Second Week of Easter

## **Sunday 8 April – (Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday)**

Scripture Acts 4: 32-25; Ps 117; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31

*John concludes today’s gospel with these words: ‘The signs are written in this book so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name’*

For many years, most lay Catholics did not read the Bible – although had readings at Mass and contemplated events in Jesus’ life in prayers such as the Rosary. After the Second Vatican Council, the Church Fathers encouraged lay people to become more familiar with the scriptures. This was for the very reason that John gives in the gospel. Praying with the Word of God opens our minds and hearts to faith in Jesus – and through this faith we come to eternal life.

* How often do you read the Bible?
* How does the Word of God help you to know Jesus – and the work of God – better?

A key point the Bishops made in the document on revelation, *Dei Verbum*, which includes the encouragement to read the Bible is that it is not a textbook but that ‘prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and human may talk together; for "we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying." (A quote from St Ambrose). A simple way to pray with scripture is to read a passage through very slowly – noting any words or phrases that seem to stand out for you and pondering why. You do not need to find an answer at once – just give time for the Spirit to work within you.

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## **Monday 9 April The Annunciation of the Lord**

Scripture: Isaiah 7: 10-14, 8: 10; Psalm 39; Hebrews 10: 4-10; Luke 1: 26-38

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’’*

The opening of today’s gospel sets the very beginning of Jesus’ life in a particular time and place. As the Son of God, Christ is eternal but today we remember how he set all this aside to be conceived in the womb of a woman. Mary was indeed highly-favoured – set apart from the beginnings of her own existence. But her life up to this point had been lived out among family and friends in a small Galilean town with no indication that anything special was going to happen… until today when an angel appears and a new phase of her life – and the life of the world – begins.

* What do you think Mary’s life had been like until this point?
* What do you think Gabriel felt as he approached Nazareth with his world-changing message?

Spend time today reflecting on what Mary’s life had been like. Imagine how her day started on the day of the Annunciation – what she might have done – or seen – who she might have met – and so on. Then imagine her in the place of this meeting and allow it to unfold before you. Do not force it – or impose your own thoughts on it – simply allow the Spirit to guide you through the precious moments of the Annunciation.

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## **Tuesday 10 April, Second Week of Eastertide**

Scripture: Acts 4: 32-37; Psalm 92; John 3: 7-15

*Jesus said, ‘The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’*

Some Christians refer to a moment in their lives when they were “born again”. They are expressing something of what Jesus describes here – a moment where something happened that marked a radical change in them – like being reborn. They may have prayed for it – but no-one can predict how the Spirit will move – when it will come and where it will take people. Such a rebirth in the Spirit can seem a daunting prospect, but for those who have experienced it, it is a powerful and precious moment – and something that defines them for the rest of their lives.

* Have you experienced rebirth in the Spirit?
* If you have, what difference has it made to your life? If not, would you like to – and what might you do about it if so?

Spend some time today reflecting on Jesus’ images of rebirth in the Spirit – and the power and unpredictability of the wind he uses to illustrate it. If you have experienced it bring your gratitude into a time of prayer with a renewal of commitment to living it to the full. If you have not and would like to, express your hope to the Lord and be open to when and how it will happen. And if you have not and would rather not – ask the Lord to show you how you can live your Catholic life as fully as you can.

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## **Wednesday 11 April (St Stanislaus)**

Scripture: Acts 5: 17-26; Psalm 33; John 3: 16-21

*Jesus said, ‘All who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’*

We have probably all read accounts of crimes being committed “in broad daylight” and registered the surprise that goes with that. We assume that crime and other bad things happen under the cover of darkness. By contrast, things that are done for the right reasons can be done in the light – we are not afraid of being found out. And, with luck, people seeing these good things will come to recognise who is the source and inspiration of our actions.

* When have you done something that you would not want anyone else to know about?
* When has someone recognised something you did as inspired by your faith in God?

Think today of the contrast between what we do in the dark and in the light. If something comes to mind that you still prefer to hide, think about approaching a priest or someone else you can trust to bring it out into the light and to be freed of its hold over you.

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## **Thursday 12 April**

Scripture: Acts 5: 27-33; Psalm 33; John 3: 31-36

*Jesus said, ‘He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands.’*

Jesus has tried to share something of the intimate relationship he has with the Father – and with the Spirit. It is a relationship that is so powerful and so beyond human comprehension that he could only give us glimpses of it. When Jesus says that he speaks the word of God, it comes with the awareness from earlier in John that he is, himself, *the* Word through which the universe was made. When he speaks of the Spirit being given without measure he is trying to convey the abundance of love and power that are outpoured into the world by the One who created it. But, like the tip of an iceberg, so much more is hidden that we simply do not have the capacity to understand.

* How do you feel about so much about God being beyond our comprehension?
* What part does love play in all this?

Give some time today to pondering the mystery of the love between Father, Son and Spirit… You will never resolve it – but allow your mind and heart to be filled with insights and thoughts that might expand your awareness of this love – and the love God has for you within it all.

KT

## **Friday 13 April (St Martin I)**

Scripture: Acts 5: 34-42; Psalm 26; John 6: 1-15

*One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’*

Jesus is surrounded by around 5000 people and those in his inner circle are worried about how they are to feed them all. Andrew’s reaction is quite interesting. He does not take the bread and fish away from the boy (another key person in the gospels whose name we do not know!). Instead, he brings the boy to Jesus – points out what he has to offer – and then leaves it to Jesus and the boy to work it out. This is an example of how we might help others to develop their relationship with God: bringing them into his presence – recognising the gifts they have to offer – and allowing Christ to work with them to do great things without worrying about taking credit for it ourselves.

* Why did Andrew not just take the bread and fish from the boy?
* How do we help others to come to the Lord so that he can use the gifts God has given them?

Spend some time reflecting on the people who have helped you to develop your own gifts – either within the Church or in your work or studies. Give thanks for them. Think also about people whose gifts you recognise –and consider how you might help them to develop theirs in turn.

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## **Saturday 14 April**

Scripture: Acts 6: 1-7; Psalm 32; John 6: 16-21

*When the disciples had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’*

The small detail of how far the disciples had rowed suggests that Jesus had spent around an hour walking to catch up with the boat. This makes the disciples’ experience even more dramatic. In the middle of a storm they see Jesus coming towards them them, far from the shore – no wonder they are terrified. But Jesus does not focus on the drama of the situation but on addressing the fear of the disciples. Very simply, he assures them that it is indeed him – and that there is no need to be afraid.

* What do you make of Jesus walking for an hour or so across the water to the disciples’ boat?
* Why did Jesus keep his words of greeting simple?

If you are in a difficult time of your life, this can be a good gospel to pray with… using the distance from shore – or the storm – or the fear of the disciples – as symbols or images for your own situation. Give it time to surface and then bring Jesus into it. Allow him to speak words of calm to you. If you are in a time of calm, pray for those in need of Jesus’ presence in their lives.

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