

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, we reflected on Jesus as the good and caring shepherd who knows us, loves us, leads us, and lays down his life for us. Let us continue our reflections on the good shepherd. Jesus presented himself not only as the good shepherd, but also as the gate for the sheep. The listeners of Jesus did not fully understand the parable of the good shepherd. So, he told them another parable that spoke of himself as the gate of the sheepfold (John 10:7). The hillside sheepfolds in Palestine were open spaces enclosed by a wall with only an opening and no gate. The Shepherd would lie down across the opening and no sheep could get in or out except over his body – the shepherd became the gate. This is the image that Jesus used when he said, “I am the gate”. It is through Jesus that we have access to God. In and through Jesus we have a new sense of security and safety. In and through Jesus we have life in abundance. He says, he came so that we may “have life and have it more abundantly”.

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 jungle 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”.

Jesus gave us many images to know him and to show us how we can go to the Father in and through him. Jesus presented himself as the light, the word, the bread of life, the shepherd, the gate of the sheepfold, the friend, the vine, the way, the truth, the life – and finally, the image of the father himself, “whoever has seen me has seen the father” (John 14:9). All these images give us a sense of the powerful presence of the risen Lord in the lives of all who have chosen to follow him. Jesus is the light in our dark moments, the word that keeps calling us to come home to God, the bread that sustains us on our journey, the shepherd who leads us and shows us the way, the door/gate to the kingdom of God, the friend that lays down his life for us, the vine on which we the branches grow and become fruitful, and the way to the truth and the life to which the Father calls us. In Jesus we see God and we see ourselves. Jesus is everything and all we need for our journey to the Father!

Let us look to Jesus as our good shepherd, leader, and friend who goes with us and keeps us safe, secure, and unafraid even in our dark and frightening moments.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fourth Week of Easter

April 22 – 27, 2024

**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 22 – Monday, Fourth Week of Easter

**Dear Lord, grant us the gift of forbearance
that we may tolerate our own imperfections and those of others.**

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 10:1-10

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 22 - St. Adalbert of Prague and 22 other saints are remembered this day.

Adalbert was born in 956 into an illustrious family of Bohemia. In childhood he was taken by a fatal illness and his parents made a vow to the Holy Virgin to offer him to the priesthood if he would be cured. Their prayers were answered, and the boy recovered his health. They sent their son to Magdeburg to the saintly Archbishop of Magdeburg, who oversaw his education in religion and science.

In 973 he received holy orders from the Bishop of Prague. Later, this Bishop died a bad death, screaming in despair on his deathbed that he would be condemned for his negligence to his duties and ardent pursuit of honors, wealth and pleasures. A witness to this sad end, Adalbert never forgot it, taking it as a lesson for the rest of his life. The next year he was chosen as Bishop of Prague.

He entered Prague barefoot and was joyfully received by the people. The Diocese was in a deplorable situation. Some of its inhabitants were still idolaters, and many Catholics were well entrenched in shameful vices. In vain St. Adalbert tried to correct them and to bring them to religion and piety. When his efforts proved fruitless, he obtained papal permission to leave the Episcopate and enter a monastery in Rome. After five years, Pope John XV sent him back to Prague with the provision that he could again leave the Episcopate if the people did not correspond.

A second time he was received joyfully, and the people promised to correct themselves and leave their heathen practices. These hasty promises were soon forgotten, however, and the Saint determined to abandon them forever and return to his monastery. On his way back to Rome, he met with a great success in Hungary, where he converted many to Catholicism. With this, the Pope ordered him to not come to Rome, but to return to Prague. At this news, the elites of Prague became enraged and killed many relatives of the Saint, stole his belongings, and burned the family castles.

Adalbert went to Boleslaus, his friend, son of the Duke of Poland. In this country he again converted many idolaters. On a missionary trip to Prussia he converted some of the inhabitants of Danzig. It was there that he met his death when a group of pagans attacked him. When he received the first blow, he thanked God for giving him the opportunity to suffer for Him. Then the pagan priest leading the idolaters pierced his body with a two-headed lance, saying: "Be joyous, then, since you want nothing more than to suffer with your Christ." It was April 23, 997. Opposition to the Good News of Jesus did not discourage Adalbert, who is now remembered with great honor in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Germany

April 23 - Tuesday, Fourth Week of Easter

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...forbearance. (Galatians 5:22-23)

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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 decided 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 23 - St. George and 9 other saints are remembered this day.

Very little is known about St. George’s life. He was probably a high-ranking officer in the Roman army. Tradition speaks of Emperor Diocletian torturing St. George to make him deny his faith in Christ. However, despite some of the most terrible tortures even for that time, St George showed incredible courage and faith and was finally beheaded near Lydda in Palestine. His head was later taken to Rome where it was interred in the church dedicated to him. His death may have been on April 23, 303 A.D.

Stories of his strength and courage soon spread throughout Europe. The best-known story about St. George is his fight with a dragon, but it is highly unlikely that he ever fought a dragon, and even more unlikely that he ever visited England, however his name was known there as early as the eighth-century.

April 24 – Wednesday, Fourth Week of Easter

Forbearance is choosing not to retaliate when wronged.

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 24 - St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen and 10 other saints are remembered this day

St. Fidelis was born Mark Roy or Rey in 1577 in Sigmaringen, a town in modern-day Germany. He studied law and philosophy at the University of Freiburg. Roy subsequently taught philosophy at this university, ultimately earning the degree of Doctor of Law. He practiced law as a counselor or advocate, at Colmar, in Alsace, France where he came to be known as the 'poor man's lawyer'. He scrupulously forbore all invectives, detractions, and whatever might affect the reputation of any adversary. Disenchanted with the evils associated with his profession, he was determined to join his brother George as a member of the Capuchin friars. Fidelis was his religious name. His wealth was divided between needy seminarians and the poor.

As a follower of Saint Francis of Assisi, Fidelis continued his devotion to the weak and needy. During a severe epidemic in a city where he was guardian of a friary, Fidelis cared for and cured many sick soldiers. If a poor man needed some clothing, Fidelis would often give the man the clothes right off his back. Complete generosity to others characterized this saint's life.

He was appointed head of a group of Capuchins sent to preach against the Calvinists and Zwinglians in Switzerland. Almost certain violence threatened. Those who observed the mission felt that success was more attributable to the prayer of Fidelis during the night than to his sermons and instructions.

He was accused of opposing the peasants' national aspirations for independence from Austria. While he was preaching at Seewis, to which he had gone against the advice of his friends, a gun was fired at him, but he escaped unharmed. A Protestant person offered to shelter Fidelis, but he declined, saying his life was in God's hands. On the way back, on April 24, 1622, he was killed by a group of armed men. Fidelis was canonized in 1746. Fifteen years later he was recognized as a martyr.

April 25 – St. Mark, Evangelist

**Forbearance is the long suffering the Lord has towards sinners
who need Him.**

1 Peter 5:5-14

Peter encourages us to be humble before God and toward one another with complete trust in God's loving kindness. He calls us to be steadfast in living in the grace of God.

Psalm 89

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

Mark 16:15-20

This is an amazing story. In verse 16:14, we read about Jesus taking the disciples "to task for their disbelief and their stubbornness since they had not put faith in those who had seen him

after he had been raised". In verse 15, the excerpt of today, we read about Jesus trusting the same men with all their "disbelief and stubbornness" and sending them with his mission of bringing good news to the world.

Today, we, with all our limitations and inconsistencies are trusted with this good news and called to bring this good news of Jesus to the world.

Saint of the Day, April 25 - St. Mark, Evangelist and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

We know very little about the early life and other details about Mark. Some people think that the young man who followed Jesus at a distance in the garden of Gethsemane and ran away naked when the crowd arrested Jesus, was Mark.

Mark was not an apostle. He was probably a member of one of the first Christian communities. His mother's house in Jerusalem is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as a center where Christians gathered. Mark was baptized by Peter. Then they both moved to Rome, where Mark served as Peter's secretary. Mark also traveled with Paul and his cousin Barnabas on their first missionary journey, evangelized Alexandria, established a Church there and founded the first Christian School. Later, during Paul's two prison terms in Rome, Mark helped him to continue his work.

Mark is the author of the earliest canonical Gospel. Mark's gospel is simple and direct. It challenges the reader to share in Jesus' sufferings. It is filled with details that help us to understand the human side of Jesus.

Mark's symbol is a winged lion. The lion is a desert animal and Mark's gospel begins with the story of John the Baptist in the desert. Traditions say that Mark went to Alexandria in Egypt. He worked there for ten years before he was martyred on April 25, 68 in Alexandria. The city of Venice in Italy has Mark for its patron saint. His bones are said to rest in the great cathedral there. Mark is patron of attorneys, lawyers, stain glass workers and insect bites

April 26 - Friday, Fourth Week of Easter

**Forbearance is patience towards those who anger us,
hurt us and disappoint us.**

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....."

This is one of the most encouraging passages in the Gospels. It is comforting and freeing to know that there is abundance in heaven, that there is room for all in the Father's house. We are used to overcrowded buses, trains, streets, hotels, and houses. We are used to accommodations being limited. In the heavenly Father's house, there is room for all, there is room for all in the heart of God.

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".

Turn to Jesus as your way, your truth and your life.

Saint of the Day, April 26 - St. Pedro de San José de Betancur and 11 others are remembered this day.

Betancourt was born at Vilaflor on the Island of Tenerife in 1626. As a small child, he worked as a shepherd, caring for his family's small flock, their only source of income, but also spending some time praying in a small cave in the arid region near the present-day town of El Médano. When the father's estate was seized by a moneylender in 1638 for failure to pay the family's debt, Peter was bound to his service in return for the monies still due him. During this period,

his eldest brother, Mateo, migrated to Spain's colonies in the New World, possibly settling in Ecuador.

In 1649, at age 23, Betancourt was freed from his period of servitude and decided to follow his brother's example. He set sail for Guatemala, the capital of New Spain, in hopes of connecting with a relative engaged in government service there. By the time he had reached Havana, Cuba, he was out of money. He then spent a year serving a priest there who was also from Tenerife. He had to pay for his passage from that point by working on a ship which docked at Honduras from where he walked to Antigua Guatemala. When he arrived in La Antigua Guatemala, he was so destitute that he joined the bread line which the Franciscan friars had established to feed the poor. Eventually he found his uncle who then found him a job in a local textile factory.

In 1653 Betancourt enrolled in the Jesuit College of San Borgia to study for priesthood. When after three years he could not master the material, he withdrew from the school and abandoned this idea. After holding the position of sacristan for a while in a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, he rented a house in a suburb of the city called Calvary, and there taught reading and catechism to poor children.

Unable to receive holy orders, Betancourt became a Franciscan tertiary at the Franciscan friary of Costa Rica in Antigua Guatemala and adopted the religious name of Peter of Saint Joseph. He visited hospitals, jails, the unemployed and worked with the young. In 1658 Peter was given a hut which he converted into a hospital for the poor who had been discharged from the city hospital but still needed to convalesce. His zeal elicited benefactions from those around him and the bishop and governor supplied him with all the conveniences he required.

Three years later several individuals provided for the purchase of the houses surrounding the one Peter then occupied and on their site was erected a hospital in which he could work better. He himself worked with the masons. The hospital was thoroughly equipped and stocked. The institution, a hospital for the convalescent poor, was placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Bethlehem. Soon after there was a shelter for the homeless, a school for the poor, an oratory, and an inn for priests.

Not wanting to neglect the rich of Guatemala City, Pedro began walking through their part of town ringing a bell and inviting them to repent. Other men came to share in Pedro's work. Out of this group came the Bethlehemite Congregation, which won papal approval after Pedro's death. A Bethlehemite sisters' community, similarly, founded after Pedro's death, was inspired by his life of prayer and compassion.

He is sometimes credited with originating the Christmas Eve posadas procession in which people representing Mary and Joseph seek a night's lodging from their neighbors. The custom soon spread to Mexico and other Central American countries. Pedro died in 1667, and was canonized by Pope John Paul II in Guatemala City on July 30, 2002.

April 27 – Saturday, Fourth Week of Easter

The Holy Spirit fills us with the fruit of forbearance to help us be calm in moments of anger and ill temper.

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, 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.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Jesus Christ went willingly to the cross for the sake of the sheep in desperate need of a Shepherd.