



Bringing Home the Word

Easter Sunday, The Resurrection of the Lord | April 1, 2018

Transformed by Christ

By Mary Katharine Deeley

We've all been waiting for this. For six weeks we've focused on letting go of our treasure to help others, taking in a little less food, and reaching out to God a little more, all so that we might in some small way prepare for this day—the greatest celebration of our Church year.

So now, after the alleluias have been sung, the baptismal vows repeated, and the Easter lamb or ham eaten, it's time to ask ourselves, "What was all that preparation for? How have I changed?"

When I was young, I gave up candy or little treats for Lent, but after Easter I happily went back to eating candy and carried on as before. As a young adult, I began using Lent to correct bad habits. I had a little more success keeping those at bay after Easter but, I confess, I didn't see myself as transformed.

"How have I drawn closer to Christ through this Lent? How will I show forth the glory of his resurrection in my life? How will I do these things?" These are good questions for all of us to ask as this Easter winds down.

Once they realized what had happened, the early Christians couldn't keep it to themselves. They preached about Jesus' death and resurrection wherever they went, witnessed to the change he'd made in their lives, and tried to live differently. They invited others to join them. Jesus calls us to do no less.

How have Lent and Easter and the memory of Christ's death and resurrection changed you? How will you live out that change? +

Sunday Readings

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God

Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6b-8

Think of what is above, not what is on earth.

Jn 20:1-9 or Mk 16:1-7

Then the other disciple also went in ... and he saw and believed.

- Do I trust in Christ's power, which I cannot see, more than the problems that I can see?
- Do I believe God is a good Father and only permits that which leads to greater glory for both of us?

A Word From Pope Francis

We Christians are all called to communicate this message of resurrection to those we meet, especially to those who suffer, to those who are alone, to those who find themselves in precarious conditions, to the sick, to refugees, to the marginalized.

—Regina Caeli,
April 10, 2016



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS





Learning From the Cross

By Richard Rohr O.F.M.

It is no accident that Catholics have made the cross the image we look upon. In the revelation of the cross, great truth becomes obvious: The mystery of the rejection, passion, death, and rising of Jesus is the fuel of history. We are wounded, then transformed.

For the first 1,100 years of Christianity an idea was popular that Jesus needed to die for us. As many saw it, Jesus gave his life as a ransom. That ransom had to be paid—some thought to the devil. Saint Anselm then introduced the notion that it was to the Father that Jesus made satisfaction. By dying, Jesus returned the love God deserved from the human race—the love that Adam, Eve, and their descendants had failed to give.

I believe we are now finally ready to accept that Jesus' sacrifice was to transform us, to reveal a God who is self-giving love. Jesus did not need to die. There was no debt to be paid. Jesus died to reveal the nature of God.

By his death on the cross Jesus does not project the evil of humanity onto anyone. He becomes the forgiving victim of human history. It is for good reason that we have dated history from Christ's entrance onto the human stage. Something is different with Jesus' arrival.

Winning Message

The perspective of the cross is that of the victim, the rejected one. After we have gone through our own Passover we come out on the other side, not just alive but changed. We learn who it is that really sustains us. We find ourselves living a life that is not our own: "Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). It's a new kind of life we are living, a life of compassion.

For many, the message of the cross seems neither practical nor relevant. We see it as something Jesus did to prove God's love for us. Jesus becomes the heavenly Hercules who endured unimaginable suffering. But that is only half the mystery. What the mystery of the cross reveals is a different way of living, a way of transformation.

The cross is about fighting without becoming a casualty yourself. The cross is about being the victory instead of just winning a victory. It is not about passivity or giving up. It is a way of winning that tries to bring your opponent along with you. It is refusing the simplistic win-loss scenario and holding out for a possible win-win. The cross is refusing to hate or needing to humiliate the other, which only continues the pattern that many have always followed.

Jesus' Calling Power

This is why the cross has turned around history and given us a new story. The cross utterly reframes humanity, forcing us to redefine success and victory. The way of the cross resets the agenda to the way of nonviolence.

When we stand in the mystery of Jesus we can never stand righteously. We have taken on the mind of Christ. We preach Jesus but, more important, we become Jesus. We recognize that Jesus has calling power over us. In return, Jesus asks that we follow him on our journey of transformation. Your job and my job is to be Jesus, yet I admit I don't know how to be Jesus. He has to do it in me, through me. All I can do, all we can do, is get out of the way and let the mystery of the cross transform us. +



Lord, your resurrection pierces the darkness of doubt and fear.
May the power of your resurrection help me to deepen my love for you and all people.

From Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 2-7, 2018

Monday of Easter Week:
Acts 2:14, 22-33 / Mt 28:8-15
Tuesday of Easter Week:
Acts 2:36-41 / Jn 20:11-18
Wednesday of Easter Week:
Acts 3:1-10 / Lk 24:13-35

Thursday of Easter Week:
Acts 3:11-26 / Lk 24:35-48
Friday of Easter Week:
Acts 4:1-12 / Jn 21:1-14
Saturday of Easter Week:
Acts 4:13-21 / Mk 16:9-15



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy) | April 8, 2018

Life Reborn

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In the first few days after our first child was born, I wasn't conscious of time. I'd sit still and look at this miracle of life, knowing that I loved her with all my heart and that our lives would never be the same. I'd get to the end of the day and wonder where the time had gone. And when she was married last year, I remembered those days like they were yesterday.

Something like that is happening now, but the first week of Easter is more than a recollection of the empty tomb. Each day's Gospel reading refers to appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples. In this way we mark the "new creation" brought about by Christ's resurrection.

For many of us, the week was another round of work or school. Our busyness might have kept us from giving much thought to the feast we just celebrated. But in our spiritual lives, time has stood still for a little while so we might ponder this miracle of life. It's a reminder that we're born new in this moment, an invitation to savor the experience and allow ourselves to be changed by it.

In today's reading, St. Paul gives us a glimpse of what life reborn looked like for the new Christian community. There was unity of heart and mind and generosity toward those who were in need. After the resurrection, their lives would never be the same.

The Church takes its time with Easter so that, no matter how old we get, we'll remember it like it was yesterday and live accordingly. +

A Word From Pope Francis

Mercy warms the heart and makes it sensitive to the needs of brothers and sisters with sharing and participation. Thus, mercy requires everyone to be instruments of justice, reconciliation, and peace. Let us never forget that mercy is the keystone in the life of faith, and the concrete form by which we make Jesus' resurrection visible.

—Divine Mercy Sunday,
April 23, 2017



Sunday Readings

Acts 4:32–35

The community of believers was of one heart and mind.

1 Jn 5:1–6

And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

Jn 20:19–31

[Jesus said,] "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I find security in the love of another in a healthy way? Is it the fruit of giving and not possessing?
- Is my strongest foundation in the love and mercy of Jesus?



God's Extravagant Mercy

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

There is a scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that addresses forgiveness. The king, Claudius, has murdered his brother, married his brother's widow, and stolen the crown. In his soliloquy, Claudius reveals what is transpiring in his tortured soul. The king knows that his fault is past but prayer does not serve him well since the effects of his crime—the stealing of the crown, the sinful fulfillment of his ambition, and his adulterous relationship with the queen—all remain. He senses that his murder cannot be forgiven as long as the effects of the murder remain.

Our faith tells us that God's mercy is always available through the salvation gained for us in Christ. We need but turn to God with sincere intent and resolve, confess our sins, and receive divine mercy. No one is excluded from this grace. God's will is that all be saved.

What is blasphemous, what blocks God's extravagant mercy pouring into our souls is not any particular sin that is unforgivable. Rather, the blasphemy happens when we refuse to forgo the effects of our sins (power, pride, possessions) and are unwilling to reform our lives with a sincere

purpose of amendment. It is not that sin is unforgivable, that God withholds divine mercy. Rather, it is an obstinate disposition that hardens the heart, preventing the rain of divine mercy from penetrating the soul.

Mercy Accepted, Rejected

In the Garden, Peter spoke words of betrayal, denying that he knew Jesus. Subsequently, Peter acknowledged his sin, wept bitterly, and was forgiven. With humility and courage, Peter faced his failure. We know the rest of the story.

For just thirty pieces of silver Judas also betrayed his master. Unable or unwilling to accept Jesus' merciful gaze, this disciple took his own life.

Mercy was afforded to both; it was accepted by only one. In some way Judas got stuck in himself and could not believe that he still retained infinite human worth. His sin shattered his sense of dignity and led to self-disdain.

Saint Augustine, in speaking of sin, describes it as *curvatus in se*, that is, turned in on oneself. Sin does exactly that. It refuses to breathe the fresh air of God's mercy. It suffocates us, cutting us off from God and others. There is a disconnect, a partial or total severing of the branch from the vine of God's life.

Jesus came precisely to reconcile us to God, to one another, and to ourselves.

Appropriating God's Message

In another Shakespearean play, *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo sees his beloved at some distance and says to himself: "O it is my love. O that she knew she were." Juliet doesn't know it! God says to us, his beloved daughters and sons: "O you are my love. Would that you knew you were!"

Could the "unforgivable" sin against the Holy Spirit be our refusal, upon hearing the message of God's love in Jesus, to appropriate this message and let it shape our lives? Joseph Campbell once suggested that the unpardonable sin was "the sin of inadvertence, of not being alert, not quite awake." The spiritual life is about staying awake to the infinite love and mercy of God given us in Jesus.

Though Shakespeare as a dramatist is not a "religious" writer, his plays provide clues for understanding the great mysteries of sin and forgiveness. For these clues, we should be grateful. +

Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10).



Risen Lord, you fulfilled your promise by rising from the dead.
Help me to practice what I preach..

From Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost,
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 9-14, 2018

Monday, Annunciation of the Lord:
Is 7:10-14; 8:10 / Heb 10:4-10 / Lk 1:26-38

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 4:32-37 / Jn 3:7b-15

Wednesday—St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr: Acts 5:17-26 / Jn 3:16-21

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 5:27-33 / Jn 3:31-36

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 5:34-42 / Jn 6:1-15

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 6:1-7 / Jn 6:16-21



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Easter | April 15, 2018

Putting Our Fears to Rest

By Mary Katharine Deeley

During a particularly difficult period at one place I worked, I would come home at night and rehash conversations and events, wondering whether the outcome would have been different if I'd said or done something else.

I wonder whether the apostles asked themselves the same kinds of questions after the crucifixion. "Should we have done something differently? Could we have prevented this somehow?" Perhaps they locked the door because they were afraid they'd be put to death too.

When we're in a bad situation, sometimes all we want to do is hide. It's a child's response: If I don't look at it, maybe it will go away. But the locked door was no barrier, and Jesus came and stood in their midst. Rather than ridicule their fear, he gently put it to rest: "Peace be with you." The more Jesus talked, the more they heard, and they came to know that the peace of the Lord is not like the world's peace.

It's not a temporary measure that will only give way to more turmoil. Jesus calmly and lovingly put their fears to rest. It wasn't that the world was suddenly going to be welcoming; rather, they would be confident in the new life that was in them and in the grace Christ alone can give.

Jesus does this for us as well. He walks through the locked doors of our hearts and blesses us with peace. The more we listen to Jesus' words, the more we can understand and witness to his truth.

Is the Lord with you today? +

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus tells us that the path to encountering him is to find his wounds. We find Jesus' wounds in carrying out works of mercy, giving to ... the body of your wounded brother, because he is hungry ... because he is incarcerated, because he is in the hospital. These are the wounds of Jesus today.

—Homily, feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, July 3, 2013



Sunday Readings

Acts 3:13–15, 17–19

The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead;

1 Jn 2:1–5a

He is expiation for our sins, and ... for those of the whole world.

Lk 24:35–48

[Jesus said,] "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Is there an area of my heart and life where I need Jesus' healing?
- Am I confident in God's power to raise me up out of my weakness?



Transformed by Easter

By Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

Christian history reaches its crescendo in the resurrection. The risen Jesus is the final revelation of the heart of God—a God who teaches love rather than hate, forgiveness rather than blame, nonviolence rather than violence.

Recall Jesus' encounters with his disciples after his resurrection. He came to his followers with whom he had spent three years, the people closest to him who had nevertheless rejected, betrayed, and abandoned him. Following his resurrection Jesus had the opportunity to chastise them. And yet, in all four Gospel accounts we see that the risen Jesus neither berates nor blames his disciples. Indeed, Peter, who had betrayed him three times, is given three chances to say "I love you" to his master.

There is nothing to fear in the risen Christ. We have in him the perfect icon of a God who is safe. We have a God who does not blame, punish, threaten, or dominate. We have a God who breathes forgiveness. The entire biblical tradition has been moving to this moment where God is identified with universal forgiveness.

Jesus' resurrection tells us that there is no victory through domination. There is no such thing as triumph by force. By his life, death, and resurrection Jesus stops the cycle of violence, challenging the notion of dominating power. He invites

us to relational or spiritual power, where we are not just changed but transformed.

Redemptive Forgiveness

Many of us identify more easily with the judging God we may have encountered in childhood: the one who knows our every sin and metes out punishments, the one we must attempt to placate and please. Often, we are more comfortable living with a fearsome God than one whose love is boundless. But by his life, death, and resurrection Jesus challenges us to new heights of redemptive forgiveness.

Most of us cannot go for long without thinking a judgmental or accusatory thought about others. So often, there is someone we're judging, accusing, blaming. To live in the good, to live in the love, to live without a need to judge—that's major surgery! None of us reaches that point early in life, but when we're there we know we're transformed. We're free. We are at one with the risen Jesus.

Once we have a personal experience in our own life of the risen Christ upholding, loving, and freeing us, then we have nothing to fear. That's how secure Christ makes us, because we have a center point. We have received the gift of the Spirit.

Divine Lure

During a retreat, my fellow retreatants

and I were asked to list the adjectives each of us would use to describe Jesus. My list included words such as compassionate, self-confident, humble, forgiving. When our leader brought us back together as a group she suggested that the qualities we had identified represented not so much what Jesus was like, but what each of us wanted in ourselves. Jesus is the divine lure who invites us forward in our humanity, enticing us into these virtues by his own full living of them. The qualities I had on my list are indeed qualities Jesus possessed. But the reason we want to embrace them is because Jesus has set the standard, the ideal for humanity.

In Jesus we see the divine being who is also the perfect human being. Jesus comes in human form to show us the face of God, who is eternally compassionate and joyous, standing with us in our sufferings and joys. As Christians, our vocation is to unite with Christ crucified and risen. +



Risen Lord, your resurrection revealed to the world the hope and promise of new life. Help me to be a faithful, hopeful, loving presence to all people.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 16–21, 2018

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 6:8–15 / Jn 6:22–29

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 7:51–8:1a / Jn 6:30–35

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 8:1b–8 / Jn 6:35–40

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 8:26–40 / Jn 6:44–51

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 9:1–20 / Jn 6:52–59

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 9:31–42 / Jn 6:60–69



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Easter | April 22, 2018

Our Good Shepherd

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My mother lived for a time on a ranch in Texas. The ranch had cattle and sheep. My mother told me that sheep are pretty dumb and need a lot of care. She had great respect for the ranch hands who patiently got them out to pasture and then rounded them up when it was time to come in. Left to their own devices, she said, sheep would be easy prey for coyotes, foxes, and bobcats that roam the hill country.

Sheep were important for many families living in first-century Palestine as well. They provided food, clothing, milk, and a source of income.

A good shepherd was worth his weight in gold, because he spent his days with the sheep, leading them to pasture, protecting them from harm, and finding them when they got lost.

Shepherds may not have had a high social status, but it would have been hard to live without them.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does all these things for his flock, and then goes even further: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

The ranch hands my mother talked about would have grieved over a dead sheep but wouldn't have died trying to save it. They made sure the sheep were watered and fed, but they didn't make the sheep's lives more abundant.

But we have abundant life because Jesus laid down his life for us. He is our Good Shepherd. Can we ask anything more?

Is the Lord with you today? +

Sunday Readings

Acts 4:8-12

[Peter said,] "He is the stone rejected by you ... which has become the cornerstone."

1 Jn 3:1-2

Beloved, we are God's children now;

Jn 10:11-18

[Jesus said,] "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

A Word From Pope Francis

The grave environmental crisis facing our world demands an ever greater sensitivity to the relationship between human beings and nature. We have a responsibility to pass on the beauty of nature in its integrity to future generations, and an obligation to exercise a just stewardship of the gifts we have received.

—Visit to Kenya, November 25, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Jesus, how well do I imitate your love by sacrificing for others?
- Do I seek salvation, peace, and healing from Jesus?



Treasuring Sabbath Time

By Kathy Coffey

Third Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day—keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

We've all gotten a Great Idea in the shower, on the bus, at the gym, or staring into space. We might suddenly remember where we left the keys, decide what's for dinner, or solve a problem that's been annoying us. The mind relishes empty spaces, becoming more creative in decluttered stretches.

If that is true in daily life, the Third Commandment shows how rest is even more important for our spiritual lives. The root meaning of the word *sabbath* is "to separate." It marks the end of one week and the start of another, or the close of work and the beginning of play.

As soon as a good directive like this is given, people exaggerate it. Some folks really ran amok with this one, even to the extreme of forbidding doing good on the Sabbath. Religious authorities spun into a frenzy when Jesus healed on the Sabbath. Clear-sighted as always, he reminded us: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In other words, if it helps you live a more fulfilled life, do it. If you're going through contortions to keep a law and losing compassion in the process, forget it.

How delightful when the commandments, carved solemnly on stone and written in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, usually a grave document, both tell us to relax, lighten up.

Ready, Set, Go

For many of us, Sunday has become the "junk drawer" of the week: We cram in all the errands and duties that can't get done because of work pressures every other day. Retailers are happy to accommodate, and Sunday becomes Shopping Day.

What's wrong with this? It's not the greatest moral evil, but we could do better. In this pattern, we lose sight of what we were made to be: God's delight. We forget that we have abundant blessings and should take time to savor them, awash in gratitude.

The original meaning of the Sabbath was the day set aside for Israel to honor its covenant with God. Today, one way to observe it is with Sunday Mass. Sabbath time also reminds us that God is eager to have our attention and quick to pour out graces. When we clear our calendars and minds, we remember who we are, just as if we are making a retreat.

And if we don't? If we keep cranking out work and churning out errands, we look like responsible, tax-paying citizens. But by giving up quiet Sabbath time, we dehumanize ourselves and lose sight of what's most important. We were all made for loving God and each other. Other accomplishments are fine, but don't measure up to that.

Clearing Space for God

Some people may protest: "But I'm working three jobs to feed my family! Where am I supposed to fit in Sabbath?" For those who are this tightly scheduled, maybe it becomes an hour before the kids wake up or after they go to bed. Maybe it's time in the evening without television or computer. There are as many ways to keep holy the Sabbath as there are people. In such times we remember we are God's beloved, and no matter what life throws at us, nothing else is as fundamentally important.

Modeling a sense of Sabbath is especially important for parents. What do we want our children to remember? Mornings when the family snuggled in pajamas, built blanket caves, held tickling contests, and cooked something delicious? Or the fact that Mom and Dad dourly trooped off to work like robots? +



Risen Lord, you are the Good Shepherd who watches over us and protects us from all harm. Give me the courage to be a loving shepherd and advocate for the poor and vulnerable.

From Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 23–28, 2018

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:1–18 / Jn 10:1–10

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:19–26 / Jn 10:22–30

Wednesday, St. Mark, Evangelist:
1 Pt 5:5b–14 / Mk 16:15–20

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:13–25 / Jn 13:16–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:26–33 / Jn 14:1–6

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:44–52 / Jn 14:7–14



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Easter | April 29, 2018

We Are the Branches

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Many enduring images of Church come to us from the New Testament. One is Paul's image: "The Body of Christ." Another comes from our Gospel today: "The Vine and the Branches."

Both are metaphors of living organisms. For both, Christ is the most important element. Christ is the head of the Body and the symbol of authority and purpose. Christ is the Vine that brings life and nutrients to the branches that produce fruit. Anyone who has visited a winery knows the significance of the vine. If it's cut, the branches wither and the crop fails.

Why is it important to have both images?

John's image reminds us that the Church can't survive if it's separated from Christ. We can live only if we remain in Christ so that the power of grace can continue to infuse us with everything we need to bear the fruit of love, compassion, and mercy.

Paul's metaphor keeps us humble. Regardless of how this Body is structured, Christ is the true head; we are to submit ourselves in obedience to him regardless of how important we are in this world. We also know we belong as a community to Christ and in communion with one another.

There are many parts to the Body and many clusters of fruit on the vine. To leave either is to separate ourselves from Christ.

That's why praying together each week is so important. It reminds us who we are and to whom we belong.

Let us offer praise for this vine and for this Body into which our baptism has called us. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 9:26–31

The Church ... was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

1 Jn 3:18–24

Love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

Jn 15:1–8

[Jesus said,] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower."

A Word From Pope Francis

The Holy Spirit, in the variety of his gifts, unites us and enables us to contribute to the building up of the Church in holiness.... Let us ask the Lord to help us to take an ever more active part in the Church's life and mission.

—General audience,
June 26, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I find ways to regularly read and hear the word of God?
- What symbols would sincerely represent the way I live my life?



John's Gospel: Our Gift

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

One of the treasures of the Church is the Gospel of John. In this work we are given a unique insight into the life of Jesus. Moreover, we are invited to enter into intimate union with Christ, at a personal level and as members of a community.

In the John's Gospel we learn the concept of "blessedness," what it means to live a Christian life. To the extent that we respond to our fourfold baptismal call, we will experience the blessedness John articulates.

Through the other evangelists—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—we see Jesus as someone who is earthly, but also the very presence of God in history. The Gospel of John, on the other hand, presents Jesus as the preexistent one. In becoming human, Jesus reveals the inner workings of divine life. That life is offered to us, and salvation consists precisely in our participation in it. To the extent that we accept Jesus into our lives, we enter into the mystery of salvation.

Through our baptism into the life of Jesus, we are called to maturity, holiness, community, and service. John's Gospel articulate those calls, and provides insights into living them. Responding to the call is the way to a blessed, happy life.

Four Roadmaps

The call to maturity! The mature disciple

is a person of faith. Faith is the opening of our lives to God revealed in Jesus. Everything depends on faith, on our submission to Jesus and his word. Maturity is a lifelong process; faith demands ongoing development. The reading and rereading of the Gospel of John helps us grow into the full stature of Christ.

The call to holiness! Within Catholic tradition, holiness is the perfection of love. John speaks eloquently of the grace of love. In the Last Supper discourse, Jesus speaks profoundly of the values of friendship, intimacy, and love. This love points to union with God and unity among us. The tenderness and force of God's love is overwhelming. And the test? To lay down one's life for others.

It is in John's Gospel that Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine and the branches. This image captures the essence of holiness. To the degree that we are united to Jesus, the Vine, then we the branches, can bear fruit that will last forever. Holiness is that union, that oneness which sustains us on our journey.

The call to community! One characteristic of early Christians was the insistence on Jesus' command that its members love one another. Another feature was dedication of the community to the person of Jesus. His vision and values were their compass. They came together because of an outside enemy, the "world," which stood for all that was not good.

The call to service! John depicts Jesus as someone for others. In the Cana miracle of water turned to wine, in the healing of the royal official's son, in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, in the washing of the feet at the Last Supper, in the resurrection accounts—Jesus is serving the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of the people.

Simple Treasure

A great treasure, this Gospel of John. Though complex in many ways, there is an underlying simplicity: Jesus, the preexistent Word of God, is for and with us. We are invited into a life of deep friendship and called to share the gift of light, love, and life with others. God dwells within us; we are temples of the Holy Spirit. Thus, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me" (14:1). +



Risen Jesus, your abiding presence gives us hope. Help me to be a loving presence to others.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 30–May 5, 2018

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 14:5–18 / Jn 14:21–26

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 14:19–28 / Jn 14:27–31a

Wednesday, St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church:
Acts 15:1–6 / Jn 15:1–8

Thursday, Sts. Philip and James, Apostles: 1 Cor 15:1–8 / Jn 14:6–14

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 15:22–31 / Jn 15:12–17

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:1–10 / Jn 15:18–21