



## Saint John XXIII Roman Catholic Church

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Office Hours: Office closed until at least May 18<sup>th</sup>

### SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

#### SUNDAY LITURGIES (MASSES)

PUBLIC SUNDAY MASSES ARE SUSPENDED AT THIS TIME

#### WEEKDAY LITURGIES

PUBLIC WEEKDAY MASSES ARE SUSPENDED AT THIS TIME

#### ASSISTANCE TO THE SICK AND SHUT-IN

For emergencies, you may contact the parish office

#### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (CONFESSIONS)

As circumstances permit, when the Pastor is available during announced office hours and/or by appointment

### PARISH BULLETIN

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER “GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY” – May 3, 2020**

**FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – May 10, 2020**

### PARISH PASTORAL TEAM

**Pastor: Reverend Fr. Robert Polz**

204-832-7335      [rpolz.johnxxiii@gmail.com](mailto:rpolz.johnxxiii@gmail.com)

**Pastoral Assistant: Sharon Camier**

204-832-7206      [sharon@johnxxiii.ca](mailto:sharon@johnxxiii.ca)

**Ministry Coordinator/Office Volunteer: Lynda Hunt**

204-832-7175      [lynda@johnxxiii.ca](mailto:lynda@johnxxiii.ca)

**Trustee: Loris Vendramelli**

204-888-8200      [loris@mymts.net](mailto:loris@mymts.net)

**Trustee: William Gould**

204-832-7175      [william.d.gould@gmail.com](mailto:william.d.gould@gmail.com)

**Parish Stewardship Committee**

**Facilitator: Loris Vendramelli**

204-888-8200      [loris@mymts.net](mailto:loris@mymts.net)

**Administrative Assistant: Joanna Mason**

204-832-7175      [joanna@johnxxiii.ca](mailto:joanna@johnxxiii.ca)

**Head Custodian: José Barrera**

204-888-9340

**Music Ministry: Donna Vendramelli**

204-888-8200      [d\\_vendramelli@mymts.net](mailto:d_vendramelli@mymts.net)

**Building and Maintenance Chair: Claude Precourt**

204-898-1893      [cfp3899@gmail.com](mailto:cfp3899@gmail.com)

**Fundraising and Development Committee**

204-832-7175      call if interested in serving

**Parish Pastoral Council**

**Facilitator: Laurette Burch**

204-885-6988      [burchd@mymts.net](mailto:burchd@mymts.net)

As of March 18, 2020, Archbishop Richard Gagnon has decreed a number of important protocols to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 Virus including the SUSPENSION OF ALL PUBLIC MASSES on Sundays and weekdays until and including Sunday, May 17, 2020. For further information, please go to the Archdiocesan website at [www.archwinnipeg.ca](http://www.archwinnipeg.ca)

While public gatherings of the faithful are suspended, our parishioners are encouraged to remain connected to the parish by offering their prayers and sacrifices in Spiritual Communion with the Lord and one another. Please see inside this bulletin for further information on Liturgies offered in private and other various opportunities to unite in prayer for the Church and the world.

So long as technological systems cooperate and circumstances permit, we plan to continue to livestream from Saint John XXIII Church the celebration of Sunday Eucharist each weekend during this state of emergency due to the pandemic. If there are any glitches uploading the livestream of these liturgies, we will do our best to upload them as soon as possible afterwards. To access livestreaming of liturgies via YouTube and/or an archive of liturgies posted online, go to links found on the home page of our parish website [www.johnxxiii.ca](http://www.johnxxiii.ca)

**MASS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – May 3**

**The Rosary will be recited before Mass**

*Livestreaming of the rosary followed by the liturgy is scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 2 at 3:40 p.m.*

**MASS FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – May 10**

**The Rosary will be recited before Mass**

*Livestreaming of the rosary followed by the liturgy is scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 9 at 3:40 p.m.*



**On the weekends of Sunday, May 3 and Sunday, May 10  
Masses will be offered “Pro populo”, i.e. for the intentions of parishioners.**

In addition to joining everyone in prayer each day for all those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as circumstances permit, Mass will be offered in private on weekdays for the following intentions:

- Madeline Price+, requested by Danica Kolomic
- Intentions of the Bond family, requested by Toni and Gary Bond and family
- Maria Grazia Loredan +, requested by Delia Poclen
- Bruno and Marinella Poclen +, requested by Delia Poclen
- Marc Seguin+, requested by Linus Endacott and family
- Intention for all mothers, requested by the Knights of Columbus St. James Council
- Richard Toal+, requested by Bill and Irene O’Byrne
- Special intention in honour of Our Lady of Fatima (May 13), requested by a parishioner
- Fr. Gary Killen+, requested by Tannena Korolyk
- Deceased member of the Hazzard family+,  
requested by Margaret and Jerome Strachan

*To the offering of Christ are united not only the members still here on earth, but also those already in the glory of heaven. In communion with and commemorating the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, the Church offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. In the Eucharist the Church is as it were at the foot of the cross with Mary, united with the offering and intercession of Christ. The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the faithful departed who "have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified," so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1370-1371)*

**If you wish to arrange MASS for a particular intention, please call or email the parish office for assistance.**

**OFFICE CLOSURE**

The Province of Manitoba has declared a state of emergency and has requested that all non-critical services shut down to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This shut down has been extended to Monday, May 18, 2020.

In keeping with this request, our parish office at Saint John XXIII will remain closed until at least May 18, 2020.

While the physical building will be closed, parish staff will continue to work from home. We will do our best to answer emails and respond to telephone voice mail messages in a timely fashion. For further information, please check out our parish website at [www.johnxxiii.ca](http://www.johnxxiii.ca) or call and leave a message at 204-832-7175

## **LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE FAITHFUL FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2020**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

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

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

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

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

*Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020  
Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist*

Pope Francis

### ***First Prayer***

**O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey  
as a sign of salvation and hope.  
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,  
who, at the foot of the cross,  
were united with Jesus’ suffering,  
and persevered in your faith.**

**“Protectress of the Roman people”,  
you know our needs,  
and we know that you will provide,  
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,  
joy and celebration may return  
after this time of trial.**

**Help us, Mother of Divine Love,  
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father  
and to do what Jesus tells us.  
For he took upon himself our suffering,  
and burdened himself with our sorrows  
to bring us, through the cross,  
to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.**

***We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God;  
Do not despise our petitions in our necessities,  
but deliver us always from every danger,  
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.***



## *Second Prayer*

**“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God”.**

**In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.**

**Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.**

**Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.**

**Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.**

**Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.**

**Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.**

**Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.**

**Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.**

**Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.**

**Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.**

**To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.**

THE *GATE*? WILL PEOPLE REALLY UNDERSTAND ALL THESE *SHEPHERDING* METAPHORS?



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

THE "GATE" IS THE DOORWAY TO ALL THAT IS NEEDED FOR THE *ABUNDANT LIFE*!



SO, JESUS IS THE ONE WHO COUNTS THE PEOPLE *ENTERING* AND *LEAVING* THE GROCERY STORE!



JOHN 10:1-10

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### ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

*My Jesus,  
I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.  
I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul.  
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
I embrace you as if you were already there  
and unite myself to you completely.  
Never permit me to be separated from you.  
Amen.*

— attributed to Saint Alphonsus Liguori



Go to the Archdiocese of Winnipeg website [www.archwinnipeg.ca](http://www.archwinnipeg.ca) for information on how to practice SPIRITUAL COMMUNION and many other resources for prayer and reflection.

***“Do not be ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ and to seem poor in this world.”*** — Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)

***“He is our shepherd, and the sheep know his voice. If we are his sheep, we will listen to him, recognizing him and obeying him. Let us be sure to follow when he goes before us ... May we long to hear his voice; let us pray that he may give us attentive ears and a heart of good will.”*** — Saint John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

### NEW PARISH OFFERTORY OPTIONS

In addition to the physical and spiritual suffering caused by the current pandemic, the financial stress on all citizens and their families, businesses and society at large, is no small cross to bear. Ongoing financial and other temporal concerns also affect the ongoing life of various faith communities all around the world. At this time, we remind our parishioners that Saint John XXIII Parish continues to struggle to meet its financial obligations. Even as public Masses are suspended, we still have financial obligations to fulfill. A sincere “THANK YOU” to those parishioners who are already taking steps to respond to this concern.

You may mail your contribution to the parish via CANADA POST. Or you may leave a message with the parish office to make arrangements with one of our parish staff to drop off your offertory donations at a safe drop off location. Alternatively, we encourage you to register for PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT. Please contact Joanna Mason for assistance.

If you wish to donate ONLINE, a link to CanadaHelps.org has been added to our parish website. Go to [www.johnxxiii.ca](http://www.johnxxiii.ca) and click on the DONATE NOW tab at the top of the *Links* column on the home page.

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**“GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY”**  
**May 3, 2020**

**Acts of the Apostles 2:14a, 36b-41**

The message of Pentecost nets 3,000 new believers.

**Psalms 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6**

God is the good and faithful shepherd of the weary soul.

**1 Peter 2:20b-25**

Like sheep gone astray, we are gathered up in Christ.

**John 10:1-10**

Jesus is the shepherd and gateway to abundant life.



**EXPLORING THE WORD**

**Enter, rejoice, and come in!**

In the not-distant past, though it feels very distant indeed in this age of the pandemic, friends of mine were talking about a great shopping experience they had had (remember those?): what a haul they brought home, and at such amazing prices! When I tried to go to the store they had mentioned, however, I found that admission came at a price: You had to have a club card to get in the door.

So it was with the yoga classes offered at the golf course (membership required), dinner at the exclusive restaurant (tie, tails, and connections not optional), and lots of other places where entrance was somewhat restricted or selective. This may be a free country, but in certain situations you simply have to belong to a group in order to gain admittance.

This is not always an unreasonable expectation: Do you want people to walk in off the street and into your book club gathering? Should just anyone be able to crash your birthday party or wedding? If you sat down to dinner tonight at your kitchen table and a stranger was sitting across from you, would that be all right with you?

Even within the church, which is in many significant ways an open society by design, full membership is by no means arbitrary, and those who belong have to undergo an admission process that may entail connections (family of birth), distinct dress (baptismal robe), application and scrutiny to ensure eligibility (RCIA), and even some monetary contribution (the ever-loving collection basket). When the Jerusalem crowd asked Peter and the disciples plaintively, “What are we to do, my brothers?” they understood that salvation would require something from them in return. Peter’s answer was point-blank: “Repent and be baptized.”

**Getting through the gate**

In the past few weeks, the gospels have invited us to consider how Jesus can be *touched* (even in the age of social distancing) and how he can be *recognized* by those who are his disciples. This week, we see that Jesus can also be entered: There is a “Christ experience” available for those who believe. Baptism is the fundamental ritual expression of entrance into the Body of Christ, of course. But as every RCIA director and presider at infant Baptisms knows, getting doused with holy water and the right ritual words isn’t what it’s all about. The exterior sign must be accompanied by an interior transformation. Peter knew that, too, which is why he didn’t say to the crowds in Jerusalem that day, “Line up and get baptized!”

Repentance is the jumpstart to the Christ experience: It’s what Thomas meant by falling on his knees two weeks ago and crying, “My Lord and my God!” It’s what the Emmaus travelers felt when the stranger they’ve been with all day tears apart the bread and they realize, “Oh my God, Jesus is risen!” Membership in the church is as useless as a club card that’s stuffed in your wallet unless you also enter into the experience of Christ. Once you pass through that gate, now you’ve arrived.

**Another day, another entry**

Jesus presents himself as the ultimate point of entry twice in the gospels: here in John, when he calls himself the “gate,” and again in Matthew, when he admits sheep and not goats into Kingdom Come. Admission to the Kingdom is revealed to be a pay-as-you-go affair. Those who shared their food with the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed the needy, visited the sick and imprisoned all along the way can now walk right in with no further ado. Those who have not paid these simple dues along the way, alas, are no longer eligible for admittance at any price. It is noteworthy that Jesus never adds, “Been baptized?” to the list of requirements for admission. Baptism is the ritual sign of the transformed life, but it cannot stand in lieu of that all-important transformation. Without a converted heart, we’re still parked at the gate.

Entering Christ is a total immersion into new and abundant life: As Saint Paul says, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Ask the 3,000 who were baptized the day they heard Peter’s message in the street. On one side of the Christ gate, they were Parthians, Medes, Mesopotamians, and God-knows-what-else. Once through the gate, they were the Body of Christ, rescued from a corrupt generation, beneficiaries of the promises of God and the forgiveness of sin. Before they

were scattered sheep, wandering unprotected and without direction. Once inside the pasture of Christ, they are safe, well nourished, and at liberty to come and go as never before. The thief who steals and slaughters and destroys cannot reach them here. Entering Christ, they know peace for the first time.

**APPLYING THE WORD**

***A Sunday for good shepherds***

We celebrate this day as Good Shepherd Sunday. Jesus is not only the one whose body we can touch in the community of faith, recognize in our communion with one another, and enter through heartfelt union with the life of Christ; he is also the one whose call leads us forward as the true shepherd of the sheep. His voice is familiar and trustworthy, like the voices of those who have spoken words of encouragement, love, and faithfulness all along our way. These parents, teachers, spiritual leaders, and mentors have brought us up in the faith, and in their good words and example we first recognize the voice of Christ guiding us to wholeness and holiness. We might take this opportunity to thank these folks today—with a phone call or e-mail—for being faithful to their own experience of Christ.

In the same way, we might consider in whose lives we may be playing the role of shepherd today, consciously or not. Do our words and example lead family members, neighbors, and friends to the heart of Christ? Might they be attracted through their relationship with us to enter the Gate and belong to Christ themselves? The goal is never to be overtly pious or moralistic, which tends to have the opposite effect of what we intend. When we have entered the Christ experience ourselves—joyful in the assembly, conscious of humanity’s deep communion, the ready hope of those in need—we leave the gate open for others to arrive.

– Alice Camille

Alice Camille is a religious educator, scripture commentator, and author of many books including **This Transforming Word** and other titles found at [alicecamille.com](http://alicecamille.com)  
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**TABERNACLE LAMP OFFERING**

**Week of May 3 – 9, 2020**

**For the intentions of Laurette and Doug Burch (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary),  
requested by Sharon and John Camier**

**Week of May 10 – 16, 2020**

**Elizabeth Margaret Polz+, requested by the Polz family**

If you wish to have the Tabernacle Lamp in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of Saint John XXIII Church burn in memory of a loved one, to honour a special occasion, or for a particular intention, you may make arrangements through the Parish Office. Call or email for assistance. The offering to cover one week (from Sunday through Saturday) is **\$25.00**.



**PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE OF OUR COMMUNITY IN NEED OF HEALING AND COMFORT**

**Darrell Aucoin, Gladys Barton, Annette and Maynard Bates, John Baziuk, Catherine Blaquera, Bill Camier, Marilyn Crakewich, René Defries, Alice Edwards, John Foucart, Audrey Fraser, Helen Hallack, Darryn Hellofs, Bev and Steve Hewitt, Rosario Jequinto, Tracy Kingsland, Amanda Klaasen, Marie Mangin, Norman Mangin, Yvonne Mason, Deb McEnturff, Frances Mijker, Susan Murphy, Zonia Patson, Cynthia Patterson, Shirley Payment, James Polz, Larrie Pushka, Owen Robertson, Janice Skene, Joe Wallack and Helen Yankoski, and all those infected/affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19).**

**THE WORD AMONG US *Daily Meditations for Catholics***

Some copies of the Easter 2020 issue are still available from the parish office. Price \$5.00 each.  
Call now to reserve your copy. Canadian Edition with CCCB approved Mass readings.

***“Suddenly I heard the words of Christ and understood them,  
and life and death ceased to seem to be evil,  
and instead of despair I experienced happiness and the joy of life undisturbed by death.”***

— Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)

**LIVE-STREAMED LITURGIES WITH ARCHBISHOP GAGNON**

Mass will be celebrated in private “LIVE-STREAMED” from St. Mary’s Cathedral at 11:00 a.m. each Sunday.  
For links and further information, go to the website [www.archwinnipeg.ca](http://www.archwinnipeg.ca)



## SPIRITUAL BOUQUET FOR MOTHER'S DAY

On Mother's Day weekend, we invite you to join in offering a spiritual bouquet to Our Blessed Mother, seeking her intercession and thanking her for her maternal, loving care. Let us offer our prayer intentions and entrust them to Our Lady. **We encourage you to offer your spiritual bouquet to Our Lady in your own homes using or adapting, if you wish, the suggestions offered in a sample activity guide which has been posted on our parish website under the bulletin tab for May 10, 2020.** As we celebrate the gift of mothers and honour Our Blessed Mother, we also recognize that Mother's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. In our spiritual bouquets lift up the intentions of our hearts to Mary this Mother's Day.

## VIRTUAL NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE FROM MAY 10 – 14, 2020

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are pleased to announce our first ever Virtual National March for Life: a week-long, online program building up to the day of the 23<sup>rd</sup> National March for Life, which marks the May 14, 1969 passing of the infamous omnibus bill that opened the floodgates to abortion on demand in our country. This initiative will also bring awareness to the killing occurring at the other end of the spectrum, near the end of life, with a focus on the proposed expansions to Canada's euthanasia law. The program will include high profile movies and interviews streamed online from May 10-12; a virtual candlelight vigil on Wednesday, May 13; online pro-life Masses and religious services on Thursday, May 14 and a livestreamed 'virtual' rally, with guests from Canada and around the world. All events will be hosted on the website [www.marchforlife.ca](http://www.marchforlife.ca) and our various social media platforms. Please check out our website for further details.



## SPIRITUALLY-ADOPTED BABY PROGRAM

**GOOD NEWS!** The baby you spiritually adopted last September will be born this month, nine months after the mother conceived him or her! The only change at birth is in the external life support system of the little one. Your baby is no different now than before birth except that he or she breathes and eats differently. It is truly a miracle. It began as a 46-chromosome cell and has grown over the past nine months into this unique human baby we now can see. Never before in history, nor ever again, will anyone exist who is exactly like your spiritually adopted baby. Your prayers saved its life. Thank you on behalf of all of the little babies and their mothers for your loving prayers that helped to bring them to birth "so that they might have life and have it to the full!"

## FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER May 10, 2020

### Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

The Twelve and the Seven share leadership in the community.

### Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

The mercy of God is something to sing about!

### 1 Peter 2:4-9

Each of us is a stone in the spiritual house of God.

### John 14:1-12

We do not need to know where Jesus is going;  
Jesus is the way we are going.

## EXPLORING THE WORD

### Gospel for control freaks

I come from a long line of Type A personalities. Some of them were tyrants, unable to rein in the need to dominate and orchestrate every aspect of their lives—and their families' lives. Others in my genetic circle took personal development to heart and got to work on letting go and letting God, which is the primary task of faith. Naturally, I like to think of myself as being in the latter category



Jesus saying farewell to his Apostles,  
from the *Maesta* by Duccio, 1308-1311

as an adult who has taken responsibility for a personality quirk that does not always serve me (or the folks around me!) very well. Whenever I'm badly in need of a day off, however, my anxiety about every last detail tends to rise to a noticeable pitch.

Working in and around churches for the past 25 years, I've noticed that control freaks are either attracted to the ministry or bred in the midst of it. Leadership is a wonderful quality of which the church could surely use more, but authoritarian oppression is not the same as leadership. How many liturgy czars, parish council Sanhedrin, music monarchs, canon law cops, and DRE dictators do we need in our communities? And does this kind of ministry reflect the servant leadership of Jesus?

### ***The Twelve make room for the Seven***

Administrators, we have to acknowledge, are inescapable necessities in a church where more than "two or three are gathered." Before Pentecost, the 12 apostles may have been more than enough, or even too many, to facilitate whatever true believers existed after the events of Holy Week and Easter. But before long it is evident that more hands are required in order for the community to be properly served. So the Twelve appoint the Seven—or so Luke would have us believe.

Scholars suspect that the narrative of the appointment of the Seven by the Twelve is one more instance of Luke tidying up the appearance of the early church to make it camera-ready for the history books. The Lucan tendency to harmonize and subordinate conflicting factions gives the early church that rosy glow of perfection we associate with a Christianity we cannot seem to recapture. It is just as likely that the seven leaders of the Greek-speaking community emerged naturally and angrily from among the Hellenists, tired of seeing their widows neglected and their concerns ignored by the predominantly Hebrew-speaking assembly—much the way Latino or African American Catholics may feel unaddressed in some parishes today. Sooner or later the constituency represented by the Seven had to be acknowledged by the Twelve, or lost altogether. An agreement to share leadership was reached, but probably not according to the neat delineation of roles as "apostle and preacher" and "deacon and server at table" suggests. After all, Stephen was put to death precisely for preaching, and fellow deacon Philip went on to become the evangelist to Samaria. Meanwhile, who's minding the tables?

If Luke is a bit of a control freak when it comes to the history, he had good intentions. The unity of the church was a precious commodity, and keeping the community together across generations, cultures, languages, and factions would remain a daunting challenge.

### ***A map would help***

Presuming that John was writing after Luke, we see that control issues continued to make a lot of early believers anxious. John tells the story of Thomas and Philip (the apostle, not the deacon by the same name) at the last supper, struggling to get as many last-minute instructions as possible before Jesus' suddenly announced departure. Jesus assures his friends that everything is under control (despite what may seem like total disruption and dissolution in the next few hours). He is going on ahead to prepare a place for them. They will know how to find him. All they have to do is what they have always done: put their faith in him.

Thomas is the first to object. Obviously, faith in Jesus is not a done deal as far as he's concerned. He would prefer to have this plan on paper: a map, a street address, and a timetable for all this coming and going, perhaps. Something more definite than a "place" and "in a little while" would be nice.

Jesus offers himself as the Way. We can see Thomas making a face at this. He has always had a problem with the mysticism thing.

Next, Philip betrays an even larger hole in his comprehension. Never mind "where" and "when" all this will take place: How about introducing us to "who"—the big Who—we are supposed to be trusting here?

It's Jesus' turn to make a face. He offers himself as the Who. It's significant that no one else raises a question after this. Sometimes, especially in John's gospel, the more Jesus talks, the less anyone understands.

## **APPLYING THE WORD**

### ***Laying the stones***

Human experience is wrapped in mystery. We've got unanswered questions at either end of life, and the part in between is not exactly a simple equation either. Those who feel compelled to dominate the details will find life to be a frustrating and unsatisfying proposition from start to finish. We are on a journey toward somewhere, and we'll get there sooner or later. Those are not the most precise directions one could have, but they are, for the person of faith, enough.

Because the one thing we are sure of is the One we are following. If we follow his way, we cannot be lost. If we trust in his plan, the unpredictability of worldly variables will not shake us. We are stones being built into a design we cannot see from our end of the quarry. The weight of our own destinies may be burdensome to us, but not to the builder who knows precisely how to shape and place us. In his hands, we will assume the perfect contour for our position in the structure, and where we wind up could not be more right. Letting go, even for a humble stone, requires confidence in the force of gravity. How much kinder, wiser, and more loving is the force that catches us!

– Alice Camille

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**Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.**

### Sunday, May 03, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER; GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

#### Follow the leader

When we were kids, playing “follow the leader” was easy. One child was designated as the pattern to imitate, and we just did whatever they did. In these days of crisis, it can seem harder to tell who the designated leader is. Is it the president or the pope, the pastor or the medical expert? Do we do what our parents advised, or listen to the recommendations of trusted friends? What do we do when media experts disagree? If we call ourselves Christians, then Christ is the ultimate authority for our values and criteria. Make a verse of scripture your daily companion.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; John 10:1-10 (49).* “For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.”

### Monday, May 04, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Stand your ground

“The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger,” said Father Stanley Rother, and he didn’t, which made him a martyr in 1981 in civil war-torn Guatemala. Even though he knew his name was on a death list, this priest from Oklahoma stayed with the people he had been serving since 1968, during which time he built a farmer’s co-op, a school, a hospital, and a radio station. He was beatified in 2017. Learn more about this inspiration for faith in the book *The Shepherd Who Didn’t Run*.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 11:1-18; John 10:11-18 (279).* “A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

### Tuesday, May 05, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Keep things in context

Catholics celebrate 50 days of Easter with a special emphasis on the Gospel of John. But with the Gospel of John comes a particular concern. At Mass, we hear—amid the evangelist’s poetic prose—some jarring references to “the Jews.” Historically, such language sadly led to a legacy of hate and harm. With anti-Semitism making headlines again, look to the short Vatican II document called *Nostra aetate*. It honors the Jewish people as our faithful forebears, tapping a truth right out of John 10: Jesus was an observant. Honor our religious ancestors by learning more about them.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 11:19-26; John 10:22-30 (280).* “Jesus walked about in the temple area.”

### Wednesday, May 06, 2020

IN CANADA: MEMORIAL OF SAINT FRANÇOIS DE LAVAL, BISHOP

READINGS: *2 Timothy 4:1-5; Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10; John 10:11-16*

IN THE USA: EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Follow the Light

“This Little Light of Mine” has been young Christians’ joyful favorite for nearly a century. It has also been an anthem for civil and human rights movements. For people of faith, we who believe that Jesus has come into the world as light, the song serves as a directive to allow God’s light to shine through the example of our lives. Reflect today on the example you have set during difficult times. Have you given into darkness and despair or served as a beacon of hope and support for those around you?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 12:24—13:5a; John 12:44-50 (281).* “I have come into the world as light, to keep anyone who believes in me from remaining in the dark.”

### Thursday, May 07, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### A masquerade to take seriously

In today’s gospel Jesus says, “Whoever receives the one I send, receives me.” It is in keeping with our tradition to see the poor, the migrant, the refugee as sent by God to stretch our hearts and open us to the Good News. Mother Teresa often referred to seeing Jesus “in the distressing disguise of the poor.” Indeed, how distressing it is to see the suffering being endured by those with the least. Take a step today to “receive” Jesus in the disguise of the poor.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 13:13-25; John 13:16-20 (282)*. "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

### Friday, May 08, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Youthful mystic

Imagine growing up with a saint in your hometown! New Jersey-native Teresa Demjanovich, honored today, was like many young people with responsibility for caring for aging parents while also getting an education and a job. She then became a religious sister but died just two years later at age 26. Known as a prayerful, holy woman, Teresa was deeply spiritual and considered a mystic. "Our heart is the compass that magnetically follows the north star of desire," Teresa wrote. "To locate my treasure I have but to unearth the lodging of my desires." As you pray this day, consider how God is leading you through your heart and desires.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 13:26-33; John 14:1-6 (283)*. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me."

### Saturday, May 09, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Light a fuse!

Peter Maurin, who founded the Catholic Worker movement with Dorothy Day, was born on this day in 1877. He longed for a world where it would be easier for people to be good to each other. While he was the visionary, Day translated his ideals of justice into practical actions: a newspaper, houses of hospitality, and farms. He found "dynamite" in the gospels, which could solve the problems of society if someone would "blow the lid off." Day lit the fuse, and their flame continues today in Catholic Worker houses.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 13:44-52; John 14:7-14 (284)*. "The one who believes in me . . . will do greater works than these."

### Sunday, May 10, 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

#### Equal actions of the spiritually mature

There's some disagreement between those who consider prayer the number-one obligation for believers and those convinced that actions speak louder than words. Monastic leader Benedict of Clairvaux wrote his *Rule* to ensure his monks understood that *ora et labora*—prayer and labor—are partner activities in reaching spiritual maturity. Some people are clearly called to devote themselves primarily to spiritual matters in full-time religious vocations. Others can better serve elbow-deep in more worldly arenas. Try to balance the mix between spiritual rejuvenation and gritty action in your life.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12 (52)*. "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table."

### Monday, May 11, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Be an advocate

Jesus promised to send his followers an advocate—the Holy Spirit—to come to our aid, to strengthen and plead our Christian cause and defend us from evil. (We can use all the help we can get in these trying times!) As part of our church's social teaching, Catholics are to be advocates for the poor. Add your voice to those urging policymakers to take action on critical issues from malnutrition to forced migration. [.org](http://www.catholic.org) is a good place to start.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 14:5-18; John 14:21-26 (285)*. "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name."

### Tuesday, May 12, 2020

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF SAINT PANCRAS, MARTYR

#### A child shall lead us

Not much is known about Saint Pancras—other than he was martyred, like many Christians, by the Roman Emperor Diocletian around the year 303. Historic churches and a famous train station in London bear his name because Augustine of Canterbury brought devotion to Pancras with him to northern Europe. A truly defining characteristic of Pancras, though, is

that he was only 14 when he was tortured and beheaded, putting him in the same “child saint” category as martyrs Maria Goretti, Agnes of Rome, and José Luis Sánchez del Río. How can your own faith benefit from a childlike trust?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 14:19-28; John 14:27-31a (286)*. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

### Wednesday, May 13, 2020

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

#### Pray as if your (eternal) life depends on it

Beginning May 13, 1917 and continuing through that fall, three children (Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta) of Fatima, Portugal reported several Marian apparitions. Much has been written about the message of Our Lady of Fatima, whose feast was added to the church calendar in 2002. The document on Fatima comes from the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In sum: The apparitions did *not* predict the future or announce the end of the world. They *did* “exhort” us to pray, because “prayer is the salvation for souls.” Good advice in any guise!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 15:1-6; John 15:1-8 (287)*. “No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me.”

### Thursday, May 14, 2020

FEAST OF SAINT MATTHIAS, APOSTLE

#### Ready and willing

Not much is known about Matthias except that he replaced Judas as one of the 12 apostles. Tradition has it that he preached in the areas around Judea and possibly farther afield and was persecuted and martyred, but details are few and unreliable. Today’s first reading tells us he stepped in when needed and agreed to join the apostles following Jesus’ death and Resurrection. Like most Christians, he lived a life of quiet faithfulness without much glory. Be ready to step in to serve others. Never mind the glory.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15:9-17 (564)*. “Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles.”

### Friday, May 15, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### That they might be one

The call to unity is woven throughout our Catholic faith. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes that we share with our ancestors in faith the conviction “that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others.” Recent events bring this truth home in forceful ways. Today let’s commemorate International Day of Families and Endangered Species Day, both of which are ways to help nurture our essential connectedness with each other and the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 15:22-31; John 15:12-17 (289)*. “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.”

### Saturday, May 16, 2020

EASTER WEEKDAY

#### Being Christian has a cost

Religious persecution was commonplace in the story of the Early Church. Two thousand years later, persecution of Christians continues. In a 2019 trip to the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome, Pope Francis remarked, “Still today Christians are persecuted—even more than in the first centuries.” Play your part in stopping all religious persecution by expressing zero tolerance for it in your own backyard.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 16:1-10; John 15:18-21 (290)*. “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

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**“May your life preach more loudly than your lips.”**

— William Ellery Channing (19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian preacher)

**“How can I be useful, of what service can I be? There is something inside me, what can it be?”**

— Vincent van Gogh