

Theme for this Easter Reflection: Readiness to encounter Jesus



Easter faith involves readiness to encounter Jesus as ‘*a living personal presence*’. It is not primarily about respecting his heroic witness, or even about contemplating and applying his remarkable teaching. Believers learn to experience his presence among them in every age as they discern their purpose and mission in life. We, as worshippers, say “Amen” to the reality of that presence when we gather for the Eucharist on Easter Sunday and every Sunday — remembering and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.

Our remembrance of Holy Week and our Easter celebrations will be different this year as we are not able to gather in one physical space to pray together. In whatever way you can in the coming days, take some time to reflect on the following:

- ✚ **Holy Thursday focus: we encounter Jesus around the table with his friends and the one who would betray him**, washing their feet, celebrating the Last Supper, the Eucharist, and inviting his friends to do the same in memory of him. *Bring to mind and give thanks for family and friends with whom you would normally be sharing a meal in these days.*

- ✚ **Good Friday focus: we encounter Jesus as he is lifted up on the cross.** *How might we lift up the spirits of those who are suffering greatly at this time?*

- ✚ **Easter Saturday focus: we encounter Jesus in this in-between time, this time of waiting.** *Let’s not be so focused on the future or the past that we miss the gifts offered in the in-between moments. Be attentive to what you see and how you feel at this moment.*

- ✚ **Easter Sunday focus: we encounter Jesus as the Risen one**, the one who has overcome death, who has fulfilled his promise and who brings a message of hope and peace. *Create a space somewhere at home during this Easter time and place at its centre something which symbolizes new life or promises kept or hope and peace.*

In the Gospel of Mark (Ch. 16 vs 15), the risen Jesus has the following message for his disciples when he appeared to them **“Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.”** The energy and wisdom of God’s spirit which we celebrate at Pentecost, which is with us each day, is moving among us in ways which may not even be obvious at present.

Co-operation in times of crisis (Covid-19)

Pentecost

The Christian holy day of Pentecost, which is celebrated fifty days after Easter Sunday, commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles.

It also marks a birthday -- the birth of the Catholic Church and the beginning of its mission to the world.

We are many members, but one Body, animated by one Spirit. Where Pentecost happens, community flourishes, because many gifts, coordinated and reconciled, make possible things that no one person could imagine or do alone. The feast of Pentecost is really a celebration of the triumph of community over the divisions created by selfishness, suspicion and sin.

Nature reveals both competition and cooperation. We often speak of Darwin's idea of the "survival of the fittest" as the law of nature, perhaps because this excuses so much human behaviour. Yet, along with evidence of competition for territory and food, there also exist amazing synergies and symbioses in nature that sustain the seamless tapestry of life in our world. The peccary, a pig-like animal that forages on the floor of the Amazon forests, survives because monkeys in the canopy above strip the outer cover of tree nuts for their food, then drop them to the peccary, the only animals with jaws strong enough to crack open the nuts for their food. The monkeys also warn the peccary of the presence of jaguars, their only predator. It is as though animals are trying to teach humans how to survive through cooperation.

With each advance in comfort and convenience, we lose touch with community and the collaborative spirit that often characterizes the lower end of the social spectrum more than the upper. Happiness eludes us when we succeed in securing the self-sufficiency the poor cannot afford.

We need one another to be whole and happy with ourselves. When barriers are removed, gifts and needs find each other. The fingers of the hands, good for so much more than single-finger pointing or poking, work together naturally to work and play and make community. Grace recovers a law of nature and a way of life that seems to be what was originally intended.

The church is supposed to model human cooperation, the full, coordinated use of each member's gifts for the good of all. A less hierarchical church, more openness and transparency, an empowered laity, are not concessions from authority, but the model Jesus left us and the way the Spirit works through us.

Focus for reflection:

 *In what ways can you see God’s spirit at work in what is unfolding around us?*

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