



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Easter (B)

April 7, 2024

I Want Proof

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Who doesn't? It's not simply that we are children of the scientific age in which proof is essential. Concrete evidence gives us a sense of security; it helps us understand how things work. Even in ordinary human relationships, we want proof. A tune from *My Fair Lady* demands, "Don't talk of love...show me." It's very difficult to live without a certain degree of surety. Consequently, we should not be surprised at Thomas' insistence: "I want proof!"

Thomas is often described as lacking faith. This isn't the full story. The reason the other disciples believed was because

they had an experience of the risen Lord. Before that experience they were hiding behind locked doors. Thomas was absent; we are not told why. Whatever the reason, he also wanted an experience of the risen Lord. He was not content to base his believing on their word alone. In a sense, more was being asked of Thomas than the others.

Thomas is the patron of all of us whose faith in the risen Lord is based on the word of others rather than on our own unique revelatory experience. Who of us wouldn't want some mystical experience? We are called to believe without seeing. Yet, this isn't strictly true—we can see evidence of the resurrection. The best proof is revealed in the lives of millions of people who commit themselves to God and who strive to live with integrity. †

Sunday Readings

Acts 4:32–35

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.

1 John 5:1–6

Whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

John 20:19–31

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

Thomas is the patron of all of us whose faith in the risen Lord is based on the word of others.



A Word from Pope Francis

Today is the day to ask, "...Do I, who have so often been fed by the Body of Jesus, make any effort to relieve the hunger of the poor?" Let us not remain indifferent. Let us not live a *one-way faith*, a faith that receives but does not give...

HOMILY, ROME, APRIL 11, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Were there people who taught you your faith just by how they lived?
- Who looks to you as a person of faith in the risen Jesus?

Doubt as a Doorway to Faith

Richard B. Patterson

Somewhere between college and the present, I seem to have lost the faith of my youth. The strong emotions I would feel at midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. The intense desire to serve God. The deep guilt and fear when I would fall into sin. Somewhere along the way I lost that faith. I would wonder, what happened?

At times I blamed the loss on my sisters' deaths. Perhaps it was because my job as a psychologist brought me into contact with so much suffering. Or maybe the nuns were right; maybe it was because I went to a secular school after college. I've come to see that probably all those factors were involved. And more.

I miss that faith. That certainty. Knowing where I stood. The warm



feelings of connection with the Divine. As I began to doubt, I feared that doubts were sinful or at least a sign of weakness. I would occasionally hear relatives whisper about someone who “lost the

faith.” Such whisperings were tinged with a bit of judgment.

I have read a lot over the years and have found help and comfort from many writers: Thomas Merton. C. S. Lewis. Henri Nouwen—all men of deep faith. A faith I lack. One day it dawned on me that each of these men whom I envied had gone through moments of significant doubt. Is it not conceivable that the rich faith they articulated would in some way have only been possible through doubt? In other words, rather than being the enemy of faith, could it not be possible that doubts could in fact be a doorway to a deeper faith? †

From *Turtle on the Fencepost: Finding Faith Through Doubt* by Richard B. Patterson, available at Liguori.org

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From “Why Catholics Celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday” by Albert McBride, O.Praem.

On October 6, 2006, an armed man entered an Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. He chased out the little boys and lined up the 10 little girls in front of the blackboard. He shot all of them and then killed himself. Five of the girls died. After the medics and police left, the families of the fallen carried their slain children home. They removed their bloody clothes and washed the bodies. Then they walked to the home of the man who killed their children. They told his widow they forgave her husband for what he had done, and they consoled her for the loss of her spouse. They buried their anger before they buried their children. Amish Christians believe that God’s forgiveness depends on extending forgiveness to other people. That’s what the mercy of God is all about. That mercy is why we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. †

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Lord Jesus, as you promised mercy, live in us that we may forgive those who wronged us and seek forgiveness from those we have wronged, we pray. Amen! Alleluia!

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 8–13

Monday, The 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, Easter Weekday:
Acts 5:17–26 / Jn 3:16–21

Thursday, St. Stanislaus:
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** 

April 7, 2024

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Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Easter (B)
April 14, 2024

What Will It Take?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

What will it take for the early followers of Jesus to recognize him in their midst? Today's Gospel recounts yet another episode of confusion and unbelief. They had an extraordinary experience that startled and terrified them. Even though other disciples reported having come upon the risen Lord, they didn't realize that it was also he they were encountering. Such an unusual experience might have left them doubtful about the Lord's presence, but the reports of others should have thrown light on the reality of their own experiences. Are they like Thomas,

who was unwilling to take the word of others but demanded his own tangible experience of the risen Lord?

However, every account of the risen Lord's appearance reports that his identity is initially hidden. They only knew that it was him when he revealed himself. Mary recognized him when he called her name (John 20:16); the couple in Emmaus knew him in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:31); even Paul on the road to Damascus only understood who the Lord was when he revealed his name (Acts 9:3).

And what about us? What will it take for us to recognize the risen Lord in our midst? Do we also need concrete evidence? Will it only happen if we have a meal with him? But isn't that exactly what the Eucharist is—a meal with the risen Lord? †

Sunday Readings

Acts 3:13–15, 17–19

The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from death; of this we are witnesses.

1 John 2:1–5a

Whoever says, "I know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar."

Luke 24:35–48

[Jesus] asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.



What will it take for us to recognize the risen Lord in our midst?

A Word from Pope Francis

Being Christian is not first of all a doctrine or a moral ideal; it is a living relationship with him, with the Risen Lord: we look at him, we touch him, we are nourished by him and, transformed by his Love, we look at, touch, and nourish others as brothers and sisters.

REGINA CAELI, ROME, APRIL 18, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you look for the presence of Christ in the faces of those you encounter every day?
- Is there anyone you refuse to see as a brother or sister in Christ? Why?

Our Enemies Have Families, Too

Rev. Paul Turner

At times war seems to be the only course of action. At other times, though, it seems as though different solutions could have been found. Americans disagree about our wars, which is good. It shows that we think critically about violence. One motto that most Americans rally around is “Support Our Troops.” Even if you don’t agree with the point of the war, you support the troops who fight it. Pope St. John Paul II, weighing the question of winners and losers in battle, said, “War is always a defeat for humanity.”

Other nations also have troops. Those troops also have families. The deaths of combatants and innocents cause tremendous grief in the lives of people, no matter whose side they are on.



The watershed event for ancient Israel was its exodus from Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea. The Chosen People crossed many miles of desert before entering the Promised Land. They left

behind their enemy, submerged in the sea that had opened for Israel’s escape and closed to defeat the foe.

Pharaoh’s army—they were someone’s children, too.

At Easter we reflect upon the exodus because it foreshadows baptism. Through the waters of rebirth, we put sin behind and are purified for life in the new Promised Land. In the case of baptism, our enemy is the devil. The resurrection overcame the power of evil, and everyone can agree that it was worth the battle. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* by Rev. Paul Turner, available at Liguori.org

Daybreaks authors include Fr. Ron Rolheiser, Sr. Dianne Bergant, and Fr. Daniel Horan

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From “How to Read the Resurrection Narratives” by Raymond E. Brown, SS

Our four Gospels, written twenty-five to sixty-five years after the resurrection, say what happened in ways so different that the Church wisely doesn’t combine them all into one picture or prefer one Gospel account over the other. Each Gospel narrative should be allowed to contribute its own wealth to what we know and believe about Christ. What can we learn from the fact that the Gospel accounts of the resurrection differ from each other? The answer is centered in the risen Jesus as God’s ultimate revelation directed to all times and places. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, but the world changes. The Church of our century cannot present a different Christ. But by the way it preserves the varied Gospel messages, it lets Jesus speak to the differing needs of the audiences of our times. †

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Lord Jesus, help us to recognize you in the faces of those we encounter in our daily lives, even those who are difficult for us to love, we pray. Amen! Alleluia!

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 15–20

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 (B)

April 21, 2024

The Good Shepherd

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

For many of us, our only connection with sheep is with illustrations of the cuddly white creatures found on holy cards. However, that image strays from the facts. Sheep are not household animals. They live outdoors; they lie down in grass, dirt, and mud. Furthermore, unlike many other animals, sheep cannot clean themselves. I'm not denigrating sheep, just putting aside any fanciful view of their nature.

Raising sheep was an important occupation in the ancient world. In fact, the royalty's governance of people was often described as shepherding. David was told: "You shall shepherd my people

Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2). Later, when the royalty were not faithful to this charge, God declared: "I myself will pasture my sheep" (Ezekiel 34:15). This startling characterization of God became a characterization of Jesus.

Grime and animal smells, the blood of births and deaths, inclement weather, and the threat of predators mark the life of a committed shepherd. Human comfort was secondary to the needs of the sheep. Sheep actually learn to recognize the voice of the one who feeds them, cares for them, protects them. The shepherd's voice seems to say: *I am here for you because you are mine.* As "the Good Shepherd," Jesus is totally committed to us, his sheep. He attends to our needs, willing to risk his own security in order to save us. His care for us seems to say: *I am here for you because you are mine.* †

Sunday Readings

Acts 4:8-12

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

1 John 3:1-2

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God.

John 10:11-18

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

God declared: "I myself will pasture my sheep."



A Word from Pope Francis

How beautiful and comforting it is to know that Jesus knows us one by one, that we are not unknown to him, that our name is known to him! We are not a "mass," a "multitude" for him, no... He knows each of us with our own story... Each of us can say: Jesus, knows me!

REGINA CAELI, ROME, APRIL 25, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do you relate to the image of Jesus as a shepherd?
- Where do you hear the voice of Jesus who protects, knows, and loves you?

Being Love for One Another

Paula D'Arcy

I was exhausted, hungry, and out of sorts. I had just cleared customs in Atlanta after a series of flights from Europe that caused me to miss a full night's sleep. Now the flight to get me back home was delayed. I had another six hours to wait.

I went to my gate area, delighted to find it empty, hoping for a nap, when an elderly lady pushing a wheelchair approached me. She was bone weary, confused, looking for her gate and a flight to Charleston to visit her daughter. I sighed, helped the woman into the wheelchair, and started walking, looking for video monitors. The last flight to Charleston had already left. I forgot my own weariness. What on earth was she going to do?

I trudged on until we found an



information booth. There was a long line, but leaning on the edge of the booth was a young flight attendant, ready to go home, his shift over. He caught my eye and smiled. "What's wrong?" he asked. I explained. He looked at the sweet woman

in the wheelchair, almost asleep. He looked at me. Then looked right into me. "I think," he said slowly, "I think you've done your part. I think the rest is up to me. I won't leave her, I promise you. Even if she needs a room for the night, I won't leave her until she gets on a plane for Charleston." I said goodbye to the woman and turned to watch the young man wheel her down the walkway until they were out of sight.

On the surface, it was a simple encounter. But it was the way this young man had responded—looking right into my eyes. In that look, we were no longer three strangers. We were three human beings whose paths had momentarily crossed. He took it seriously: We are here for one another. And in that moment of love, he showed me the way to our true home. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* by Paula D'Arcy, available at Liguori.org

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Easter Springs to Life" by Diane M. Houdek

The psalm most often read at funeral liturgies is Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." We know we need God. When Jesus says he is our shepherd, we sense his intimate care for us, his flock. We recognize his voice, knowing he will lead us to abundant pastures and lifegiving water. And we know he laid down his life to keep us safe from danger and the finality of death. We can let go of many of the stresses, large and small, of daily life. We can trust that with his guidance, we will discover where we can go safely—and where we can't. By following the voice of our shepherd, we learn the true meaning of Easter. †

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Lord Jesus, amid many voices demanding our attention, help us recognize your voice, trust your love for us, and follow you, we pray. Alleluia! Amen!

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 22–27

Monday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 11:1–18 / Jn 10:1–10

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 11:19–26 / Jn 10:22–30

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 12:24—13:5a / Jn 12:44–50

Thursday, St. Mark:

1 Pt 5:5b–14 / Mk 16:15–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:26–33 / Jn 14:1–6

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:44–52 / Jn 14:7–14

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Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Easter (B)

April 28, 2024

“In” or Not at All

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

The little word “in” appears eleven times in the Greek text of today’s short passage from John’s Gospel, and it has the same meaning in all cases. It refers to an intimate relationship: We are in Christ; Christ is in us.

This being in does not mean “inside,” like being in a room or in a country. It means being an intimate aspect of something, like the relationship of a branch to the vine. Perhaps a way of understanding this intimacy is to remember that the branch cannot exist by itself, and there is no vine if there are no branches. We cannot be partially in. We are either in or out.

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 John 3:18–24

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

John 15:1–8

[Jesus said,] “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.”

If we want to live and thrive, we must cherish and protect our relationship with Christ, who is our source of life and nourishment. Otherwise, we risk being nothing more than dead branches, the usefulness of which is mere fodder for the fire. This sounds like a harsh punishment. However, it is not really punishment. Rather, it is the inevitable consequence of cutting ourselves off from our supply of life-giving nourishment. Furthermore, being cut off does not happen accidentally; we choose it deliberately.

Finally, this metaphor of vines and branches is an image of the Church. Though each of us, by grace, is “in Christ,” our source of life, the risen life of Christ surges through members of his body. Thus, when we are united to Christ by grace, we live in him as Christ lives in all of us. †

***If we want to thrive,
we must cherish our
relationship with Christ,
our source of life.***



A Word from Pope Francis

Today the Gospel offers us the moment in which Jesus introduces himself as the true vine and invites us to abide in him so as to bear much fruit... One of the ripest fruits that springs from communion with Christ is...the commitment to charity for our neighbor...

REGINA CAELI, ROME, APRIL 29, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- In what ways does Christ live in you?
- How do you live in Christ?

Waiting for the Resurrection

Ron Rolheiser, OMI

We live in difficult times. We've only to watch the news on any given evening. If there's an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving God who is Lord of this universe, his presence isn't very evident on the evening news. There's violence all over the planet, fueled on every side by self-righteous ideologies that sanction hatred, by self-interest that destroys community, and by a socially-approved greed that lets the poor fend for themselves.

It's fair and reflective to wonder: Where is the resurrection in all of this? Why is God seemingly so inactive? Where is the vindication of Easter Sunday?

What the resurrection teaches is that



God doesn't forcibly intervene to stop pain and death. Instead, he redeems the pain and vindicates the death. The resurrection of Jesus reveals that there's

a deep moral structure to the universe, that the contours of the universe are love and goodness and truth. This structure, anchored at its center by ultimate love and power, is non-negotiable: You live life its way or it simply won't come out right.

More importantly, the reverse is also true: If you respect the structure and live life its way, what's good and true and loving will eventually triumph, despite everything, like a giant moral immune system that brings the body back to health. God lets the universe right itself the way a body does when it is attacked by a virus. We don't have to escape pain and death to achieve victory, we've only to remain faithful, good, and true inside of them. God's day will come. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* by Ron Rolheiser, OMI, available at Liguori.org.

Daybreaks authors include Fr. John Kavanaugh, Sr. Dianne Bergant, and Fr. Daniel Horan.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Easter Redemption" by Fr. Gregory Wiest, CSsR

To understand the scope of the power of the resurrection, we must understand Jesus' power here on earth before he died. Throughout his ministry, Jesus fortified people physically. He restored sight to the eyes of the blind, gave strength to the legs of the lame, and flooded the ears of the deaf with sound. He also healed people spiritually. He brought peace to disturbed minds and diminished the torment of demons to the hearts of humanity. This power extended into social situations, too. Gathering the outcast, the neglected, and the condemned, he created new communities of acceptance. For Jesus, the earth was meant for the meek. He blessed peacemakers and forbade retaliation. His power and leadership materialized as service to the poor. He uplifted the rejected and gave importance to the lowly of the world. †

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Lord Jesus, teach us what it means to abide in you, and help us to believe that with you, all things are possible, we pray. Amen! Alleluia!

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 29—May 4

Monday, St. Catherine of Siena:

Acts 14:5–18 / Jn 14:21–26

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 14:19–28 / Jn 14:27–31a

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 15:1–6 / Jn 15:1–8

Thursday, St. Athanasius:


Acts 15:7–21 / Jn 15:9–11

Friday, Sts. Philip and James:

1 Cor 15:1–8 / Jn 14:6–14

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 16:1–10 / Jn 15:18–21

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