



Daily Bread

*Homiletic starters
and scriptural
reflection points for
each day of the month*

CELEBRATION:
A Comprehensive
Worship Resource
CelebrationPublications.org

Find the daily readings at
www.usccb.org/bible/readings

The Lectionary provides a kind of spiritual script for the universal church that keeps us, literally, all on the same page as we journey through the liturgical seasons. These short reflections, written by five authors, are intended to help daily preachers and others who pray from the assigned Scriptures each day to orient themselves to the living word addressed to the church in the world.

April 2017

Fourth Week of Lent (continued)

Sat., April 1 | Jer 11:18-20; Jn 7:40-53

The Christ will not come from Galilee, will he? April Fools! What a great day to consider the surprises of our God. We look for a king and find a child. We look for a savior and find the crucified one. We look for rescue and find strength. We look for answers and find faith. We think we know what we're looking for and exactly where to find it. April Fools! A devastating event becomes the moment our life was saved. Love fails and we discover the love of our life. We lose our job only to find the work we were meant to do. A harsh ending brings a new beginning. Almost always. But only when we stop looking back, take a deep breath, and say, "What's next?" Shall we agree to be fools for Christ? *Brother Jesus, we can only know little, but with grace, our faith can be big. Bless us with that grace, we pray.* PBS

Fifth Week of Lent

Mon., April 3 | Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62; Jn 8:1-11

Thus innocent blood was spared that day. The story of Susanna and the elders is not one that most Protestant Christians have ever heard. Thank God for Daniel, who was wise enough to see through the elders' accusation that Susanna had committed adultery because she wouldn't allow them to rape her. Years later, when the Pharisees were ready to stone a woman caught in adultery, Jesus turns the tables on them with a simple statement, "Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone." In these two stories, the innocent are spared and the guilty are judged, but we know that does not always happen — consider what will happen to Jesus in a few days. *For the innocent who are not spared, we pray.* JL

Tues., April 4 | Nm 21:4-9; Jn 8:21-30

But with their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses. The Hebrew people had been dramatically delivered from slavery in Egypt. They had managed to outrun Pharaoh's chariots, passed miraculously through the Red Sea, and finally, they were free! Much to their chagrin, they realized almost immediately that their new freedom led them to the wilderness, not directly to the promised land. So what did they do? They began to gripe and grumble and complain. "Moses, why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water?" They had not only forgotten their lives as slaves in Egypt; they had forgotten to trust their God. *When we wander in the wilderness, teach us to trust you, O God.* JL

Wed., April 5 | Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Jn 8:31-42

They disobeyed the royal command and yielded their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. The book of Daniel comes to us from the time when the people of Israel were living in exile in Babylon. Three young Jews — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — refuse King Nebuchadnezzar's orders to worship a golden statue. They are thrown into a fiery furnace "heated seven times more than usual." They trust that God who had brought the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt would be able to deliver them from this as well. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's faith in the God of Israel would have provided much-needed inspiration and strength for Jews living as strangers in a strange land. *For courage and loyalty, we pray.* JL

Thurs., April 6 | Gn 17:3-9; Jn 8:51-59

Your name shall be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a host of nations. When Abram was 75, God instructed him to pack up the family and move to the land of Canaan. God promised he would make of Abram "a great nation" and in him, all families of earth would be blessed. But Abram and his wife Sarai, at that point, didn't have any children, and God's promise obviously hinged on Sarai having a child. Years passed; God came again when Abram was 99 and Sarai was 90. Again, a child was promised, and as a sign of this promise, this covenant, God gave each a new



name: “Abraham” means “ancestor of multitudes;” Sarai became Sarah, which means “princess,” perhaps indicating her status as the matriarch of Israel. In time, their son Isaac was born — and eventually, Isaac’s grandsons became the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. *Your covenant, O God, enables us to live in faith and hope.* JL

Fri., April 7 | Jer 20:10-13; Jn 10:31-42

Denounce! Let us denounce him! Jeremiah was a young man when he felt called by God to speak out against hypocrisy and injustice in the Hebrew community. Like many prophets before and after him, Jeremiah’s words were not always appreciated. He was imprisoned and beaten on more than one occasion. In today’s reading, however, Jeremiah is not speaking words of prophecy; he is, in effect, complaining to God about being ridiculed, threatened and insulted. But even though Jeremiah is pretty fed up with the prophet business, he remains confident that God is with him. Those who rebuke and persecute him will be put to shame. They will not triumph. *Holy One, reassure us of your presence when we are disillusioned.* JL

Sat., April 8 | Ez 37:21-28; Jn 11:45-56

Many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what Jesus had done began to believe in him. Our Lenten journey is very much a journey toward death. We know that Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem, and we know what awaits him there — perhaps we are given this story as a preview of Jesus’ death. Throughout the story of Lazarus, we hear the story of Jesus: the tomb is not far from Jerusalem, the tomb is a cave with a large stone covering the opening, the stone is rolled away, and Lazarus comes out after several days in the grave. And when religious leaders heard about what Jesus had done, they escalated their efforts to “take care” of Jesus. *Eternal God, as we journey toward death, keep us rooted in your steadfast love.* JL

Holy Week

Mon., April 10 | Is 42:1-7; Jn 12:1-11

Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor? Judas is forever condemned as the one who betrayed Jesus in a big way; something we would never do! His selfish nature, however, may not be so far from our own. Judas easily criticized Mary’s generosity toward Jesus, even though he also accepted her generous hospitality and food. His “ratting on” Jesus for silver is also a betrayal of those whom he called “brother” for three years. My actions may not have caused someone to be murdered, but I *have* chosen my personal comforts over the dignity of others. I *have* passed on rumors that could damage reputations. I *have* griped about the prosperity of others while failing to acknowledge how God has blessed my own life. *Merciful Lord, deliver me from being judgmental and hypocritical.* MJ

Tues., April 11 | Is 49:1-6; Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times. This week is the highlight of our faith, but it is also a week that sends us on an emotional roller coaster. From the betrayal of a friend, to the collapse of Peter’s faith, to the bru-

tal pain of injustice, we can distance ourselves emotionally by viewing it as something that happened in the past and “ended well.” Yet, our world is still filled with greed, bullies and the violence of injustice. This week, of all weeks, calls us to embrace and renew our baptismal promise to become the body of Christ; to allow the light and love of the risen Christ to work through us for a world desperate for hope. *Be my rock of refuge, O Lord, for you are my hope.* MJ

Wed., April 12 | Is 50:4-9a; Mt 26:14-25

See, the Lord God is my help; who will prove me wrong? The excitement is building for the elect, candidates and our formation team. We’ve been preparing a long time for this week of initiation. Like a mother hen, I urge them to do what they can to experience this week to its fullest, because I know from experience, their faith will not *always* feel as strong or confident as it does right now. They will need to tap into this week in the future, when they encounter their own loss, doubt and suffering. I pray that no matter what trials they may face, they will know, deep within themselves, that God is always near, offering resurrection and light within every darkness. *Be glad, you who seek God. Let your hearts revive.* MJ

Holy Thursday, April 13 | Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15

Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper (See Lectionary for Chism Mass readings)

As I have done for you, you should also do. For many years, our parish celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper has included a ritual in which people are invited to have their feet washed by our priest or volunteers, and are then invited to wash the feet of others. Those who have never experienced it are often nervous about participating. Like Peter, they hesitate perhaps out of a sense of their perceived unworthiness or of being vulnerable or simply because they’re embarrassed about exposing ugly feet. Yet, this profound ritual never fails to teach that being an effective servant of Christ requires grace and humility within both the giver and receiver of care. *Lord, may we care for others with the mercy you have shown to us.* MJ

Good Friday of the Lord’s Passion, April 14 | Is 52:13-53:12; Heb 4:14-16, 5:7-9; Jn 18:1-19:42

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness. Our Good Friday liturgies are usually standing room only. It takes a bit of time to allow all those who come forward at their own pace to kiss, touch or hug our old barn board cross. For several, this is the only Triduum liturgy they attend, because this liturgy, like no other, seems to speak to those who struggle with pain, loss or suffering of any kind. They connect to the Christ who also suffered, yet endured it out of love for us. Many who venerate the cross wait for the resurrection of hope. *Let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.* MJ

Holy Saturday, April 15 | Vigil Readings (see Lectionary for readings)

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father so we too might walk in the newness of life. We have prepared for



this wondrous night! In darkness, we recall the story of our salvation; the story of how God created us, guided us and leads us to the salvation for which all humanity yearns. We listen, we sing out and we renew our identity as children of the risen Christ. The great Exsultet proclaims our confidence in this profound mystery: “The sanctifying power of this night dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty ... O truly blessed night, when things of heaven are wed to those of earth.” *Let us rejoice and be glad! Alleluia!* MD

Octave of Easter

Mon., April 17 | Acts 2:14, 22-33; Mt 28:8-15

Do not be afraid! Every year, Teatro la Fragua in El Progreso, Honduras, performs “El Asesinato de Jesús,” ending with the resurrection in a blaze of light and colorful costumes. It’s a chaotic delight as the dozen performers narrate Christ’s rising, interrupting each other, contradicting each other, all quoting exact words of the Gospels. Go to Galilee. Stay in Jerusalem. One Mary, two Marys, three Marys. Ah, glory! The Resurrection is not just the biggest event since Creation, it’s the biggest event *including* the creation of the universe! If it’s not to be considered “historical,” then you’ll just have to re-define “history.” The guards at the tomb witnessed the event but were well paid to call it a conspiracy theory. Nowadays, you get a book deal. *O Lord, show me the path of life, the fullness of joys in your presence!* MD

Tues., April 18 | Acts 2:36-41; Jn 20:11-18

Mary! Mary Magdalene is the first chosen witness to the Resurrection, a dramatic moment, in the history of the world, actually. Mary turned around twice, first to plead with “the gardener” to show her where Jesus is, and again when Jesus called her name. I’d be spinning, too, if I saw the risen Lord! Peter says we *will* see him, or at least hear him, by 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.” Wonderfully, St. Ignatius’ contemplation on Jesus’ resurrection in the fourth week of the Spiritual Exercises begs the grace “to rejoice and be glad intensely” for Jesus’ own personal joy! *May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you!* MD

Wed., April 19 | Acts 3:1-10; Lk 24:13-35

Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us? Jesus just rose from the dead and he’s in a playful mood. He joins a couple, leaving Jerusalem for Emmaus. They are Cleopas and, we may assume, his wife, who stood at the foot of the cross (John 19:25). Their faith is in crisis. Jesus plays along till he can’t take it anymore: “Oh, how foolish you are!” Then he gives them a crash course in biblical exegesis, to prove that “it was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory.” He tops it off with the Eucharist. *Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord!* MD

Thurs., April 20 | Acts 3:11-26; Lk 24:35-48

Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have. When a supposedly dead man eats “a piece of baked fish” right in front of you, his resurrection is not a pious opinion or mass hysteria! The image is so vivid, it’s almost a graphic novel. It certainly astonished the apostles, who then had to swallow something even bigger, namely, as Jesus says, that “everything” in Moses, the prophets, and the psalms is “about me.” Then there’s John’s stunning phrase, a brief sentence that sums it all up: “Jesus exegeted God” (John 1:18). The apostles will preach this meme the rest of their lives throughout the rest of the world: “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead.” *O Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth!* MD

Fri., April 21 | Acts 4:1-12; Jn 21:1-14

It is the Lord! There are two “charcoal fires” in John’s Gospel, the first at the scene of Peter’s cold-hearted denials that he even knows who Jesus is, and this one, when Jesus makes breakfast for Peter and the apostles on the beach of the Sea of Tiberias. From the shore, Jesus has already sweetly called the apostles “Children!” thus restoring their innocence after they had abandoned him in his passion. When the beloved disciple recognizes Jesus, he provides us with a motive, too, for seeing the infant church beginning to form. The big catch of fish makes a fitting end to Easter week; soon we’ll all be in their nets, God willing. My cry will be: “It is the church!” *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice!* MD

Sat., April 22 | Acts 4:13-21; Mk 16:9-15

Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. The last piece of Mark’s Gospel, a random stew of resurrection bits, is nevertheless a jewel, a priceless reminder of how precarious our salvation is. Mark’s Gospel is fast and furious; everything happens “immediately,” leaving no room for bulging discourses like Matthew or theological debates like John, or redistribution-of-wealth programs like Luke. Peter, Mark’s main source, as tradition holds, is probably already dead, and the net is closing in on Mark, it seems. Rushing to finish, he may have been grabbed right from his desk to join the martyrs he was trying to encourage. Another, trembling hand patched up the gap, a fifth evangelist, let’s call him St. Anonymous. *Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good!* MD

Second Week of Easter

Mon., April 24 | Acts 4:23-31; Jn 3:1-8

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. Jesus assured the disciples that the Spirit would come upon them and give them power. After hiding behind closed doors, when these frightened followers received the transforming gift of the Holy Spirit, they courageously went out, proclaiming Christ, converting, baptizing and building the church. Their example and the call of our baptism strengthen us to continue the mission Jesus entrusted to them. The Holy Spirit is the center and source of the church, giving it life, motivating,



energizing and working within each of us. *May the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit embolden us as we share the good news.* PR

Tues., April 25 | 1 Pt 5:5b-14; Mk 16:15-20

Mark, evangelist

Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. The church's missionary mandate is primarily accomplished through evangelization. Certainly in our words, but especially by the witness of our lives, we proclaim the truth of Christ to the world. Though the call is global, we need not go far to make a difference. We all have family and friends who for varying reasons are no longer active in the faith. Some may loosely associate themselves with the church, but their daily living sadly lacks Christ at its center. We're called to listen, welcome and reconcile. We are to be aware, supporting and strengthening those slipping away. We must lovingly, compassionately make Christ present to everyone we encounter. *May our words and actions lead others to you, Lord.* PR

Wed., April 26 | Acts 5:17-26; Jn 3:16-21

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. We're all sinners, broken and in need of love, compassion and forgiveness. Wrong-doing is destructive enough without further heaping human judgment on those already weak and lost. Condemnation is not Jesus' goal; salvation is. Certainly embracing his truth necessitates radical change, but that is conversion, which requires light and truth, not criticism and censure. Jesus was sent as the ultimate act of love, despite our failings, stubbornness and tendency toward darkness. He desires our redemption; we must seek the same for ourselves and others. *Let us reflect the light of Christ as a sure sign of his love and mercy.* PR

Thurs., April 27 | Acts 5:27-33; Jn 3:31-36

He does not ration his gift of the Spirit. When God sent his Son, he also sent his Spirit. It's an inseparable mission of salvation. Christ poured his Holy Spirit onto the disciples, prompting them to go out, preach and build his church. Christ still sends the Spirit, filling the church and all her members. The Holy Spirit resides at the heart of everything the church is and does, revealing Christ's presence and saving work in the liturgy. The Spirit guides us to holiness through the sacraments, enabling us to develop various virtues through the gifts we receive. Through the fruits of the Holy Spirit, we look beyond ourselves and seek the well-being of others. God gives without limits or conditions; this is evident in the immense gift of the Holy Spirit continually lavished upon us. *Help us to be as generous as you are, Lord.* PR

Fri., April 28 | Acts 5:34-42; Jn 6:1-15

Where can we buy enough food for them to eat? The disciples want to dismiss the multitude gathered around Jesus. They complain about the cost to feed the crowd and reject the only solution before them as hopeless. Jesus, however, accepts the little they have and graciously works with it. He thanks his heavenly Father and blesses the offerings, which, though seemingly meager, are more than enough for all. We cannot

doubt the Lord's generosity and ability to provide beyond our needs. We have to trust he always has a plan. God will never send us away or dismiss our longing. We are showered by such abundance that we should never despair the call to provide for others. God multiples our gifts and efforts for the benefit of all who come to us in need. *Give me the confidence, Lord, to share your gifts generously.* PR

Sat., April 29 | Acts 6:1-7; Jn 6:16-21

Catherine of Siena, religious and doctor of the church

It is I. Do not be afraid. A strong wind stirred the sea, and an unsettling image appeared before the disciples. Seeing their panic, Jesus came nearer to the boat and gently quieted their fears. With these same simple words, Christ comforts us, too. He calms the storms of life and casts out our fears. When we place our faith in Jesus, the menacing wind may still blow, but instead of questioning who or what approaches, we'll know that Jesus guides us to gentler shores. The world is often scary and uncertain, but the assurance that Jesus walks toward us makes facing the dangers bearable. It's not life's uncertainties but insufficiency of faith that threatens to upset the boat in which we travel through life. Have faith. Jesus is near. *Lord, help us weather the difficult moments in life.* PR

Celebrate the Easter season with us!

During the Easter season,
Celebration will offer daily reflections.

Access seasonal selections of Scripture resources and commentaries and inspiring art and graphics along with Daily Bread.

Sign up to receive Daily Bread emails in your Inbox:
CelebrationPublications.org/DailyBread

Daily Bread Authors

Paige Byrne Shortal, longtime contributor to *Celebration*, serves as coordinator and editor for the Daily Bread writers.

Miguel Dulick lives in a mountain village in Honduras, Central America. Originally from St. Louis, he holds degrees from St. Louis University and Weston School of Theology, Boston.

Mary Joshi lives in Moncton, NB, Canada. Raised Catholic, married to a Hindu and mother of two grown children, Mary coordinates the RCIA for her parish unit. She holds degrees in English and education.

Jeanne Lischer grew up in St. Louis and Ghana, West Africa, in a missionary family. An ordained United Church of Christ minister, she serves two churches in Missouri.

Patricia Russell graduated from Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Mich., with degrees in English and secondary education.