself a concentrated *summa theologiae* of the theme of mercy. It represents, in fact, an image very dear to the early Church, i.e. the love of Christ who brings the mystery of his incarnation to fulfillment with the redemption. The logo has been conceived in such a way that the Good Shepherd touches humanity's flesh so deeply and with such love as to bring about a radical change. One feature of the logo

which cannot fail to emerge is how, having raised humanity onto his shoulders in a gesture which demonstrates extreme mercy, the eyes of the Good Shepherd and those of Adam become united so that Christ sees through the eyes of Adam, and vice-versa. Every man and woman thus discovers in Christ, the new Adam, his or her own humanity and the future to come, contemplating in the eyes of Christ the Father's love.

The scene is set within a *mandorla* (an almond shape), a device dear to early and medieval iconography, which underlines the presence of the two natures—divine and human—in Christ. The three concentric ovals, progressively lighter in color as they extend towards the outer edge, suggests the dynamic by which Christ carries humanity out of the night of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.



Clergy's Corner



I don't know if you came to the live drama in the Hall on January 18. It was the story of *St. Faustina* and the revelations of the Divine Mercy. We had 450 people in attendance. Everyone really enjoyed it. What a wonderful way to begin this Holy Year of Mercy!

I was asked to come and pray with Maria Vargo (*St. Faustina*) before the play started. What a talented young lady!

After the presentation I visited with the couple sitting next to me whom I didn't know. They were members of another church. The wife was so touched, she told me she was going to say the Chaplet of Divine Mercy every day! I said....."Praise God"!

We all can do something for the Holy Year. Something that life presents us. Maria Vargo has her mission and the non-Catholic Lady has hers. What is yours? Maybe a prayerful meditation will reveal it to us. Pax Tecum!

Msgr. Leo Wleczyk



I AM NOT A MURDERER (MATTHEW 5:21). I want to share with you today from Matthew chapter 5, the next sections of the Sermon on the Mount. I've titled this passage today "I am not a Murderer" because I really think that's what our Lord is talking about.

Murder is really a very serious problem in our world, getting worse all the time. And that doesn't say anything about another form of murder, which is suicide. That doesn't account for abortion, either, and since abortion was legalized there have been at least 6 million babies

murdered.

We do this all the time. And we say, "Oh, you know, that category of people that murder, I would never do that." And yet sometimes we get so angry on the inside with someone. We mock people. We may curse people. We may feel bitterness toward people. We may nurse grudges toward people. We have un-reconciled feelings toward people. And our Lord Jesus is saying, "That is the same as murder," because God looks at the heart.

And so when He says, "I say unto you," He swept aside all the rabbinical rubbish, and He put the emphasis where the emphasis belonged. He stripped them of their self-righteousness. He said, in effect, "Who is a murderer? I'll tell you who is a murderer; anybody who is angry with his brother, anybody. You're a murderer." That's pretty straightforward, isn't it? Pretty devastating! It strips the Pharisees bare, and it doesn't do a bad job on us either, frankly. Anger is murder's root, and our Lord says anger and murder merit equal punishment. In verse 22, He is saying, "You're in danger of the judgment. You're in danger of the council. You're in danger of hell fire."

Listen to 1 John 3:15. "Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer." Did you hear that? "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer." And brother here is used in a broad and generic sense, in terms of social relationships, people in your life, not your spiritual brother because nobody listening to Jesus at that point would understand the brotherhood of believers. You have hatred, you're a murderer. You have anger, you're a murderer. And in God's eyes, it's no different than a man who goes out and does the crime.

I don't know a civil court in the world that would give the death penalty to somebody for getting angry. They may give it throughout history for murder, but not for anger. But if God's calling the verdicts, and God's sitting on the throne, He is saying in effect that the one who is angry is as guilty as the one who kills.



Listen. Who is a murderer? Ask yourself, who is a murderer? Have you ever been angry? You ever called anybody a name? Maybe your wife or husband or child; somebody under your breath. Have you ever cursed anybody? Have you ever come to church to worship while you had bitterness in your heart? Such hypocrisy! Have you ever had a grudge with somebody and you dragged it all the way to the court and you never settled it? And you weren't faithful? Then you're the same as a murderer because you allowed conflict, bitterness, hatred, anger to enter into your heart.

Let me ask a second question. First question, who is a murderer? Second question, who deserves death and hell? Who does, who deserves death and hell? You do, I do, and we're all guilty of murder. We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and the wages of sin is what? Death. And so you say, "Well, how do we escape? I mean if we're all murderers and no murderer will inherit the kingdom, if we're all murderers, and we all deserve death and hell, then how do we escape? I mean we've all worshiped in hypocrisy. We've all been angry. We've all said malicious things. We've all thought a curse, or said a curse. We've all been unreconciled to a brother. We've all done that. What are we going to do?"

May God grant us to have the power to overcome anger and to have the power to reconcile with a brother.

Fr. Giovanni Nguyen

From the Deacon's Desk



I hope this installment of *The Light* finds you having the Best Lent Ever. I would like to recall a few of the points I made on Ash Wednesday as we began our Lenten journey. Please take a second to perform a quick checkup on where you are and where you hoped to be.

Just like Matthew Kelly says in the opening chapter of his book *Rediscover Jesus*, "One of the things I love about our faith is that our God

is a God of second chances, fresh starts, and new beginnings." So no matter if your Lent did not start well, it is not too late to begin. God has called you to this place, at this time to begin again. God is merciful. His mercy has no beginning and it has no end. It is marked by some very significant events which we recall. Our decorations in the church focus on the cradle and the cross tied together by a flowing purple cloth. The cradle represents God's most vivid act of mercy toward his creation, the gift of his son Jesus. The cross depicts Jesus' total sacrifice of mercy in giving his ALL to redeem humankind. The purple cloth flowing from the cradle down to the cross serves to tie Jesus' birth to his mission... to die and rise. But the cloth doesn't stop there... it continues down to the people. And like that cloth, God's mercy flows down to the people below. We will hear several times in Lent how God shows us His mercy by continually calling us back and giving us another chance. The God of second chances. No matter what we have done or what we have failed to do, God never stops loving us and He continues to pour out his mercy on us.

Lent is that special time of year when we examine our relationship with Jesus and ask Him how He would like us to grow closer to Him through this very blessed season. This is what we must remember - Lent is about a relationship with Jesus Christ - not just about giving things up! We have a chance to be with Jesus these next 40 days and to allow Him to transform us into Himself through our fasting, almsgiving and prayer. This transformation must involve our being crucified with Jesus, so that we may rise with Him when we celebrate Easter.

As I just mentioned, the three traditional practices of Lent are fasting, almsgiving and prayer. I would encourage you to do something in each of these areas. Most people give up something, like chocolate or soft drinks or coffee. And that is OK, but it is not enough. When it



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comes to fasting, we need to look at where our sins are, and then give up something that will help us deal with that sin. Fasting should help us to die to self and sin, so that we can live more fully for God and others. So let the cradle represent your new birth this Lent and whatever you give up, let that be your cross...your sacrifice that will allow you to draw closer to Jesus.

Almsgiving is something that we should be doing all year, but most especially during Lent. This means taking care of the poor. This would be a great time to adopt a Third World child, through one of the many agencies that do offer this. As a parish we will participate in the Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl. Be sure to pick up a Rice Bowl and fill it with the money you would have spent on that soft drink or latte you choose to give up during Lent.

The next practice must be the most important one, and that is prayer. We need to be people of prayer! You can decide to read the Bible every day, go to daily Mass, say the rosary, or say the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Last year I challenged each and every person to have the Best Lent Ever. I hope you will join me and thousands of others as we REDISCOVER JESUS this lent through Matthew Kelly's book and the daily inspirational videos at DynamicCatholic.com. However, God is calling you to grow in intimacy with Him through prayer; Just DO IT! Just make sure you take time to LISTEN more than talk. More than anything, this is what God calls us to do this Lent! Let the cradle represent your new birth this Lent and whatever you give up, let that be your cross...your sacrifice that will allow you to know God's mercy, to Rediscover Jesus and return His mercy to others.

Deacon Gary Forse

Woman of the Year



On Thursday, February 25, 2016, our own JoAnn Forse was honored as the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Woman of the Year in recognition of her outstanding service to the Brazosport. She said it was a very humbling experience. She had no idea but, thinking back, she said that there were some signs that could have given her an indication that something was up, but she was completely surprised.

It started when her son, our Deacon Gary, had called to invite her to a dinner on Thursday. He told her that he will be doing the invocation prayer for a meeting at the Civic Center and that it will be nice if she was with him. She said, "Sure, I don't have anything going on that night." Then Tim, her youngest son, called from Houston about coming to town and wanting to spend the night with her on Thursday also. As it turns out, he had also planned on going to the dinner. When they got to the dinner, she walks to the table and Fr. Leo was also there. She asked why is Fr. Leo here and someone said that he just likes to attend dinners. It was a very humbling experience to hear the main speaker saying what I had done for the community.

JoAnn said that it was Clarence, her late husband, who was her inspiration. His stories touched my heart. He would go to the Sea Center and come back to tell me about how much fun he had with the kids that were visiting. One time he came home sad because a small child was there without a coat and it was cold. From then on he started to take jackets to the center in case there was another child that needed one. He was always willing to help where needed and often allowed her to help.

JoAnn's neighbors love her! She's been living in the same house since 1955. It was the



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first one to be built in her neighborhood. She worked for Dr. Johnson, the first Lake Jackson pediatrician, for 27 years and 10 more for Dr. Wang before really becoming involved with volunteering.

JoAnn has been an inspiration to all of us. She is always willing to lend a hand to anyone in need and she does it with a smile. She always gives a hundred percent to everything she is involved with – and it is a lot! At 80+ years old, she is still involved at the Sea Center, the Museum, Theresians, Catholic Daughters of America, Women of St. Michael, visiting the sick and home bound to bring them communion, chapel hour, and also sets apart an hour or more for personal prayer every day. Such an inspiration! Thank you JoAnn for giving yourself to all of us. May God continues to shower you with many blessings.

Conversion Story

By Adele Baxter:

I have believed in Christ since my grandmother St. Claire introduced me to him as a very young child at a little Presbyterian Church near her farm in Porterville, Pennsylvania. I remember begging her so that I could receive communion in that church. I remember wanting to be a full member of that church. My parents did not attend any church. I knew my mother believed, but my father said he didn't believe. I tried many times to convince him there is a God. When I was at home with my parents in Pittsburgh I would get up early on Sunday mornings and go to a local Presbyterian Church a few blocks from our home. I got up early on Sunday mornings while my family slept so I could attend Sunday School. I went there so I could sing, "Jesus Loves Me" with the other children. I truly believed Jesus did love me. God was part of my life in a very real way.

I came from a broken home as my parents separated when I was about 9 or 10 years of age. My mother moved my brother and I a lot over the teenage years. During those years I searched for a church home and visited many different churches and many different faiths. Usually it depended where my friends went to church. I was 16 the first time I visited a Catholic Church. It was an awesome experience for me. I found peace there and a reverence in the people attending. They knelt in prayer. Everyone was so deep in prayer. When the Priest raised the host I sensed God's presence. It was a very special moment and that had a profound effect on me. I loved the atmosphere, the candles flickering, the cross of Christ, and the stained glass windows depicting Christ's life. I felt God's presence. When the service was over many people stayed and knelt in prayer. I wanted that. I wanted more of God in my life.

A couple of years after that experience I met a very special young man who would later become my husband. He happened to be Catholic. I did not become Catholic until several years after we married. I did attend Mass with him and became a Catholic when I turned 21. I had promised my mother I would not join a church until that age.

We had children and my faith grew as I took the children to many Holy hours and made missions. Seeking God in prayer became a major part of my life. Being able to receive the body of Christ was so wonderful to me. I developed a deep love for Christ in the Eucharist, and even felt a special glow and warmth when I received Communion.

Our oldest daughter, Virginia Gail became ill with leukemia at the age of 12 and a half. She was gone in 7 weeks. For the next 10 years I struggled with my beliefs. While Gail was ill I told God that I would accept HIS will for this special little girl who loved him so much. But my heart felt like it was broken beyond repair. Almost daily I went to the cemetery and cried bitter tears; I wanted her back, I wanted to hold her one more time. During this time I attended Mass, but didn't feel that glow anymore when I received Christ in the Eucharist. I only went out of



obedience.

Some years later things changed when my husband and I attended a Marriage Encounter. At the closing Mass we gathered around the Lords table, said the Lord's Prayer, and received the Eucharist. WOW! In a split second everything changed. I felt tremendous love in my heart for Christ and especially for all present celebrating that Mass. I was changed forever!!!

We went to Mass the following Sunday and as the scriptures were read, the words seemed to jump off the page. It was as if I had never heard them before.

I feel a peace and joy in my faith even though many sad things have happened in my life. I feel the presence of Christ on a daily basis. I pray daily for my family and loved ones. I am so grateful for the gift of faith that came to me as a little child and has seen me through it all.

Did you Know?



By Richard Keistler,

Did you know that there is another beautiful, Scripture-based set of Mysteries available to all of us who pray the Holy Rosary? My last article for *The Light* explained the World Peace Rosary designed and popularized by Bishop Fulton Sheen in the 1950's. The Mission Mysteries

were also an outgrowth of the Cold War of the 1950's, combined with traditional Roman Catholic mission work.

The Mission Mysteries, as far as I have been able to discover, were first introduced to world by The Maryknolls, a missionary order. I went through RCIA and conversion to this faith in the latter part of 2010. One of the first Rosaries I purchased was a World Peace Rosary I'd ordered. When it arrived, there was a small card in the box with the Rosary with the Mission Mysteries. I learned them right along with the four 'main' sets of Mysteries.

What is the value of these Mysteries? I like to use them as a 'second' set of Mysteries. Often, even though I've prayed the appropriate set of Mysteries for the day of the week, I'll find myself in the mood to pray another set later in the day. After all, Saint Pio was known to often pray thirty or more sets of Mysteries every day!

Now, I've seen these Mission Mysteries in different orders, but they are always the same set. I'll present them here as I learned them. They'll all be familiar to you.

FIRST MISSION MYSTERY: The Visit of the Magi. Matthew 2:1-11. This Mystery tells the story of Herod's treachery, and God's intervention to protect the baby Jesus.

SECOND MISSION MYSTERY: Jesus With the Samaritan Woman. John 4:28. The familiar story of our Christ interacting at Jacob's Well with the woman with a scandalous past.

THIRD MISSION MYSTERY: Jesus Cures the Centurion's Servant. Luke 7:2. The Centurion demonstrated a faith greater to our Christ than any other he'd met.

FOURTH MISSION MYSTERY: The Conversion of Paul. Acts 9:20. The well-known story of the conversion of Saul, the Christian-killer, to Paul, a saint for Christ.

FIFTH MISSION MYSTERY: Jesus Sends Out His Disciples. Mark 16:15. Christ himself instructs and motivates his disciples to become fishers of men far beyond anywhere they'd been before.

I have found these Mission Mysteries to be an ongoing pleasure to pray, and another way to remember the life of our Christ and Savior. I hope you will learn and enjoy them also.



The Liturgical Season

St. Joseph

Solemnity, March 19



St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster father of Jesus, is also known and celebrated in the Catholic world as the patron saint of a holy death, of workers, of families, of home sales, and of adoptive fathers.

On March 19, on the feast of St. Joseph, Catholics of southern Italian descent honor him with an age-old tradition called St. Joseph's altar. History has it that the tradition began on the Italian island of Sicily. There was a severe drought that ruined the harvest and caused a famine. The Sicilians prayed a novena to Saint Joseph, the Patron Saint of the Family, and prayers were answered when the famine and the drought receded. The Sicilians wanted to express thanks to St. Joseph, and they did it by offering all they had then – food. Originally, the food from the altar was given to the poor.

Today, a three-tiered altar, representing the Holy

Trinity, is laden with braided breads shaped like a cane as St. Joseph's staff, a cross to recall the Crucifixion and Resurrection, a wreath-shaped bread to represent the crown of thorns, and a heart to remember God's abundant love for us. The altar contains a whole baked/smoked fish, fresh fruits, vegetables, olives, Italian cookies, and dyed eggs in breads, in anticipation of Easter. Also, elaborately shaped fig pastries, decorated cakes, candles, flowers and Holy Family statues adorn the altar.

At St. Michael's parish, the celebration of the St. Joseph's altar began as a way to perpetuate the customs and foods of Sicily, and more importantly, to honor St. Joseph.

Parishioner Mike Latino, who is of Sicilian descent, and his wife Kathy, planned the first event 18 years ago, and it continues today as a parish-wide celebration.

As is the custom, spaghetti with meatless marinara sauce, sprinkled with seasoned breadcrumbs to symbolize the sawdust from St. Joseph's carpentry workroom, is served along with hard-boiled eggs, Italian seasoned vegetables, bread, salad, dessert, and drinks. The tradition of no meat has been carried on to this day because the feast day is always during Lent and because Sicilians living on an island usually had little meat to eat.

After dinner the perishables, food and flowers, are given away to those who are present. However keeping with the tradition of the original altar, here at St. Michael's, donations are accepted for the St. Vincent DePaul Society, who in turn distributes help to the poor.

This year's celebration will take place after the 11:00 Mass on Sunday March 6th. There are many opportunities for involvement: baking recipes at the church kitchen, or at home, setting up tables and the altar, decorations, shopping for groceries, food preparation, and many other activities. Helpers are encouraged to contact Kathy Albert, 979-583-6167 or kealbert@academicplanet.com or the parish office, 979-297-3041.



Holy Week

March 20-26



The following excerpts were taken from Pope Benedict XVI homilies in March 2008:

Dear brothers and sisters, year after year the Gospel passage for **Palm Sunday** recounts Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Together with his disciples and an increasing multitude of pilgrims he went up from the plain of Galilee to the Holy City. Evangelists have handed down to us three proclamations of Jesus concerning his Passion, like steps on his ascent, thereby mentioning at the same time the inner ascent that he was making on this pilgrimage. Jesus was going toward the temple – toward the place where God, as Deuteronomy says, had chosen to "make his name dwell" (cf. 12: 11; 14: 23). God who created heaven and earth gave himself a name; indeed, he made himself almost tangible to human beings. No place can contain him, yet for this very reason he gave himself a place and a name so that he, the true God, might be personally venerated as God in our midst. We know from the account of the 12-year-old Jesus that he loved the temple as his Father's house, as his paternal home. He now visits this temple once again but his journey extends beyond it: the final destination of his climb is the Cross. It is the ascent described in the Letter to the Hebrews as the ascent towards the tent not pitched by human hands but by the Lord, which leads to God's presence. The final climb to the sight of God passes through the Cross. It is the ascent toward "love to the end" (cf. Jn 13: 1), which is God's true mountain, the definitive place of contact between God and man.

During his entry into Jerusalem, the people paid homage to Jesus as the Son of David with the words of the pilgrims of Psalm 118[117]: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mt 21: 9). He then arrived at the temple. There, however, in the place that should have been taken up by the encounter between God and man, he found livestock merchants and money-changers who occupied this place of prayer with their commerce... Indeed, the God of Israel was precisely the one God of all peoples. And although pagans did not enter, so to speak, into the Revelation, they could however, in the atrium of faith, join in the prayer to the one God. The God of Israel, the God of all people, had always been awaiting their prayers too, their seeking, and their invocations... This was the idolatry Jesus came up against in the face of which he cites Isaiah: "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Mt 21: 13; cf. Is 56: 7), and Jeremiah: "But you make it a den of robbers" (Mt 21: 13; cf. Jer 7: 11). Against the wrongly interpreted order, Jesus with his prophetic gesture defends the true order which is found in the Law and the Prophets.

Today, all this must give us, as Christians, food for thought. Is our faith sufficiently pure and open so that starting from it "pagans", the people today who are seeking and who have their questions, can intuit the light of the one God, associate themselves in the atriums of faith with our prayers and, with their questions, perhaps also become worshippers? Does the awareness that greed is idolatry enter our heart too and the praxis of our life?...

And then there are children who pay homage to Jesus as the Son of David and acclaim him the Hosanna. Jesus had said to his disciples that to enter the Kingdom of God it was essential to become once again like children. He himself, who embraces the whole world, made himself little in order to come to our aid, to draw us to God. In order to recognize God, we must give up the pride that dazzles us, that wants to drive us away from God as though God were our rival. To encounter God it is necessary to be able to see with the heart. We must learn to see with a child's heart, with a youthful heart not hampered by prejudices or blinded by interests. Thus, it is in the lowly who have such free and open hearts and recognize Jesus, that the Church sees her own image, the image of believers of all ages.



Holy Thursday



An excerpt from Magnificat Holy Week 2015 by Léon Bloy:

Try to imagine a man of action some sort of explorer, about to set forth on a journey. His powers of persuasion have aroused a few enthusiasts who have decided to follow him. The start of a journey is a triumph. In towns and villages flags are out, there are displays of lights, the bold travelers are fêted. The very countryside revels over their passing through it.

Yet the joy soon dims. The wayfarers enter new lands of which know nothing, understand nothing, and cares less. Sometimes also our travelers arouse misgivings.

Their passionate desire for the Yea or Nay of the Gospels, excluding all other forms of discourse, assuredly does not recommend them. Little by little the food and fine wines are replaced by potato peelings, and the contents of chamber pots succeed the flowers.

The enthusiasm of his companions is already wholly extinguished. Several of them have withdrawn on various pretexts and have not returned. The faithful few, in their turn, seek means and flee without too greatly disgracing themselves. They had not foreseen that there would be suffering.

Still, those who are left resign themselves from shame or from pride. As long as there continue to be human dwelling and men good or bad, a little effort still makes the journey bearable.

But now it happens that both the one and the other become sparse. We are entering into the desert, into solitude. Here are Cold, Darkness, Hunger, Thirst, vast Weariness, dreadful Sadness, the Agony, and the Bloody Sweat.

The rash traveler looks for his companions. He understands, then, that it is God's good pleasure that he be alone amid torments, and he goes into the black immensity, bearing his heart before him like a torch!

Léon Bloy (†1917) was a French novelist, essayist, pamphleteer, and poet.

Good Friday



An excerpt from Magnificat Holy Week 2015 by Pierre-Marie Dumont:

Entitled *The Entombment*, this work is in fact a "lamentation," a word that refers to "the weeping women." The artist has set the scene in the tomb, just as the shroud is about to enclose Christ's face. The apostles after betrayal and denial, have fled. Only the women, the four Marys, remain. Mary Magdalene is recognizable by her hair: flame red and worm loose. Mary the mother of James the Lesser supports the Mother of Jesus, and strikes her forehead in a gesture of desolation. Mary of Nazareth, wears a widow's veil. With clasped hands and closed eyes, she contemplates in her heart this mystery of mysteries. Her beautiful carved face seems etched by her seven sorrows. Finally Mary Salome, wife of Zebedee and

mother the James and John, throws herself on the mortal remains of her Savior.

These four women at the tomb well illustrate the four attitudes of the Christian soul as it contemplates the mysteries of Christ: pure love, compassion, faith, and self-abandonment.



Holy Saturday



*An excerpt from Magnificat Holy Week 2015 by
Monsignor Romano Guardini:*

We are accustomed to accepting the course of the Lord's life on earth as predetermined. Because it was as it was, we conclude that it was meant to be so. We judge everything by its outcome and forget

how monstrous, in the eyes of both God and man, the means by which it was accomplished. We must strip ourselves of our customary callousness and realize how frightful the whole procedure was, how hardened men's hearts, how paltry Jesus' reception!

Now until we have felt our way back to this attitude will we understand Christ's Word: But this is your hour and the power of darkness (Lk 22:53). He knew that, in the analysis, mankind's unique, limitless possibility was not frustrated by human will alone. For this, humans, in spite of all their presumption and violence, are much too insignificant.

It is incomprehensible that things could go as they did when, after all, he was who he was! Why was none of those in power receptive and courageous? Why was no one there to lead the people to Christ? Why were his disciples, humanly speaking, so inadequate?

Who is this God who seems to lack power to bring about his Son's due reception? What a strangely disturbing impression of weakness he makes! And what wicked, dogged power is this thing called "world" that is capable of hardening itself against God's summons and cold-bloodedly making an end of his envoy? What kind of God must this be to remain silent before such things? We live so thoughtlessly that we no longer feel the impact of such unheard conduct. How do men imagine the advent of divinity on earth?...

Surely we begin to feel the otherness of Christianity. Those other "divinities" were earthly powers, and earth recognizes and loves what is hers. When something truly from elsewhere comes, how different the response! Gradually we sense what it must be to be a Christian: to be allegiance-bound to such a God in a world that is as it is. No wonder it means estrangement. And doesn't "world" in reality mean ourselves – not only that which is about us? That in us which is close to the divine is somehow alien to us, and we have good grounds for the Christian fear that what happened once might be repeated in us: the second fall, the closing of our own hearts to God!

Monsignor Guardini († 1968) was born in Italy and became a renowned professor of philosophy and theology in Germany.

Easter



An excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI homilies in March 2008:

I have risen, I am still with you. Alleluia! Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus, crucified and risen, repeats this joyful proclamation to us today: the Easter proclamation. Let us welcome it with deep wonder and gratitude!...

In these words, at the rising of the Easter sun, the Church recognizes the voice of Jesus himself who, on rising from death, turns to the Father filled with gladness and love, and exclaims: My Father, here I am! I have risen, I am still with you, and so I shall be for ever; your Spirit never abandoned me. In this way we can also come to a new understanding of other passages from the psalm: "If I climb the heavens, you are there; if I descend into the underworld, you are there ... Even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as clear as day; for you, darkness is like light" (Ps 138:8,12). It is



true: in the solemn Easter vigil, darkness becomes light; night gives way to the day that knows no sunset. The death and resurrection of the Word of God incarnate is an event of invincible love, it is the victory of that Love which has delivered us from the slavery of sin and death. It has changed the course of history, giving to human life an indestructible and renewed meaning and value...

Dear Christian brothers and sisters in every part of the world, dear men and women whose spirit is sincerely open to the truth, let no heart be closed to the omnipotence of this redeeming love! Jesus Christ died and rose for all; he is our hope – true hope for every human being. Today, just as he did with his disciples in Galilee before returning to the Father, the risen Jesus now sends us everywhere as witnesses of his hope, and he reassures us: I am with you always, all days, until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20). Fixing the gaze of our spirit on the glorious wounds of his transfigured body, we can understand the meaning and value of suffering; we can tend the many wounds that continue to disfigure humanity in our own day. In his glorious wounds we recognize the indestructible signs of the infinite mercy of the God of whom the prophet says: it is he who heals the wounds of broken hearts, who defends the weak and proclaims the freedom of slaves, who consoles all the afflicted and bestows upon them the oil of gladness instead of a mourning robe, a song of praise instead of a sorrowful heart (cf. Is 61:1,2,3). If with humble trust we draw near to him, we encounter in his gaze the response to the deepest longings of our heart: to know God and to establish with him a living relationship in an authentic communion of love, which can fill our lives, our interpersonal and social relations with that same love. For this reason, humanity needs Christ: in him, our hope, "we have been saved" (cf. Rom 8:24)...

Dear brothers and sisters! Let us allow the light that streams forth from this solemn day to enlighten us; let us open ourselves in sincere trust to the risen Christ, so that his victory over evil and death may also triumph in each one of us, in our families, in our cities and in our nations. Let it shine forth in every part of the world... Let us invoke the fullness of his Paschal gifts, through the intercession of Mary who, after sharing the sufferings of the passion and crucifixion of her innocent Son, also experienced the inexpressible joy of his resurrection. Sharing in the glory of Christ, may she be the one to protect us and guide us along the path of fraternal solidarity and peace... Happy Easter!

Divine Mercy Sunday

Solemnity, April 3

What is Mercy?

An excerpt from the writings of Father John Dominic Corbett, O.P.:

Mercy is the form love takes when it encounters misery. It is first of all a form of love because it wants what is good for the one who is loved. Keeping this in mind can keep us from some subtle and corrupting mistakes. Mercy is not condescension. Instead it is a kind of restoration. Imagine someone of royal lineage who has recently fallen upon hard times. He is wandering and lost and perhaps suffering from a form of amnesia. He can not tell you his name. If you encounter this person, you feel compelled to restore something lost. You don't love the fact that he doesn't have access to who he really is. You love what he is and who he is, and so you strive to restore who he really is.

God knows us as he intends us to be; his sons, his daughters, his friends. He knows that he has fitted us for himself and that no other destiny for us will do. When he knows us as sinners and as unable to secure our own deliverance from our sins, he knows us as needing his mercy. But his mercy is, in a way, called for, not by reason of our own merits, but because of his own fatherly affection for us and because he sees the change in us that his father's love will produce. His mercy reflects God's true judgment on us as being not his "undeserving poor: but his own beloved children.



The Annunciation of the Lord

Solemnity, April 4



An excerpt from the Catholic Answer Book of Mary, the Annunciation by Rev. Romanus Cessario, O.P.

The Annunciation always falls on March 25, exactly nine months before the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. However, the celebration is transferred to a different day if it falls on a Sunday of Lent, during Holy Week, or during the octave of Easter. The Church considers Masses for the Sundays of Lent, any time in Holy Week, and any time from Easter through the Sunday after Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday) to be so important that even this Marian feast cannot replace one of them. So, when the

Annunciation falls on a Sunday in Lent (before Palm Sunday), it is transferred to the following Monday. If it falls on Palm Sunday or on any day in Holy Week, it is transferred to Low Monday, the Monday after the Sunday after Easter. As such, this year we celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord on Monday, April 4, 2016.

The Annunciation celebrates the beginning of our Christian faith. And even at the inauguration of our salvation, the divine plan involves the Virgin Mary in our sanctification. The angel Gabriel makes this clear in three statements that he addresses to the Blessed Virgin: "The Lord [the Father] is with you" (Lk 1:35); "You will conceive...and bear...the Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:31-32); "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35). The Annunciation discloses the inner vitality of the triune God.

Indeed, the divine strategy includes Mary. As the Mother of the Messiah, Mary retains a specific responsibility in our spiritual development. By giving us Mary as our mother in the order of salvation, God provides us with a remedy against our reluctance to live in the truth about our own misery. Why? The Holy Father again exclaims: "In Mary every perfection of the creature preexists, and in a manner unspeakably more perfect than in everything else, short of God Himself and the Word made flesh." This means that every sin and imperfection that would otherwise separate us from God find its remedy in Mary. Of course, that does not mean that Mary supplants our Savior. Since her dignity remains founded on being the Mother of God, everything that she accomplishes for us comes from Christ Himself.

St. Mark

Feast: April 25



By Elizabeth Betczynski:

The second Gospel was written by St. Mark, whose feast day is April 25th, and who, in the New Testament, is sometimes called John Mark. Both he and his mother Mary, were highly esteemed in the early church, and his mother's house in Jerusalem served as a meeting place for Christians there. He was probably a Levite and probably a minor minister in the Synagogue. Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on St. Paul's First Missionary Journey, but returned home before the journey was over, rubbing St. Paul in a bad way. Approximately 10 years later we find him in Rome as St. Peter's secretary and interpreter. Mark translated St. Peter's Aramaic preaching into Greek and Latin. Later Paul and Mark will work together again in



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apparent harmony, for Paul will call him very useful in spreading the Gospel (2 Tim 4:11) and a source of great consolation because of his fidelity.

Mark tells the story of Jesus' life in a straightforward way; as "on the move"; interested in what Jesus did. The first words of his Gospel very boldly affirm the divinity of Christ, for it reads: The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1).

a. This statement — that Jesus is the Son of God — is key to understanding the whole of St. Mark's Gospel. For if one does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, then he will never be able to understand the Gospel.

b. When it comes down to it, we must be able to see Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man. If we deny His divinity or His humanity we fall into error.

c. All the works, miracles, teaching and words of Jesus recorded by St. Mark authenticate the very fact of His Divine Sonship.

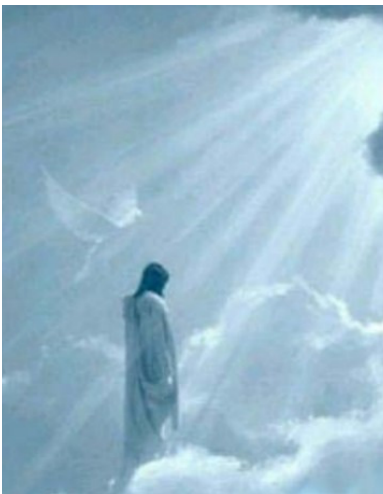
d. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, St. Mark, at the end of his Gospel, provides a summary of the Gospel, creating a bookend with the first verse. For it is the recorded statement of the Roman Centurion on Calvary: And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39).

It is historically certain that St. Mark wrote the second Gospel, that he wrote it in Rome sometime around the year 60 A.D., and that he wrote it in Greek for the Gentile converts to Christianity. Tradition tells us that St. Mark was requested by the Romans to set down the teachings of St. Peter. He was secretary and interpreter for Peter. This seems to be confirmed by the position which St. Peter has in this Gospel. In this way the second Gospel is a record of the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of the Prince of the Apostles. Tradition ascribes to him the founding of the Church in Alexandria where he was martyred. Mark is the patron of Venice which claims his body is in St. Mark's cathedral there. In art, he is often depicted in the process of writing with a winged lion at his feet. (some references to Mark are in Acts 12:25, 13:5,13, 15:36-40)

References: Pocket dictionary of saints by J. Delaney, Lives of the Saints, from the Catholic Book Publishing Co., and the Little Book of Saints by C. Barrely, and Father Dominica Mary, MFVA.

The Ascension of the Lord

Solemnity, May 5



By Elizabeth Betczynski:

We have struggled through Lent, contemplating how to pray more, fast (what did we give up?), and to give more. Then came the happy time of celebrating Easter. Jesus' passion is over, our salvation is insured. Picture the Apostles, grieving, wondering what has happened. Even though Jesus told them what was coming, actually seeing his passion was overwhelming. Then Jesus is risen and appears to them. So much Joy! From the pit of despair and loneliness comes the high of joy for 40 days.

Then the Apostles followed Jesus to Mount Olivet near Bethany (in Acts) and heard him say "all power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Then you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20).



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In Luke 24:49 Jesus continues: "I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (baptized with the Holy Spirit in Acts 1). He raised his hands, and as he blessed them, he was taken up to heaven. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Mark 16:19 continues: 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.

The Nicene Creed condensed the Ascension to: "he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end."

We read these scriptures and say the creed each week, but what can we learn from meditating on this feast? Through Jesus' death and resurrection, all people are shown that life doesn't dissolve into emptiness and nothingness but moves into new life with God. This good news is the source of all Christian joy. As the Apostles learned, it was time to come down from the mountain and live life as Jesus directed. As the Apostles returned to Jerusalem, they had to wait for the Holy Spirit – no time frame, just wait for guidance.

So what should we do during this 'waiting' time? Mary stayed with the Apostles and other disciples as well. It was a community of prayer and waiting. Jesus showed that he believed in his disciples – that he had confidence in them. To strengthen the bond of friendship, Jesus promised the Apostles the Holy Spirit. We all need vision and goals to give us direction. We need courage and hope and someone to help guide us if we get off track. Jesus has given these things to us in a way we never could have imagined. This was the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus believes in you too. He offers you the same gift of friendship he offered the Apostles. The only requirement is that you do as he commands – love your brothers and sisters in the world. And to strengthen you and instruct you, Jesus gives you his Holy Spirit who will keep your friendship alive.

Feast day this year the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord is Thursday, May 5th but will be celebrated on Sunday, May 8th.

Pentecost

Solemnity, May 15



An excerpt from the writings of Cardinal Jean Daniélou S.J.:

The communication of the Holy Spirit is accomplished essentially at Pentecost. The Spirit is given to the Church. The Church is the place where the Spirit illumines the intelligence with eternal truth...

In Christ, humanity is wholly consecrated and turned toward the Father. But this consecration must embrace and imbue humanity; and this is the labor of the Spirit in the Church. It is the river of living water that seeks to sweep everything before it and shatters all obstacles, or the fire that Christ has kindled in the world and which seeks to consume all things...

The image underlying the name Spirit is essentially that of an irresistible power coming from God himself, a power divine in its own right and therefore a deifying power, a sanctifying power supremely equipped to communicate God's life.

Thus the Spirit's mission consists essentially in sanctifying humanity, leading humanity to partake of the state of holiness in which Christ's humanity is already established. This holiness is not simply the act of taking possession of things in the name of God, but of imbuing all reality with God's life. And in this sense the Holy Spirit is like a breath or a perfume, depending on the images we use to describe it, especially when linked with the unction of confirmation. It



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seeks to impregnate all reality. It seeks to embrace created realities, intelligences, hearts, and wills. The Holy Spirit, which is the person in God that most resembles an element or an environment, penetrates and impregnates all created realities in order to communicate incorruptibility to them, to strengthen that which is weak in them, to impregnate them with the incorruptible life of God.

Cardinal Daniélou († 1974) was a Jesuit priest, theologian, historian, and member of the Académie Française.

The Most Holy Trinity

Solemnity, May 22



An excerpt from Magnificat June 2012 by Fr. Gilles Emery:

Faith in the Trinity rests on God's revelation of himself in the economy of salvation. We do not have access to the Trinity outside what God had revealed to us by sending his own Son and giving his Holy Spirit. This point is crucial. Trinitarian faith is distinct from experiences that begin by observing nature, or studying cultural phenomena, or that start from arguments or human introspection. It rests exclusively on the gift that God makes when he enables believers to know him in faith. The revelation of the Trinity is accomplished by the coming of God himself into human history: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son (Jn 3:16); God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5)...

Two aspects of this affirmation merit special attention.

First, the believer's knowledge of the Trinity rests on the revelation that takes place in the words and in the historical events to which the words are connected. These events are the Incarnation of the Son of God and his life in our human condition, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church at Pentecost. This manifestation of the Trinity is different from other forms of revelation (for example, the revelation that God can make simply by the interior inspiration of the mind of prophets), because the revelation of the Trinity takes place in events manifested to human eyes. Second, in these events God himself comes. God is not only at the origin of these events, but he also gives himself in them. Thus, in the Incarnation, the Son of God in person becomes human and, by his life and his offering on the cross, he obtains salvation through love of his Father and through love of humankind. Similarly, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit in person is given and comes to dwell in the heart of believers. And when, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, believers receive Jesus as the Son of God, the Father himself comes to dwell in their hearts, as Jesus promised: "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14:23). In the events of salvation, God the Trinity gives not merely "something," but rather he gives himself: God the Father sends his Son and pours out his Holy Spirit. These two aspects (God is revealed in historical events and in them he really gives himself to believers) are at the center of the revelation of the Trinity. They constitute a fundamental and characteristic trait of the evangelical faith that distinguishes it from other forms of knowledge and of religious experience.

Father Gilles Emery, a Dominican priest of Swiss providence of Preachers, is professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Fribourg.



Bible Studies

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" St. Jerome

Day	Time	Leader	Phone	Location
Sunday	9:30 AM	Joe Lesnau	979-265-6221	Room 149
Sunday	10:45 AM	Gary Forse	979-299-3145	Room 149
Wednesday	6:00 AM	Duane Williams	979-297-5564	Angelina Room
Wednesday	9:30 AM	Bettie Carmody	979-265-6509	Room 149
Thursday	9:15 AM	Jeanne Schroll	979-297-5860	F Wing
Friday	9:15 AM	Pam Walker	979-297-9746	Room 149

Prayer Groups

"Hear my prayer, O God. Give ear to the words of my mouth" Psalm 54:2

Day	Time	Focus	Location
Monday	7:00 pm	Rosary	Church
1 st Monday	7:00 pm	Patriotic Rosary	Church
Tuesday	5:00 pm 6:00 pm	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Wednesday	8:00 am 9:00 am	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Thursday	5:00 pm 6:00 pm	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Friday	8:00 am 9:00 am	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Saturday	6:30 am	Men's Prayer Group	"F" Wing
Saturday	8:00 am	Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet	Chapel
1 st Saturday	8:00 am	Pro-Life Rosary	Chapel



THE HOLY SEE

First Jubilee Audience: Mercy and Mission



Vatican City, 30 January 2016 (VIS) – Pope Francis dedicated the first of his Jubilee audiences to the theme "Mercy and Mission". The Jubilee audiences are an initiative of the Holy Father during the Holy Year, enabling those who are unable to attend the Wednesday general audiences to participate in his catechesis. On this occasion more than 22,000 people were present in St. Peter's Square.

"Day by day we enter into the life of this Holy Year of Mercy. With His grace, the Lord guides our steps as we cross the Holy Door and comes towards us so as to stay always with us, despite our shortcomings and our contradictions. Let us never tire of asking His forgiveness, as

when we are weak His closeness makes us stronger and allows us to live our faith with greater joy".

Referring to the close link between mercy and mission, Francis underlined that as Christians we have the responsibility to be missionaries of the Gospel. "When we receive good news or have a good experience it is natural that we wish to communicate it to others. ... The joy we feel inspires us to do so. It should be the same when we encounter the Lord. Indeed, the concrete sign we have truly encountered Jesus is the joy we feel in communicating this to others too. This is not proselytism, but rather it is a gift: I give you what makes me joyful. Reading the Gospel we see that this was also the experience of the first disciples. ... Encountering Jesus is the same as encountering His love. This love transforms us and makes us able to transmit to others the strength that it gives us".

"We could say that the day of our Baptism each one of us is given another name alongside the one we receive from our mother and father, and this name is 'Christopher', which means 'Christ-bearer'. The name of our approach, as bearers of Christ's joy and mercy", remarked the Holy Father. "The Christian is a bearer of Christ. ... But the mercy we receive from the Father is not given to us as a private consolation, but rather makes us instruments to enable others to receive the same gift. There is a wonderful circularity between mercy and mission".

"Living mercy makes us missionaries of mercy, and being missionaries enable us increasingly to grow in God's mercy. So, let us take seriously the fact of being Christians, and let us commit ourselves to living as believers, because only in this way may the Gospel touch the people's hearts, opening them to receive the grace of love", concluded the Holy Father.



Angelus: The Logic of Mission



Vatican City, 7 February 2016 (VIS) – The logic that guides the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church is that of 'fishing', of going out in search of men and women, not out of proselytism but rather to restore full dignity and freedom through the forgiveness of sins, explained the Pope during today's Angelus, commenting on the day's reading from the Gospel of St. Luke which narrates the call of Jesus' first disciples. On the shore of the

Sea of Galilee, Simon Peter and his companions were washing their nets after a night's fishing without catching anything. Jesus gets into one of the boats and begins to preach the word of God to the multitude gathered on the banks. He then tells them to take the boat out to sea and to cast their nets, and although Simon Peter reminds Him that they had toiled all night in vain, he obeys faithful to Christ.

"And his faith did not let him down; indeed, the nets were filled with such a quantity of fish that they almost tore", added Francis. "Before this extraordinary event, the fishermen were overcome with wonder. Simon Peter fell at Jesus' feet and said, 'Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man'. This miraculous sign convinced him that Jesus was not only a great teacher, whose word is true and powerful, but that He is the Lord, the manifestation of God. And this presence, so close to him, inspires in Peter a strong sense of his own pettiness and unworthiness. From a human point of view, one would think there should be distance between the sinner and the saint. In truth, it is precisely his sinful condition that requires the Lord to not distance himself from him, the same way a doctor cannot turn away from the sick".

Jesus' response to Simon Peter is "reassuring and decisive: 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men'. Again, the fisherman from Galilee, placing his trust in this word, leaves everything and follows Him; He Who has become his Master and Lord. James and John, companions of Simon Peter, do likewise. This is the logic that drives the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church: to seek out, to 'fish' for men and women, to return full dignity and freedom to all, through the forgiveness of sins. This is the essence of Christianity: to spread the regenerating and gratuitous love of God, with an attitude of acceptance and mercy to everyone, so that everyone can encounter God's tenderness and achieve a full life. Here, in a particular way, I think of confessors: they are the first to give the mercy of the Father, following the example of Jesus, just as the two saints, Fr. Leopold and Padre Pio did.

"Today's Gospel asks us: do we really trust the Word of the Lord? Or do we let ourselves be discouraged by our failures? In this Holy Year of Mercy, we are called to comfort those who feel they are sinners and unworthy and downhearted for their mistakes, repeating Jesus' words to them: 'Fear not'. The mercy of the Father is greater than your sins. It is greater, do not be afraid".



General Audience: God's Justice is Mercy



Vatican City, 3 February 2016 (VIS) – The relationship between mercy and justice, in the light of the Sacred Scriptures, was the theme of Pope Francis' catechesis in this Wednesday's general audience, which took place in St. Peter's Square and was attended by more than ten thousand people.

"The Sacred Scripture presents God as infinite mercy, but also as perfect justice", he said. "How can the two be reconciled? They may

appear to be contradictory, but this is not the case, as it is precisely God's mercy that leads us to achieve true justice. In the legal administration of justice, we see that those who consider themselves to have been victims of abuse consult a judge in court and ask that justice be done. It is a retributive justice, inflicting punishment on the guilty, according to the principle that each person receives what he deserves. ... But this route does not lead to true justice, as in reality it does not conquer evil, it simply limits it. Instead, only by responding with good can evil truly be conquered".

The Bible, he explained, proposes a different form of justice, in which the victim invites the guilty party to convert, helping him to understand the harm he has done and appealing to his conscience. "In this way, recognizing his blame, he can open up to the forgiveness that the injured party offers. ... This is the way of resolving conflicts within families, in relations between spouses and between parents and children, in which the injured party loves the guilty and does not wish to lose the bond between them. It is certainly a difficult path: it demands that the victim be disposed to forgive and wishes for the salvation and the good of the perpetrator of the damage. But only in this way can justice triumph, as if the guilty party acknowledges the harm he has done and ceases to do so, the evil no longer exists and the unjust becomes just, as he has been forgiven and helped to find the way of good".

"God treats us sinners, in the same way. He continually offers us His forgiveness; He helps us to welcome Him and to be aware of our evil so as to free ourselves of it. God does not seek our condemnation, only our salvation. God does not wish to condemn anyone! ... The Lord of Mercy wishes to save everyone. ... The problem is letting Him enter into our heart. All the words of the prophets are an impassioned and love-filled plea for our conversion".

God's heart is "the heart of a Father Who loves all His children and wants them to live in goodness and justice, and therefore to live in fullness and happiness. A Father's heart that goes beyond our meager concept of justice so as to open up to us the immense horizons of His mercy. A Father's heart that does not treat us or repay us according to our sins, as the Psalm says".

"It is precisely a Father's heart that we encounter when we go to the confessional", Francis emphasized. "Perhaps it will tell us something to better understand our evil, but at the confessional we all go in search of a father who will help us change our life; a father who gives us the strength to go on; a father who forgives us in God's name. Therefore, to be a confessor is a great responsibility, as the son or daughter who comes to you seeks only to encounter a father. And you, the priest there in the confessional, are the place where the Father does justice with His mercy", he concluded.



Message To the Missionaries of Mercy



Vatican City, 10 February 2016 (VIS) – *SHOWING THE MATERNAL FACE OF THE CHURCH*, being aware of the need for forgiveness and the sense of shame of those who confess, and not applying a harsh form of justice were the main features of the advice Pope Francis gave yesterday afternoon to the Missionaries of Mercy from all continents, whom he received in audience in the Sala Regia of the Vatican Apostolic Palace. Today, during the Ash Wednesday Mass, he will confer to them their mandate as "missionaries" of mercy in the context of the Jubilee.

"I meet with you with great pleasure, before giving you the mandate of being Missionaries of Mercy.

This is a sign of special relevance because it characterizes the Jubilee, and enables the unfathomable mystery of the mercy of the Father to be lived in all the local Churches", said the Holy Father. "Being a missionary of mercy is a responsibility I have entrusted to you because it requires that you be witnesses in the first person of God's closeness and his way of loving. It is not our way, always limited and at times contradictory, but His way of loving, His way of forgiving, that is indeed mercy".

Francis went on to remind the new missionaries that in their ministry they are called upon to express the maternity of the Church. "The Church is a mother because she always generates new sons and daughters in faith; the Church is a mother also because she nurtures faith; and the Church is a mother also because she offers God's forgiveness, regenerating new life, the fruit of conversion. We cannot run the risk that a penitent does not perceive the maternal presence of the Church who welcomes and loves him. If this perception were to be made less evident as a result of our rigidity, it would constitute a grave damage first and foremost to faith itself, as it would prevent the penitent from seeing himself as integrated within the Body of Christ. Furthermore, it would greatly limit his sense of being part of a community. We are instead called upon to be a living expression of the Church who, as a mother, welcomes anyone who approaches her, knowing that through her they are integrated with Christ. Entering into the confessional let us always remember that it is Christ Who welcomes, Christ Who listens, Christ Who forgives, and Christ Who gives peace. We are His ministers, and we are the first who are in need of His forgiveness. Therefore, whatever may be the sin to be confessed – or that the person does not dare to say, but alludes to, which is enough – each missionary is called upon to remember their own existence as a sinner and to humbly place himself as a 'channel' of God's mercy".

Another important aspect is to know how to "look at the desire for forgiveness in the penitent's heart. It is the fruit of grace and its action in the life of people, which enables us to feel nostalgia for God, for His love and His home. Let us not forget that it is precisely this desire that is at the beginning of conversion. The heart turns to God, recognizing the sin committed, but with the hope of obtaining forgiveness. And this desire is strengthened when one decides in one's heart to change life and to sin no more. It is the moment at which one entrusts oneself to God's mercy, trusting fully in being understood, forgiven and supported by Him. Let us allow ample space to this desire for God and for His forgiveness; may we let it emerge as a true expression of the grace of the Spirit that inspires the conversion of the heart".



St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Church Lake Jackson, TX

Finally, the Holy Father spoke about a crucial, often neglected aspect: shame. "It is not easy to place oneself in front of another man, knowing that he represents God, and confess to sin. One is ashamed not only of the sin committed, but also of having to confess it to another", said the Pope, emphasizing that the Bible from its very first pages tells us about how Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, felt shame and hid themselves from God. Noah too, considered a righteous man, was not free from sin. His intemperance is a sign of his weakness, to the extent that he loses his dignity, expressed in the Scripture by his nakedness. Two of his sons, Shem and Japheth take his cloak and cover him to restore his dignity.

"This passage suggests to me the importance of our role as confessor", said Francis. "Before us there is a 'naked' person, and also a person who does not know how to speak and does not know what to say ... with the shame of being a sinner, and very often unable to say so. Let us not forget: before us there is not the sin, but the repentant sinner. ... A person who wishes to be accepted and forgiven. Therefore, we are not called upon to judge, with an attitude of superiority, as if we were immune to sin. On the contrary, we are called upon to act like Shem and Japheth, who took a cover to spare their father from shame. Being a confessor in accordance with Christ's heart means covering the sinner with a cloak of mercy, so that he is no longer ashamed and is able to recover the joy of his filial dignity, and may also know where to find it".

"However, it is not the club of judgment that we succeed in returning the lost sheep to the flock, but rather with the holiness of life that is the starting point of renewal and reform in the Church. Holiness is nurtured with love and knows how to bear the burden of the weak. A missionary of mercy carries the sinner on his shoulders, and consoles him with the power of compassion. ... It is possible to do great damage, great damage to a soul if one does not listen with the heart of a father, with the heart of the Mother Church". "Some months ago I spoke with a wise cardinal of the Roman Curia about the questions that some priests ask in confession, and he said to me, 'When a person starts and I see that they want to say something, and I realize and understand, I say, I understand, don't worry. ... This is a father'".

"I accompany you on this missionary adventure", concluded the bishop of Rome, "offering you as examples two saints, ministers of God's forgiveness: St. Leopold and St. Pio ... along with many other priests who during their life have borne witness to God's mercy. They will help you. When you feel the burden of the sins confessed to you, and the limits of your person and your words, trust in the power of mercy that reaches out to everyone as love and knows no bounds. And say, like many saintly confessors, 'Lord, I forgive you', and go ahead".

Pope Francis' Catechesis: Mercy and Power

Vatican City, 24 February 2016 (VIS) – Mercy and power were the theme of Pope Francis' catechesis in this week's Wednesday general audience in St. Peter's Square, attended by more than twenty thousand faithful and pilgrims.

The Holy Father explained that various passages of the Bible speak about kings and men of power, and also of their arrogance and abuses, demonstrating that "wealth and power can be good and useful for the common good if placed at the service of the poor and of all, with justice and charity. However if, as often occurs, it lived as a privilege, with selfishness and arrogance, they become tools of corruption and death".

An example of this unjust privilege is found in the account of the vineyard of Naboth. The king Ahab wishes to acquire it since it was situated adjacent to the royal palace, but Naboth refuses since for Israel the land is God's, and receives His blessing which is handed from generation to generation. Ahab is indignant at receiving this refusal, which he perceives as an



Pope Francis' Catechesis: Mercy and Power



offence to his power, undermining his authority. His wife, Jezebel, which also considered royal power to be absolute, decides to eliminate Naboth and makes false witnesses accuse him before the elders and the authorities of having blasphemed and spoken ill of the king, crimes which carried the death penalty. Naboth was executed and the king inherited his vineyard.

"Recalling these events, Jesus tells us: 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority

over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave'. If the dimension of service is lost, power transforms into arrogance and oppression". The story of Naboth, continued the Pope, "is not a story of other times; it is also the story of today, of the powerful who exploit the poor, exploit the people, to have more money. It is the story of human trafficking, of slave labor, of poor people who work illegally and with the minimum salary to enrich the powerful. It is the story of corrupt politicians who want more and more".

The episode of Naboth's vineyard teaches us "where the exercise of authority without respect for life or justice and without mercy leads us. And here we see where the thirst for power leads: it becomes avarice, the desire to possess everything". Francis gave the example of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "who was not a communist", when he observed the avidity of the rich landowners who sought to acquire more and more houses and land. "Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land".

However, "God is greater than evil, and the dirty games human beings play, and in His mercy He sends the prophet Elijah to help Ahab convert. The king, faced with his sin, is humbled and asks for forgiveness. How good it would be if today's powerful exploiters were to do likewise!", exclaimed Francis. "The Lord accepts his penance, but an innocent man was killed and this inevitably has consequences. Indeed, the evil committed leaves painful traces, and the history of mankind bears the scars".

In this case too, mercy shows the path to follow as it is able to cure wounds and change history. "Divine mercy is stronger than the sin of men. It is stronger; this is the example of Ahab! We know its power, when we remember the coming of the Innocent Son of God Who made Himself man to destroy evil with His forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the true king, but His power is completely different. His throne is the cross. He is not a king who kills, but on the contrary gives His life. His approach to all, especially the weakest, defeats solitude and the destiny of death that sin leads to. Jesus Christ, with His closeness and tenderness, leads sinners into the space of grace and forgiveness. And this is God's mercy".



The Saints

*O Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary, infuse into me grace,
wisdom, charity, chastity and humility.*

Sts. Philip & James, Apostles

Feast: May 3



James son of Alphaeus. We know nothing of this man except his name, and of course the fact that Jesus chose him to be one of the twelve pillars of the New Israel, his Church. He is not the James of Acts, son of Clopas, “brother” of Jesus and later bishop of Jerusalem and the traditional author of the Letter of James. James, son of Alphaeus, is also known as James the Lesser to avoid confusing him with James the son of Zebedee, also an apostle and known as James the Greater.

Philip. Philip came from the same town as Peter and Andrew, Bethsaida in Galilee. Jesus called him directly, whereupon he sought out Nathanael and told him of the “one about whom Moses wrote” (John 1:45).

Like the other apostles, Philip took a long time coming to realize who Jesus was. On one occasion, when Jesus saw the great multitude following him and wanted to give them food, he asked Philip where they should buy bread for the people to eat. St. John comments, “[Jesus] said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do” (John 6:6). Philip answered, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little [bit]” (John 6:7).

John’s story is not a put-down of Philip. It was simply necessary for these men who were to be the foundation stones of the Church to see the clear distinction between humanity’s helplessness apart from God and the human ability to be a bearer of divine power by God’s gift.

On another occasion, we can almost hear the exasperation in Jesus’s voice. After Thomas had complained that they did not know where Jesus was going, Jesus said, “I am the way...if you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:6a, 7). Then Philip said, “Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8). Enough! Jesus answered, “Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9a).

As in the case of other apostles, we see James and Philip human men who became foundation stones of the Church, and we are reminded again that holiness and its consequent apostolate are entirely the gift of God, not a matter of human achieving. All power is God’s power even the power of human freedom to accept his gifts.



The Saints

Our Lady of Fatima

Feast: May 13



One of the greatest events of this century took place in the village of Cova da Iria near Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. Between May 13 and October 13, the Mother of God appeared to three Portuguese children to bring the message of the gospel back to a world that was slipping away. Mary asked the children to pray the rosary for world peace, for the end of World War I, for sinners, and for the conversion of Russia.

Last year, a group of forty-eight of us was led by Fr. Giovanni to visit this beautiful place in Following in the footsteps of Mary pilgrimage. We had the opportunity to join the hundreds of people that were gathered at the plaza of the basilica for the candlelight procession at night and prayed the rosary with them. It was an incredible experience to be there at the place that the virgin actually appeared to the three children.

Memories from my childhood were rushing to my mind when our guide started to sing a familiar song that we use to sing during our praying of the rosary during the month of May in my home town. It goes like this: “*El 13 de Mayo la Virgen Maria bajo de los cielos a Cova da Iria*” which translates; “On May 13 our Virgin Mary came down from heaven to Cova da Iria”.

“Throughout history there have been supernatural apparitions and signs which go to the heart of human events and which, to the surprise of believers and non-believers alike, play their part in the unfolding of history. These manifestations can never contradict the content of faith, and must therefore have their focus in the core of Christ’s proclamation: the Father’s love which leads men and women to conversion and bestows the grace required to abandon oneself to him with filial devotion. This too is the message of Fatima which, with its urgent call to conversion and penance, draws us to the heart of the Gospel” (The Message of Fatima, Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith, 2000)

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF FATIMA

Most holy Virgin, who came to Fatima to reveal the treasures of graces hidden in the recitation of the rosary, inspire our hearts with sincere love of this devotion, that meditating on the mysteries of our redemption recalled therein, we may obtain the conversion of sinners, the conversion of Russia, and [here name the other favors for which you are praying], which we ask of you, for the greater glory of God, for your own honor, and for the good of souls. Amen.

Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, pray for us.



Coming Soon



A Deep, Biblical Look at Jesus Christ

The better we understand Jesus, the better we understand ourselves. But who was Jesus, this itinerant preacher whom many called the Messiah?

In *Priest, Prophet, King*, you'll discover Jesus as the Anointed One—the ultimate priest, prophet, and king foreshadowed throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Using biblical insights and engaging stories, Bishop Barron affirms that we see Jesus most clearly through the lens of the Old Testament.

Through this deeply biblical program, you will better understand Jesus, become more familiar with Scripture, and realize your own priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission, received when you are baptized “into Christ.”





Save the Date

Letting God's Mercy Heal and Change Us

By: Fr. Matt Linn

We become like the God we adore. Thus, one of the easiest ways to heal ourselves and our society is to heal our image of God, so that we know a God who loves us at least as much as those who love us the most. We will focus on reconstructing our unloving image of God (e.g. perhaps a vengeful punishing God) if it keeps us from experiencing "God is Love" who helps us grow in love and freedom. The session includes a video and healing prayer process.



Sunday, April 17. 2016

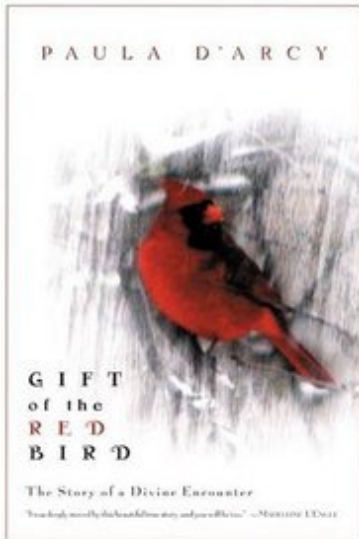
Angelina Room

7:00 PM



For Your Information

Online Reflections

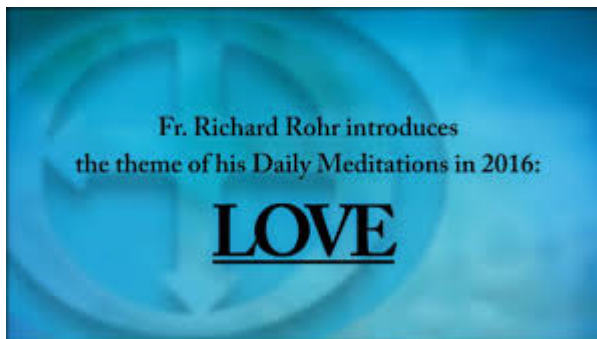


An invitation from: **Paula D'Arcy**

Red Bird Foundation was founded by Paula D'Arcy in 2001 as a non-profit foundation dedicated to assisting others in the transformation of pain and the restoration of hope.

To receive her monthly reflections visit the below link. You won't regret it:

<http://www.redbirdfoundation.com/monthly-reflections/>



Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations offer brief reflections on contemplative spirituality. Fr. Richard draws from his Franciscan heritage, Christian scriptures and mystics, and non-dual teachers from every wisdom tradition who point to our inherent union with and longing for God.

<https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

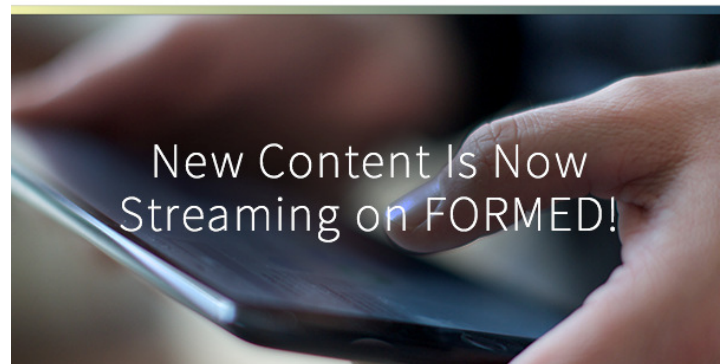
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Important Dates In This Trimester

Date	Celebration	Date	Celebration
March 7	Sts. Perpetua and Felicity	April 21	St. Anselm, Bishop and Doctor
March 8	St. John of God	April 25	St. Mark, Evangelist
March 9	St. Frances of Rome	April 28	St. Peter Chanel
March 17	St. Patrick	April 29	St. Catherina of Siena
March 19	St. Joseph, husband of Mary	April 30	Pius V, Pope
March 20	Palm Sunday	May 2	St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor
March 24	Holy Thursday	May 3	Sts. Philip and James, Apostles
March 25	Good Friday	May 5	The Ascension of the Lord
March 26	Holy Saturday	May 13	Our Lady of Fatima
March 27	Easter	May 15	Pentecost
April 3	Divine Mercy Sunday	May 18	St. John I, Pope and Martyr
April 4	The Annunciation of the Lord	May 22	The Most Holy Trinity
April 5	St. Vincent Ferrer, Priest	May 26	St. Philip Neri, Priest
April 11	St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr	May 29	Corpus Christi

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