

May REFLECTIONS

Fr. Dan Lydon, C.S.V., D.Min.

May 1, 2020

A letter from Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The month of May is approaching, a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow.

I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you. I include them with this letter so that they are available to everyone.

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020

Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist

Pope Francis

May 2, 2020

You fill the hungry with good things, Lord God, and break the sinner’s chains. Hear your people who call to you in their need, and lead your Church and the whole world from the shadows of death. Gather us from sunrise to sunset, that we may grow together in faith and love and give lasting thanks for your kindness.

May 4, 2020

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack. (Ps 23)

There's a little phrase that we hear at every Mass of during the Easter Season –we hear it in the Preface – the part when we say that it is “right and just” to lift our hearts to the Lord. There are 5 choices for Easter Season Prefaces and it's in all 5 of them. It's the basic description, the most fundamental characteristic of the Christian – here it is:

Overcome with paschal joy...
the Christian person is a person
overcome with the joy of the Resurrection.

Yet sometimes our everyday lives feel so heavy that it's awful hard to imagine ourselves “overcome with Paschal joy.” Even when we're not in the midst of a world-wide pandemic, the critical illness of a friend or family member, the loss of a job, disappointment in a relationship and the burdens of everyday life can make it a challenge to feel particularly joyful.

But the joy we are being invited into this season is beyond what we see in our everyday lives. It's true that Jesus says “Come to me and bring me your burdens” but we usually can't believe it. Maybe we don't want to believe it.

If I really allow Jesus to come into my heart the way he wants to, will he ask me to change my life in ways that are too hard?

How do I share the chaos of my life with Jesus? If I keep him at arm's length, my life might be difficult, but at least my problems are familiar.

What would it cost me to let go and change my life?

Loving Father, open our hearts and minds to be mindful of the many events in our life that bear witness to your unchanging love for us. Help us to go through life confident that we can never move outside your loving acceptance and your powerful help. We ask this in the name of Jesus your Son. Amen

A Prayer from Abbot Michael Casey, OCSO

May 5, 2020

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me. (Ps 23)

We know our own faults and failings so well. Too well. We begin to believe that Jesus loves the way we love – with all of our human limits. How could Jesus love us and accept us the way we are right now? Maybe when we fix a few things about our lives, love our spouse a little better, stop being so critical of family members, stop drinking, stop nagging, love a little more... when we are perfect, then Jesus will love us.

But Jesus loves us - right now. At this moment, Jesus holds each one of us in his warm and loving gaze and loves us so freely at a depth that our human minds can't take in. Whether we comprehend this or not, Jesus loves us endlessly and waits for us with his arms open, ready to hold and support us.

As we receive the embrace of the Good Shepherd and at least try to feel the peace and joy of Easter wash over us, we can look over his shoulder, and see beyond to those in need who now wait for us. That's when we realize that the real joy in our lives is putting aside our own faults, challenges and difficulties for a while and entering into the lives of others.

Let us pray:

Father, your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires.
Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.

Amen.

May 6, 2020

In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul. (Ps 23)

Pope Francis says that at Easter, we leave ourselves behind, like Jesus left the tomb behind, and we encounter others by “being close to those crushed by life’s troubles, sharing with the needy, standing at the side of the sick, elderly and the outcast.”

Jesus is, as we heard on Sunday, the GATE. Jesus is for us more than the Good Shepherd, really...he tells us he is the GATE into and out of the walled pen where the sheep spend their nights. The Shepherd leads them into safety as darkness falls. The terrors of night will not overcome them. For a time, the sheep must live in captivity - they must live a narrow and cramped existence. They are held within the walls of the pen, crowded in there with sheep who are listening to some other voice protected by the one whose voice they recognize.

Then morning comes and they listen for their shepherd’s voice...and when they hear the voice of their good shepherd they know that with a new day dawning he will lead them and guide them “in right paths” they know and trust that he is at their side.

Their Good Shepherd is their gate out of confinement and into liberation and abundant pastures.

Let us pray:

Through your Son you taught us, Father, not to be fearful of tomorrow but to commit our lives to your care. Do not withhold your Spirit from us but help us find a life of peace after these days of trouble.

Amen.

May 7, 2020

Oftentimes in Confession people confess having had impure thoughts.

The most impure thought during this pandemic is thinking that wearing a mask or spatial distancing doesn’t matter. For a Catholic Christian two values are of utmost importance (even greater values than U.S. constitutional rights. What are they? They are LIFE and the COMMON GOOD. Other Christian virtues to consider if someone wants to do an examination of conscience: HUMILITY, PATIENCE, LOVING-KINDNESS.

Choosing to not wear a mask or respect spatial distancing rules constitutes VERY SERIOUS SIN. It is indicative of a hardness of heart and egocentricity that goes beyond normal tendencies to selfishness.

Question to ask ourselves during this crisis:

Do I really think I have all the answers? Am I willing to listen to and comply with (in a spirit of openness and humility) directives from officials who have asked us to wear a mask in public and keep our distance from one another? Do I really think that it does not matter if I am cynical or critical of church or civil authorities? Does my attitude show a hardness of heart and a need for conversion?

These times are indeed an opportunity to look at what REALLY constitutes sin.

Let us pray:

Lord, you are the fullness of life, of holiness and of joy. Fill our days and nights with the love of your wisdom, that we may bear fruit in the beauty of holiness, like a tree watered by running streams. Amen.

May 8, 2020

Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days. (Psalm 23, NCV)

By our baptism, we were welcomed into a community, a sheepfold, as it were, of people who have died and who have risen in Christ. We are Christ in this world. Christ sends us out as Easter People. We are, in one sense the sheep, yes, but the gospel calls us to be the Good Shepherd and the Gate for the world. We find peace in Jesus' love for us and now we share it with others.

The Good Shepherd who is one with the Father is calling us to be the Good Shepherd for others....Maternity, B.V.M. Church has as its mission to be a witness to Bourbonnais and beyond.

The mission of our church is not to be a filling station where we come to fill our tanks with grace. Our mission is ---emboldened with God's grace--to bring grace out into the world.our mission is not simply to be *lumen gentium*....a light to the gentiles, so to speak....but we recall and celebrate today on Good Shepherd Sunday...the call we have, since we are overcome with Paschal joy after all, our call is to be healers and peacemakers and gift-bearers...**to be good shepherds** in the pasture of Bourbonnais and beyond...our call is to be agents of liberation and abundant life...as the Good Shepherd is for his sheep.

We find ourselves standing side by side with Jesus, looking together at those we are being sent to love. That is where the real joy of Easter waits for us.

The truth of the matter is that we are filled with grace when we gather in a church building or in our homes to hear the Word and recall the sacrifice Christ made for the world.

Perhaps during this pandemic our most loving act as Good Shepherds will be to people who are not agents of cynicism and impatience.

Perhaps our vocation at this time is to be agents of humility and trust, of hope and patience. We are people who trust in a voice other than their own. We are people who know that the darkness and confined existence we experience now is only temporary...that we will, when the light of a new day dawns, be led out into a pasture of abundant life and know once again the delight of being overcome with Paschal joy!

Let us pray:

You fill the hungry with good things, Lord God, and break the sinner's chains. Hear your people who call to you in their need and lead your Church from the shadows of death. Gather us from sunrise to sunset, that we may grow together in faith and love and give lasting thanks for your kindness.

Amen.

May 9, 2020

In our sickness we need a savior, in our wanderings a guide, in our blindness someone to show us the light, in our thirst the fountain of living water which quenches forever the thirst of those who drink from it. We dead people need life, we sheep need a shepherd, we children need a teacher, the whole world needs Jesus!

*St. Clement of Alexandria
The Teacher 9, 83, 3-85, a: SC 70, 258-261*

Let us pray:

Lord God, hope of all the earth, hear the humble prayer of your children as we sing your praises. Pour out your Spirit on us so that our lives may bear fruit abundantly.

Amen.

May 10, 2020

Gilbert Keith Chesterton, an English author, in reflecting on God's mercy in his life wrote that the only proper response [to God's mercy] is **gratitude**. Chesterton wrote:

"When it comes to life... the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude. You say grace before meals. All right, but...

I say grace before the play and the opera,
...before the concert and the pantomime,
...before I open a book,
And I say grace before sketching, painting,
swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing;
And grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

Chesterton adds: "When we were children, we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?"

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, you came among us to share our joys and our sadness. May we always be grateful for all the good gifts that have been bestowed upon us, no matter how great or how small. We are especially grateful for our mothers today. Inspire us to be a source of joy and happiness to those who are part of our lives. For you are our Lord forever and ever. Amen.

May 11, 2020

Confession

Did you hear about the fellow who had been away from the church for twenty years and made up his mind to come back? He decides to go to confession. He enters the confessional and is surprised to see a small bar with a variety of wine bottles, a couple boxes of chocolates, a coffee maker, and a newspaper.

Then the priest enters the confessional. The man says, "Hey, Father, I see things have really changed in the last twenty years. I like this."

The priest responds, "I think you've got it all wrong. You're on my side."

Let us pray:

Almighty God, source of everlasting light, send forth your truth into our hearts and pour over us the brightness of your light. Amen.

May 12, 2020

Treasures

We walk through the Fire of many trials and tribulations as we journey into the Beautiful Gardens of God for refreshments at the Fount of Living Waters. If we persevere in prayer and practice the Virtues of Faith, Hope and Love, the Lord will give us all the Treasure of Heaven. It is Christ who sits with me to guide my hand into the Realms of Heaven where it draws upon the Light and Love of the Trinity to write these words dedicated to the Eternal Godhead.

I will never let the things of this world separate me from Christ the Messiah who dwells deep within the Silence of my soul. Trusting in Jesus is to give our whole being to Him in Love, for His Mercy is endless.

The Holy Angels guard our Sacred Soul that is made in the Image and Likeness of its Creator. I thank you for bringing me into existence as I joyfully await the arrival of the New Jerusalem to restore the Original Divine Order as all of Creation will sing your Praises forever.

Submitted by MBVM parishioner Michael Titus Cleary

May 13, 2020

The Present Moment

Many of us may become sad or anxious or consumed by fear when we begin to think of how life may change because of this darn coronavirus. "Will I ever again be able to attend an Earth, Wind and Fire concert?" "Go to church and being more concerned about hand wipes, my face mask, and how far away the next worshipper is from me! - You've got to be kidding!" "Is it really safe to go to a restaurant?"

In his spiritual classic, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, Jesuit Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade speaks of the "sacrament of the present moment." Fr. Caussade suggests that in order to find true peace we need to slow down and accept each moment as a gift from God. God is present in each moment, no matter what is happening in our lives. Here is what Fr. Caussade says:

**"The present moment is always full of infinite treasure.
It contains far more than you can possibly grasp.
Faith is the measure of its riches;
what you find in the present moment
is according to the measure of your faith."**

God calls us to be fully present to the moment at hand, but so often we are lost in another world or fretting about the past or anxious about the future. Or maybe we're wasting time reading posts on Facebook (and so many are very cynical and negative!). Imagine! Engaging in such activity when someone needs our full attention.

Fr. Mark Thibodeaux, SJ suggests a way to pray about the sin of not being open to the sacrament of the present moment:

"Looking through a typical day, I ask the Lord to show me the moments when I am not fully present – when I become distracted and lost in my own thoughts or perhaps working or playing with something else while the moment calls for my full attention.

I ask God to show me show me the ill effects of my absence and to show me how much better things can go when I am fully present. I speak with God about being lost to the present, worrying about the future, becoming stuck in the past. I ask God for advice, healing, forgiveness."

For further reading: *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen*, Loyola Press, 2015.

May 14, 2020

Today is the feast of Saint Matthias. We don't know much about him, simply that he was chosen to replace Judas and that he died a martyr. He lived those words from today's gospel.

We will probably not die a martyr's death. But, aren't we, in a way, all laying down our lives for one another during this pandemic crisis? We are laying aside our normal lives by staying at home so that, together, we can curb the spread of this virus and save thousands of lives.

Sacrifice, dying to self, listening to medical experts, government and church officials ---listening to anyone other than ourselves—is often hard, especially for us Americans!

Right now, there is a move to get back to normal, to "re-open." While I understand and empathize with the need to get the economy in better shape and to get people back to work, I truly believe that the gospel of Jesus is calling us to go VERY SLOWLY in this.

I am not in a hurry to open churches. Imagine, a place of worship of God becoming a place where a deadly virus is transmitted. There will be no way to completely sanitize a church. There will be tremendous risk if we hold services this summer.

I will encourage people to continue hunkering down in the coming months – even if the church opens for groups of 10 or 50 people. This can be an opportunity for families to pray together and not worry if their mask is on or not...or if the coronavirus is on the hosts or the fingers of the Eucharistic minister. This will require sacrifice and dying to self. After all, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

May 15, 2020

March 12, 1622 five saints were canonized in the same ceremony....four giants in the history of the church history –all well-known throughout Europe at the time– Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier, Teresa of Avila, Philip Neri...and....**Isidore the Farmer.**

Isidore worked the land....his wife....Maria de la Cabeza...is also considered a saint by the people of Spain...they had only one child ...who died in childbirth.

Isidore attended Mass each day. He worked as a day laborer who prayed all through the day and served the poor...the other workers complained to the owner of the land that Isidore did not do his fair share of work....the owner Juan de Vergas....went to see for himself what was going on.

What he saw from his hiding place amazed him: he saw Isidore sitting at the side of the field praying while an angel plowed the field.

He had a great concern for the proper treatment of animals. During one winter, he was carrying a sack of corn to the mill to be ground to flour. Noticing all the hungry birds around him, Isidore opened the sack and poured half of it on the ground for them. He was ridiculed for the waste, but when he reached the mill, the sack produced double the normal amount of flour.

Isidore invited the poor into his home for meals...he and his wife ate the scraps from the table.

Isidore died May 15, 1130. He is the patron saint of farmers. A number of other miracles (438 are documented) were ascribed to his help—he assisted the king of Spain through a vision in a battle, for example, and his relics were associated with the healing of a later monarch.

The fact that the Pope deliberately included Isidore with Ignatius, Teresa, Francis Xavier and Philip Neri tells us that:

physical labor has dignity;

sainthood does not stem from status;

contemplation does not depend on learning;

the simple life is conducive to holiness and happiness.

Perhaps the truth which emerges is this: If you have your spiritual self in order, your earthly commitments will fall into order also.

We might do well to imitate his trust and dependence on God.

May 18, 2020

God is Not Silent Right Now

Trappist Father Michael Casey has some wonderful insights that I would like to share today. In one of his homilies from 2011 he offers us some ideas that might speak to us during this pandemic.

But first, I need to share that although the dioceses in Illinois have begun to speak of “re-opening,” it will be a very long time, perhaps two years, before we gather again as a large group in church. Small groups will gather in church each week, perhaps in the coming months. We may be able to only attend Mass only once a month in person. The other weeks we can pray in other ways. ***We simply do not know what the next few months and years will look like.***

We have no other option than to accept this. An important call, as I have said before during this crisis, is to be patient, hopeful, and humble before civil and church authorities, and make the common good a top priority. This is the teaching of our church. Those of us who call ourselves Catholic Christians must value these things above our “rights” as citizens. You may disagree with me, but it is my vocation to call us to what ***our Catholic tradition*** values.

In this time of pandemic, I would say the call is to take our Catholic teaching seriously. Here are some interesting insights from Fr. Casey:

“As long as God remains silent we are at peace; if God begins to speak to us, to call us, to send us on a mission, our instinctive response is to take a jumbo jet to the ends of the earth....

God’s plan for our growth often begins with disengaging us from what currently occupies our attention...we can be called to start a new chapter in our life, often enough one for which we have not been prepared....

Even the saints experienced stormy weather...if we doggedly refuse to be deflected by the way God seems to be dealing with us, then it is not unrealistic to expect that eventually the sun will break through the clouds and things will begin to appear in a different light.”

Let us pray:

Loving Father, keep alive in us a firm trust in your providence. Help us to see that even our trials and misfortunes serve your loving purpose and that when you seem to be absent, it is only an invitation to seek you more intensely. Hear us now and sustain us always in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Source: *Balaam's Donkey*, Michael Casey, OCSO]

May 19, 2020

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.
Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.
—*Prayer to the Holy Spirit*

May 20, 2020

Let us pray:

Lord, your words today call to our minds the memory of our grief over loved ones who have—in one way or another—passed from our lives. Yet along with this memory comes strength and hope, for their passing has indeed made us different people, stronger people, who rely more on you. May your Spirit continue to work in us to transform weakness into strength. Amen.

Herbert Yost, C.S.C.

May 21, 2020

You will grieve, but your grief will become joy.” (John 16)

As many have heard, the diocese of Joliet has released a plan (in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Chicago) to “re-open” churches.

Actually, it will be a VERY LONG TIME before churches open up and we pray and worship as we did before. We, as a parish, have begun to look at what we can offer our parishioners inside our building. We will develop what might better be called A Plan For the Use of our Church Building – with Severe Restrictions.

How we will pray and worship will be very different. There will be no singing. People will be told where to sit. People may not be able to worship every week in the church building. Priests will have to wear face shields at certain times. There are literally hundreds of new rules we will need to follow in order to be certified to open our doors. It will take weeks to be able to be certified. We are not even at the first phase of “re-opening” church doors.

That is all I need to say about it right now. I am not at all filled with joy about this process. People’s risk for contracting the virus will increase. There is no way we can completely disinfect

the church. I am grieving. I grieve when I see and hear about Christians disobeying and protesting the governor's orders.

For today I will continue to support the governor. Our parishioners need to know that our Roman Catholic Church of Joliet supports him and DOES NOT support protests and hate-filled speech of any kind.

As a Christian I know that my grief, my anger, my fear about opening our church will be transformed. Today's gospel says that our grief is always transformed into joy.

For the next week or so I will be posting very short reflections or simply prayers to my web page. I have been asked to be MBVM's "Compliance Manager" for the implementation of the plan for the SEVERELY RESTRICTED USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING.

Let us pray:

Lord God, hope of all the earth, hear the humble prayer of your children as we sing your praises. Pour out your Spirit on us so that our lives may bear fruit abundantly. Amen.

May 22, 2020

A Thomas Merton Prayer for Today:

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone." —THOMAS MERTON, "THOUGHTS IN SOLITUDE"

May 26, 2020

I needed to take a few days off from my reflections. As I said in my homily on Sunday, (attached, below) everything was fine for the first 10 weeks of this thing, but the past two weeks for me it's hit and miss. One day I feel energetic and positive, the next I am discouraged and apprehensive about the opening of the church at this time.

One thing that has helped me is deactivating my Facebook account. It has made a world of difference. A parishioner wrote and said that he heard from a friend that "we have received mixed reviews." I'm not sure what that means, but honestly, I wish he never would have shared that with us.

I thank the MANY parishioners who have written or called to share words of thanks and appreciation for what we have done during the first two months of this pandemic. We have done what we could, always following the directives of our superiors.

I think I have the energy to continue with these reflections. Most of my energy will be as Compliance Manager for the gradual opening of the church for private prayer and Adoration.

May 27, 2020

Grime

Michael Casey, a Cistercian monk, gives retreats and conferences all over the world. One day, while waiting for his flight, Casey sat down next to a large potted plant in the waiting area. A woman came up next to him to water the plant. She would wipe the leaves and, it seemed, would speak in a low voice to the plant. She told Casey that it was her job to go through the terminals and tend to the indoor plants. She told him that the atmosphere inside the airport is toxic for plants, and in Casey's words, "it was her responsibility to try to offset the stress that crippled the plants' well-being." Casey continues:

"Later I began to think of how toxic our cultural ambience can be and how crippling the effect of its toxic influence. For better or for worse, most of us are exposed to mass media and social media for several hours every day.....Without noticing it, we are slowly being overlaid with a layer of intellectual and moral grime. We are less able to see clearly through the welter of different opinions, and our moral compass swings too wildly from side to side to give us a firm direction to pursue."

Let us pray with Fr. Casey,

Lord God, free us from all that will distort our vision or cloud our judgment. Open our minds more fully to your truth and give us a heart that is ready to love and be loved. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

[Source: Balaam's Donkey, Michael Casey, OCSO]

May 29, 2020

On the May 24, feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, Pope Francis is encouraged us to pray a special prayer this year. It is a prayer to ask for the grace to care for our most fragile brothers and sisters, and for the home we all share.

Loving God,
Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained.
Open our minds and touch our hearts,
so that we can be part of Creation, your gift.
Be present to those in need in these difficult times,
especially the poorest and most vulnerable.
Help us to show creative solidarity
as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.
Make us courageous in embracing
the changes required to seek the common good.
Now more than ever, may we all feel interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding
to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.
May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs
of a more fraternal and sustainable world.

We pray through Christ our Lord,
under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians,
Amen.

May 31, 2020

Pentecost



Last week I invited the congregation to behold the mystery of 'ascension.' We certainly value THE Ascension (of Jesus into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father) --- but giving thanks and praise for ascension I think is equally important....giving thanks and praise that Jesus and the saints and our loved ones who were good disciples of Jesus are still present to us wherever we are and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in...

This week I ask you to behold the mystery of **pentecost**. Now, certainly... we give thanks and praise to God for sending the Spirit among us. But how about the experience of **pentecost** as a most basic human experience.

I think we all really believe in the Holy Spirit...there's a great energy each week at the end of the praying of the Creed. (Maybe it's that we're just glad it's almost over):

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

And we've probably all had those experiences where we hadn't really planned to say something or do something and we were just "inspired" and it made a difference in someone's life.

Or when trying to discern something and we felt guided by something beyond ourselves...we may have found ourselves saying at these times...

"It was the Spirit."

And I am sure that we believe what our scriptures remind of us today. It is the Spirit who brings diversity into the world and it is the Spirit who brings diverse voices together with one mind and one heart. We certainly have seen that lived out in the church.

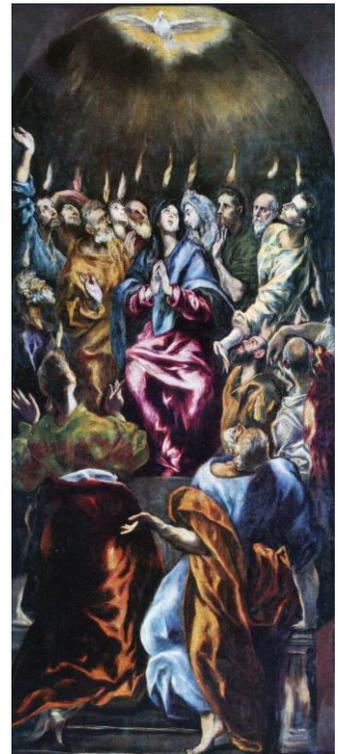
Psalm 104 celebrates the Spirit's important job of creating and breathing life into all of creation.....and it is the Spirit who sustains creation and who renews creation. Psalm 104-- in verses we didn't hear today --praises the Lord who is even involved in making grass grow and has a part to play even in the production of bread and wine and oil.

It is the Spirit who maintains the rhythm of the cosmos and in the care and feeding of animals. It is the Spirit who has a part in the annual renewal of the ground and also in earthquakes and volcanoes and storms--- all of which, from God's perspective, and in the long run are good for and for our planet.

But let's dig deeper into the mystery of the human experience of ***pentecost***. Where to we experience ***pentecost*** in our everyday lives?

The great German theologian Karl Rahner can help us here. Although his writing can be quite dense....he also digs deep into almost every human experience and helps us find where God—in this case—the Spirit may be present.

In one of his essays Rahner points out that there are those big experiences of the Spirit like the ones I just mentioned. But he believes it is good also to look at the subtle, almost banal experiences of the Spirit. It is good to do this because by examining the more subtle experiences of the Spirit in our lives we have



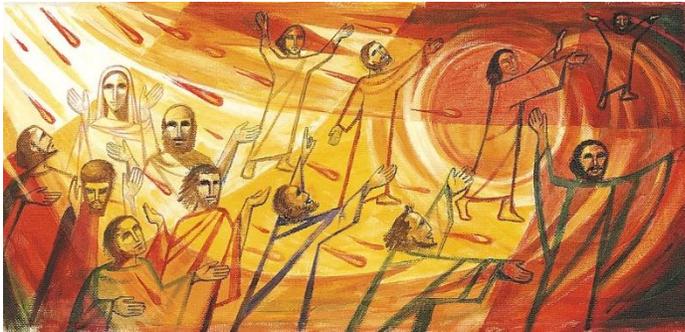
more to celebrate, more reasons to give God glory...more reasons, quite bluntly, to go to church.

There is the person, says Rahner who is dissatisfied with his or her life....and although from one way of looking at their life... hope seems an impossible task...yet, they are lured into trusting God.....this is the Spirit at work.

There is the individual who discovers she can forgive even though she receives no reward for it and silent forgiveness from the other side is taken as self-evident the work of the Spirit.

There is the one who tries to love God although no response of love seems to come from God's 'silent incomprehensibility' and because loving God seems to him as a "ghastly leap into groundless space' and yet he keeps on trying to love God year after year....the work of the Spirit.

There is the person who is 'absolutely lonely' who finds all the bright elements of life just 'pale shadows'the person who does not run away from loneliness but treats it with ultimate hope.....the work of the Spirit.



Rahner gives many more examples, but there is one more I would like to share...if you have watched the news or read the paper or looked at your I Phone you know that this week we marked the 75th anniversary of D-Day – the landing of 160,000 troops along a 50 mile stretch of a heavily-fortified French coastline.

More than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded but their sacrifice allowed thousands of soldiers to begin the slow, hard trek through France and Europe to lay the foundation for an Allied victory over the Nazi threat.

In the interviews of men who are still living—now in their nineties---almost to a man they say they were simply doing what needed to be done..it was their duty to charge forward and to bury the dead...even dead Germans who did not pick up their dead.

Rahner says there are people who *do their duty* with the terrible feeling that what he or she is doing is ludicrous and for which they may receive little or no thanks. The fact that people do their duty despite their fear or lack of understanding, for Rahner, this is evidence of the Spirit at work.

Those 18, 19, 20 year-old men who landed on the beaches of Normandy 75 years ago this week were doing their duty...they were lured by the Spirit and given the gifts of fortitude and courage.....and their quiet decision to do what they were called to do despite their fearthey were men of the Spirit.

The invitation for us today is to seek out and find the ***pentecost moments*** in our lives....when were we dissatisfied with our lives....but by the power of the Spirit kept on trusting? When were we nudged by the Spirit to forgive even when forgiving didn't make sense? How many times did we find it almost impossible to love God or even continue to reaching out to God – and by some miracle we did it anyway?

And have we considered that by being lured by the Spirit to simply being true to our commitments and doing our duty ... as parents, farmers, students, workers...despite the difficulties...have we considered that by responding to the Spirit and doing what we are called to do...we are acting as men and women of the Spirit...people touched by God to bring life to the world.

We thank God today for **pentecost moments**---God's movement, God's nudges, God's call in our lives thus far and we look forward to the adventures the Spirit has in store for us in the years to come.

Today concludes our paschal feast that began 50 days ago on Easter. Our liturgical year invites us into Ordinary Time, where we live and grow our faith. Perhaps this ordinary Time will be a good opportunity to heighten our awareness of the breath of God sustaining us in every moment. The breath of God nudging us and calling us. On this feast of Pentecost we pray for the Spirit of God, the breath of life, to renew the face of the earth and to renew us!