



SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2016

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY)

How can we exercise mercy?

This year, which the church dedicates to the mystery of divine mercy, today's feast is even more important than usual. In a world full of tragedy and suffering, how do we participate in the revelation of God's mercy? Henri Nouwen spoke to this question in *The Genesee Diary*. He recognized that in our prayer for the world, we become the world, lifting up the needs of millions and delivering them into God's presence. We can't embrace a world in pain, but God can, Nouwen wrote. Make the nightly news a prayer hour in your home.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 5:12-16; Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31 (45)*. "I am the first and the last, the one who lives."

MONDAY, APRIL 4 SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

A good day to renew your faith

For centuries England celebrated the feast of the Annunciation as "Lady Day" (as in "Our Lady"), and curiously the day also marked the beginning of the English legal year, when taxes were due and long-term contracts were renewed. The date for Annunciation (normally March 25 but a moveable feast depending on the timing of Lent) roughly corresponds to the spring equinox, when day and night are equal in length, so perhaps that seemed like a good time to start a new calendar cycle. Whatever the reason, today remains a day of new beginnings, the day Mary learned she would bear a very special child. Reason enough to consider this to be a day for new beginnings in your own spiritual journey. Ring in the new!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10; Hebrews 10:4:4-10; Luke 1:26-38 (545)*. "Nothing will be impossible for God."

TUESDAY, APRIL 5 FEAST OF VINCENT FERRER, PRIEST

Be part of the solution

The years around 1400 were rough ones to be a Catholic. The Western Schism (1378-1418) divided Roman Catholicism between two, and eventually three, claimants to the papacy. Dominican Vincent Ferrer, a gifted missionary during this time of trial, tried his hand at uniting the divided church, but the differences were too great for any one person to heal. He later said the experience had such a depressing effect on him as to seriously damage his health. Differences and divisions left unattended, whether in a faith community, a family, or an organization, are bad for our health and

well-being. Do what you can to be a force for healing and reconciliation, but realize no one can do it alone.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 4:32-37; John 3:7b-15 (268)*. "The community of believers was of one heart and mind."

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6 EASTER WEEKDAY

Rescue is the goal

Much of Christianity has been styled as judgment over a devil-ridden society. When 18th-century minister Jonathan Edwards delivered his most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," he warned against the horrors of hell and the danger of being lost for eternity. Members of the assembly interrupted Edwards repeatedly asking, "What can I do to be saved?" They heard little consolation in the message. Our complete gospel witness must include John's glorious, magnificent bottom line: Jesus came to save, not to accuse.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 5:17-26; John 3:16-21 (269)*. "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

THURSDAY, APRIL 7 FEAST OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, PRIEST

Choose a path with heart

We all had that special teacher, or a few select teachers, who reached us in a lasting way, perhaps inspiring us to choose the vocation we have today or helping us believe in ourselves when we had our doubts. Maybe it was a supportive pat on the back when we struggled on a test or had a family problem. "To touch the hearts of your students is the greatest miracle you can perform," said John Baptist de la Salle, who dedicated much of his life to educating poor students in France around 1700 and is today the patron saint of teachers. Whose heart will you touch with your own life's work?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 5:27-33; John 3:31-36 (270)*. "The God of our ancestors raised Jesus."

FRIDAY, APRIL 8 EASTER WEEKDAY

Dive in

The fish has been a symbol of Christ and of Christianity for the entirety of church history. Many of the first disciples were fishermen. One of Jesus' most astounding miracles was feeding a multitude with loaves and fishes. The Greek word for fish is an acronym for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior." The sign of the fish was used as a secret marking by early Christians to avoid persecution. This water-dwelling being also alludes to Baptism. Meditate on the many facets of the fish symbol while answering Jesus' call to be "fishers" of men and women.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 5:34-42; John 6:1-15 (271)*. "This is truly the prophet, the one who is to come into the world."

SATURDAY, APRIL 9 EASTER WEEKDAY

Hunger for the gospel

Theory can get in the way of practice, especially when it comes to our faith. "I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the gospel, period," Desmond Tutu said. "The gospel . . . is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't ask, 'Now is that political or social?' He said, 'I will feed you.' Because the good news to a hungry person is bread." Perfecting the way we live the gospel is the challenge of a lifetime. It means moving beyond semantics to action. Faith, after all, is lived out—both in word and in deed.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 6:1-7; John 6:16-21 (272)*. "The word of God continued to spread."



Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

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