

Sunday, April 1, 2018
Daily Bread - April 1, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning. - John 20:1

Monday, April 2, 2018
Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16; Mt 28:8-15

Jeanne Lischer

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce the news to his disciples.

Every life has defining moments. Some are joy-filled and some are terrifying and painful and heartbreaking. We may not recognize their significance at the time, but later, we realize how completely a particular event changed our lives. As Jesus' disciples of the 21st century, we have to remember that none of us saw the resurrection. All we have are the reports of what happened afterward: The disciples experienced his presence with them even after his death. This experience completely transformed them from a group of scared disciples into bold witnesses who could not stop talking about what had happened, even in the face of persecution, arrest and martyrdom.

Fill us, holy One, with resurrection hope, courage and faith.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018
Acts 2:36-41; Ps 33; Jn 20:11-18

Jeanne Lischer

But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'

By all accounts, the resurrection of Jesus was a transformative experience for all of Jesus' disciples, but perhaps for no one more than Mary Magdalene. Luke tells us that Jesus had healed her of "evil spirits," and after that, Mary Magdalene became one of Jesus' most devoted disciples. Even when the other disciples denied and betrayed him, even when they had fled, Mary Magdalene stayed with Jesus even as he hung on the cross. She was one of the first to see

the risen Christ, who told her to go and tell, go and proclaim, go and preach.
Transformed by your grace, may we be a voice for hope, love and new life.

Wednesday, April 4, 2018
Acts 3:1-10; Ps 105; Lk 24:13-35

Jeanne Lischer

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus.

To get away from the despair and defeat and a situation that was unbearable, Cleopas and his friend start walking to Emmaus. Where is Emmaus? Seven miles from Jerusalem, but in what direction? Perhaps the “road to Emmaus” is a metaphor for the road we walk when the future seems bleak and hopeless. It is the road in front of the doctor’s office where one has just found out about a life-threatening illness. It is the path to a lonely room where a wife sits with the husband who no longer knows her name. The road to Emmaus is everywhere. And Jesus joins us on the road.

Thank you for walking with us, Lord Jesus.

Thursday, April 5, 2018
Acts 3:11-26; Ps 8; Lk 24:35-48

Jeanne Lischer

While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?”

For most of us, Easter is a single day of celebration, festive music, lilies and family gatherings. But Easter is more than one day; it is a season which lasts 50 days until Pentecost. And so we continue to read accounts of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances. The two disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus have returned to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples about the stranger who joined them on the road and how they finally recognized him as Jesus when he broke the bread with them. Suddenly, Jesus is in their midst; the disciples are startled and think they are seeing a ghost. While they are still coming to grips with Jesus’ presence, he asks them for something to eat — his not-so-subtle way of letting them know he is not a ghost.
Lord Jesus, open our eyes to recognize you in our midst.

Friday, April 6, 2018
Acts 4:1-12; Ps 118; Jn 21:1-14

Jeanne Lischer

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment ... and jumped into the sea.

Over the years, I have come to appreciate the many stories that have been recorded about Peter — impetuous, bold, fearful Peter. He’s the first to declare that Jesus is the Messiah, but he also reacts in horror when he realizes that the Messiah will suffer and be killed. He is the one who wants to build shrines for Jesus, Elijah and Moses after the Transfiguration; he is also the one who denies knowing Jesus when push comes to shove. He tries to walk on water and jumps into the sea when he realizes that the stranger on the beach is the risen Lord. Peter, like all of us, is a mix of faith and doubt, trust and ambivalence, courage and fear. Even after all his failures, the risen Christ, with great love and faith, tells Peter: “Feed my sheep.”

Thank you, gracious God, for loving us as we are and for challenging us to greater faithfulness.

Saturday, April 7, 2018
Acts 4:13-21; Ps 118; Mk 16:9-15

Jeanne Lischer

Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.

Those who encountered the risen Christ — Mary Magdalene, the two unnamed disciples — were instructed to “go and tell.” But when they did, no one believed them; it was, in many ways, easier to grieve than to believe that Jesus was alive. In this final scene from Mark’s Gospel, Jesus appears to the disciples and rebukes them for not believing those who had seen him after the resurrection. Does the risen Christ still appear in our time? Absolutely. And maybe, just maybe, we will have the eyes to see and the faith to go and tell.

Forgive us, living Lord, when we do not see, or seeing, do not tell.

Sunday, April 8, 2018
Daily Bread - April 8, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"Do not be unbelieving, but believe." - John 20:27

Monday, April 9, 2018
Is 7:10-14, 8:10; Ps 40, Heb 10:4-10; Lk 1:26-38
Annunciation of the Lord
Mary Joshi

[She] shall name him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us!”

I sometimes try to imagine Scripture stories as they might unfold in our modern world. What conclusions might I jump to if I saw a young, pregnant teenaged girl, accompanied by an older gentleman as they check into a dingy, roadside motel on the outskirts of town? What rumors might I generate upon seeing a group of local workers followed by three well-dressed, foreign-looking gentlemen come to see them? What situations have I actually misjudged and what erroneous conclusions have I made about people’s character based on my perception of their poverty, living conditions or their home of origin? Am I so sure I would welcome Mary and Joseph into my neighborhood or allow them to enter my home?

O Mary, you possessed such courage and trust! Help me to overcome my cynical distrust of humanity.

Tuesday, April 10, 2018
Acts 4:32-37; Ps 93; Jn 3:7b-15

Mary Joshi

If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

Nicodemus is trying so hard to understand what Jesus is teaching him, but it seems to contradict so much of what he holds to be true. In time, however, Nicodemus did understand and changed from being a secret follower in the night, to one that risked his reputation to help bury Jesus with dignity. I have also had hardened beliefs unexpectedly transformed by an encounter with people and circumstances in which I was certain God could not exist or would not condone, yet the spirit of Christ shone through them. Like Nicodemus the Pharisee, an encounter with Jesus can refigure closed minds and open the most hardened of hearts.

Risen Christ, you are filled with mystery and wonder. Lead me in the ways of your truth.

Wednesday, April 11, 2018
Acts 5:17-26; Ps 34; Jn 3:16-21
St. Stanislaus, bishop and martyr
Mary Joshi

Light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light.

In our attempts to get healthier, my husband is more disciplined than I am about food and exercise. In my guilt at being less disciplined, I sometimes hide unhealthy habits or fabricate excuses for my failed efforts. My husband's love for me would be unchanged if he knew the full truth, but with each hidden guilt, my opinion of myself deteriorates and drags me farther from my goal to be healthier. Perhaps this is a reason why Jesus invites us to bring our weaknesses into the light, not to condemn us, but so that his unconditional, healing love can give us the courage and strength to become our truest and best self.

Shed your light on our imperfections, O saving Lord, and embrace us in your healing love.

Thursday, April 12, 2018
Acts 5:27-33; Ps 34; Jn 3:31-36

Mary Joshi

We must obey God rather than any human authority.

Miraculously freed from jail and led by the Spirit, Peter and the apostles returned to the Temple and continued to teach about Jesus, only to be arrested once again by the court officials. There are many men and women in our world who mirror the courage and persistence of these early disciples, who risk their lives to speak out against the unjust and corrupt actions of those in authority. We may not all have the courage to act on a grand scale, but each of us is called to speak out and work to restore the dignity of all who are treated unjustly. Jesus tells us that for those who speak the words of heaven, God "does not ration his gift of the Spirit."

When the poor cry out, O Lord, make our hearts brave, our will determined and our voices strong.

Friday, April 13, 2018
Acts 5:34-42; Ps 27; Jn 6:1-15

Mary Joshi

What good are these [five barley loaves and two fish] for so many?

When the Canadian government stopped the production of the penny, many charities collected them during the grace period before its discontinuation as a small fundraiser. Many people happily lightened their pockets of the seemingly worthless weight. One local school was able to extend their breakfast program for several months on what they collected. It reminds me of Eucharist. We gather together and offer our individual talents, but when these offerings are blessed and infused by the risen Christ, they become so much more than we could ever offer the world on our own. Unlike the penny, Jesus' gift will never be discontinued; rather, it continues to multiply among us as long as we are willing to offer ourselves and accept his grace and blessing.

O Bread of Life, gather and bless our fragmented talents that none of them may be wasted.

Saturday, April 14, 2018

Acts 6:1-7; Ps 33; Jn 6:16-21

Mary Joshi

We shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

A parishioner recently blamed dwindling church attendance on "modern liberal attitudes." She spoke nostalgically of the church of her youth when it seemed there were clear-cut rules of right and wrong that everybody knew to live by. Our diocese is dealing with the threat of bankruptcy and church closures to settle the lawsuits of victims abused at the hands of clergy from years ago. I would not wish to return to past church structures and attitudes that allowed such abuse to go unchecked. As today's reading from Acts demonstrates, our church has always struggled between our mandate to spread the message of Christ's salvation and the human desire for power and advantage. Unless Christ is at the heart of everything we do, our faith community will always fight this battle.

Through the storms of pain, anger and confusion, saving Lord, make your presence and your will known to us.

Sunday, April 15, 2018

Daily Bread - April 15, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"You are witnesses of these things." - Luke 24:48

Monday, April 16, 2018
Acts 6:8-15; Ps 119; Jn 6:22-29

Miguel Dulick

All those who sat in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Hey, where was Stephen when Jesus was picking apostles? Was he overqualified? Young, charismatic, “filled with grace and power,” a miracle-worker, he accepts the humble service of deacon and immediately elevates it to a status just short of the Messiah. Not surprisingly, he’s got a target on his back after challenging various hostile groups, who resort to “fake news” to convict Stephen of blasphemy. I wish I were half as brave! Meanwhile, Jesus is taking on the “establishment” in the Bread of Life discourse. Folks only follow him, he says, “because you ate the loaves and were filled.” Are they in for a surprise!

The way of truth I have chosen; I have set your ordinances before me, O God!

Tuesday, April 17, 2018
Acts 7:51—8:1a; Ps 31; Jn 6:30-35

Miguel Dulick

You stiff-necked people!

Stephen gives a terrific speech, taking up a whole chapter in Acts, reviewing God’s entire history with Israel, the kerygma in spades. But the reading today cuts it down to just the last four sentences. Cutting Stephen down is the Sanhedrin’s job! But seriously, it’s a must-read; as an historian, Luke must have loved transcribing it. On the other hand, we do have intact Stephen’s final words, when his identity is fully folded into the life of Jesus: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Meanwhile, Jesus also issues a corrective in the historical record. “It was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.” This is what Eastertime looks like!

Into your hands I commend my spirit, O Lord, O faithful God!

Wednesday, April 18, 2018
Acts 8:1b-8; Ps 66; Jn 6:35-40

Miguel Dulick

There broke out a severe persecution of the Church in Jerusalem.

Stephen’s martyrdom is blood in the water for the ravenous enemies of the church, including Saul, “entering house after house and dragging out men and women.” But it does bring salvation to Samaria, off limits since Jesus’ own day, now evangelized by Stephen’s fellow deacon Philip: “With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip.” Meanwhile, Jesus reminds us that the will of his Father is clear: “I should not lose anything of what my Father gave me.” The Easter season has to be a time of hope and joy, no matter what the challenges. A week of Sundays, we’re halfway through. Can we just keep climbing?

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of God’s name!

Thursday, April 19, 2018
Acts 8:26-40; Ps 66; Jn 6:44-51

Miguel Dulick

Beginning with this Scripture passage, Philip proclaimed Jesus to him.

The Ethiopian eunuch, originally curious about Isaiah, is baptized into his new-found faith. Meanwhile, Jesus would give a decisive twist to history: "I am the bread of life." The manna of Moses has been superseded. But he's not done: "And the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world." That capital "F," not in the original Greek, of course or in other translations, leaves no doubt that in the New American Bible, Jesus means the Eucharist, "body and blood, soul and divinity," in the dogma of the Council of Trent. Easter! No turning back!
Blessed be God who refused me not my prayer or his kindness

Friday, April 20, 2018

Acts 9:1-20; Ps 117; Jn 6:52-59

Miguel Dulick

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

For Saul, destroying the church was ideological; for Jesus, it was personal. Saul had to be blinded before he could see. When I first came to Honduras, Padre Patricio (Fr. Jarrell Dudley Wade from Oklahoma) took me throughout his parish, mostly on muleback. He would get so discouraged at the infighting, even among the poor. "Everybody wants the little church, no one wants the big church." Saul, soon to be Paul, got introduced to the big church in very dramatic fashion. "The Body of Christ," he called it, and there was room for everyone. Meanwhile, Jesus had made the same point: "My Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink." Christ's body and the blood shall hold the church in unity.

Steadfast is your kindness toward us, and your fidelity, O Lord, endures forever.

Saturday, April 21, 2018

Acts 9:31-42; Ps 116; Jn 6:60-69

Miguel Dulick

Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

The Gospel of John may seem somewhat ill-proportioned: a handful of miracles or "signs," five chapters for the Last Supper, and this chapter on eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood, the longest chapter in the Christian Scriptures (except for the first chapter of Luke). So, I guess Jesus means it; and the crowd knows he means it, because they leave him: "This saying is hard (literally, 'stale'); who can accept it?" But it seems we must accept it, if we want Easter!

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

Sunday, April 22, 2018

Daily Bread - April 22, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me" - John 10:14

Monday, April 23, 2018

Acts 11:1-18; Ps 42; Jn 10:1-10

Patricia Russell

I am the gate for the sheep.

References to sheep and shepherds are abundant in Scripture, stirring gentle images of a watchful caretaker protecting lost and vulnerable creatures. Jesus, however, first references himself not as shepherd but as the gate. In its historical context, this is an unsettling image of a one-way journey to impending slaughter. Lambs for Passover and sheep about to be sacrificed within the temple courts — to atone for the sins of humanity — entered the city of Jerusalem through the Sheep Gate located north of the Temple Mount. They did not exit. Jesus, however, presents himself as the way out. In order for the sheep to be saved and to find pasture, they must pass through a different gate — him. His providing an alternate gate serves not as a barrier, but as a passageway. Only after guiding his sheep to safety does he take for himself the designation of shepherd.

Watchful Shepherd, forgive me when I stray from your protective embrace.

Tuesday, April 24, 2018

Acts 11:19-26; Ps 87; Jn 10:22-30

Patricia Russell

But you do not believe, because you are not among my sheep.

The people ask Jesus to speak plainly, but he can't be any clearer. If you know the Father, Jesus argues, then you should know him. Those who listen to Jesus hear the Father as well. His works testify to the Father as he comes from God. The sheep who know the Father's voice will follow Jesus because he and the Father speak in exactly the same way. There's an undeniable familiarity. Knowing the Father and listening to him automatically compel the faithful to hear and follow Jesus. It stands to reason, then, that those who do not hear the Father's voice in Jesus are unaccustomed to sound of God's call. Not accepting Jesus means those who aren't able to hear in Jesus' voice the Father's call never really knew the Father or, more likely, have stopped listening.

Open my ears and my heart, gentle Shepherd, to hear and follow the Father's call.

Wednesday, April 25, 2018
1 Pt 5:5b-14; Ps 89; Mk 16:15-20
St. Mark, evangelist
Patricia Russell

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."

The church is missionary by nature. The Second Vatican Council called the church's missionary mandate its "essential task." In 1919, Pope Benedict XV sought a missionary approach free from colonial, nationalistic and expansionistic aims, proclaiming, "The Church of God is universal; she is not alien to any people." On World Mission Sunday, Oct. 22, 2017, Pope Francis sent a Letter for the Centenary of the promulgation of the Apostolic Letter "Maximum illud" calling for an Extraordinary Missionary Month in October 2019 to increase awareness of the "missio ad gentes"—the call to go out to the nations — "with prophetic spirit and evangelical boldness, to God's saving will through the Church's universal mission." As St. John Paul II stated, "The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion."

Send forth your church, O Lord, with a renewed missionary spirit.

Thursday, April 26, 2018
Acts 13:13-25; Ps 89; Jn 13:16-20

Patricia Russell

These are now his witnesses before the people.

Seemingly unbelievable claims are met with a demand for proof. The apostles serve as the living message, bearing witness to the resurrection in the very place Jesus was crucified. As his closest companions throughout his public ministry, they traveled with him. They knew him intimately. Now their presence and testimony provide validity to Jesus' triumph over death and continuity to his teachings. There's an assurance of fidelity to Jesus' message because they were there. It was a lived, personal encounter. They came face to face with the resurrected Christ whom they knew well. There's no mistaking his identity. It's from them that we receive and pass on proof. Their experience of seeing, talking and embracing the Savior confirms that the Lord Jesus, indeed, rose from the dead.

Risen Savior, give me the courage to profess the faith so that others may see you in my witness and know that I am yours.

Friday, April 27, 2018
Acts 13:26-33; Ps 2; Jn 14:1-6

Patricia Russell

"I am the way and the truth and the life."

Jesus promises his disciples a special place prepared for them in his Father's house. As one community of the church, experiencing Christ's presence in every gathering, we, too, already have a place prepared for us in the church. Salvation comes from Christ — he is the one path. He communicates grace, truth and salvation to us most fully through the church that he instituted. Our salvation is not merely personal; it hinges on relationship. God desires to save everyone through communion with him and each other. The church is central to the Father's plan to unite and save us. By sending his son to proclaim and usher in the kingdom of God, the Father calls us to become his people. We enter into relationship with him and each other uniquely through Jesus' sacrifice in the celebration of the Eucharist that confers grace and increases our unity as one people of God seeking the truth.

Loving Savior, help me respond to your call to follow you, to build relationships, and to go into the world boldly sharing your truth.

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Acts 13:44-52; Ps 98; Jn 14:7-14

Patricia Russell

"Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip?"

Jesus is keenly aware of how much time he has spent with Philip and the other apostles. What is not as obvious is the depth of relationship and understanding they have achieved. We often have social, superficial relationships with people without truly gaining an intimate perspective of their fears or desires. What Jesus really wants to know is if Philip and the others have paid attention. He tries to determine what the disciples will take away from their time together and how they feel about what lies ahead. Jesus needs to know if they truly understand his oneness with the Father. If so, then he can be assured that they have taken his earthly life and purpose to heart and are conscious of his part in the Father's mission and their role in continuing it. We must ask ourselves if our relationship with Jesus goes beyond a casual acquaintance. How well do we know him? Through that association how well can the Father know us?

Jesus, my friend and companion, be patient as I seek to deepen my relationship with you.

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Daily Bread - April 29, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"I am the vine, you are the branches." - John 15:5

Monday, April 30, 2018

Acts 14:5-18; Ps 115; Jn 14:21-26

Paige Byrne Shortal

In past generations he allowed all Gentiles to go their own ways; yet, in bestowing his goodness, he did not leave himself without witness, for he gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filled you with nourishment and gladness for your hearts.

I've never met a child who, having learned to say, "No!" and "Mine!" didn't also know how to protest, "It's not fair!" Where does that sense of fairness come from? Growing up I had a strong notion of justice and it was an argument of C.S. Lewis that turned me into a believer, or more

accurately, helped my head follow my heart. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis argues that if we protest against the evil in the world, the idea of “not evil” must come from somewhere or someone. If we cry, “It’s not fair!” where do we get the idea of fair? And how shocked would we be if a person we love and look to for justice said to us, “Fairness schmareness! What’s fair?” This natural argument for the existence of good is what Paul invokes with the Gentiles of Lystra. Even if they do not know the one true God, they know the blessings — the beneficial rains and fruitful seasons, the nourishment and the gladness. Paul was zealous but also practical, meeting people where they were and drawing them into the fold of believers.

Gracious God, help us to love people as they are and see in them what you are calling them to be.