



Impact

Discipleship. Stewardship. Evangelization.

April, 2019 We enter into April with hearts that are full — filled with the grace of God, which we have witnessed and experienced in the season of Lent, and which now leads us to ponder the fullness of Christ's Paschal Mystery in the sacred Triduum and the Easter season to come. In order to bring faith to life this month, we must hear the story again, for the first time. The story of God's undying love for us in Jesus Christ, the story of Christ's paschal mystery. This month's issue of Impact includes encouragement to participate and reflect deeply upon the Triduum and to embrace the life of the believer, the life of Christ, which is poured out on the cross and shared with us in the Eucharist. May you and all in your community be filled with grace and peace in this holy season. — Leisa Anslinger and Amberly Boerschinger

Homily Connections

April 7: In both Cycle A (the readings prescribed for the Third Scrutiny) and Cycle C, today's readings lead us to reflect on what it means to put our faith in Jesus Christ, who leads us to eternal life, and in whom we have great hope.

Connecting with everyday life: If you have Elect or candidates who will be in the midst of the assembly today, invite them and all of your community to reflect on the difference faith in Jesus makes in their lives. At liturgies in which you are not celebrating the Third Scrutiny, ask your people to put themselves in the place of the woman in the gospel, and in the place of scribes and Pharisees. The perspective of each gives us pause to think about our own relationship with the Lord — are we scandalized by his offer of mercy, overwhelmed, or relieved by it? As we enter into the final week of Lent before Holy Week, invite your people to encounter and be encountered by the Lord, to hear the story of Jesus again, for the first time. (Page 1)

April 14: We begin Holy Week on this Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion. Today, we envision Jesus entering Jerusalem on the back of a colt and hear the passion narrative from the Gospel of Luke.

Connecting with everyday life: People sometimes wonder why we hear the passion narrative on Palm Sunday and again on Good Friday. Today is a special opportunity to invite your people to, as much as possible, treat the coming week as time set apart, a sort of mini-retreat in the midst of daily life. As we hear the story of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection in the three days of the Triduum, we will focus on particular aspects of the whole story of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Today, we open our minds and hearts to all that we will hear, ponder, and celebrate in the days to come. (Pages 1 or 2)

April 21: Alleluia! Christ is risen! We are filled with joy at the proclamation of Christ's resurrection. We experience the unbelievable news, first proclaimed through Mary of Magdala, and then through Peter, whose bold witness of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection urges us to believe in the gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Connecting with everyday life: It is likely that you will have many visitors in the assembly today, people who rarely come to Mass, and yet are drawn to church on this day. They may come out of habit or guilt, or because other family members have deep faith and cannot imagine not being present for Easter. No matter what brings them to you, today is a day to invite them to hear the story of Jesus again, for the first time. Tell them how faith in Jesus shapes your life, and invite them to open their hearts to the love which is beyond all telling, the love of Christ, whose resurrection offers us abundant life. (Pages 10r 2)

April 28: Throughout the season of Easter, the First Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. We hear the accounts of the early community of believers, and in the gospels, the encounters of the apostles with the risen Lord.

Connecting with everyday life: Invite your people to put themselves in the place of Thomas today. Share with them, in whatever way you feel comfortable, an experience of moving from doubt to faith, and what happened as a result. Ask them to consider times when they have doubted or have struggled with faith, perhaps in this present moment, and invite them to risk putting their faith in the Lord.

At Parish Meetings or in Adult Faith Formation this Month

Opening Prayer

Sing or recite Psalm 116 (The Responsorial Psalm with the refrain for Holy Thursday)

Our blessing cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ.

How shall I make a return to the Lord
for all the good he has done for me?
The cup of salvation I will take up,
and I will call upon the name of the Lord.

Precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful ones.
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid:
you have loosed my bonds.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and I will call upon the name of the Lord.
My vows to the Lord I will pay
in the presence of all his people.

(Psalm 116: 12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18)

Listen to Sacred Scripture: 1 Cor 11:23-26 (From the Holy Thursday liturgy)

Read: The article on page 2 of the April Impact.

Share: your thoughts, using these questions to guide your reflection:

How are you, and will you be, taken, blessed, broken, and given?

In what ways are you called to live as Christ's own in the world?

Commit: Note the impact of your Lenten observance, and resolve to continue to allow faith to shape your life in the season to come.

Offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.

Hear the story again, for the first time.

We know the story of God's undying love for humankind, of Jesus, God's only Son, who came to be one with us, shared God's merciful and forgiving love, freely accepted suffering and crucifixion, and then unbelievably rose on the third day. This story of salvation through Jesus Christ may seem unbelievable. And yet, we do believe.

We believe all of these things because with the whole story in our hearts and minds, we understand that Jesus came to show us a radical and revolutionary way of life. The way of love. And when we reflect on our own life in all its complexity, we know that the most powerful and meaningful experiences in our lives are those of love. Of laying down our lives for the sake of another. Of giving, not because we feel we should, but because we know we must.

As amazing as it is, we can become numb to the depth of God's love for us in Jesus Christ. It is almost more than we can take in. Triduum — Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter — is time set apart, in which we shake off complacency and enter into the mystery, Christ's Paschal Mystery, through which darkness is dispelled, suffering transformed, and death is rendered powerless. This year, immerse yourself in the Triduum. Hear the Good News of Jesus Christ again, as though you are encountering it and the Lord for the first time.? ©Catholic Life and Faith, 2019

Reflecting on the Triduum

On Holy Thursday, we reflect on the gift of the Eucharist and Christ's mandate to wash the feet of others. How does your participation in Mass draw you to live in communion with Christ? In what ways do you sacrifice, and for whom? How many times have you "washed the feet" of another, serving them through your actions or attention?

On Good Friday, we reverence the cross and reflect on Christ's passion, crucifixion, and death. How do you show reverence or love for the people in your life? What about those whom you find difficult to love? In what ways has the death of loved ones led you to value life and live more intentionally?

At the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, we light the Paschal candle, bless water, baptize and confirm the Elect, and celebrate Christ's resurrection. How do you experience and share Christ's light and life? How does Jesus' resurrection give you hope and courage in times of darkness?

God created us, Jesus saves us, now what?

Easter Sunday is the feast — our feast — of Christ's undying love for humanity. On the heels of such devastation and despair as Good Friday, the joy of Easter Sunday seems incomprehensible. Now, with the fullness of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection before us, we are presented with a major challenge - living the life and love of Christ, which we celebrate and receive in the Eucharist!

Jesus left us himself in the Eucharist on Holy Thursday not simply so that we could remember him, but so that after conquering death and building a bridge between us and God through his sacrifice and rising, we could be sustained as HIS hands and feet acting in the world.

Henri Nouwen, great spiritual guide and writer, wrote a book called *Life of the Beloved*. In this book, Nouwen reflects on the ideas that each of us, like Jesus, are "taken, blessed, broken and given." Each one of us is created and chosen by God. Each one of us is blessed and formed to do whatever God's good will has for us. Each one of us is battered by the waves of life, the tossing of sin, and the brokenness of the world. However, it is through our brokenness, like that of Jesus through the events we celebrate during Holy Week, that we are broken OPEN in order to be shared and given to the rest of the world.

So the challenge is: how are you living the Eucharist? How are you generously accepting your salvation given to you through Christ? How are you becoming the hands and feet of Jesus?

Easter is more than a day of ransom. It is more than a day of celebration. It is a radical call to live as Jesus lived and to share Jesus with the world. Are you ready to give yourself? Are you ready to let Christ's life and love change you and flow through you for others? What do you have to offer the world? Live Easter. Live the Eucharist. Live as Christ's own in the world. - Amberly Boerschinger

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Lent is a season in which we more intentionally turn away from anything that stands between ourselves and God, and in which we turn more faithfully and fully toward the Lord with our lives. The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and giving are a way of entering more fully into the life that Jesus shows us. How will you put your life in God's hands more fully this Lent?

I am, as I suspect you are, grateful for the gift of being alive. I am grateful, too, that in actually living there are depths to be plumbed and truths to be discovered. Even more so, I am grateful that living - I mean really, truly having and exploring "life" - is an expectation.

St. Irenaeus, the second-century theologian, famously wrote that "the glory of God is a human being fully alive." In other words, by experiencing what life has to offer - by being active, attentive, curious, thoughtful, etc. - we honor and glorify the God who gave us that life in the first place. We spend so much of our time trying to "get a life." It would seem that God wants us to get one, too.

Mary Oliver, in her poem "The Summer Day," poses this question: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" May our answer be to fully live, to live joyfully, and in doing so give praise and glory to God. *In all things may God be glorified!* — Matt Reichert

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