Easter Reflections

The Lord is Risen!
Prepared by the Precious Blood Family of Communities

Adorers of the Blood of Christ (US Region)
Missionaries of the Precious Blood (Atlantic, Cincinnati & Kansas City Provinces)
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood (O’Fallon, MO)
Sisters of the Precious Blood (Dayton, OH)
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In some churches this Easter morning, we can be sure that the preacher will ask: “Can I get a witness?” They will be imitating St. Peter’s discourse to Cornelius and the people of Caesarea (see the first reading for today, Acts 10:37-43) proclaiming that Jesus has risen and they will invite those in the congregation to raise a hand and exclaim: Amen! We also believe!

Amen—we also believe! We praise God today with awesome wonder at what God has done for us. Jesus who was dead and in a tomb has been raised to a new life. Jesus died on the cross but death could not hold him captive. The love of God liberated him and gave him new life.

Peter proclaimed that “all the prophets bear witness that everyone that believes in Jesus will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Amen—we also believe! We believe that our sinfulness died with Jesus on the cross and so now our sins do not hold us captive because we have been liberated by the merciful love of God. The darkness and death of sin has lost its hold on our hearts as a new day dawns with the light and love of God.

For those that believe, the power of the resurrection is transformative and empowering. Like Jesus rising from the tomb, our lives are not merely resuscitated but made truly new. The first fruit of this new life is the compelling desire to share the Good News and to participate in the continuing mission of transforming the world through the life giving power of God’s love.

Can we follow the example of the first witness to the resurrection, Mary of Magdela? Can we run, not walk to tell
others the good news? Can our excitement bring others out of their fearful sanctuaries and bring them to the place of wonder and awe where they too can become prophets of the good news of the risen Christ?

The world continues to need prophets who give witness:

• to the joy of believing that the power of God’s love will continue to bring to life the deadness of a world indifferent to injustice;
• to the hope that the suffering of those oppressed will be healed;
• and to the power of the love of God to change hearts and lives.

Can I get a witness?

V. Rev. William Nordenbrock, C.PP.S.
Moderator General
April 2, 2018
Easter Monday

Jesus has been raised from the Dead! Do not be afraid!
Go tell my people… they will see me.

Easter is a day of Jubilation! A day when hope amidst sadness, doubt and confusion turns into true reality! “Jesus is not dead, but Alive!”

What joy Mary Magdalen and the other Marys must have experienced when Jesus stopped them on their way from the empty tomb and spoke directly to them and told them to go to the others. How fast they must have run! I’m sure they couldn’t get there fast enough to tell the disciples that they had seen Jesus alive and spoken to Him. “Jesus is Alive! And Jesus will see them too!”

When we have good news, we run to tell it, everywhere! We can’t hold it in. What better news is there to share than Jesus is here with us? We have seen Jesus present in our lives, in our gospel living, in those with whom we walk and work! With whom do we run and share our experiences? Jesus tells us too, to go and tell all people that He is alive, and they will see Him too. He is here with us!

We are to be Hope-filled people, Jesus’ messengers of Hope, to our world. We must be like the Marys on the way from the tomb, and pay attention to God’s presence all around us, in people, in creation, in experiences and be astonished by God’s workings and then go and spread hope, and joy. Go and spread the good news that Jesus is very much alive! Jesus is present in our world! Alleluia!

Sr. Annette Embrich, ASC
April 3, 2018  
Easter Tuesday

_They have taken my Lord away…_

During the last few years several women have come to me disoriented and grieving after the violent death of a son or husband. Sometimes they express their desire to dream about their loved one. Sometimes they maintain the loved one’s room exactly as it was before their untimely death. Most of the time they keep a photo on a table with a candle burning. There are many ways to avoid the pain of violent loss, ways that keep us from falling into the pit of despair.

We pray at tombs, we bring flowers, we pull weeds, we chat with our deceased loved one. When that tomb appears empty, or the photo disappears, or another relative gives away the loved one’s clothes, one is forced to face again the loss. That is what happened with Mary Magdalen. Her grieving was interrupted. The fact that there was nothing in the tomb threw her back into her own loss again and she cried.

Sometimes there is a moment of surprise in our grief, in which we do finally recognize Jesus in the garden, when we do finally have that dream or receive that message from our beloved or somehow find a new reason to continue with life. This is what Jesus did for Mary Magdalen. He came. She recognized his voice, the loving way he pronounced her name. Her eyes fooled her, but her ears knew him.

Jesus can change our grief in an instant of recognition, in the same miracle in which he rose from the dead.

Sr. Theresa Walter, CPPS  
Dayton
April 4, 2018
Easter Wednesday

What I would like to discuss is the passage that points to Jesus walking with his two disciples. “As they approached the village to which they were going, Emmaus, Jesus gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them.”

When I first entered the C.PP.S. formation program Br. Gabriel Bridges C.PP.S. told me to first decline invitations to people’s kindness. I was to say, “Oh I can’t accept you paying for this meal.” Br. Gabriel said do not be so eager to accept an act of kindness or people will see that you are too wanting. He said after you have declined once then accept the gift. Jesus is playing this same game I believe. He gave the impression that he was going on further, that he had better things to do, but Jesus truly wanted to stay with these two disciples. He wanted to stay with them just as much as they wanted Jesus to stay with them.

It is my belief that Jesus is so in love with us. Jesus is a perfect gentlemen and he does not make us do anything we do not want to do. Give Christ permission to enter every aspect of your life. Allow the joy of the resurrected Christ to enter your hearts in the weeks ahead. God bless you all.

Rev Tony Fortman, C.PP.S.
Cincinnati Province
April 5, 2018
Easter Thursday

_The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way, and how they had come to recognize him in the breaking of the bread._

During the Easter season may we all find ourselves "on the Way" expectantly awaiting and attentive to the presence of the Risen Lord who makes our hearts burn with renewed faith. Christ is truly present when we gather to celebrate his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. However, as Vatican II reminds us, he is also present in the Scriptures which he continues to break open for our spiritual nourishment and growth.

Furthermore, the Council urges us to watch for and find Jesus in the midst of our daily encounters with our sisters and brothers for as he himself reminds us "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst." Jesus is present in us and with us!

The Eucharist itself, as evidenced in the Last Supper account in St. John's Gospel, commands us to wash each other's feet as part and parcel and completion of our Eucharistic encounters. "As I have done for you, so must you do for one another."

Finally, at the conclusion of today's Gospel passage Jesus commissions us with a great responsibility in our daily lives: "You are witnesses of these things." Indeed, we are witnesses for the Risen Lord, not only in professing faith in his death and resurrection but also in carrying out our given mission to serve our brothers and sisters. For when we serve others as Jesus did, we truly profess faith in his death and resurrection until he comes again and hope that he will truly come again. "Come, Lord Jesus!"

M. Rev. Joseph Charron, C.PP.S.
KC ProvinceBishop Emeritus of Des Moines, Iowa
April 6, 2018
Easter Friday

By what power and in whose name have people of your stripe done this?”
Peter had the answer, “It was done in the name of Jesus Christ.”

By what power did the apostles take in so many fish that they could not haul the net in?
John had the answer, “It is the Lord”

It is the Lord, Jesus Christ, who became incarnate, lived among us, died, and rose from the dead. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone of the church. It is the Lord, Jesus Christ, who is our power and our glory.

Let us reflect on every little gift we enjoy, every moment of this day. What is the power that makes it all possible? “It is the Lord.”

Let us reflect on the good choices we have made. What is the power that makes it possible? “It is the Lord.”

Let us reflect on the poor choices we have made. What is the power that makes it possible to seek forgiveness? “It is the Lord.”

Each day presents us with such a variety of occasions in which to encounter people. As Christians, we believe that we are not alone in these encounters. If we were alone, we might fish all night and catch nothing.

But the power of God is with us. Let us remember today to expect great things of our God…..and to be grateful.

St. Patricia Marie Landin, SSMO
April 7, 2018
Easter Saturday

My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior.

The boldness of Peter and John is truly inspiring. They had no fear at all. No fear of the authorities. No fear of the criticisms of others. No fear of what may happen to them if they didn’t keep quiet about Jesus. And it was that boldness that allowed others, so many others to both hear and come to Christ. Makes me often wonder and ask the question, how bold am I? In my ministry am I modelling the boldness of these two great disciples? This can be a very tough question. It is however one that I do need to ask myself on a regular basis. Hopefully we have all made some time for honest reflection during Lent. Now that we are in the Octave of Easter we are called to be bold and spread the truths of our faith. The psalm for today, Psalm 118 is a wonderful one for us to use to rev us up. To be that jet fuel to get us moving. To give us that boldness of these disciples to stand strong, courageous and confident that the risen Christ is with us each and every step of the day.

Rev. Michael R. Mateyk, CPPS
Atlantic Province
God’s mercy endures forever.

We use many images to describe the essence of the community of believers that we have come to call the church. Perhaps the image that is most commonly used, and certainly the favorite of Pope Francis, is People of God. There’s a certain down-to-earth reality in that image, an implication that people, humanity, is what church is all about. Today’s readings give us a wonderful kaleidoscope of what is best and what is worst in humanity: we are generous, needy, believing, doubting, bold and fearful. So it should not surprise us that the Sunday after we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus we are challenged to bring God’s mercy into every aspect of our lives, every relationship that we make or break.

Pope Francis speaks of “pastoral care in conversion” in Evangelii guadium. He described that conversion when speaking with the bishops of Brazil: “There is need therefore for a church that is capable of rediscovering the womb of mercy. Without mercy it is scarcely possible today to penetrate into a world of the ‘injured’ who need understanding, forgiveness, and love.” The church is to be the place where all can feel welcomed and loved, pardoned, and challenged to live according to the gospel.

As Precious Blood congregations, mercy should be our hallmark. Divine Mercy Sunday might be considered a common feast day for all of us. Our call is to be the Street People of God, those who bring God’s mercy to the peripheries—to the bruised, forgotten, shunned, poor and despairing. And we do? Consider Precious Blood family members ministering to and with the LGBTQ community in California, the poor who come to the Center of Hope in Wichita, the many immigrants in St. Louis, the young men and families who come to the Precious Blood Ministry of
Reconciliation in Chicago, those who seek help at the Brunner Literacy Center in Dayton, and the people who take a stand in behalf of our planet in Columbia, PA.

Every day each of us is called to the periphery of human existence. Maybe we never leave our home and our sphere of influence seems miniscule. But what a powerful gift we give the world if all we ever do is pray with the psalmist: “God’s mercy endures forever.”

Sr. Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC
Nothing will be impossible for/with God

Today’s Scripture brings us two amazing women – women unafraid to let God into their lives and do the impossible.

This Gospel is full of surprises and we might say with Mary, “How can this be?” Surely God would not choose a young girl to be the Mother of Jesus! Has she any experience in Motherhood? No, surely not this young woman, not married, too young, too unprepared for raising a child and not any Child – the son of God! Then the story goes on to say that Elizabeth in her old age will have a baby – impossible? It would seem so. However, the story goes on in our own lives, maybe not as dramatic, but how many times have we looked back on our lives and said, “Can that be…I was so young when I first ventured out and took that risk…; or I remember when I questioned God and said, “Not me, Lord, please!” I am too young, too old, too weak, too sinful. Or for those of us in our elder years, we wonder how can it be that we are still being asked to give life? Mary and Elizabeth’s lives were changed forever by their willingness to take a risk and say, “YES, let it be done”!

Take time today to reflect on your amazing self – how your “Yeses” have transformed you forever. Celebrate! Then take time with Mary and Elizabeth as you reflect on what seems impossible in your life at this time.

Sr. Donna Liette, CPPS
Dayton OH
April 10, 2018  
Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter  

"Are you born again?"

This was a question bandied about in charismatic circles. The readings for today point to different responses to that question. In John's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again (from above). Jesus is telling Nicodemus and us that believing in the resurrected Jesus is the way of being born again. It is to receive the gift of knowing, understanding, and accepting the Son of God who has become one of us to give us a share in his life.

I think Flannery O'Connor, famous catholic southern author, offers us a further explanation of this "believing." She writes, "About the only way you can tell whether you believe or not is by what you do." That's a wonderful lead in to the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles and the story of the early church community and their powerful witness of sharing their goods "so that there was no needy person among them." The two readings together offer us a challenging invitation to reflect on our own lives.

Rev Jim Franck, C.PP.S.  
Cincinnati Province
April 11, 2018

Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter

Go, stand in the temple and tell the people
the whole message about this life.

I wonder how tempting it may have been for the apostles to simply ignore the orders of the angel who freed them. Did they consider, even for a moment, not going back to the temple to preach and choosing instead to run away? Maybe the idea of remaining in their cells and refusing freedom outright occurred to them.

Just like the original apostles, we have been charged with the greatest privilege of all – announcing, as Luke puts it, ‘the whole message about this life’. To do so, we are often challenged to go to unfamiliar places, at inconvenient times, in difficult circumstances, to proclaim to unknown people the Kerygma, so powerfully summarized in today’s gospel. As beautiful and fulfilling as the mission of bringing ‘the message about this life’ to others may be, am I ever inclined instead to seek to escape? Do I ever allow myself to remain imprisoned by negative experiences, thoughts, or feelings? Do fear or even laziness ever cause me to prefer the comfort of the cell that I know over the risks of going back out to the temple I don’t.

Knowing what the consequences might be, the apostles chose to continue to preach the good news. We are called to follow their example. We are called to a spiritual freedom that allows us to be witnesses and preachers of God’s grace and forgiveness offered through the shedding of Jesus’ blood.

Rev. Patrick Gilmurray, CPPS
Atlantic Province
April 12, 2018  
Thursday of the Second Week of Easter

*He does not ration his gift of the Spirit.*

We have a savior! Alleluia! Easter joy fills our hearts at this time of year. And yet the first reading today reminds us that true and faithful followers of Jesus were called before the Sanhedrin to remind the apostles that they had been ordered to cease sharing the Good News. Just as they refused, we can question ourselves about any hesitations we have experienced to share the Good News.

In the Psalm 34 responsorial, we see two promises: "many are the troubles of the just" and "but out of them all the Lord delivers." If our sharing the Good News follows the pattern of the lives of the apostles, we are called to be authentic witnesses to Jesus and his message. And we are forewarned that this stance will bring on "troubles" which are within our abilities to confront and overcome, with God's inspiration and guidance.

Is it possible to confront and overcome? Yes! With God's grace, we too receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Sr. Charlene Herinckx, SSMO
During the summers growing up, we would head to the lake for a weekend getaway. It was always great fun to dangle our feet in the water and splash and catch a fish or two. During college, I would return to the farm during the summers. I was invited to help out at the parish. It was the summer our parish was asked to cover Sunday Mass at the Lake. An outdoor pavilion had been built with concrete floor and roof with open walls. A picnic table was used for an altar while others sat at the other picnic tables. However, it was always a challenge to know how much bread to consecrate. We would do a head count, but that didn’t always work with later comers. One Sunday, Fr. Dan made the comment, “We are in Kansas, the bread basket of the world. Put in extra host. Heaven forbid we run out of host in the middle of wheat country!” And there was always just the right amount. What a great joy it was to celebrate Mass with the lake behind us in the great outdoors. Always enough to celebrate and share.

Rev. Timothy Armbruster, C.PP.S.
KC Province
April 14, 2019
Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

Lord, let your love be with us, as we place our trust in you.

Our faith experience is a compilation of our learnings throughout the many moments of our life. We learn by what we have heard spoken about the WORD, seeing the WORD lived as a reality, experiencing the WORD in our own life. In Acts the Hellenists complain because they have heard but have not seen the lived reality of compassion in caring for their widows who were neglected. The twelve consider the growing needs but are mindful of their own mission to preach which they can only do when they are fed by the WORD. They appoint others to carry forward the mission of loving presence and compassionate care of the people to others whom they pray with and for and lay on hands, the personal touch of handing on this part of the visible mission.

In the Gospel the disciples have heard the WORD, Jesus is present with them. They have assisted in feeding the hungry when Jesus has prayed and the little has become abundant in the blessing and sharing. In all this lived experience, Jesus walking to them on the water is more than they can comprehend. Yet the compassionate Jesus tells them "It is I. Do not be afraid."

Pray today to be bold in faith, to “not be afraid” to come to our sisters and brothers with the compassionate love of Jesus who continues to teach us today in the stillness of our hearts. Let us assist the immigrant, the lowly, the forgotten in the world with our actions and our prayers to sustain all.

Sr. Sandra Barton, CPPS
O’Fallon
April 15, 2017
Third Sunday of Easter

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and terrified . . .

The world is crying out for Precious Blood spirituality, for healing, and for reconciling! We read, listen to and talk about the news, about fake news, about bad news. We experience a profound broken heartedness by the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters. We watch reports in terrified silence as members of one religion commit heinous crimes against another. We are startled by the hardness of hearts we experience in not recognizing the human dignity in our brothers and sisters, made in the image and likeness of God, who are immigrants; who are gay, lesbian, transgendered; who are Republican, Democrat, or Tea Party; who root for the team that we dislike; who are other; who are different.

Today the Gospel calls us to remember, to make present that, even while we are speaking, lamenting the situations in our country, and in our world, Jesus stands in our midst. Jesus is in our midst in the real presence of the Eucharistic Liturgy in four ways: present in the Eucharist, present in the Word of God, present in the Assembly of the Faithful, and present in the Presider. In FOUR ways Jesus is present in our midst and yet we miss Him. We don’t get it and we are “startled and terrified” because, like the disciples, we too are “still speaking”.

The Emmaus story in Luke’s Gospel’s calls us to remember the real presence of Jesus with us today! This resurrection narrative calls us to hear and to believe Jesus calming our fears for ourselves, our religious communities, our
ministries, and our world. Jesus states in a simple sentence, “Peace be with you.” May the Precious Blood of Jesus grace us with the stillness of heart to hear and experience the peace of Christ, to believe it in our very selves, and generously share that peace as we bring healing and reconciliation to others in our broken world.

Sr. Karen M. Elliott, CPPS

Dayton
The Gospel today takes place after Jesus fed the five thousand. We hear the next day people got into boats to go to Capernaum to look for Jesus perhaps in hopes of seeing another miracle or to hear more parables. The Gospel concludes with the disciples asking Jesus “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.” Sounds simple enough; believe in Jesus.

It’s easy to say you believe in Jesus and all that is written in Scripture. The daily challenge is putting this belief into action. As Catholic’s we know that faith without action or works is dead. True faith transforms us from reading and listening to the Scripture to living it. We are called and sent forth from the celebration of Mass to carry the Word to others. Simple acts such as kindness to strangers or a simple smile of appreciation can emulate Jesus’ love of neighbor. How we act in the car, at home, when out with friends, at work; everywhere our daily path takes us can be an example of faith.

We discovered by pausing even once during the hecticness of the day to do something nice for someone else sets an example of our belief in “the one he sent” and this impacts all areas of our life, of the way we serve, of the way we live.

Mr. & Mrs. John & Trish Frazer
Precious Blood Companions
April 17, 2018
Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty

The bread given by Moses to the people, in reality, was never given by Moses. It is a gift desired and decided by God because of a persistent murmuring against Aaron and Moses himself by the people of Israel. This bread served only for the body.

Being a daily prodigy, however, it should have strengthened faith in God the Savior and Liberator of his people, but soon it became a habit, and when something becomes a habit people can have two different reactions, get used to it and make it into a tradition or be bored of it and wanting to change it as soon as possible.

These are the two reactions that we, as Catholics, have to face in today's church. We are never happy, no matter what we have and this is our greatest sin.

Jesus came to free us from sin shedding his blood on the cross. The same blood that we drink every time we celebrate the Eucharist in order to have true life.

Today Jesus announces himself as the living bread descended from Heaven. But he is also the living blood that comes from Heaven to give life to everybody. This means that whoever wants life must welcome him, receive him, eat and drink him, feed on him. If we do not feed on him, we fill our stomachs but not our souls. We can not compromise on these words of Jesus. They are of an absolute and universal truth. Who wants life, who wants not to be hungry and thirsty, must believe in him, welcome him, be satisfied with him. He is the only blood of life for the whole world.

Rev. Augusto Menichelli, CPPS
Atlantic Province
April 18, 2018  
Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

I am the Bread of Life,  
he who comes to me will never be hungry,  
and he who believes in me will never thirst.

These simple yet profound words of Jesus, are echoed over and over in the Gospel of John, as he continually wants to draw us daily into a closer and closer relationship with himself and an ever deeper walk in faith by partaking of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

Each time we go to the Celebrate the Eucharist we begin by preparing ourselves by asking for the Lord’s tender mercy, followed by the readings along with reflections, then stating our profession of faith, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the culmination of receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, then we are sent to share the light of faith; the Good News of the Gospel.

Still I wonder, do I know what I am participating in? Do those at the table with me know what they are a part of and what we have been invited too? Most importantly, how do I come to the table of the Breaking of the Bread? On our daily journey in life we walk with feet of clay, perhaps struggling with many issues of sadness, of loss, of illness and other circumstances that are beyond our control. Which may find our own faith somewhat shaken and shallow.

There is another journey of faith illustrated in Scripture on Easter Evening that may help us. It is the story of the two disciples who traveled from Jerusalem back to their village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along, with down trodden and sad faces, they discussed all that had happened in the city over the past few days, as they had thought Jesus was the one who would set Israel free, their Savior was gone. Then Jesus came along the road ever so gently and suddenly, and began to walk with them. They lifted
up their eyes no longer looking at the ground and downtrodden, but at the stranger who had joined them. The stranger listened to their sad hearts and joined in the conversation. He began to explain the scriptures beginning with Moses and all the prophets explaining the passages that were about himself. As they neared the village, the stranger appeared to be going on further, but the two disciples begged him to stay with them. He went in and they all sat at the table, then taking bread into his hands, broke it. Upon seeing this, the eyes of the disciples were opened, and they recognized Jesus! He then vanished from their sight. But Jesus left them with a burning longing in their hearts, and a burning zeal to go back to Jerusalem and share the good news that they had seen The Risen Lord!

This familiar story of the two disciples on the Journey to Emmaus is our story too. In our own lives there are times we are downtrodden, our hope is lost, our faith trembles, it is then we reach out with weak faith asking to become strong again with the Bread of Life; to have Jesus walk alongside us again.

The life of faith is never one in which we can stand still, we are called even more today to walk the Emmaus road to –re-kindled our first love. As we walk from our Church bench toward the altar, can we ponder being on the road to Emmaus, to have our eyes-opened again in the breaking of the bread, and to receive Jesus, who is the desire of our Soul. As we walk back to our bench, and center on the presence of Jesus within us may our hope and faith deepen and our love be re-kindled in our hearts with Easter Joy.

Sr. Patricia Marie Landin, SSMO
Life flows forth to us from all the Scripture readings for this ever so special time of Easter as it does from all the sacred Scriptures. God uses people to help people get in touch with the deepest longings of the human heart that are planted in us by God's love. Phillip, in the Acts passage is an instrument of instruction (which is patience, wisdom, acceptance, knowledge and care shared with the Ethiopian as he is open by the Spirit. God, in becoming a human being in Jesus Christ is sharing with us Life in our very humanity. The whole lesson for today in the Scriptures is that caring for another is essential for the Word to be shared. The Eucharist in which we share in the Bread of Life encompasses all caring, mercy, love, forgiveness, patience, self-sacrifice for others, and wisdom offered in the daily challenges of our lives as Christians. This is essential for Christianity and for the welfare of the whole of humanity in daily living. Life is offered, received, shared!

Rev. Michael Goode, CPPS
KC Province
April 20, 2018  
Friday of the Third Week of Easter  

*Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.*

St. Paul was the most unlikely convert to the Church. We can also say he was the least likely apostle to the Gentiles. He was a staunch Jew. For him to accept the call to be an apostle to the Gentiles required a conversion equal to the one in this reading. How did Paul come to this conversion? Perhaps what prepared Paul for this call was the three days in darkness. What was his prayer during these days? Did he perhaps ponder Stephen’s prayer of forgiveness? Did he wrestle with what he fought against and come to know the Jesus he was persecuting? He already knew about Jesus. Now he came to know the Jesus for whom he would give his life. The Gospel today requires of us times of quiet. Faith in the Eucharist calls us to recognize our brothers and sisters today as the Body of Christ. Like St. Paul we are called to bring Jesus not just in our inner circle, but to those who have not heard of God’s love. The refugee, the immigrant, the stranger in our midst are also the body of Christ. Hopefully, we will not hear Jesus say, “Why are you persecuting me?”

Sr. Marie Fennewald, CPPS  
O’Fallon
April 21, 2018
Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

Many of the disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” As a result, many disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

What were the words Jesus spoke that turned away these disciples? “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live forever.”

How seriously do we take these words every time we receive Jesus’ Body and Blood?

Most of us received our First Holy Communion as children. Can you remember the studying, anticipation, waiting, longing to receive Jesus? And finally, the day arrived. We were filled with joy, excitement and a heart bursting with love because we possessed not only Jesus, but his Promise of Eternal Life.

Now many years later, do we still experience the anticipation, the longing and remember the Promise of Eternal Life before we receive Jesus’ Sacred Body and Blood? Or, like the disciples who turned away, do we find the words of Eternal Life a hard saying and receive Jesus’ Sacred Body and Blood thoughtlessly, routinely? Is it just an automatic action which is part of the Mass?

Jesus gave his body and shed his blood and made a covenant with us and at every Mass the bread and the wine truly become the Body and Blood of Jesus.

May we never forget or take for granted that Jesus’ Body and Blood sustains, delights, surprises, impels and is shared among us for all eternity.

We accept your hard words and thank you Jesus for Your Eternal, Life Giving Sacrifice.

Ms. Mary A. Stasiak
ASC Associate Coordinator, Eastern Area Associates
April 22, 2018
Fourth Sunday of Easter
World Day of Prayer for Vocations

“I am the Good Shepherd”

The fourth Sunday of Easter is often called Good Shepherd Sunday. The gospel reveals the love Jesus has for each of us as the Good Shepherd.

In biblical times, the shepherd stayed with the sheep most of the time. He led them during the day, helped them to find water and food, protected them from any danger, helped them find their way when they got lost and often slept near them at night to keep them safe. Villages usually had an enclosed area nearby surrounded by stones or briars with one opening. Each night sheep in the village would be gathered into the sheepfold and the shepherds would take turns acting as a gatekeeper, lying down across the opening of the sheepfold becoming the gate – keeping the sheep in and the wolves out. If the sheep were threatened in any way, the shepherd would stand by them to defend them. In the morning, each shepherd would return with a particular call or whistle which their sheep would know and follow. They would not respond to any other shepherd, only to their own. Rather than follow behind the sheep, pushing them along as modern sheepherders do, the shepherds in the time of Jesus would walk before their sheep as their leader.

The message Jesus the Good Shepherd has several layers. Initially, just as the shepherd was always with his sheep, forming the gate and guarding them with his very life, so too Jesus is the gatekeeper who is always with us, guarding us with his very life and keeping us safe. He is the one who helps us find our way when we are lost or stray. Secondly, the sheep know their master’s voice and follow. Likewise, we are called to know and follow the voice of Jesus. The challenge is
hearing the voice of the Lord among so many voices today. Jesus reminds us that he is the true voice we need to listen to and follow.

Thirdly, Jesus portrays a true leader not as one who pushes followers out into the dangers of the world, but one who leads them with courage and faith.

In very simplistic terms, Jesus says a leader must be one who practices what they preach. The parent who teaches their children to pray and be good Christians must also take the time themselves to pray and to live what they teach. The priest, religious or teacher who proclaims God’s love must also live that love. And the boss who demands a certain quality of work, must also be willing to live up to those standards. Lastly, Jesus is pointing out that he is the gate. He is the one through whom we need to pass in order to find our way to the Father and to the peace and joy of the heavenly kingdom.

May we listen to Jesus the Good Shepherd and follow him closely.

Rev Ken Schnipke, C.PP.S.
Cincinnati Province
April 23, 2018
Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

*I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

In the Gospel, Jesus plainly says that He is the Good Shepherd and the sheep gate. There are many doors or gate available to us to enter, to touch and to communicate to the sheep. Please choose Jesus, for only in Jesus, we will not be astray. Only in Jesus we will have life and it is an abundant life. Whoever ever enter into the door of a relationship with Jesus, he or she will not be endangered and will not be left outside or locked out. He or she will find a real home to belong. He or she will be safe according to Jesus. If Jesus is the door, the sheep can also get out of that door and face life. What is that life according to Jesus? I am the way, the truth and the life and he also adds no one goes to the Father except through me. This is the abundant life that our Shepherd and door leads us to.

I had the chance to interview a former prisoner. He said, “one lesson that I learned in jail was the door the path that I must take is that of Jesus.” With Jesus you may not get rich right away, you may not become successful all the time but you know you're on the right path and he said this after discovering who Jesus is and following him. I discovered peace and life that Jesus the shepherd and the door has promised. Blessed Easter to all! May the Precious Blood of Jesus give us life in abundance. Amen.

Mr. Gerardo V. Laguartilla
CPPS Seminarian
Atlantic Province
April 24, 2018  
Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

My sheep hear my voice.  
I know them and they follow me.

Two thousand years later, I wonder if Jesus says the same thing about us with the same confidence. He still loves us with the same deep love He had for His sheep so long ago. But do we follow so well? So many of our values—faith, family, freedom, care for creation—are questioned or denied almost daily.

A few years ago a favorite motto was WWJD? -- what would Jesus do? Children, teenagers, and adults alike wore WWJD? jewelry, bracelets, and shirts to remind them to renew the motto often, live it daily, and encourage others to join us in consciously making the world a better place to live. A good example for all of us to follow is Pope Francis whose daily memo gives us much to think about and practice. Let us each make a daily conscious effort to create a more positive world by strengthening family practices, living and sharing our faith, seeking to make freedom ring again in our land and throughout the world, and making the sacrifices needed to recreate our universe for the betterment of all peoples and creatures.

Sr. Marcella Parrish, SSMO
As we celebrate the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist today, we hear the Gospel account about the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. Before he leaves, Jesus sends his Apostles into the world to proclaim the good news to all creation. As members of the Precious Blood Family, we also are sent to proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ in a world filled with a lot of bad news. It is easy to let the bad news affect our emotional state of being. We can carry a cloud over us that affects all our family and work-place relationships. So, the commission of Jesus to us to proclaim good news is really important today. The world needs to hear about our experiences of the love of God.

As you reflect on your circle of influence, how can you proclaim good news through your words, body language, or listening ear today? Where is the cry of the blood calling you to speak good news to someone today?

Rev. Ron Will, CPPS
KC Province
April 26, 2018
Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter

*Whoever receives the one I send receives me...*

In the first reading of this day, St Paul speaks in the synagogue in Antioch. As the good teacher he is, he tells his listeners things they already know well and regularly recount in their liturgy. His actual message is at the end. John, the Baptist, who had the respect of the congregation, had said of himself and Jesus: “What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me: I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.”

Unfastening sandals and washing feet, because of the filth involved, were unclean tasks and relegated to slaves.

In the Gospel, Jesus has just washed the feet of his disciples and says to them: “Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master, nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him.” In this way Jesus speaks of his relationship to the Father. Later he adds: ”Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

We never know who God will send to us as his representative. Therefore it is best to treat everyone as if they were from God. This is especially good to remember as we contemplate our Bold Action. What a rich opportunity to meet and interact with God!

Sr. Theresa Jezl, CPPS
O’Fallon
April 27, 2018  
Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

A student preparing for Confirmation asked who were the saints in the church. The reference was to the statues and tapestries that adorned the walls of the building. The expected answer was a litany of all the saintly images in fabric and plaster of Paris visible along the walls. However, the answer that a young OMI novice from India gave was quite profound. He talked about St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta and other holy men and women who formed the “walls” of the Church.

Like the people Luke addresses in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles, we too have special ancestors. Our ancestors are the founders and foundresses of our congregations and the many men and women who have followed them since our earliest 19th century origins. Think of it. Our “walls” are sturdy, faithful, and Spirit-filled. The presence of our ancestors surrounds us as we carry forward the charism once entrusted to them. Now we are the witnesses to God’s people of a profound love expressed each day in many reconciling ways.

...what God promised to our ancestors God has fulfilled for us...

Sr. Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC
If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.

There was a young woman in RCIA a couple of years ago when I was working in a parish. She was always cheerful, positive and had a bubbly personality. She had a beautiful voice that she shared with the parish, even before coming into the Church. She was full of questions, no matter what the topic. She soon married, and they had a beautiful little girl. A year ago I heard that she had a brain tumor—glioblastoma. She started a blog soon after her diagnosis. In the beginning she wrote often about her treatments and about how she was doing and feeling. She had many followers. Most of them repeated how often they and their friends were praying for her, asking God to heal her, as was I. The posts became less frequent. In September she died. Occasionally her husband, now a young widower with a young daughter, posts on the blog. In his latest post the pain and the heartbreak came through in every word. He wrote how during those 8 months from diagnosis to her death they grew closer together, they grew in their faith, and they were “really living the way we should have been living all along.”

Sometimes it is hard to believe this saying of Jesus. We ask for something, something like health, but Jesus doesn’t do it. At least he doesn’t the way we think it is going to happen. Maybe Jesus did do it. Maybe the blog did “heal” her when she shared her pain with others. Maybe others were healed through her words. Maybe her husband is being healed by sharing his pain and sorrow. It’s about life, death, and resurrection. Jesus did do that!

Sr. Ann Clark, CPPS
Dayton
April 29, 2018
Fifth Sunday of Easter

*I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.*

As we contuse through the Sundays of Lent we have today what may be the most vivid image for those of us living in the 21st C. When Jesus talk about the sheep most of us can’t really (unless you grew up on a farm) appreciate the scene. But we have had all grown houseplants and in school done science experiments where we cut ranches off and then would graft one back on a plant. We have seen for ourselves that truth. That unless the branch is attached to vine or plant it will die. Now this gives us a few points to reflect upon. Who or what am I attaching myself to in my life? How strong is my attachment to Christ? And then, what do I do that severs my attachment from the Church? These are very challenging questions that require honest time and effort in answering if I want to truly look into my soul and make that room for Christ.

I can look back at all themes I kept myself firmly attached to Christ and see how I was both blessed and was a blessing to others. I can look back and see how empty life was when I cut myself off from my Church. And I can also look back and see just what sins I engaged in that cut me off and left me alone to fend for myself.

St. John tells us today, "Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he gave us.” This is the key. To keep the commandments of Christ and his Church. We may not always understand them, but then that is where the theological virtue of faith comes in.
Pentecost is coming once again and so to help us truly be ready for that Holy Spirit let us keep ourselves attached to Christ, to keep his commandments and those of his Church, for then we can be sure that God’s grace will flow through us, give us life and be that witness to the world.

Rev Michael R. Mateyk, CPPS
Atlantic Province
April 30, 2018
Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

*Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.*

It is easy to say the words, ‘I love you’ to someone. Words are a dime a dozen. It is much harder to prove it by one’s actions. If a person loves someone, they want to spend time with them, they want to get to know their family, and they hope they are accepted by their family members.

Jesus tells us that if we love Him, His Father will love us and Jesus will love us. The more time we spend with Him the more He will reveal Himself to us. People in love cannot bear to be separated. They are always seeking ways to please the other and to know each other more deeply.

There are days when a person does not feel loved, and sometimes quite lonely. Jesus is waiting to hear us say that we need Him, and that we love Him, and He will be there. Sometimes He comes and gives us a hug through a dear friend. At other times we are struck by the words of scripture or words of encouragement that a friend offers or simply by the warm smile of another. To know Jesus more deeply is to love Him more deeply.

The biggest obstacle in our lives is our busy schedule. The biggest mistake in our lives is to not make room to spend time with the one who loves so much.

Jesus, give us the desire to spend time with you, to think about all the ways that you show your love to us and help us to love you as you love us.

Sr. Juliana Monti, SSMO
May 1, 2018
Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter
St. Joseph the Worker

Peace I leave you.

Every now and then a person will greet me with “Shalom.” That is a loaded word, loaded with grace. It’s a lot more than the “peace sign” of the 1960’s. Jesus, about to pour out his Blood on the Cross, wishes everything good for his disciples. He asks his Father to give them everything necessary for a full life. He knows that not even his death can stop the flow of love from God to humanity and from one person to another. In fact his return to his Father insures that flow of life. All limitations of time and space are removed. Jesus went to his death with the sure confidence that he and his Father were one.

We are invited into that same peace, that same sure knowledge that no one or no thing can separate us from the love of God, a gift that no one can take from us. No wonder that we pray this prayer before receiving the Eucharist: “I leave you peace; my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom.”

Rev Joe Uecker, CPPS
KC Province
May 2, 2018  

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter: St. Athanasius

*I am the vine, you are the branches.*

I am writing this on February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, our CPPS Congregational feast day so my reflections on the two readings for today are highly influenced by this fact.

The first reading describes the Church confronting differences arising from converts to the faith. The Church was growing; this called for reconciliation at the local level as well as at the governmental level of the church. Our CPPS congregation confronted this same experience of growth whereby its missionary call beckoned it to countries in Europe and eventually North and South America and recently even Africa. The Community’s membership grew to accommodate its missionary calls.

The second reading shows a very different kind of church-replacing activity with reflection. We now see a church rooted and stabilized in the figure of the vine and branches. The Church has grounded itself sufficiently to be concerned about a deeper reality – the relationship between God and the individual and the growth of that relationship. In the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century we experienced a similar call in Vatican II. Spirituality, not dogma, marked the thrust of the Council.

Currently now in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, our community’s General Chapter has called us to deepen our spirituality and the Church’s mission by a contemplative living style. To carry our contemplative prayer into contemplative living is a challenge, because it means recognizing Jesus in every person we meet.

**Personal Reflection**

If you lived with a sister of another community, what evidence of contemplative living would she see in you?

Sr. Luanna Brucks, CPPS  
O’Fallon

May 3, 2018  

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter  
Sts. Phillip & James, Apostles
There is no word or sound, no voice is heard, yet their message reaches to all the ends of the world.

In my ministry of teaching young immigrant children the language of this country, I have learned that words are not always necessary, especially in the beginning. Through the use of gestures, pictures, facial expressions and movements, a word or a message can be communicated. And when understanding of that word or message happens, you can see the eyes of the children light up with joy, excitement, and Wow! Children smile with the realization that “Yes!” they can and will learn this new language. They are given a sense of hope for their future in this new land.

Emily Dickinson writes about hope.”

“Hope” is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without words
And never stops – at all.

The message of hope is given not so much with words or voice, but in the opening of our heart and reaching out to others. We can give hope by simply being present to another with compassion and care; a smile, a wink, a gentle touch, an understanding nod, a cup of tea. A painting of a flower blooming in the crack of a sidewalk, a bouquet of flowers handed to someone through prison bars, or the ever-faithful sunrise each day can also speak of hope. It is a hope that new beginnings are possible, a hope that strength and courage will be given for whatever the day will bring. And not a word needs to be spoken.

And so, perhaps a question that we can ask ourselves is how can we each become a compassionate, quiet, hopeful presence for those we will meet this day?

Sr. Jane Gegg, ASC
May 4, 2018
Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

This I command you: love one another.

A few weeks ago, a wave of pain swept over me at reported comments by a leader about immigrants from the global south. You’d think by now, I would be desensitized to political rhetoric but this time, he hit a nerve. In the gospel Jesus reiterates what God commanded the Israelites at Mount Herob, by asking us to love one another - by asking me to love this leader. As I write this, traces of Valentines day still linger on with drugstores having huge discounts on chocolate and other niceties. This great ode to love coincided with Ash Wednesday this year, a quandary for some but also a subtle pointer in another direction. Lent is the precursor of the greatest demonstration of love in the history of humanity. Lent is a constant reminder of the gift that God has continually offered to humanity from the beginning of time.

As those entrusted with great responsibilities in the political arena continue to fail the least amongst us; as neighbors turn against one another; as separatist words - illegal, alien, them - are bandied around with every increasing frequency: our love faucets need to be turned to maximum. Only a great outpouring of love will turn hearts of stone into flesh once more. Only love will salve the wounds of those who are hurting and broken. Love begets hope and love will hasten our feet and ease our journey towards God whom our soul longs and aches for. It’s imperative that we chose love!

Mumbi Kigutha
CPPS Novice
Dayton
May 5, 2018
Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

“You are not of the world…”

One of the things that confuses many Christians is the attitude of non-Christians toward them. Most of us think that since we go to the world with the greatest and most important message in all of history that the world would applaud and cheer. For the most part, people are not waiting for that message with open arms. In fact, the Bible says that the world does not want us or our message. They hate us. Hate? That is what Jesus said “If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you.” “If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hate you.”

The more you look like Christ the more the world is going to treat you the same way it treated Him. When you don’t act, talk or think like the world does, you are going to make the crowd uncomfortable. You are not going to be “one of us.” The fact is you are not. God has “chosen you out” by His sovereign grace. This concept of a Christian living in the world, but not being of the world is a key concept to understand what it means to be a Christian. When our secularized society demands from us and from the Church certain changes, we are simply being asked to move away from God. We, Christians, however, should be faithful to Christ and to his message. This fidelity may, quite often, mean persecution: “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you, too”.

If Jesus had kept His mouth shut and just gone around healing and feeding people, there wouldn’t have been any trouble. But He exposed their sin. Harry Ironside told the story of the missionary in Africa. In a very backward village, he left a mirror hanging on a tree after shaving. The wife of the tribal chief came along and looked
into it. She had never seen a mirror before. She asked "Who is that ugly woman?" When the missionary explained the mirror to her and told her that it was she. She got made, threw the mirror down and crushed it.

The world doesn’t want to be shown what it looks like. It makes them mad. They can’t take out their hatred on Christ, so they take it out on you. When our secularized society demands from us and from the Church certain changes, we are simply being asked to move away from God. We, Christians, however, should be faithful to Christ and to his message.

Let’s be brave and let us proclaim without any fear Christ resurrected, light and joy of all Christians!

May God bless all!

Rev. Alfons Minja, C.PP.S. Tanzanian Province
May 6, 2018
Sixth Sunday of Easter

*No one has greater love than this,*
*to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*

Last August, when I was on my vacation to visit my mom in Houston, I was touched by a sacrificial love of a Texas mother during the **Hurricane Harvey Flood.** On August 29, 2017 Colette Sulcer, a 41-year-old Texas woman, was driving in her car with her 3-year-old daughter when, suddenly, she hit high water. After she pulled into a parking lot and got out of the car, the flooding’s current carried both Sulcer and her child about a half mile. Somewhere along that distance, while keeping her daughter perched above the water, Sulcer drowned. Officer Carol Riley, a spokesperson for the Beaumont Police Department, told people, “When the baby was found, she was clinging to her mother. She did the best she could to keep her child above the water. The woman absolutely saved the child’s life.”

Sacrificial love is the highest form of love. It is selfless. Its priority is the welfare of others before oneself. Most of us experience the sacrificial love of our parents. They give up their lives, their time, and finances to their children without thinking of themselves. Sacrificial love isn’t about doing what we do well but giving more than we have to give, doing more than we know how to do, sharing more than we thought we could. Sacrificial love means investing our time, money, talents, gifts and service in our love for others. Sacrificial love means willing to *empty ourselves, to give ourselves for the sake of others.*

Another term for sacrificial love would be agape love. Agape love basically means to be self-sacrificing. God’s love for the whole world is a sacrificial love, a giving love, unconditional love so that we could have life. This love is shown in John 15:13, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” The greatest act of sacrificial love was when Jesus willingly sacrificed His life to free us from our bondage to
We must never forget that love comes from God and that God is love. Once we begin to grasp the depth of God’s love for us, then we will be able to love others in sacrificing our lives for them.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe who died for one of the prisoners in Auschwitz said, “Let us remember that love lives through sacrifice and is nourished by giving. Without sacrifice, there is no love.”

Let us remember the words of John the Apostle, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity for them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3:16-18)

Sr. Thuy Doan, SSMO

May 7, 2018
Monday of the Sixth Week of Easter

The word that John uses for the Spirit is Paraclete meaning the one who is called alongside. The Spirit of God stands alongside us to give strength, courage, comfort. The Spirit of God stands with us, up close and personal, that we might not grow weak or weary or falter. Paul is found praying with the holy women of Lydia’s household whom he teaches, baptizes and welcomes into the community (ekklesia-those who are called out or called together). Lydia, filled with a new spirit, ecstatically welcomes the community into her house to give of her own newfound strength, courage and comfort.

On the morning of February 14, 2018 I saw a photograph on Facebook of a tiny little girl dressed in a hospital gown, walking all alone down a hall, pushing an IV pole. The caption plaintively read: “I have no one to pray for me.” And I could not help but think how important it is that we stand with one another, support one another, pray for one another, give our strength to one another. With God’s Spirit accompanying us we companion others in need.

Fill us with your Spirit, O God, that we may stand strong together, sharing with one another our faith, hope and love.

Rev. Bill Hubmann, CPPS
KC Province
May 8, 2018
Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

It is better for you that I go.
For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.

Can you believe Paul and Silas stayed in prison? Really, if an earthquake broke my chains and swung the cell door open, I would interpret it as a sign from God and make a hasty exit. So why did they stay? A whisper in my heart said: *freedom isn’t escape from prison.* You see, I failed to realize they were already free. It appeared they were beaten, chained and trapped in prison, but through their prayers they were united to the Advocate within and truly free. They exercised that freedom and choose to look inward, to listen to God’s counsel. Freedom opened their eyes to see the work needed right there. In the midst of their suffering, because they surrendered their will to God’s, they became God’s blessing to the jailer and his whole household. Their hearts were open to His plan, so they didn’t miss the blessing hidden in their suffering. So I prayed, “God, what “prison” is making me miss your blessings?” Most recently, it was my never ending to-do list. If anyone interrupted my plan to check off all today’s boxes, they were soon sorry. When I surrendered it at Jesus’ feet, my eyes opened and saw the “aggravating interruption” was actually God’s to-do for me. As a slave to my to-do list, it became a prison complete with checkmark boxes as chains and my prideful accomplishments as warden. Today let’s realize we are free and pray in “prison” lest we miss out on God’s abundant blessings.

Kim Lawry
O’Fallon, Partner in Mission
May 9, 2018
Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

I see that you are very religious...
I even discovered an altar...“to an unknown god.”

A few days before Christmas I received a book entitled KNOWING THE UNKNOWABLE GOD written by a student in my first class of 6 year olds (1956). Needless to say, the title left me more than a bit amazed, curious, mystified. Alas! The student had become the teacher.

My initial written response to him was: “Yes, I have also come to know the Unknowable God! Aren’t we blessed?” I proceeded to tell him that I had come to know God because I had seen this God in him and in so many folks that I had come to know and work with over the years. I had seen God as Creator in the beauty of nature and in the uniqueness and creativity invested in humankind in different places in this vast world of ours. Sometimes the experience was more powerful than at other times, but it was always present if and when I took the time to take notice.

Several years ago I found this quote from the Talmud: “O Thou, who are at home deep in my heart, enable me to join you deep in my heart.” That enabled me to get deeper in touch with the God within me. That Presence abides in me whether I am cognizant of it or not. Awesome and so very humbling!

In hindsight, I have come to more clearly recognize that the God within has truly journeyed with me from day 1! There were times when I felt I was searching for SOMEONE or the Something more! Much like the little fish searching for the ocean in one of Anthony de Mello’s stories, I was seeking, questioning the WHY and the HOW and the WHERE of life. The little fish was assured that he was already in the ocean just as I slowly began to recognize that God was within, around, and had encircled me with love beyond measure.
Just as Paul had to alert the Athenians that their God was beyond or more than images of gold. God was more than their altar, etc. He was immersed in them because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. “In Him, we live and move and are!”

Sr. Rose Anthony Mathews, ASC
May 10, 2018  
Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter  
Ascension(Traditional)

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

An end--and a beginning. Jesus leaves in a definitive way; the disciples understand that they are seeing him on earth for the last time. But they are not allowed to mourn or to stand around “looking up into heaven”. They are to begin a new phase of their discipleship; they are to begin the Church. “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” Go!

Sometimes you stand, like those disciples, looking up. You want to see Jesus; you want to be with him. Perhaps you long for consolations you have received in the past. Like Mary Magdalene, you want to cling to his feet. But always you have to come back to earth again, where you have your present mission. You have been commanded to go, to be witnesses to the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Right now, you must love your neighbors and your enemies, stand up for justice, feed the hungry, reconcile the angry, comfort the bereaved, challenge sinners…spread the kingdom, in whatever form the power of the Holy Spirit takes in you. Go. Proclaim.

O God, whose Son today ascended to the heavens as the Apostles looked on, grant, we pray, that in accordance with his promise, we may be worthy for him to live with us always on earth, and we with him in heaven. (Collect of the Mass)

Sr. Paula Gero, CPPS  
Dayton OH
May 11, 2018
Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter
St. Philip Neri

We just cannot take short cuts. To get to the cake and ice cream we have to eat some spinach first. In the Gospel, Jesus explains to the disciples that the reality of being a believer/follower we have to embrace suffering. We have to embrace suffering even if the world around us “rejoices” or at least carries on as if nothing wrong is happening. To believe in Jesus, to believe in his teachings, healing works and miracles and then live all of that out will put us at odds with the normal world that we live and work in. As one person who founded another major religion stated….“life is suffering…….”

The good thing is that the suffering is not the end in itself, suffering is not done for it’s own sake. It leads to something else, and I am not going to sink into clichés about our rewards in heaven. Suffering leads to something good in this life. Paul experienced exactly that in the first reading. He was put in front of a local Roman authority and account for doing what God called him to do – preach the Good News and be prophetic. Paul obviously did not preach on comfortable content. He obviously stirred people up and made some powerful people mad at him. Paul did not short cut to his comfort zone.

Paul could have avoided the sticky issues and preached easy content. He would have avoided angry local authorities and Roman governors. Sure, he would experienced comfort. However, that comfort could be easily stolen away and it has no lasting joy – the joy that the Savior promises in the Gospel that nobody can take from us. If Paul would have skipped all of the hard stuff, what little comfort he would experience would be gone in time or stolen by something or someone else.

So – hey – don’t skip the spinach.

Br. Brian Boyle, C.PP.S.  Cincinnati Province

Disclaimer – I like spinach very much – but I am assuming most readers do not.
May 12, 2018
Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

_Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately_

From this one verse, we can see something significant happening. Apollos was excited! ---so much so, that he speaks boldly in the synagogue in Ephesus, even though he was not from there. He had heard of John the Baptist’s proclamation of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and had embraced it wholeheartedly. But as we all know, it’s not just how we say something; it’s what we say that is important as well. All the boldness in the world doesn’t help us, if we don’t know the full story of what we’re trying to convey.

That’s where Priscilla and Aquila come in. They’re listening and observing this passionate speaker and rather than discouraging him or criticizing him in public for his lack of understanding of the message of Jesus, they quietly decide to help him on a personal basis.

Priscilla and Aquila are what, today, we would call a power couple, but one which sees power in the Gospel of Christ. To do this, they show hospitality to Apollos and open their doors to him. In their home, they explain to him the significance of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection and the Holy Spirit’s role in the Church today.

What Priscilla and Aquila demonstrate to us today is that both men and women can effectively collaborate in ministry without concerns of superiority entering the picture. Like them, we can also look for opportunities to help others gain what we already have—whether it’s a greater understanding of our faith, or connecting them with a network of people who can better assist them in their vocational journey. We can also open our homes and our hearts in hospitality to fellow Christians and build one another up in the faith, whenever possible. What Priscilla and Aquila proclaim to us is that all persons share in the threefold munera of Christ--- sanctifying, teaching and governing.
May 13, 2018
The Ascension of the Lord

As we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord into heaven, I think of the role of intercessor. An intercessor is someone who speaks or requests on our behalf. There is no greater intercessor for us than Jesus Christ and His greatest intercession for us happened on the cross when He gave Himself for our salvation. Now, ascended to the right hand of the Father, He continues to intercede for us after having experienced the joys and trials of human life and given Himself fully for us. No wonder He asked us to offer our prayers and requests in His Name. When we pray in His Name, we ask Him to intercede for us.

Rev. Jim Betzen, CPPS
KC Province
May 14, 2018  
Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter  
St, Matthias, Apostle

I chose you ... to go and bear fruit that will last...

On this feast of St. Matthias, the call of Matthias makes me think: I may not have chosen Judas, but Jesus DID! Jesus loves us and wants us to love Him and love Him IN ALL others regardless of how one thinks, what one thinks, where one lives, the color of one's skin, one's political leanings. It's hard not to judge others, but Jesus only mentions LOVE ONE ANOTHER how many times in today's Gospel?? Does THAT tell me something? How do I really love others? Especially with new Easter life on the journey to the heavenly mansion I really want to see Jesus living in Hispanics, Islamics, African Americans, Europeans, Asians, Africans, ALL people the world over, especially those who live in USA regardless of how they got here. How did I get here? How did we all get here? What are my attitudes toward others? Am I discriminating in how I look at them, treat them.? Do I talk to them or distance myself from them? How can I bear fruit that will last? "The Lord will give him a seat..." Matthias received the support of the early Church. Will our immigrants, refugees, and migrants receive the support of our citizens and country to be given a seat here? What will it take for us as a country to follow Jesus' command to “love one another as I have loved you"?

Sr. Julie Marie Wolf, CPPS  
O'Fallon
May 15, 2018
Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Eternal life is this, to know you...

“And eternal life is this, to know you…”
But how do we know you?
Do we know you from the inside,?
Do we know how you think? How you feel?
On a crowded bus or in a shopping mall.
There is a little girl.
Do I sense the fear in her eyes
As she cautiously asks her nervous mom for help?
Do I see that young man’s worried look
As he stares out the window?
Do I hear the joy in that little one’s giggle?
Does my heart feel the pain?
Laugh with the giggle?
Oh, Lord, let my heart be so attuned to your heart
so I may
See as you see
Hear as you hear, and
Feel as you feel.
So, knowing you, I, too, can share with the apostles
The mission of Jesus
With my whole heart
Till the end of my days.

+ Sr. Marcia Kruse, ASC
May 16, 2018

Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

*Be on guard ... Consecrate yourselves*

Both sets of words appear in the readings for the day. Both readings also lead to impending departure. Paul is about to leave the Ephesus community—“never to see his face again” (Acts 20:38). Jesus is speaking to His disciples just before his arrest and death by crucifixion.

The final message of a loved one about to leave, or from one who has already left, makes a deep impression. “Be on guard.” Be watchful over “yourselves, and over the whole flock the Holy Spirit has given you. . .” (Acts 20:28). Don’t be lulled into complacency. There are “savage wolves” (Acts 20-29) ready to attack, eager to take away what is precious to you. Even those of your own company try to “distort” Acts 20:30 the truth. Be advised, you who hear the shepherd’s voice and want to follow his way, be on guard. Give of yourself. Serve others, particularly the weak and the needy. Work hard. Stay alert to “the words of the Lord Jesus . . . There is more happiness in giving than receiving” (Acts 20:35). Then you will *sing!*

“Consecrate yourselves,” “Consecrate them” by means of the **truth**. Keep yourselves for holiness, for godliness. Keep your eye on Jesus. He acquired you “at the price of his own blood” (Acts 20:28). He will preserve you for himself. He lost no one, except “him who was destined to be lost” (Jn 17:12).

Choose the one whom you will follow: the world or God. Choose: your own way or Jesus’ example. Choose: the “evil one” or “truth.”

Follow Jesus. Reach out to teach and to heal, to listen and to love, to feed and to satisfy, to retreat and to pray and to bring Home.

Consecrate yourself as Jesus did, for the sake of the Kingdom. Consecrate yourself and “share my joy completely” (John 17:13).

Sr. Barbara Ann Hoying, CPPS Dayton
May 17, 2017
Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus prayed for you and for me. What a comforting thought. A common contemporary refrain quote attributed to St. Augustine is “If you were the only person on earth, Jesus would have died for you.” What an idea! God’s personal love for you is so deep, that he would have willingly gone to the cross to save you. It is so good for us to remember that Jesus loves each of us deeply, and that on the night he entered into his Passion, he prayed for you and me, and every Christian that would ever walk the earth.

Perhaps this prayer was in Paul’s mind whenever he was brought before a tribunal, or had to give answer for his preaching. Even when he still called himself Saul, Jesus had already prayed for him and his ministry. Even when we have wandered far from God’s dream for our life, Jesus has already prayed for us.

This thought is incredibly comforting. Life is not easy, and can sometimes feel overwhelming. But Jesus prayed for you and me specifically. None of the struggles of life can stand up to the One who has our back.

Rev. Steve Dos Santos, C.PP.S.
Cincinnati Province
May 17, 2017
Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

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Rev. Steve Dos Santos, C.PP.S.
Cincinnati Province

May 19, 2018
Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter

*Seeing John, Peter was prompted to ask Jesus,*
*‘But Lord, what about him?’*
*Jesus replied*
“How does that concern you?
Your business is to follow me.”

The apostles were truly human—curious, competitive, humble fishermen, testing to see if they were getting their fair share. So many of their foibles seemed to come from poor timing or poorly asked questions.

Peter had just come from the triad of questions from Jesus to see if he loved enough to be trusted with the leadership of the Church. It seems that conversation would have him worrying about his own relationship with Jesus rather than the relationship of Jesus and John. The response of Jesus was direct to Peter and is equally direct to each of us today: “Your business is to follow me.”

Following Jesus involves treating others with respect, caring for the poor, the hungry, the lame, the blind, the imprisoned, seeking just wages for all workers. If each of us makes a conscious effort the treat every other person in the manner we wish to be treated, the world would be a better place for all of humanity. Caring for creation would balance the present needs and grow a better world for future generations.

Sr. Marcella Parrish, SSMO
May 20, 2018
Pentecost

We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.

In my wildest imagination I would have never thought this would be the Scripture verse I would choose for the focus of this reflection. This verse from Acts of the Apostles speaks of diversity, of gathering together, of unity, of sharing the gift of the Spirit which kindled in the Apostles the fire of God’s love. Each nation heard them speak in their own language about the mighty acts of God.

Today our world needs a new Pentecost, a Pentecost not only for Jews, Cretans or Arabs but a Pentecost for the whole human family. We are Mexicans, Syrians, Bosnians, Ethiopians, Croatians, Guatemalans, Russians, Vietnamese, Kenyans, and on and on. We are one human family who desires the gifts of compassion not intolerance, of welcome not deportation, of equality not supremacy, of love not animosity, of unity not division. “Holy Spirit, heal our wounds, our strength renew. On our dryness pour your dew.”

In today’s political climate it is so easy to point an accusing finger, to say a harsh word about those who do not think or act like I might. I have a right to debase their names because they form judgments with misguided thinking. They are ignorant of others’ needs, hopes and dreams. Perhaps it is at those times I need to call upon the Spirit to kindle in me the fire of God’s love. I need to look within at how I am being intolerant, unloving, self-righteous; how I contribute to an
impasse that prevents the truth from being told. “Come Mother/Father of the poor; Bend the stubborn heart and will; Melt the frozen, warm the chill; Guide the steps that go astray.”

Yes, our world cries out for a new, a renewed Pentecost. Whether the Spirit comes as a loud driving wind that animates us with wild courage to proclaim the Gospel of justice and peace or if the Spirit comes peacefully as the breath of Jesus, may we hear and experience the mighty acts of God. “Come, Holy Spirit, come! And from you celestial home shed a ray of light divine.”

Sr. Ginny Jaskiewicz, CPPS  
O’Fallon