

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, we celebrated Good Shepherd Sunday. We reflected on Jesus as our Good Shepherd, a caring, self-sacrificing Shepherd who lays down his life for us his sheep. We also reflected on the vigilance of the good shepherd and his closeness to the sheep. I encourage you to review yesterday's reflections on the Good Shepherd as you begin this week.

Let us continue our reflections on the Good Shepherd. One of the outstanding qualities of a good shepherd is patience. The sheep tend to wander off, eat whatever they find, drink from the dirty potholes, go over the cliff and get into difficult situations. They are not smart! A good shepherd patiently brings the straying sheep back to the fold and tenderly cares for the sheep.

We must be patient, especially if we are in a shepherding (leadership) position - patient with ourselves and with those in our care. Patience is a way of being present on our journey. It is the state of endurance under difficult circumstances. It is perseverance in the face of delay. It is being focused and staying on the task in adverse conditions, without acting on shortfalls and imperfections in negative ways. It is forbearance under strain, especially when faced with long-term difficulties. It is self-discipline and self-control.

It has never been easy to be patient, but it's probably harder now than at any time in history. Patience is a challenge in a world where messages and information can be sent across the world instantly, everything is available with only a few clicks of the mouse or an 800 number. We are living in difficult and uncertain times. We are becoming more disturbed, troubled, anxious, afraid and impatient. St. Francis de Sales advises us, "Have patience with everyone, but especially with yourself. Do not be over-troubled about your imperfections! Have the courage to rise up again when you fall into any of them. There is no better means for persevering in the spiritual life than continually beginning again, and never to think that you have done enough."

I invite and encourage you take a few moments each day of this week to reflect on the quality of your patience and look at the possibility of being and becoming more patient with yourself and with those around you as you go about doing your daily chores.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fourth Week of Easter

April 27 – May 2, 2026

God has, in fact, thought of us from eternity
and has loved us as unique individuals.
He has called every one of us by name,
as the Good Shepherd calls His sheep by name.
(Pope John Paul II)

April 27 – Monday, Fourth Week of Easter

Stillness is where we find our true essence.
(Eckhart Tolle)

Acts 11:1-18

As the Church continued to grow, new problems and issues began to surface. The Gentiles welcomed the word of God and were accepted into the Church. This set off a major controversy about the obligations of the Mosaic Law. In this passage from Acts, we read about the reasons that Peter gave for accepting the Gentiles into the Church without imposing the obligations of the Mosaic Law. The main thought was, “if God has gifted the Gentiles with the life-giving spirit, who are we to impose restrictions?”

This is a good question for all of us, “who are we to impose restrictions on God’s gift of Grace?”

Psalm 42

**As the hind longs for the running waters,
So my soul longs for you, O God.
Athirst is my soul for God, the living God,
When shall I go and behold the face of God.**

John 10:11-18

Jesus speaks of himself as a caring, listening, sensitive and self-sacrificing shepherd, who has an intimate and very personal knowledge of the sheep. This is the real, good shepherd who is born to his task. The sheep became his friends and companions and he thought of the sheep before he thought of himself. The false shepherd came to the job as a way of making money, for the pay he could get, with no sense of responsibility to the sheep.

The good shepherd worked and sacrificed himself for the sheep and the false one worked mainly for the money, for himself. The person who works only for a reward thinks only of the rewards, the person who works for love, thinks of the people he loves. Jesus was the good shepherd who so loved his sheep that he risked his life and gave his life totally for the sheep that he loved.

Look to Jesus as your good shepherd, leader and friend! And like the good shepherd, be a caring, sensitive and self-sacrificing leader! Learn to make these qualities yours in your ministry as a parent or educator or pastor or political or social leader.

Saint of the Day, April 27 - St. Zita of Lucca and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

Zita was born into a poor family in Tuscany in the village of Monsagrati around the year 1212. At the age of 12, she became a servant in the Fatinelli household. For a long time, she was unjustly despised, overburdened, reviled, and often beaten by her employers and fellow servants for her hard work and obvious goodness. The constant abuse was powerless to deprive her of her inward peace, her love of those who wronged her, and her respect for her employers. By this meek and humble self-restraint, Zita at last succeeded in overcoming the malice of her fellow-servants and her employers, so much so that she was placed in charge of all the affairs of the house. Her faith had enabled her to persevere against their abuse, and her constant piety gradually moved the family to a religious awakening.

Zita considered her work as an employment assigned to her by God, and as part of her penance, and obeyed her master and mistress in all things as being placed over her by God. She always rose several hours before the rest of the family to pray and to attend mass every morning with great devotion before beginning the work of the day. Throughout her life, Zita found a source of strength and consolation in the Mass and Holy Communion, which frequently moved her to tears. Despite her many responsibilities, she frequently set aside time to recall God's presence through contemplative prayer. After foretelling her own death and spiritually preparing for it, Saint Zita died in Lucca on April 27, 1271.

April 28 – Tuesday, Fourth Week of Easter

Serenity is a quiet and tranquil mind.

Acts 11:19-26

The good news of Jesus reached the Greeks and a large number of them believed and were converted to the Lord. Barnabas was sent, from Jerusalem, to minister to them. He was a man

full of the Spirit, who encouraged and brought Saul for Support in his ministry. For the first time, here in Antioch, the disciples of Jesus were called Christians.

Be gracious and accept, gratefully, the support of others in your ministry!

Psalm 87

**Zion shall say: "One and All were born in her;
And he, who has established her, is the Highest Lord."
They shall note, when the peoples are enrolled:
"This man was born there."
And all shall sing, in their festive dance:
"My home is within you".**

John 10:22-30

It was the festival of the Dedication, Festival of lights or Hanukkah. King Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) of Syria decide to eliminate the Jewish religion and introduce everything Greek into Palestine. Many Jews died resisting this move of Antiochus. The Maccabaeus brothers began a revolution, fought a good fight and finally won the struggle in 164 B.C. and in that year the temple and all that was used in the temple were purified. It was to remember this event that this Feast of Dedication was introduced – it was actually a rededication of the temple.

It was here in the temple, at this festival of lights, they asked Jesus, again, whether he really was the Messiah. Jesus affirmed his claim again. Some accepted it and others walked away. To those who accepted it, Jesus promised eternal life, a life that is full and safe. This is possible because of the intimacy that he has with the Father. Jesus said to them, "I and the Father are one". All are safe in the arms of the loving Father, whom Jesus revealed.

Acceptance of Jesus and growing in intimacy with Him guarantees intimacy with God, our father.

Saint of the Day, April 28 - St. Peter Chanel and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Peter Chanel was born on July 12, 1803 in the hamlet of La Potière, France. From about the age of 7 to 12 he worked as a shepherd. The local parish priest persuaded his parents to allow Peter to attend a small school the priest had started. After some local schooling, his piety and intelligence attracted the attention of a visiting priest from Cras, Fr. Trompier, and he was put into Church-sponsored education at Cras in the autumn of 1814. He made his first communion on 23 March 1817. His interest in the missions abroad began when he read letters from missionaries to America sent back by Bishop Louis William Valentine Dubourg. In 1819 he entered the seminary at Meximieux where he won several awards and class prizes in Latin, Christian doctrine and speech.

Peter Chanel was ordained a priest on July 15, 1827 and spent a brief time as an assistant parish priest at Ambérieu-en-Bugey. At Ambérieu he also read letters from a former curate from that parish who was at that time a missionary in India. There he met Claude Bret, who was to become his friend and also one of the first Marist Missionaries. The following year, Chanel applied to the Bishop of Belley for permission to go to the missions. His application was not accepted and instead he was appointed for the next three years as parish priest of Crozet, which he revitalized in that short time.

Peter Chanel's zeal was widely respected, and his care, particularly of the sick in the parish, won the hearts of the locals. During this time, he heard of a group of diocesan priests who were hopeful of starting a religious order to be dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Wanting to be a missionary, he joined the Society of Mary, the Marists, at the age of 28. He taught in the seminary for five years. Then, as superior of seven Marists, he traveled to Western Oceania. The bishop accompanying the missionaries left Peter and a brother on Futuna Island northeast of Fiji, promising to return in six months. He was gone five years.

Meanwhile, Peter struggled with this new language and mastered it, making the difficult adjustment to life with whalers, traders, and warring natives. Despite little apparent success and severe want, he maintained a serene and gentle spirit, endless patience and courage. A few natives had been baptized, a few more were being instructed. When the chieftain's son asked to be baptized, persecution by the chieftain reached a climax. Father Chanel was clubbed to death on April 28, 1841. Within two years after his death, the whole island became Catholic and has remained so. He was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1954. Peter Chanel is the first martyr of Oceania and its patron.

April 29 – Wednesday, Fourth Week of Easter

Serenity is the calm that comes from knowing you are enough.

Acts 12:24-13:5

The community of believers grew in number. Paul and Barnabas were accepted into the college of apostles and sent to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Reflect on your call, today, to spread the good news of Jesus. Pray that more men and women would dedicate themselves to spreading the word of Jesus.

Psalm 67

**May God have pity on us and bless us;
May he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way, be known upon earth;
among all nations, your salvation.**

John 12:44-50

Jesus made the claim that in him we encountered God.....to see him is to see God....in him we meet God and God meets us.....

In Jesus, we come to know who God is and in him we come to know who we are.....

Jesus proclaimed, "I have come to the world as its light....."

Turn to Jesus for a clear vision of God, ourselves, this world, life, death and the world to come.....

Jesus affirmed again, "I did not come to condemn the world but to save it....."

Never condemn yourself or anyone else.....develop for yourself a positive, redeeming, saving attitude.....

He also made it clear to his listeners that whatever he spoke was spoken as the Father had instructed him.....the word he spoke came from the Father!

Jesus was and is the WORD of the Father.....take his word.... let his word become flesh in you today, here and now.

Saint of the Day, April 29 - St. Catherine of Siena and 22 other saints are remembered this day.

Caterina di Giacomo di Benincasa was born on March 25, 1347 in Siena, Italy. She was the 23rd child of Jacopo and Lapa Benincasa. The house where Catherine grew up in still exists. Her mother, Lapa, was about forty years old when she gave premature birth to twin daughters Catherine and Giovanna. She had already borne 22 children, but half of them had died. Giovanna was handed over to a wet-nurse and died soon after. Catherine was nursed by her mother and developed into a healthy child. She was two years old when Lapa had her 25th child, another daughter named Giovanna. As a child Catherine was so merry that the family gave her the pet name of "Euphrosyne", which is Greek for "joy."

As a teenager Catherine built a cell inside her mind, from which she could never flee. In this inner cell she made her father into a representation of Christ, her mother into the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her brothers into the apostles. Serving them humbly became an opportunity for spiritual growth. Catherine resisted the accepted course of marriage and motherhood on the one hand, or a nun's veil on the other. She chose to live an active and prayerful life outside a convent's walls following the model of the Dominicans.

She eventually entered the Dominican Third Order at 18 and spent the next three years in seclusion, prayer, and austerity. Gradually, a group of followers gathered around her - men and women, priests and religious. An active public apostolate grew out of her contemplative life. Her letters, mostly for spiritual instruction and encouragement of her followers, began to take more and more note of public affairs.

Her public influence reached great heights because of her evident holiness, her membership in the Dominican Third Order, and the deep impression she made on the pope. She worked tirelessly for the crusade against the Turks and for peace between Florence and the pope.

In 1378, the Great Schism began, splitting the allegiance of Christendom between two, then three, popes and putting even saints on opposing sides. Catherine spent the last two years of her life in Rome, in prayer and pleading on behalf of the cause of Pope Urban VI and the unity of the Church. She offered herself as a victim for the Church in its agony. She died surrounded by her "children" on April 29, 1380 and was canonized in 1461.

April 30 – Thursday, Fourth Week of Easter

Serenity frees and empowers us not to retaliate when wronged.

Acts 13:13-25

Paul continued his missionary journey. He offered, to different groups of people, a summary of the history of salvation beginning with Abraham leading to the death and resurrection of Jesus. He invited people to accept Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Psalm 89

**The favors of the Lord I will sing for ever;
Through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.
For you have said, "My kindness is established for ever:
In heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.**

John 13:16-20

Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. Great things happened during this meal. The Gospel reading of today flows from this experience. He had washed the feet of his disciples and called them to follow his example in gracious and self-sacrificing service.

Jesus also wanted the disciples to know that redeeming the world would cost him his life and that he was choosing death and that it was his chosen act of “surrender” to the will of his Father. This Gospel passage also refers to the bitterness of betrayal and the joy of fidelity. Jesus was accepting death in fidelity, in loyalty, in love, in total giving. And one of the disciples was going to betray him who loved and trusted!

Learn to surrender to the will of the Father! Pray for wisdom and courage to accept the cost of self-surrender!

The disciples were commissioned to go out with the master’s message - not with their own agenda, but with the master’s word. They were to speak his word, in his name. They were to stand with him, in him and for him.

Be faithful to the WORD of Jesus!

Saint of the Day, April 30 - St. Pius V and 18 other saints are remembered this day.

Antonio Ghislieri was born on January 17, 1504 in Bosco in the Duchy of Milan, Italy. At the age of fourteen he entered the Dominican Order, taking the name Michele. Ordained a priest at Genoa in 1528, he was sent by his order to Pavia, where he lectured for sixteen years. At Parma he advanced thirty propositions in support of the papal chair and against the Protestant Reformation.

He became master of novices and was on several occasions elected prior of more than one Dominican priory. During a time of great moral laxity, he insisted on discipline, and strove to develop the practice of the monastic virtues. He fasted, did penance, passed long hours of the night in meditation and prayer, traveled on foot without a cloak in deep silence, or only speaking to his companions of the things of God. As his reformist zeal provoked resentment, he was compelled to return to Rome in 1550, where, after having been employed in several inquisitorial missions, he was elected to the commissariat of the Holy Office.

In 1556 he was made Bishop of Sutri by Pope Paul IV and was selected as inquisitor of the faith in Milan and Lombardy. In 1557 he was made a cardinal and named inquisitor general for all Christendom. Pope Pius IV appointed him Bishop of Mondovi in Piedmont. Before Michele Ghislieri could return to his episcopate, Pope Pius IV died. On January 8, 1566, Michele Ghislieri, was elected to the papal throne, taking the name Pope Pius V.

During his papacy (1566-1572), Pius V was faced with the almost overwhelming responsibility of getting a shattered and scattered Church back on its feet. The family of God had been shaken by corruption, by the Reformation, by the constant threat of Turkish invasion, etc. Pope Pius V was now charged with the task of implementing the sweeping reforms called for by the Council. He ordered the founding of seminaries for the proper training of priests. He published a new missal, a new breviary, a new catechism, and established the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine classes for the young. Pius zealously enforced legislation against abuses in the Church. He patiently served the sick and the poor by building hospitals, providing food for the hungry, and giving money customarily used for the papal banquets to poor Roman converts. His decision to keep wearing his Dominican habit led to the custom of the pope wearing a white cassock.

Pius's ceaseless papal quest for a renewal of the Church was grounded in his personal life as a Dominican friar. He spent long hours with his God in prayer, fasted rigorously, deprived himself of many customary papal luxuries, and faithfully observed the spirit of the Dominican Rule that he had professed. Pius V died on May 1, 1572 of what is believed to be cancer. Pope Pius V was beatified by Pope Clement X in the year 1672 and was later canonized by Pope Clement XI on 22 May, 1712.

May 1 - Friday, Fourth Week of Easter

**Serenity is the calm that comes
when you stop trying to control the uncontrollable.**

Acts 13:26-33

In this excerpt from Acts, we read about Paul speaking to the Jews settled in the cities of the Roman Empire. He spoke in their Synagogue about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and how this was in fulfillment of God's plan.

Psalm 2

**I myself have set up my king,
On Zion, my holy mountain.....
Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice before him;
With trembling pay homage to him.**

John 14:1-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled.....there are many dwelling places in my father's house.....I am the way, the truth and the life....."

There is a story of a missionary who was lost in the African jungle. When, finally, he reached a primitive village, he asked one of the villagers to lead him out. After more than an hour of

hacking their way through thick jungle growth, the missionary said to his guide: “Are you sure, this is the way? Where is the path? His guide responded, “Sir, in this place there is no path. I am the path.” This story takes us to the words of Christ: “I am the way, the truth and the life”.

The ultimate meaning of Christ’s life, death and resurrection was to reveal the God who.....

- makes a way out of no way,
- turns tragedy into triumph,
- creates something new from old,
- generates light in darkness,
- brings victory out of defeat,
- generates hope where there is despair,
- brings good out of evil,
- brings life out of death

Saint of the Day, May 1 – St. Joseph the Worker and 28 other saints are remembered this day.

In 1955, a huge part of the world was being influenced by Communism. Among the efforts of Pope Pius XII to counter the evil effects of Communism’s atheistic ideology was the institution of a new feast in honor of St. Joseph the Worker. Pius XII placed it on May 1st, the same day that the Communists held their “May Day” celebration: an anti-religious, purely secular commemoration of labor. To counter the communist view, Pope Pius XII placed before the faithful the example of St. Joseph the Worker, true model of all workers. St. Joseph did his work, quite literally, for God. As a carpenter in Nazareth, he worked in order to support the Child Jesus and His Mother Mary. Jesus learned the carpenter’s trade from St. Joseph and worked for the majority of His life as a carpenter Himself. The life of the Holy Family shows us the value, beauty, and sanctity of work.

St. Joseph the Worker is the patron saint of all workers who get up and go to work every day to support the family they love and cherish. Catholic tradition has always held a deep respect for the dignity of human labor as a participation in the creative work of God. The book of Genesis (2:15) tells us of God’s command to man to till the earth and let it become fruitful.

Saint Joseph was a carpenter and taught Jesus the trade as well. Jesus spent his early adult years working side-by-side in Joseph’s carpentry shop before beginning his ministry. In his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II stated: “the Church considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide [social] changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.”

Saint Joseph is a model of work with respect and dignity. Let us draw our inspiration from St. Joseph and participate in the creative activity of our God.

May 2 – Saturday, Fourth Week of Easter

Serenity is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of inner peace.

Acts 13:44-52

Paul was rejected by some of the Jews of Antioch. He began to turn to the Gentiles who welcomed the new faith. Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the territory. Rejected by his own people, with great courage, he continued his missionary journey while telling them that, by their ejection, they proved themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

Learn to live lives worthy of everlasting life.

Psalm 98

**Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds;
His right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm....
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; break into song; sing praise.**

John 14:7-14

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...I am in the Father and the Father is in me...the man who has faith in me will do the works I do and even greater than these...because it is the father who lives in me accomplishing his works...”

Jesus said that the things he said and the things he did, did not come from himself, his own initiative or his own power or his own knowledge, but from God. His word was God’s word, his work was God’s work, his power was God’s power, his life was God’s life...God came through in all he was and in all he said and in all he did...

In Jesus we meet God...God’s message, God’s mind, God’s heart...And in us, today, the world must meet all that is from God and of God....

Jesus said that the disciples would do what he did and even greater. We, the disciples of today must continue the mission of Jesus.

We must trust the promise of Jesus that it is God, the Father, doing His work in us...speaking His word through us...working out His plan through us...

Saint of the Day, May 2 - St. Athanasius and 12 other saints are remembered this day

St. Athanasius was born into a Christian family in Alexandria, Egypt in 296. His parents gave him a classical education. A local priest, Alexander, later canonized as St Alexander of Alexandria, recognized his knowledge and talents and tutored Athanasius in theology. Around the age of 19, Athanasius spent a formative period in the Egyptian desert as a disciple of St. Anthony in his monastic community. Returning to Alexandria, he was ordained a deacon in 319 and resumed his assistance to Alexander who had become a bishop.

The Catholic Church, newly recognized by the Roman Empire, was already encountering a new series of dangers from within. A priest named Arius taught that Jesus could not have existed eternally as God prior to his historical incarnation as a man. According to Arius, Jesus was the highest of created beings and could be considered “divine” only by analogy. Many Christians found it intellectually easier to believe in Jesus as a created demi-god, than to accept the mystery of a Father-Son relationship within the Godhead. By 325, the controversy was dividing the Church and unsettling the Roman Empire.

In that year, Athanasius attended the First Ecumenical Council, held at Nicea to examine and judge Arius' doctrine in light of apostolic tradition. It reaffirmed the Church's perennial teaching on Christ's full deity and established the Nicene Creed as an authoritative statement of faith. Near the end of St. Alexander's life, he insisted that Athanasius succeed him as the Bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius took on the position just as the Emperor Constantine, despite having convoked the Council of Nicea, decided to relax its condemnation of Arius and his supporters. Athanasius continually refused to admit Arius to communion, however, despite the urgings of the emperor. Athanasius was accused of theft, murder, assault, and even of causing a famine by interfering with food shipments. Arian emperor Constantius drove Athanasius into exile at least five times for insisting on the Nicene Creed as the Church's authoritative rule of faith.

Athanasius received the support of several Popes and spent a portion of his exile in Rome. However, the Emperor Constantius did succeed in coercing one Pope, Liberius, into condemning Athanasius by having him kidnapped, threatened with death, and sent away from Rome for two years. The Pope eventually managed to return to Rome, where he again proclaimed Athanasius' orthodoxy. In 369, Athanasius managed to convene an assembly of 90 bishops in Alexandria, for the sake of warning the Church in Africa against the continuing threat of Arianism. He died in 373, and was vindicated by a more comprehensive rejection of Arianism at the Second Ecumenical Council, held in 381 at Constantinople.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**The human being is not the lord of beings,
but the shepherd of Being.
(Martin Heidegger)**

