Even during lockdown:
Heaven is Open for Business

THE VIEW FROM DOWN HERE:
LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN, IN PRAYER

Each Issue Featuring

CATHOLIC NEWS
DAILY READINGS
LIVES OF THE SAINTS
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS
SPIRITUAL TEXTS
PUZZLES
ACTIVITIES
April 27, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Readers,

Well, we've made it to the second issue of THE LANTERN, a parish magazine to provide our faithful with powerful Catholic spiritual resources in this time of their needed. As noted on our cover, your faith commends you to look up to heaven, up to God, in prayer. And this may be a good time for that!

Why is this a good time for that? Because the situation we are in as a society, as a nation, and as a Church has people facing a variety of feelings and concerns. We face the feelings of isolation or deprivation of our way of everyday life. We feel the loss of control of the circumstances that surround us. We feel the fear of sickness in this time of that blasted virus that caused our troubles. How could one little virus germ do all this? I am reminded of the Elton John song, "Empty Garden," where the singer laments, "It's funny how one insect can damage so much grain." And yeah, we've been damaged by this.

The every problem, every trouble poses an opportunity to us. Our limitations these days perhaps provide us with extra time to turn back to God, to use some of our extra time for prayer. I've been informed by heaven that the lines are open; just call in to God, directly or through and with His Holy Saints whenever you're ready. God is waiting to hear from you: to help heal your feelings of isolation, deprivation, and fear. He's waiting to hear your voice, and bring you some peace. And the call is toll-free.

This issue of THE LANTERN again features prayers, scripture, spiritual texts, hagiographies (lives of the saints), and much more to put you in the Catholic zone of prayers and connection to faith. While in that zone, pray to God, talk to God, and then be sure to hear and listen to his voice as he responds. Psalm 116 starts out: "I love the LORD, who listened to my voice in supplication, Who turned an ear to me on the day I called." In good times and bad, in season and out of season, the Lord waits to hear from you! And you don't have to ask, "Can you hear me now?" because, I will confirm for you, he can!

Yours in Christ,
Fr. James Lentini
Pastor
Mary listens to the Shepherd tell of their experience of the revelation of the angels. She takes these things and ponders them in her heart.

PASTOR’S COLUMN (FROM THIS WEEK’S BULLETIN)

PONDERING THESE THINGS IN MY HEART

Following the example of our Blessed Mother, Mary, there are things that are certainly worthy of pondering, these days

By Fr. James Lentini, Pastor

In Luke’s Gospel, on the evening of Christ’s birth, following the Angel telling the shepherds that a savior is to be born, and following the shepherds relating to Mary’s about the multitude of angels singing their praises for this child born in a manger, these shepherds inform Mary of what they saw and heard.

And what was Mary’s response? According to Luke 2:19, “Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” She pondered, and sets an example for us to do likewise when faced with things that are too sweeping to take in at times.

The verb “ponder” is defined by Webster as meaning “to weigh in the mind, to think about, to reflect on.” So, in brief, “ponder” means to weigh and reflect upon, which is appropriate, as the word “pound” (something with weight) and “pond” (a body of water that reflects) both have their origin in the Latin word for ponder: “ponderare.”

Why all this talk of pondering? Because this will be a ponderous Pastor’s Column. I usually use the Pastor’s Column to relay Catholic teaching, history, or related information. But this week, I’m pondering. This week, I’m reflecting on the current situation of lockdown, the question of the loss of human interaction, and the role of the imposed lockdown in the lives of individuals and in the life of our faith. I’m hesitant at times to share insights like these, as they are personal, but I think many of you are having similar reflections (although perhaps arriving at different conclusions).

THE SITUATION. So, unless you have been living in a parallel universe, you all know that we are currently in the midst of a lock down to battle the Coronavirus outbreak. This lock-down, or period of isolation, which has gone on for over a month — and looks to continue for a while — feels like a form of imprisonment for many folks. It feels like an imposed quarantine of sorts. This time, this period, of lock-down, isolation, health crisis and economic shut down, has given me, during my quiet time in prayer, many moments to ponder what all of this means for the faithful of the flock here at Holy Cross and at Immaculate Conception, and indeed in our state and nation.

As I write below, I’m not looking for agreement or disagreement. I’m just pondering the current situation and am sharing my ponderings with you. So, what is it that I am pondering these days? I have eight points of ponder that I ponder ponderously, to wit:

1. THE TIME OF LOCK DOWN. I ponder that while most understand the present circumstances, and are being

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DAILY READINGS

Each day during the week, stop for a moment, pause and take a good listen to the word of God

MONDAY, APRIL 27

ACTS of the APOSTLES 6:8-15

Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people. Certain members of the so-called Synagogue of Freedmen, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and people from Cilicia and Asia, came forward and debated with Stephen, but they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they instigated some men to say, “We have heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God.” They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, accosted him, seized him, and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They presented false witnesses who testified, “This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law. For we have heard him claim that this Jesus the Nazorean will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.” All those who sat in the Sanhedrin looked intently at him and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

I declared my ways, and you answered me; teach me your statutes. Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Remove from me the way of falsehood, and favor me with your law. The way of truth I have chosen; I have set your ordinances before me.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

PSALM 119

Though princes meet and talk against me, your servant meditates on your statutes. Yes, your decrees are my delight; they are my counselors.

GOSPEL: JOHN 6:22-29

[After Jesus had fed the five thousand men, his disciples saw him walking on the sea.] The next day, the crowd that remained across the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not gone along with his disciples in the boat, but only his disciples had left. Other boats came from Tiberias near the place where they had eaten the bread when the Lord gave thanks. When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Jesus answered them and said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.” So they said to him, “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.”

TUESDAY, APRIL 28

ACTS of the APOSTLES 7:51-8:1

Stephen said to the people, the elders, and the scribes: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the Holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it.”

When they heard this, they were infuriated, and they ground their teeth at him. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and Stephen said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin
against them”; and when he said this, he fell asleep. Now Saul was consenting to his execution.

PSALM 31

Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety. You are my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake you will lead and guide me.

R. Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God. My trust is in the LORD; I will rejoice and be glad of your mercy.

R. Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your kindness. You hide them in the shelter of your presence from the plottings of men.

R. Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

GOSPEL: JOHN 6:30-35

The crowd said to Jesus: “What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

So Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven, my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

So they said to Jesus, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

Memorial of Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

ACTS 8:1b-18

There broke out a severe persecution of the Church in Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made a loud lament over him. Saul, meanwhile, was trying to destroy the Church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment.

Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Thus Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city.

PSALM 66

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise. Say to God, “How tremendous are your deeds!”

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

“Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you, sing praise to your name!” Come and see the works of God, his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

He has changed the sea into dry land; through the river they passed on foot; therefore let us rejoice in him. He rules by his might forever.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

GOSPEL: JOHN 3:35-40

Jesus said to the crowds, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen me, you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.”

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

ACTS 8:26-40

The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, “Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route.” So he got up and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, that is, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit said to Philip, “Go and join up with that chariot.” Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him. This was the Scripture passage he was reading:

Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who will tell of his posterity? For his life is taken from the earth.

Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, “I beg you, about whom is the prophet
saying this? About himself, or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this Scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him. As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?” Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him.

When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing. Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

PSALM 66

Bless our God, you peoples, loudly sound his praise; He has given life to our souls, and has not let our feet slip.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare what he has done for me. When I appealed to him in words, praise was on the tip of my tongue.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Blessed be God who refused me not my prayer or his kindness!

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

GOSPEL: JOHN 6:44-51

Jesus said to the crowds: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. No that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world.”

ACTS 9:1-20

Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Who are you, sir?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, that he may regain his sight.” But

Ananias replied, “Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and children of Israel, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.” So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, “Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength.

He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

PSALM 117

Praise the LORD, all you nations; glorify him, all you peoples!

R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

For steadfast is his kindness toward us, and the fidelity of the LORD endures forever.

R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.
GOSPEL: JOHN 6:52-59

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his Flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.” These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

SATURDAY, MAY 2

Memorial of Saint Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the Church

ACTS of the APOSTLES 9:31-42

The Church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. She was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit she grew in numbers.

As Peter was passing through every region, he went down to the holy ones living in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been confined to bed for eight years, for he was paralyzed. Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed.” He got up at once. And all the inhabitants of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated is Dorcas). She was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving. Now during those days she fell sick and died, so after washing her, they laid her out in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, “Please come to us without delay.” So Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs where all the widows came to him weeping and showing him the tunics and cloaks that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, “Tabitha, rise up.” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He gave her his hand and raised her up, and when he had called the holy ones and the widows, he presented her alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord.

SUNDAY, APRIL 26

ACTS of the APOSTLES 2:14,36-41

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: “Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.” He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

PSALM 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

He guides me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. With your rod and your staff that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

1 PETER 2:20-25

Beloved: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the

shepherd and guardian of your souls.

J O H N 1 0 : 1 - 1 0

Jesus said: “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”

Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

CLICK HERE TO READ DAILY REFLECTIONS ON THE SCRIPTURE BY OUR CLERGY

Word on Fire: Bishop Barron's Homily for Divine Mercy Sunday

SUNDAY HOMILY from Bishop Barron April 19, 2020
OFFICE OF READINGS

In its tradition, the Church commends the faithful to engage in the official prayer of the Church which is commonly called the Divine Office. One section of that Divine Office is called The Office of Readings. Below are daily selection from the Office of Reading — extended scriptures and spiritual writings. Let these beautiful texts help your grow in your spiritual life!

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**MONDAY, APRIL 27**

**First reading**
From the Book of Revelation 7:1-17

*The great multitude of those marked with the seal of God*

I, John, saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth; they held in check the earth’s four winds so that no wind blew on land or sea or through any tree. I saw another angel come up from the east holding the seal of the living God. He cried out at the top of his voice to the four angels who were given power to ravage the land and the sea, “Do no harm to the land or the sea or the trees until we imprint this seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”

I heard the number of those who were so marked—one hundred and forty-four thousand from every tribe of Israel: twelve thousand from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Benjamin.

All the angels who were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures fell down before the throne to worship God. They said: “Amen! Praise and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving and honor, power and might, to our God forever and ever. Amen!”

Then one of the elders asked me, “Who are these people all dressed in white? And where have they come from?” I said to him, “Sir, you should know better than I.” He then told me, “These are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“It was this that brought them before God’s throne: day and night they minister to him in his temple; he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. Never again shall they know hunger or thirst, nor shall the sun or its heat beat down on them, for the Lamb on the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

**Second reading**
From the commentary on the first letter of Peter by Saint Bede the Venerable, priest

*A chosen race, a royal priesthood*

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood. This praise was given long ago by Moses to the ancient people of God, and now the apostle Peter rightly gives it to the Gentiles, since they have come to believe in Christ who, as the cornerstone, has brought the nations together in the salvation that belonged to Israel.

Peter calls them a chosen race because of their faith, to distinguish them from those who by refusing to accept the living stone have themselves been rejected. They are a royal priesthood because they are united to the body of Christ, the supreme king and true priest. As sovereign he grants them his kingdom, and as high priest he washes away their sins by the offering of his blood. Peter says they are a royal priesthood; they must always remember to hope for an everlasting kingdom and to offer to God the sacrifice of a blameless life.

They are also called a consecrated nation, a people claimed by God as his own, in accordance with the apostle Paul’s explanation of the prophet’s teaching: My righteous man lives by faith; but if he draws back, I will take no pleasure in him. But we, he says, are not the sort of people who draw back and are lost; we are those who remain faithful until we are saved. In the Acts of the Apostles we read: The Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the Church of God which he bought with
his own blood. Thus, through the blood of our Redeemer, we have become a people claimed by God as his own, as in ancient times the people of Israel were ransomed from Egypt by the blood of a lamb.

In the next verse, Peter also makes a veiled allusion to the ancient story, and explains that this story is to be spiritually fulfilled by the new people of God, so that, he says, they may declare his wonderful deeds. Those who were freed by Moses from slavery in Egypt sang a song of triumph to the Lord after they had crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s army had been overwhelmed; in the same way, now that our sins have been washed away in baptism, we too should express fitting gratitude for the gifts of heaven. The Egyptians who oppressed the people of God, and who can also stand for darkness or trials, are an apt symbol of the sins that once oppressed us but have now been destroyed in baptism.

The deliverance of the children of Israel and their journey to the long-promised land correspond with the mystery of our redemption. We are making our way toward the light of our heavenly home with the grace of Christ leading us and showing us the way. The light of his grace was also symbolized by the cloud and the pillar of fire, which protected the Israelites from darkness throughout their journey, and brought them by a wonderful path to their promised homeland.

TUESDAY - APRIL 28

First reading
From the Book of Revelation 8:1-13

The seven angels punish the earth

When the Lamb broke open the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw that the seven angels who stood before God were given seven trumpets.

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne. The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with burning coals from the altar, and hurled it down to the earth. There were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The seven angels who were holding the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

When the first one blew his trumpet, there came hail and fire mixed with blood, which was hurled down to the earth. A third of the land was burned up, along with a third of the trees and all green grass.

When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a large burning mountain was hurled into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the ships were wrecked.

When the third angel blew his trumpet, a large star burning like a torch fell from the sky. It fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The star was called “Wormwood,” and a third of all the water turned to wormwood. Many people died from this water, because it was made bitter.

When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them became dark. The day lost its light for a third of the time, as did the night.

Then I looked again and heard an eagle flying high overhead cry out in a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth from the rest of the trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to blow!”

Second reading
From a sermon by Saint Augustine, bishop

Let us sing to the Lord a song of love

Sing to the Lord a new song; his praise is in the assembly of the saints. We are urged to sing a new song to the Lord, as new men who have learned a new song. A song is a thing of joy; more profoundly, it is a thing of love. Anyone, therefore, who has learned to love the new life has learned to sing a new song, and the new song reminds us of our new life. The new man, the new song, the new covenant, all belong to the one kingdom of God, and so the new man will sing a new song and will belong to the new covenant.

There is not one who does not love something, but the question is, what to love. The psalms do not tell us not to love, but to choose the object of our love. But how can we choose unless we are first chosen? We cannot love unless someone has loved us first. Listen to the apostle John: We love him, because he first loved us. The source of man’s love for God can only be found in
the fact that God loved him first. He has given us himself as the object of our love, and he has also given us its source. What this source is you may learn more clearly from the apostle Paul who tells us: The love of God has been poured into our hearts. This love is not something we generate ourselves; it comes to us through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Since we have such an assurance, then, let us love God with the love he has given us. As John tells us more fully: God is love, and whoever dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. It is not enough to say: Love is from God. Which of us would dare to pronounce the words of Scripture: God is love? He alone could say it who knew what it was to have God dwelling within him. God offers us a short route to the possession of himself. He cries out: Love me and you will have me for you would be unable to love me if you did not possess me already.

My dear brothers and sons, fruit of the true faith and holy seed of heaven, all you who have been born again in Christ and whose life is from above, listen to me; or rather, listen to the Holy Spirit saying through me: Sing to the Lord a new song. Look, you tell me, I am singing. Yes indeed, you are singing; you are singing clearly, I can hear you. But make sure that your life does not contradict your words. Sing with your voices, your hearts, your lips and your lives: Sing to the Lord a new song.

Now it is your unquestioned desire to sing of him whom you love, but you ask me how to sing his praises. You have heard the words: Sing to the Lord a new song, and you wish to know what praises to sing. The answer is: His praise is in the assembly of the saints; it is in the singers themselves. If you desire to praise him, then live what you express. Live good lives, and you yourselves will be his praise.

**WEDNESDAY - APRIL 29**

**First reading**
*From the Book of Revelation 9:1-2*

*The plague of locusts*

The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I, John, saw a star fall from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the abyss; he opened it and smoke poured out of the shaft like smoke from an enormous furnace. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. Out of the smoke, onto the land, came locusts as powerful as scorpions in their sting. The locusts were commanded to do no harm to the grass in the land or to any plant or tree but only to those men who had not the seal of God on their foreheads. The locusts were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months; the pain they inflicted was like that of a scorpion's sting. During that time these men will seek death but will not find it; they will yearn to die but death will escape them.

In appearance the locusts were like horses equipped for battle. On their heads they wore something like gold crowns; their faces were like men's faces but they had hair like women's hair. Their teeth were the teeth of lions, their chests like iron breastplates. Their wings made a sound like the roar of many chariots and horses charging into battle. They had tails with stingers like scorpions; in their tails was enough venom to harm men for five months. Acting as their king was the angel in charge of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon.

The first woe is past, but beware! There are two more to come.

**Second reading**
*From the dialogue On Divine Providence by St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church*

*I tasted and I saw*

Eternal God, eternal Trinity, you have made the blood of Christ so precious through his sharing in your divine nature. You are a mystery as deep as the sea; the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for you. But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more. When you fill my soul I have an even greater hunger, and I grow more famished for your light. I desire above all to see you, the true light, as you really are.

I have tasted and seen the depth of your mystery and the beauty of your creation with the light of my understanding. I have clothed myself with your likeness and have seen what I shall be. Eternal Father, you have given me a share in your power and the wisdom that Christ claims as his own, and your Holy Spirit has given me the desire to love you. You are my Creator, eternal Trinity, and I am your creature. You have made of me a new creation in the blood of your Son, and I know that you are moved with love at the beauty of your creation, for you have enlightened me.

Eternal Trinity, Godhead, mystery deep as the sea, you could give me no greater gift than the gift of yourself. For you are a fire ever burning and
never consumed, which itself consumes all the selfish love that fills my being. Yes, you are a fire that takes away the coldness, illuminates the mind with its light and causes me to know your truth. By this light, reflected as it were in a mirror, I recognize that you are the highest good, one we can neither comprehend nor fathom. And I know that you are beauty and wisdom itself. The food of angels, you gave yourself to man in the fire of your love.

You are the garment which covers our nakedness, and in our hunger you are a satisfying food, for you are sweetness and in you there is no taste of bitterness, O triune God!

THURSDAY - APRIL 30

First reading
From the book of Revelation 9:13-21

The plague of war

I, John, watched and the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from between the horns of the altar of gold in God’s presence. It said to the sixth angel, who was still holding his trumpet, “Release the four angels who are tied up on the banks of the great river Euphrates!”

So the four angels were released; this was precisely the hour, the day, the month, and the year for which they had been prepared, to kill a third of mankind. Their cavalry troops, whose count I heard, were two hundred million in number—a number I heard myself. Now, in my vision, this is how I saw the horses and their riders. The breastplates they wore were fiery red, deep blue, and pale yellow. The horses’ heads were like heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire and sulfur and smoke. By these three plagues—the smoke and sulfur and fire which shot out of their mouths—a third of mankind was slain. The deadly power of the horses was not only in their mouths but in their tails; for their tails were like snakes with heads poised to strike.

That part of mankind which escaped the plagues did not repent of the idols they had made. They did not give up the worship of demons, or of gods made from gold and silver, from bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Neither did they repent of their murders or their sorcery, their fornication or their thefts.

Second reading
From the treatise Against Heresies by Saint Irenaeus, bishop

The Eucharist, pledge of our resurrection

If our flesh is not saved, then the Lord has not redeemed us with his blood, the Eucharistic chalice does not make us sharers in his blood, and the bread we break does not make us sharers in his body. There can be no blood without veins, flesh and the rest of the human substance, and this the Word of God actually became: it was with his own blood that he redeemed us. As the Apostle says: In him, through his blood, we have been redeemed, our sins have been forgiven.

We are his members and we are nourished by creation, which is his gift to us, for it is he who causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall. He declared that the chalice, which comes from his creation, was his blood, and he makes it the nourishment of our blood. He affirmed that the bread, which comes from his creation, was his body, and he makes it the nourishment of our body. When the chalice we mix and the bread we bake receive the word of God, the Eucharistic elements become the body and blood of Christ, by which our bodies live and grow. How then can it be said that flesh belonging to the Lord’s own body and nourished by his body and blood is incapable of receiving God’s gift of eternal life? Saint Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians that we are members of his body, of his flesh and bones. He is not speaking of some spiritual and incorporeal kind of man, for spirits do not have flesh and bones. He is speaking of a real human body composed of flesh, sinews and bones, nourished by the chalice of Christ’s blood and receiving growth from the bread which is his body.

The slip of a vine planted in the ground bears fruit at the proper time. The grain of wheat falls into the ground and decays only to be raised up again and multiplied by the Spirit of God who sustains all things. The Wisdom of God places these things at the service of man and when they receive God’s word they become the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ. In the same way our bodies, which have been nourished by the Eucharist, will be buried in the earth and will decay, but they will rise again at the appointed time, for the Word of God will raise them up to the glory of God the Father. Then the Father will clothe our mortal nature in immortality and freely endow our corruptible nature with incorruptibility, for God’s power is shown most perfectly in weakness.
FRIDAY - MAY 1

First reading
From the book of Revelation 10:1-11

The call of the seer is renewed

I, John, saw another mighty angel come down from heaven wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow about his head; his face shone like the sun and his legs like pillars of fire. In his hand he held a little scroll which had been opened. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and then gave a loud cry like the roar of a lion. When he cried out, the seven thunders raised their voices too. I was about to start writing when the seven thunders spoke, but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have spoken and do not write it down!”

Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and took an oath by the One who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and earth and sea along with everything in them: “There shall be no more delay. When the time comes for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, the mysterious plan of God, which he announced to his servants the prophets, shall be accomplished in full.”

Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the open scroll from the hand of the angel standing on the sea and on the land.” I went up to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little scroll.” He said to me, “Here, take it and eat it! It will be sour in your stomach, but in your mouth it will taste as sweet as honey.” I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. In my mouth it tasted as sweet as honey, but when I swallowed it my stomach turned sour. Then someone said to me, “You must prophesy again for many peoples and nations, languages and kings.”

Death slew him by means of the body which he had assumed, but that same body proved to be the weapon with which he conquered death. Concealed beneath the cloak of his manhood, his godhead engaged death in combat; but in slaying our Lord, death itself was slain. It was able to kill natural human life, but was itself killed by the life that is above the nature of man.

Death could not devour our Lord unless he possessed a body, neither could hell swallow him up unless he bore our flesh; and so he came in search of a chariot in which to ride to the underworld. This chariot was the body which he received from the Virgin; in it he invaded death’s fortress, broke open its strongroom and scattered all its treasure.

At length he came upon Eve, the mother of all the living. She was that vineyard whose enclosure her own hands had enabled death to violate, so that she could taste its fruit; thus the mother of all the living became the source of death for every living creature. But in her stead Mary grew up, a new vine in place of the old. Christ, the new life, dwelt within her. When death, with its customary impudence, came foraging for her mortal fruit, it encountered its own destruction in the hidden life that fruit contained. All unsuspecting, it swallowed him up, and in so doing released life itself and set free a multitude of men.

He who was also the carpenter’s glorious son set up his cross above death’s all-consumming jaws, and led the human race into the dwelling place of life. Since a tree had brought about the downfall of mankind, it was upon a tree that mankind crossed over to the realm of life. Bitter was the branch that had once been grafted upon that ancient tree, but sweet the young shoot that has now been grafted in, the shoot in which we are meant to recognize the Lord whom no creature can resist.

We give glory to you, Lord, who raised up your cross to span the jaws of death like a bridge by which souls might pass from the region of the dead to the land of the living. We give glory to you who put on the body of a single mortal man and made it the source of life for every other mortal man. You are incontestably alive. Your murderers sowed your living body in the earth as farmers sow grain, but it sprang up and yielded an abundant harvest of men raised from the dead.

Come then, my brothers and sisters, let us offer our Lord the great and all-embracing sacrifice of our love, pouring out our treasury of hymns and prayers before him who offered his cross in sacrifice to God for the enrichment of us all.

SATURDAY - MAY 2

First Reading
From the book of Revelation 11:1-19

The two invincible witnesses

I, John, watched and someone gave me a measuring rod and said: “Come and take the measurements of God’s temple and altar, and count those who worship there. Exclude the outer court of the temple, however; do not measure it, for it has been handed over to the Gentiles, who will crush the holy city for forty-two months. I will commission my two witnesses to prophesy for those twelve hundred and sixty days, dressed in sackcloth.”

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which

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stand in the presence of the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire will come out of the mouths of these witnesses to devour their enemies. Anyone attempting to harm them will surely be slain in this way. These witnesses have power to close up the sky so that no rain will fall during the time of their mission. They also have power to turn water into blood and to afflict the earth at will with any kind of plague.

When they have finished giving their testimony, the wild beast that comes up from the abyss will wage war against them and conquer and kill them. Their corpses will lie in the streets of the great city, which has the symbolic name “Sodom” or “Egypt,” where also their Lord was crucified. Men from every people and race, language and nation, stare at their corpses for three and a half days but refuse to bury them. The earth’s inhabitants gloat over them and in their merriment exchange gifts, because these two prophets harassed everyone on earth.

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life which comes from God returned to them. When they stood on their feet sheer terror gripped those who saw them. The two prophets heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, “Come up here!” So they went up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies looked on. At that moment there was a violent earthquake and a tenth of the city fell in ruins. Seven thousand persons were killed during the earthquake; the rest were so terrified that they worshiped the God of heaven.

The second woe is past, but beware! The third is coming very soon.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. Loud voices in heaven cried out, “The kingdom of the world now belongs to our Lord and to his Anointed One, and he shall reign forever and ever.” The twenty-four elders who were enthroned in God’s presence fell down to worship God and said:

great and the small alike; The time to destroy those who lay the earth waste.”

Then God’s temple in heaven opened and in the temple could be seen the ark of his covenant. There were flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm.

Second reading
**From a discourse by Saint Athanasius, bishop**

*On the incarnation of the Word*

The Word of God, incorporeal, incorruptible and immaterial, entered our world. Yet it was not as if he had been remote from it up to that time. For there is no part of the world that was ever without his presence; together with his Father, he continually filled all things and places.

Out of his loving-kindness for us he came to us, and we see this in the way he revealed himself openly to us. Taking pity on mankind’s weakness, and moved by our corruption, he could not stand aside and see death have the mastery over us; he did not want creation to perish and his Father’s work in fashioning man to be in vain. He therefore took to himself a body, no different from our own, for he did not wish simply to be in a body or only to be seen.

If he had wanted simply to be seen, he could indeed have taken another, and nobler, body. Instead, he took our body in its reality.

Within the Virgin he built himself a temple, that is, a body; he made it his own instrument in which to dwell and to reveal himself. In this way he received from mankind a body like our own, and, since all were subject to the corruption of death, he delivered this body over to death for all, and with supreme love offered it to the Father. He did so to destroy the law of corruption passed against all men, since all died in him. The law, which had spent its force on the body of the Lord, could no longer have any power over his fellows. Moreover, this was the way in which the Word was to restore mankind to immortality, after it had fallen into corruption, and summon it back from death to life. He utterly destroyed the power death had against mankind—as fire consumes chaff—by means of the body he had taken and the grace of the resurrection.

This is the reason why the Word assumed a body that could die, so that this body, sharing in the Word who is above all, might satisfy death’s requirement in place of all. Because of the Word dwelling in that body, it would remain incorruptible, and all would be freed for ever from corruption by the grace of the resurrection.

In death the Word made a spotless sacrifice and oblation of the body he had taken. By dying for others, he immediately banished death for all mankind. In this way the Word of God, who is above all, dedicated and offered his temple, the instrument that was his body, for us all, as he said, and so paid by his own death the debt that was owed. The immortal Son of God, united with all men by likeness of nature, thus fulfilled all justice in restoring mankind to immortality by the promise of the resurrection.

The corruption of death no longer holds any power over mankind, thanks to the Word, who has come to dwell among them through his one body.
First reading
From the book of Revelation 12:1-17

The sign of the woman

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. Because she was with child, she wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. Then another sign appeared in the sky: it was a huge dragon, flaming red, with seven heads and ten horns; on his heads were seven diadems. His tail swept a third of the stars from the sky and hurled them down to the earth.

Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, ready to devour her child when it should be born. She gave birth to a son—a boy destined to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and to his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert, where a special place had been prepared for her by God; there she was taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days.

Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. Although the dragon and his angels fought back, they were overpowered and lost their place in heaven. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent known as the devil or Satan, the seducer of the whole world, was driven out; he was hurled down to earth and his minions with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have salvation and power come, the reign of our God and the authority of his Anointed One. For the accuser of our brothers is cast out, who night and day accused them before our God. They defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death. So rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, earth and sea, for the devil has come down upon you! His fury knows no limits, for he knows his time is short.”

When the dragon saw that he had been cast down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the boy. But the woman was given the wings of a gigantic eagle so that she could fly off to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she could be taken care of for a year and for two and a half years more.

The serpent, however, spewed a torrent of water out of his mouth to search out the woman and sweep her away. The earth then came to the woman’s rescue by opening its mouth and swallowing the flood which the dragon spewed out of his mouth. Enraged at her escape, the dragon went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep God’s commandments and give witness to Jesus. He took up his position by the shore of the sea.

Second Reading
From a homily on the Gospels
by Saint Gregory the Great, pope

Christ the good shepherd

I am the good shepherd. I know my own — by which I mean, I love them — and my own know me. In plain words: those who love me are willing to follow me, for anyone who does not love the truth has not yet come to know it.

My dear brethren, you have heard the test we pastors have to undergo. Turn now to consider how these words of our Lord imply a test for yourselves also. Ask yourselves whether you belong to his flock, whether you know him, whether the light of his truth shines in your minds. I assure you that it is not by faith that you will come to know him, but by love; not by mere conviction, but by action. John the evangelist is my authority for this statement. He tells us that anyone who claims to know God without keeping his commandments is a liar.

Consequently, the Lord immediately adds: As the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. Clearly he means that laying down his life for his sheep gives evidence of his knowledge of the Father and the Father’s knowledge of him. In other words, by the love with which he dies for his sheep he shows how greatly he loves his Father.

Again he says: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them; they follow me, and I give them eternal life. Shortly before this he had declared: If anyone enters the sheepfold through me he shall be saved; he shall go freely in and out and shall find good pasture. He will enter into a life of faith; from faith he will go out to vision, from belief to contemplation, and will graze in the good pastures of everlasting life.

So our Lord’s sheep will finally reach their grazing ground where all who follow him in simplicity of heart will feed on the green pastures of eternity. These pastures are the spiritual joys of heaven. There the elect look upon the face of God with unclouded vision and feast at the banquet of life for ever more.

Beloved brothers, let us set out for these pastures where we shall keep joyful festival with so many of our fellow citizens. May the thought of their happiness urge us on! Let us stir up our hearts, rekindle our faith, and long eagerly for what heaven has in store for us. To love thus is to be already on our way. No matter what obstacles we encounter, we must not allow them to turn us aside from the joy of that heavenly feast. Anyone who is determined to reach his destination is not deterred by the roughness of the road that leads to it. Nor must we allow the charm of success to seduce us, or we shall be like a foolish traveler who is so distracted by the pleasant meadows through which he is passing that he forgets where he is going.
LIVES OF THE SAINTS
Let's remember these exemplars of the faith who have gone before. Let's ask their intercession before the Lord, in our need.

MONDAY
APRIL 27
ST. SIMEON OF JERUSALEM
PRAY FOR US

St. Simeon of Jerusalem was the son of Clopas, and cousin to Jesus. He received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In 62 A.D., St. James the Lesser, Bishop of Jerusalem, was put to death for preaching the faith; St. Simeon was chosen to replace him. In 66, a civil war began in Judea, between the Jews and the Romans. The Christians departed from the city before the Roman attack. They settled in town called Pella, with St. Simeon as leader. After the Romans sacked Jerusalem, St. Simeon and the Christians returned; resettling among the ruins. The city was rebuilt, and the Church flourished, with multitudes of Jewish converts. In 107 A.D., Emperor Trajan condemned St. Simeon to be crucified for being a Christian. Following days of torture, he was martyred at the age of 120, after serving as Bishop for 43 years.

TUESDAY
APRIL 28
ST. PETER CHANEL
PRAY FOR US

Born in 1803 to a peasant family, St. Peter Chanel was a shepherd as a boy and an excellent student. Ordained a Priest in 1827, he was assigned to Crozet, a parish in decline; he turned it around, in part because of his ministry to the sick, and brought a spiritual revival.

St. Peter Chanel joined the Society of Mary (the Marist Fathers) in 1831. He was assigned with a band of missionaries to New Hebrides (South Pacific) in 1836. St. Peter Chanel was the first Christian missionary on the island of Fortuna (today part of the French colony of Wallis and Fortuna), and converted many. He learned the local language, and taught in the local school.

St. Peter Chanel became the first martyr in Oceania when he was put to death by order of Niuliki, a native leader and a priest of the tribal religion of the island. Niuliki was angered at St. Peter Chanel’s influence on his family, when his own son and daughter converted to become Christians.

WEDNESDAY
APRIL 29
BLESSED SISTER MARIA OF THE TRINITY
PRAY FOR US

Born in 1904, Itala Mela lived the diocese of La Spezia, Italy, in a Catholic family that was somewhat indifferent to their faith. Itala herself fell completely away from the Church following her brother’s death.

However, Itala Mela, later had a powerful conversion experience; she returned to the Church and her faith. She also felt a call to religious life as a Benedictine Oblate in Rome, becoming Sister Maria of the Trinity.

While in the convent, it was said that Blessed Sister Maria of the Trinity suffered with health problems. But her weaknesses didn’t stop her from coming to seek greater understanding of God. Thus, she became a great theological writer, known for her depth of understanding of the Trinity as part of the faith. From this love of the Trinity, is the source of her name. Blessed Sister Maria of the Trinity died in 1957, and was beatified by Pope Francis in 2017.
Born in East Anglia, England in the 7th century, St. Erconwald was a Benedictine monk who founded the Chertsey Abbey in Surrey, England, and served as its first abbot. He also helped to found a convent in Essex where his sister, Saint Ethelburga served as abbess. He was later named Bishop of the East Saxons, with his Diocese centered in the city of London.

Though St. Erconwald suffered from severe gout, which hobbled him, he nonetheless traveled extensively throughout his Diocese, north and south, east and west. He was well loved by his people. St. Erconwald died in 693 and his remains were buried at old St. Paul’s Cathedral. His grave was a popular place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages -- there many sick people were miraculously cured. His resting place was destroyed, together with a number of other tombs in the cathedral, during the rise of Anglicanism in England. He is both the patron Saint invoked against gout and one of the patron saints of London.

Born in Ukraine in 1869, Blessed Klymentii entered the Monastery of Saint Theodore the Studite in 1911 at age 42, and was ordained in 1915. He became Abbott of the Monastery in 1944. During World War II, he provided refuge to persecuted Jews, hiding them from the Nazis, during the German army’s occupation of the Ukraine.

After World War II with the resurgence of the Communist authorities retaking control in Ukraine, and their virulent hatred of the Catholic Church, Blessed Klymentii was arrested by Soviet interior police -- the NKVD -- for practicing his faith. Thus, at the age of 78, he was sentenced to eight years in a forced labor camp. He died in prison, a martyr for his faith, on May 1, 1951.

He was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2001 as one of the vast number of "Martyrs Killed Under Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe."

As a Deacon and an aide to a leading Bishop at the Council of Nicea in 325, St. Athanasius fought for the defeat of the heresy known as Arianism and the acceptance of the truth of Divinity of Jesus Christ. St. Athanasius formulated the doctrine of “homo-ousianism” which says that Christ is the same substance as the Father; this refuted Arianism’s claim that Christ was different from God and a mere creation of the Father, that is, he was a creature and not Divine.

For his great theological mind, and defense of the truth of the faith, St. Athanasius was made Bishop of Alexandria in 328. He served for 46 years as Bishop. In battling the Arians, who were still a force to be reckoned with in Alexandria, St. Athanasius wound up exiled five times during his tenure as Bishop. He died on May 2, 373.

A Muslim convert to Catholicism, St. Ahmed the Calligrapher lived in 17th century Constantinople. He worked as a calligrapher in the royal chancery. St. Ahmed had a Christian slave woman from Russia who tended him. Little by little, this Christian woman brought him to a desire for the Catholic faith, and he began his conversion. Soon thereafter, Ahmed received Holy Baptism. One day a group of Islam officials heard St. Ahmed say, “There is nothing better than Christian faith and Christian God.” The Islamic officials were so angered at his show of Christian faith. For his show of faith, he was put before Sultan, and after a period of torture was given the chance to recant his Christian faith and return to Islam; he refused. St. Ahmed was beheaded on May 3, 1682.
SIGHTED

A sign that no one wants to see in Delmarva as we approach the late spring and the coming of summer!

Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is illuminated with the flags of the world as a sign of unity in overcoming the current health crisis.

Even in the midst of crisis, people can find some humor. This is a t-shirt selling currently on Amazon.com to commemorate the 2020 toilet paper hoarding period of the Coronavirus crisis in the United States, even right here in Delaware and Maryland, too.
SIGHTED

The Pope imparts his blessing to nearly empty St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican.

Orthodox Christians stream to their local Church to celebrate Orthodox Easter this past Sunday in Bulgaria.

Some empty roads in the City of Philadelphia, during the peak of the Coronavirus lock down.

A mounted police officer is on patrol in an empty Times Square in New York City, to enforce lock-down measures and ensure that there is no horsing around.

A Priest is shown at the ambo, proclaiming the Gospel during the celebration of a Mass in a huge, but very empty, Church.
conscientious in adhering to the rules of the lockdown, in the back of their minds, they are asking “Is this going to go on endlessly?” In the back of their minds they are wondering, “In our response to this problem, are we setting precedents that we will regret later?” The suspension of our way life, currently imposed on us by executive diktat in each state and nationally, seems something unthinkable, yet somewhat understandable. But, there are questions to ponder in all of this. When it will end? We don’t know. And, in truth, when it ends, it can start all over again. Also, will people abide forever in an eternal lock-down whenever time a new virus comes along?

2. RAMIFICATIONS. I ponder the ramifications of the limitlessness and the side-effects of the present situation’s regulations and prohibitions. While catching this virus is bad, we are simultaneously confronted with other bad things: devastating economic consequences, massive job losses, the shuttering of businesses, the cost in mental health, an increase in suicides, and the incredible difficulty for many people to function in this lockdown. All happening as a result of actions taken, all happening as result of preventing the spreading of a virus, but happening, in some sense, without an inkling of an end game.

3. A COUNTER POINT? I ponder that the health-compromised elderly (especially those over 80) who can be the most seriously affected, indeed killed, by the virus, are the most virulently anxious to get back to living again. They are the group with the highest percentage (according to a recent Harris Poll) that would go back to eating in a restaurant and go back to shopping once the economy re-opened (at 43% and 65%, respectively, a rate 12 percentage points and 18 percentage points higher, respectively, than the nearest other age group). Ironically, from that poll, it would seems that these older folks whom States are taking such great action to protect, appear to be more unhappy with the present restrictions and more eager to see them suspended than the younger age groups. I ponder, on the above matter: why is that the case? Wouldn’t it seem that the folks who are most vulnerable would be most hesitant about returning to the pre-Coronavirus way of life so quickly? That’s also a ponderous matter…. and I address that below in #4.

4. OF RECONCILIATION AND MORTALITY. And so, I ponder, that as one gets older, one reconciles themselves with the truth of human mortality. I know as I edge closer to 60, that is certainly true for me. Thus, the older one gets, the more reluctant one will be to spend his or her remaining years/time isolated from his or her family and friends and the joys of daily life. For example, if you were an 85 year old grandparent and had a choice between possibly catching Coronavirus or living out what could be your final years of life without ever seeing your grandchildren again, which would you go for? The
response would likely be the latter. Is the person who makes that choice just selfish, or is that person seeking the human experience rather than perhaps dying alone, or being isolated. Solitary confinement is usually a punishment for the worst inmates in a prison, is it a rightful sentence to be imposed under the aegis of helping? And if it is imposed, what are the ramifications? Isolation is, in its own way, a form of slow death. By our nature, as scripture says, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” (Genesis 2:18), that is to say, human contact is a necessary part of the way we are made. We need human contact just as we need food, water, and love, hence God didn’t stop after creating Adam.

5. OF SCIENCE AND MORALITY. I ponder, what kind of an issue are we dealing within all of this mess of the current virus crisis? Is it strictly and only a “science” question? Relatedly, should all policy decisions be guided only by science? Or are there moral questions at play here... moral questions that deserve a Christian response, and need to be in the mix. What do I mean by this? Well, scientists can provide scientific, external, and empirical data that help us to understand the circumstances and virus’ progression, but that data does not deal with the greater moral questions being posed by this crisis and our response. Questions like “What does it mean to be human?” “Is man meant to be isolated?” “Is living online the same as living?” “What matters most about human life - its length or its liberty?” “What is the proper balance among one’s safety, one’s liberty, and the common good?” and “Amidst this crisis, are we extinguishing civil liberties that might only need be somewhat curtailed?” need to be considered. Christ only lived 33 years; if he would have heeded the calls of the authority to, dare I say, self-isolate and stay away from others, maybe he would have lived 66 years — mankind wouldn’t have been redeemed, but his life would have been longer. I guess, what I am asking, however imperfectly, is this: is life really meant to be lived without risks? Does leaving our brothers and sisters isolated, fearful, and in hiding, really fulfill our Christian mission? Should we live our lives fearful of being in one another’s company?

6. OUR YOUNG GENERATION. I ponder, and I ponder greatly, on the question of our teens, people in their 20s and 30s, and those with young families, regarding the ramifications of our current crisis. And what I ponder is this: would I prefer to take a risk with my own health for the sake of protecting the next generation’s (and their children’s) economic future? Indeed, I would; greater love has no man than this: to lay down his life (or perhaps risking a potential virus with varying effects) for his friends. That means risking the risk of risk, for the future of our future’s future. Where are we on that?

7. VITAL VS. VIRAL. I ponder; also, the moral considerations about the experience of life, specifically, as it relates to the younger generation I noted above. If there continues to be social distancing and no social gatherings or contacts for a prolonged period (say, until there is a vaccine one day, or until herd immunity occurs) then a long stretch of the lives of our young people will be impoverished in some quite sad ways: they will be unable to socialize with friends, or form new relationships; they will be unable shake the hand of a friend; hold someone to console them; kiss their first date; dance together; and so on. If a young man or young woman (late teens, 20s, 30s, etc) are single and unattached right now in 2020, then they will have to remain that way for the remainder of this crisis, and will be missing out on the chance to form the bonds of love and personal relationships that would be normal at this time in their life. They will be losing out on having the human touch in their life. Should one’s life cease to be vital, for fear of getting viral? Is our response to not getting “caught” by the virus, to be one of hiding away like St. Peter hid on the night of the Lord’s Passion for fear of getting “caught” as being one of the followers of Christ.

8. OF LIFE AND LIVING. I ponder, whether we need a discussion or moment of reflection regarding these matters — not just this current crisis but for future ones; discussions and reflections which go beyond the science and even beyond economics. I ponder that we need to ponder and discuss the value and values, from a Christian perspective, of what it means to be human and live a human life. Thus, if I locked myself in a fallout shelter from age 18-90, and thereby would never come in contact with anyone — hence, avoiding anyone who could get me sick — then I guess, perhaps, I’d live longer and healthier, but would I actually be living at all?

And at the end of the day, that last question is the question that I really ponder.

People have told me that they are hungry for the Eucharist. What I would hope they mean by that is that they are hungry for gathering for the Eucharist. In truth, one only needs to receive communion once a year to meet the obligations of their faith in that regard, but whether one receives or not, they are obligated to attend Mass weekly, and gather with their brothers and sisters in Christ to celebrate — key word, “celebrate” — the Eucharist. In our current situation we are not celebrating, we are hungering for that celebration. I look for the day when that hunger will be sated, and we will again be living in the midst of the community Catholic faithful, not centered around isolation and fear, but rather centered around the altar and hope, celebrating and being nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ.

Pope Francis speaking on "online" Mass and Communications:

"Be careful not to ‘virtualize’ the Church, not to ‘virtualize’ the Sacraments, not to ‘virtualize’ the People of God." The Church, the Sacraments, the People of God are concrete. It’s true that right now, we should build this familiarity with the Lord in this way [i.e., online, virtual] ... but in order to get through the tunnel, not to stay here."

"Familiarity without the Church, without the people, without the sacraments, is dangerous. It can become, we could say, a "gnostic" familiarity, a familiarity just for me, separated from the people of God."
PUZZLE PAGE

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Catholic Trivia
From Rome

**Vatican to Ease Some Coronavirus Restrictions in May**

By Courtney Mares

Vatican City, Apr 22, 2020 / 11:10 am MT (CNA) - Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin met with members of the Roman curia on Wednesday to discuss the gradual reopening of Holy See offices as Italy prepares to end its national lockdown.

The heads of Vatican dicasteries decided to implement a “gradual reactivation of ordinary services” starting in May, while “safeguarding the health precautions to limit contagion,” according to a statement from the Holy See Press Office April 22.

Italy’s strict lockdown is scheduled to end May 4 after 55 days of mandatory quarantine for the entire country.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced April 21 that he will be releasing a plan to slowly lift the coronavirus restrictions and reopen businesses.

“I wish I could say: let’s reopen everything. Immediately. … But such a decision would be irresponsible. It would bring up the contagion curve uncontrollably and it would frustrate all the efforts we’ve put in so far,” Conte wrote in a Facebook post published April 21.

After over a month of lockdown, more than 100,000 people are currently ill with COVID-19 in Italy after 183,957 total cases were documented by the Italian Ministry of Health.

When the Diocese of Rome announced the suspension of all public Masses one day before the national lockdown was declared, there had been a total of 87 coronavirus cases documented in Lazio, the region surrounding Rome. As of April 21, there are 4,402 active cases reported in the same region with an additional 1,130 people recovered and 363 deceased.

Vatican City itself has reported nine cases of COVID-19 among its employees. The most recent confirmed case was reported by the Holy See Press Office this week after the patient was hospitalized.

“Appropriate sanitisation and checks were carried out among those who had had contact with the interested party on the only day of his presence at the workplace in the two weeks prior to the response, all with negative results,” Holy See Press Office Director Matteo Bruni said April 20.

Bruni has repeatedly said that Vatican City is implementing measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in coordination with the Italian authorities.

St. Peter’s Basilica and square, the Vatican Museums, and several other public offices in the Vatican City State have been closed for more than six weeks.

Pro-Life News

**U.S. Bishops urge FDA: Keep COVID Vaccine Free of Abortion Link**

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The chairmen of four U.S. bishops' committees, joined by the leaders of several health care, bioethics and pro-life organizations, "urgently and respectfully" implored the commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ensure any vaccines developed for the coronavirus "are free from any connection to abortion."

"To be clear, we strongly support efforts to develop an effective, safe, and widely available vaccine as quickly as possible, however, we also strongly urge our federal government to ensure that fundamental moral principles are followed in the development of such vaccines, most importantly, the principle that human life is sacred and should never be exploited," the letter said. "We are aware that, among the dozens of vaccines currently in development, some are being produced using old cell lines that were created from the cells of aborted babies," they said.

"It is critically important that Americans have access to a vaccine that is produced ethically: No American should be forced to choose between being vaccinated against this potentially deadly virus and violating his or her conscience," the group said. "Fortunately, there is no need to use ethically problematic cell lines to produce a COVID vaccine, or any vaccine, as other cell lines or processes that do not involve cells from abortions are available and are regularly being used to produce other vaccines," they said.
CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Franciscan U. to Pay Tuition Costs for New Students in Fall

STEUBENVILLE, Ohio (CNS) — In response to the unprecedented economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, Franciscan University of Steubenville announced it will cover the remainder of tuition costs, after scholarships and grants have been applied, for the fall 2020 semester for all incoming full-time undergraduate students enrolled in its on-campus programs. The university's plan, called "Step in Faith," was unanimously approved by the university’s president and board of trustees April 18 and announced to students April 21.

Franciscan Father Dave Pivonka, the university's president, said in a statement: "As a university, we feel called by God to ease the burden for students, so they can experience the irreplaceable value of a Franciscan University education."

He added that university officials have "heard from many students whose concerns over the pandemic are making the decision to leave home for college more difficult. Also, many families and students have seen their ability to pay for college evaporate due to the economic impact of the coronavirus. We hope this unique response will help them to overcome these obstacles and uncertainties and step out in faith with us."

Funding for this tuition aid comes in part from the university's reserve funds. The idea for using this money was raised after Father Pivonka asked faculty and staff to join him in prayer for "fresh, creative, Holy Spirit-inspired ideas" to address the challenges the university and its students were facing due to the pandemic.

"While the tuition coverage for fall 2020 goes to every new freshman and undergraduate transfer student regardless of their ability to pay, families for whom tuition payments are not a hardship -- as well as other benefactors -- have the opportunity to contribute to the 'Step in Faith Fund,' which will help us help our students," Father Pivonka said.

Daily Reflections by Our Clergy

During the time when the faithful are challenged by an ongoing health crisis, the clergy serving our Parishes are providing Daily Reflections on the scriptures for the faithful.

• Click here to see the latest Daily Reflections •

Devotions for the Days of the Week

In its tradition, the Church has a focus of devotion for each day of the week to nourish the prayer life of the faithful and keep them close to the heart of Christ and his Church. In Catholic tradition, these are the focus of prayers each day of the week:

Monday — Poor Souls in Purgatory
Tuesday — The Holy Angels
Wednesday — St. Joseph
Thursday — The Most Blessed Sacrament
Friday — The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
Saturday — Blessed Virgin Mary
Sunday — The Most Holy Trinity

Click on any of the links above to access these litanies for your prayer life.