

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, we celebrated Mercy Sunday. I invite you to reflect a little more on mercy during this week and do some acts of mercy as you go about doing your daily chores. Mercy is not an abstract idea or a doctrine of the church. It is an integral part of Gospel living. Acts of mercy must flow into our daily behavior patterns and find its way even into the little things we do for each other, especially for those in need.

Jesus gave us several parables to help us understand the need to be kind and merciful as our father is merciful. One of these parables is about the last judgement (Mathew 25:31-46). This parable of the last judgement invites us into a vivid imaginative courtroom scene where judgment of those who are worthy to be welcomed into eternal life is taking place. The criteria for the judgment of worthiness is presented as acts of mercy and of loving kindness.

Loving persons do loving acts. Kind people do kind deeds. It is help in simple, ordinary things, response to the daily needs of ordinary people: giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, comforting the sick – things that anyone can do, things that do not require training in skills or a degree or diploma from a university. It is not performance of miracles or preaching of great sermons or donations of large sums of money or holding higher positions in society or any recognition offered to a person by the world, but in simple acts of loving kindness which has become part of the very nature, the character of a person.

Acts of kindness are done not for a reward, not even thinking that it is done for the Lord, but it has become part of a person's nature. It is help which is uncalculating. In the parable, those who helped did not know that they were helping Christ and gaining merit for eternal life. And those who failed to help said, "if we had known it was you, we would have helped". Acts of loving kindness flow from loving hearts, from loving people without expecting praise, reward and merits....it is the nature, the character of loving people to do loving things in response to the simple, everyday needs of ordinary people.

Take a few quiet moments each day of this week to reflect on your own experience of the mercy of God and that of others. Think of the many daily opportunities that you have for showing mercy and respond to them generously. St. Paul advises us, "Be kind to one another, compassionate and mutually forgiving, just as God has forgiven you in Christ" (Ephesians 4:32).

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Second Week of Easter

April 17-22, 2023

**Brothers and Sisters, God's face is the face of a merciful father who is always patient. Have you thought about God's patience, the patience He has with each one of us? That is His mercy. He always has patience, patience with us, He understands us, He waits for us, He does not tire of forgiving us if we are able to return to Him with a contrite heart. "Great is God's mercy," says the Psalm.
(Pope Francis)**

April 13 – Monday, Second Week of Easter

Tranquility is not a place, but a state of mind.

Acts 4:23-31

The community of believers was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they prayed for the powerful presence of God in all they did. They prayed for God's blessings on their healing ministry as a sign of the presence of the risen Christ among them. They prayed for the conversion of those oppressing them and making accusations against them. They were now living witnesses of all that Jesus taught them while he was among them.

Psalm 2

**The Lord said to me, "you are my son;
This day I have begotten you...
Blessed are they who put their trust in the Lord!**

John 3:1-8

Nicodemus may have come to Jesus at night because of fear of what others might say or think since he was a wealthy man, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews as a member of the Sanhedrin.

Be watchful! The thought, "What people might say or think", is a fear that keeps many ignorant, unchanged and unfree!

Nicodemus could have come to Jesus in the night because night was the time Jesus was more free, away from the crowd and undisturbed. He could have desired a private and undisturbed conversation with Jesus. There is wisdom in such a choice.

A talk with Jesus in darkness can bring great light into cloud, confusion, uncertainties, etc.

There is an old saying, “it takes one to recognize another”. Nicodemus recognized the goodness of Jesus and affirmed that Jesus must have come from God. Jesus, in turns, affirmed, “no one can see the rule of God unless he is begotten from above”. Jesus opened a new wisdom to the Jews who believed that they did not need to change since they were already special people of God. One has to be born of “water and spirit” in order to enter God’s kingdom. This call to rebirth, to “being born anew” runs throughout the Gospels as well as other books of the New Testament.

To be born anew is to be changed in such a way that it can be described only as rebirth or re-creation. The season of Easter calls us again to “rebirth”, to be “born anew”, to become people transformed in Christ.

Saint of the Day, April 13 - St. Martin I and 8 other saints are remembered this day.

Martinus was born on June 21, 598 near Todi, Umbria. We do not have information about his birth and early life. He was of noble birth, of commanding intelligence, and of great charity to the poor. He acted as papal legate at Constantinople in the early years of the pontificate of Pope Theodore I (642–49), and was a deacon at the time of his election as Pope in 649.

When Martin I became pope in 649, Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine empire and the patriarch of Constantinople was the most influential Church leader in the Eastern Christian world. The struggles that existed within the Church at that time were magnified by the close cooperation of emperor and patriarch.

A teaching, strongly supported in the East, held that Christ had no human will. Twice, emperors had officially favored this position: Heraclius by publishing a formula of faith, and Constans II by silencing the issue of one or two wills in Christ.

Shortly after assuming the office of the papacy—which he did without first being confirmed by the emperor—Martin held a council at the Lateran in which the imperial documents were censured, and in which the patriarch of Constantinople and two of his predecessors were condemned. In response, Constans II first tried to turn bishops and people against the pope.

Failing in this and in an attempt to kill the pope, the emperor sent troops to Rome to seize Martin and to bring him back to Constantinople. Already in poor health, Martin offered no resistance, returned with Calliopas, the exarch of Constantinople, and was then submitted to various imprisonments, tortures, and hardships. Although condemned to death and with some of the imposed torture already carried out, Martin was saved from execution by the pleas of a repentant Paul, patriarch of Constantinople, who was himself gravely ill. Tortures and cruel

treatment having taken their toll, Martin died September 16, 655. He is the last of the early popes to be venerated as a martyr.

April 14 – Tuesday, Second Week of Easter

Serenity is the acceptance of the present moment without judgment.

Acts 4:32-37

Changed by the Easter event, the first believers maintained a healthy unity, harmony among themselves despite differences, “community of believers was of one mind and one heart”. Distinctions as regards gender, race, ethnic background, socio-economic status, etc. were causes of friction and separation among them...but Easter changed everything! Belongingness to the saving cross and the death and resurrection of Christ changed them radically. They were a new people and they were one, unified, harmonious group...they became a community in Christ! They bore witness to the resurrection of Jesus...they gave...they shared...they respected one another...they claimed nothing as their own...no one was needy among them.

Easter transformed their life and gave them a new sense of belongingness in the community!

Psalm 93

**The Lord is king in splendor robed;
Robed is the Lord and girt about with strength...
Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;
Holiness befits your house...**

John 3:7-15

Nicodemus had a private and undisturbed conversation with Jesus in the night which gave him new and wonderful insights. He didn't fully grasp the meaning and significance of these insights. Jesus tenderly and patiently explained to Nicodemus the meaning and the value of the “rebirth” that he was talking about. He said that he was talking about what he knew and that he was not talking about a new theory or a new doctrine.

There are many things in the world, in nature and the in the universe that we do not understand, but we know they are there, and we know the effects of their work, they are real. Jesus used the example of the wind blowing where it wills – we know the wind and its effects well, but there are many things about the wind that we do not understand. The work of the

“Spirit”, the work of “rebirth”, the work of “redemption” may or may not be intellectually and fully grasped. This work is real, and it is the mystery of redemption – it is a mystery to be embraced, experienced and celebrated.

Learn to walk in the mystery of God’s redeeming love!

Saint of the Day, April 14 - St. Lydwine and 9 other saints are remembered this day.

Lidwina was born on April 18, 1380 in Schiedam, Holland. She was one of nine children of a working man. At age 15, she was ice skating when she fell and broke a rib. She never recovered and became progressively disabled for the rest of her life. Her biographers state that she became paralyzed except for her left hand and that great pieces of her body fell off, and that blood poured from her mouth, ears, and nose. Today some posit that Saint Lidwina is one of the first known multiple sclerosis patients and attribute her disability to the effects of the disease and her fall.

After her fall, Lidwina fasted continuously and acquired fame as a healer and holy woman. The town officials of Schiedam, her hometown, promulgated a document (which has survived) that attests to her complete lack of food and sleep. At first, she ate a little piece of apple, then a bit of date and watered wine, then river water contaminated with salt from the tides. The authenticating document from Schiedam also attests that Lidwina shed skin, bones, parts of her intestines, which her parents kept in a vase and which gave off a sweet odor. These excited so much attention that Lidwina had her mother bury them. Lidwina died at the age of 53. She is known as the patron saint of ice skaters.

April 15 – Wednesday, Second Week of Easter

Serenity is the peaceful surrender to the flow of life.

Acts 5:17-26

The apostles were arrested and jailed. During the night an angel opened the jail and brought them out and sent them with the message, ‘go out to the temple precincts and preach this new life’ and they went and resumed their teaching.

No jail can prevent the spread of the good news.

Psalm 34

**I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall be ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in the Lord;
The lowly will hear me and be glad.**

John 3:16-21

Verse 16 of this Scripture passage is one of the most frequently quoted scripture verses, displayed on banners, signs and bumper stickers...“God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life”. This verse is worth memorizing, remembering and contemplating. This is the central message of the Gospel. This is the good news. It tells us that God loved first, and salvation comes from him as his gift. It tells us that God loved the world – not a few favorite people or nation, not even a few good people – but the world. God’s love is an all-embracing love.

We are invited to ponder this all-embracing love of God for the world! As Saint Augustine says, “God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love.”

God’s love, his abiding presence, his intimacy has the power to change people and things and the universe. It is this intimacy that brings peace, God’s gift of peace. We long for a sense of oneness, a union and communion with others like us and communion with God. We long for the liberation which Jesus proclaimed, which only he can offer. It is this communion that brings peace. Jesus is our door to intimacy with God, others, the universe and self. In Jesus, we discover our freedom and our salvation – Jesus is our freedom and our salvation.

Saint of the Day, April 15 - St. Paternus and 10 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Paternus was born at Poitiers, about the year 482. His father, Patranus, with the consent of his wife, went to Ireland, where he ended his days in solitude. The mother raised Paternus in great piety. When Paternus grew up he decided to follow in the steps of his father and, obtaining his mother’s permission and blessing, he set out to Wales together with a group of other young ascetics seeking the solitary life.

In Wales, Paternus started to withdraw for solitary prayer. But, in a short time, together with other monks, Paternus founded the great Monastery of Llanbadarn Fawr (“the Great Monastery of Padarn”) near to Aberystwyth in the former county of Cardiganshire, which is now Ceredigion. Some 120 monks lived in this monastery under St. Paternus. Paternus was most probably not only the Abbot of Llanbadarn but also a bishop at the same time. After governing his diocese for thirteen years, he withdrew to solitude in France, and there ended his days about the year 550.

April 16 – Thursday, Second Week of Easter

Serenity is the gentle acceptance of life's unpredictability.

Acts 5:27-33

The disciples of Jesus continued to preach the good news in spite of repeated warning from the chief priests. The people listened with great attention and enthusiasm. The Jewish leaders became powerless before men who said, "Better for us to obey God than men! The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you put to death...we testify to this."

Psalm 34

**I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall be ever in my mouth.
Taste and see how good the Lord is;
Happy the man who takes refuge in him.**

John 3:31-36

We continue to read about the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus began to reveal the mystery that Nicodemus was trying to understand. Jesus says, the one who comes from above can testify to what is above because he knows what is above.....the one whom God sent speaks God's word...and his testimony can be trusted because he knows and speaks what he knows. And the truth that Jesus revealed is that the father loves the son and whoever believes the son has eternal life.

Jesus brings the message of eternal life, life to its fullness. Whoever believes in Jesus, finds life eternal. Whoever accepts this testimony of Jesus testifies to God's truthfulness. The fullness of God's revelation has come to us in Christ. Obedience to God's truth revealed in Jesus brings us to the eternal life.

Be faithful! Be obedient! Embrace the eternal life that Jesus offers!

Saint of the Day, April 16 - St. Bernadette Soubirous and 16 other saints are remembered this day.

Bernadette Soubirous was born on January 7, 1844 and baptized at the local parish church, St. Pierre's, on January 9, her parents' wedding anniversary. Hard times had fallen on France and

the family lived in extreme poverty. Bernadette was a sickly child, contracted cholera as a toddler and suffered severe asthma for the rest of her life. She attended the day school conducted by the Sisters of Charity. She could read and write very little due to her frequent illness. She spoke the language of Occitan, which was spoken by the local population of the Pyrenees region at that time and to a lesser degree today. Bernadette joined the Sisters of Charity at Nevers in 1866.

From February to July 1858 near Lourdes, France, a “Beautiful Lady” appeared eighteen times to Bernadette. The Beautiful Lady asked for prayers for the conversion of sinners and penance. Large crowds came to the grotto to hopefully witness some miracle. On February 25, the Beautiful Lady told Bernadette to drink from the fountain and bathe in it, but there was no obvious fountain or spring in the spot shown to her. She began to dig in the moist soil with her hands, and water began to trickle out. Bernadette drank the water and washed her face in it. Within two days, at the site where Bernadette dug in the mud, there was a pool of water overflowing the rocks. Miraculous cures have been attributed to this water.

On February 28 and March 3, the Lady relayed a message to Bernadette to give to the clergy - “Go and tell the priests that a chapel must be built here.” Bernadette told her priest Abbé Peyramale who replied that he needed the identity of the mysterious lady. It was during the visit on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, that the Lady revealed, “I am the Immaculate Conception.” A basilica was built at the site of the grotto and was completed in 1876. She died on April 16, 1879 and was canonized on December 8, 1933.

April 17 - Friday, Second Week of Easter

**Serenity is found in the acceptance of what is
and the release of what was.**

Acts 5:34-42

The members of Sanhedrin prepared themselves to punish the disciples for their disobedience. One of the members advised them to leave the disciples alone. He said that if their message came from God, no one could stop it and if it came from some other source, it would destroy itself. The Sanhedrin called the disciples and had them whipped and sent them away ordering them not speak about Jesus.

The apostles continued to proclaim the good news accepting all insults and punishments with great joy.

Psalm 27

**The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge;
Of whom should I be afraid?**

John 6:1-15

John recounted the miracle of the loaves. Dwell on each of the following thoughts and listen to what the Lord is saying to you now:

Jesus with great compassion called the disciples to feed the hungry crowd...

He has been feeding them with the WORD, now he must feed them with BREAD...

The disciples expressed their helplessness in a lonely place with five thousand men to feed, not counting women and children...

Jesus accepted five loaves and couple of dried fish from a boy and this simple gift became abundance, food for many and even left over...

Jesus instructed them not to waste anything. But gather the leftover and cherish every bit of blessings...

Jesus, realizing that they were going to force him to be their king, withdrew to the mountain alone...

Saint of the Day, April 17 - St. Benedict Joseph Labre and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Benedict Joseph Labre was born on March 25, 1748 in the village of Amettes, in northern France. He was the eldest of fifteen children of a prosperous shopkeeper, Jean-Baptiste Labre, and his wife, Anne Grandsire. At the age of sixteen, he approached his uncle, a parish priest, about becoming a Trappist monk, but his parents told him he would have to wait until he grew older. When Benedict was about eighteen, an epidemic fell upon the city, and uncle and nephew busied themselves in the service of the sick. While the uncle took care of the souls and bodies of the people, Benedict cared for the cattle. His uncle was among the last victims of the epidemic.

Benedict Joseph Labre tried to join the religious orders of the Trappists, the Carthusians and the Cistercians, but did not come up to their requirements. He was under age, he was too delicate;

he had no special recommendations. Then, at age 18, a profound change took place. Benedict lost his desire to study and gave up all thoughts of the priesthood. He became a pilgrim, traveling from one great shrine to another, living off alms. He wore the rags of a beggar and shared his food with the poor. Filled with the love of God and neighbor, Benedict had special devotion to the Blessed Mother and to the Blessed Sacrament. In Rome, where he lived in the Colosseum for a time, he was called “the poor man of the Forty Hours devotion” and “the beggar of Rome.” The people accepted his ragged appearance better than he did. His excuse to himself was that “our comfort is not in this world.”

On April 16, 1783, the last day of his life, Benedict dragged himself to a church in Rome and prayed there for two hours before he collapsed, dying peacefully in a nearby house. Immediately after his death, the people proclaimed him a saint. Benedict Joseph Labre was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1881.

April 18 – Saturday, Second Week of Easter

Serenity comes when you trade expectations for acceptance.

Acts 6:1-7

The number of the followers of Jesus grew and they became an international community. They had to confront new problems such as the care of the poor, the orphans and the widows. The Greeks began to feel that their widows were being neglected. The apostles selected deacons to carry out the work of compassion and mercy so that they can devote themselves to proclaiming the good news of risen Lord.

Psalm 33

**Give thanks to the Lord on the harp;
With ten-stringed lyre chant his praises.
Upright is the word of the Lord,
And all his works are trustworthy.**

John 6:16-21

The disciples of Jesus were afraid as they were facing a rough sea and strong wind. Jesus came toward them, walking on the water and they became more afraid. Jesus told them not to be afraid and together, they came ashore.

In the presence of Jesus, they became unafraid and safe and secure! The Psalmist says, “the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear” (Psalm 27)

Jesus was watching them from the mountain where he had gone after the miracle of the loaves. He had not forgotten them.

Reflect on the mindfulness of the Lord.

Jesus came toward them on the troubled waters. Mindfulness is not a passive recall or remembrance of a person or an event. It is a dynamic force that moves one to reach out, to move toward and to act positively.

Reflect on the need to cultivate the quality of “mindfulness”.

Saint of the day, April 18 - Saint Athanasia of Aegina and 16 other saints are remembered this day.

Athanasia was the daughter of Christian nobles, Niketas and Irene. She grew up in a pious family and early in life felt drawn to the religious life. Legend says that she experienced a mystical union of a star merging with her heart while weaving at the loom when she was a young girl. However, at her parent's request, she married at age 16 to an army officer. Widowed after 16 days of marriage when her husband died in battle against invading Arabs. She again considered the religious life, but an imperial edict required all single women of marriage age to marry soldiers.

She again married this time to a deeply religious man who felt drawn to become a monk and left with her blessing to do so. She became a nun, gave away the bulk of her possessions, converted her home into a convent, obtained a spiritual director named Matthias, had other sisters move in with her, served as abbess, and lived a life of severe austerity. She built three churches.

The community later moved to Timia where Athanasia became widely known for miraculous healings. To escape the press of people who were drawn to her reputation of holiness, and return to the quiet, prayerful life, she and two sisters fled in secret to Constantinople where she lived as an anchoress in a cell for seven years; while walled away, she was an advisor to Empress Theodora. After seven years, she returned to Aegina, where she died of natural causes three days later at Timia on August 14, 860.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not.
Just be grateful for what you have and let them bless you with joy.**

