



# Easter Reflections

from the Precious Blood  
Leadership Conference

**Prepared by the Precious Blood Family of Communities:**

Adorers of the Blood of Christ (US Region)

Missionaries of the Precious Blood

(Atlantic, Cincinnati & Kansas City Provinces)

Sisters of the Most Precious Blood (O'Fallon, Mo.)

Sisters of the Precious Blood (Dayton, Ohio)

Sisters of Saint Mary of Oregon

**April 16, 2017**  
**Easter Sunday**

*This is the day the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad. (Psalm 118: 24)*

This Responsorial Psalm refrain for Easter Sunday provides a truly fitting response to the astounding Good News of Jesus' resurrection given in all three Scripture readings for today's Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord. Why are we called to be glad and rejoice? Because Jesus is risen and we sing: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Today our hearts are filled with joy because Jesus, our hope for eternal life through the shedding of his Precious Blood, has won our salvation. Risen, he goes before us as the Victorious Lamb of God.

In this brief Easter reflection, I want to touch on theological HOPE which gives rise to deep and abiding JOY. I am proposing that theological hope (faith, hope and charity) is the firm foundation for our Paschal joy.

When I studied theology in the 1960's at St. Charles Seminary, we did not do much on hope. In a sense, it was then a forgotten virtue. But when I started to teach theology in the early 1970's, a whole flood of books and articles on hope appeared. One of the earliest articles that really touched and influenced me was written by our own Fr. Bob Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

What caused this upsurge of writings on hope? There are numerous reasons, but very importantly, hope was seen by scholars to be a major movement in the dynamic of Sacred Scriptures where the history of salvation moved from Exodus to the Promised Land, from promise to fulfillment. And this dynamic is effective and trustworthy because it is founded on God, who is always faithful. As

spiritual writer Susan Muto put it: “Theological hope is letting go and placing our lot in God’s hands.” She writes “our” lot, which gives another insight into theological hope, showing that it is a community virtue in which we are all recipients and in which we are all contributors!

The French personalist philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, caught this insight well in his beautiful description of hope: *“j’espere en toi pour nous”* (“I hope in you for us”). We are called to live in hope so as to enlarge one another’s hope. Thus, as an Easter people we are a community of hope-filled people! This makes us a joy-filled community. Leon Bloy wrote that the presence of joy is a sure sign of the Holy Spirit’s presence, assuring us that God is good, that Jesus is risen, and that we are in God’s loving and saving hands. In like manner, Pope Francis wrote recently: “The basic element of joy, then, is profound peace, that imperturbability in the Spirit that remains with us even in the most painful, excruciating moments.” Pope Francis goes on to say, “Long faces cannot proclaim Jesus. Joy and praise of God are the only way to advance the Gospel.”

Let us then, my dear Precious Blood sisters and brothers, live in the hope and joy of the Lord’s resurrection!

Indeed ... “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.”

M. Rev. Joseph Charron, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

**April 17, 2017**  
**Easter Monday**

*Exalted at the right hand of God he poured forth  
the promise of the Holy Spirit that he received  
from the Father, as you both see and hear. (Acts 2: 33)*

The Spirit is poured out into our hearts. This makes us temples of God, the dwelling place of God. God is present in the depths of our being. There is a need in our world today, a need for people to know the heart of God. A heart that is compassionate and merciful, a heart full of love and tenderness, a heart that is always welcoming us to rest and be renewed. Filled with this Spirit, we are impelled to be his disciples bringing hope and consolation to the hearts of his pilgrim people. It is important that we take time daily to contemplate the Spirit's indwelling. It is only when the Spirit has entered into the depth of my being that I become a channel of his love, fired with his truth and love. Yes, the kingdom of God is within, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Yes, we become an Easter people, proclaiming the Good News of God's great love! Alleluia is our song!

Sr. Rose Mary Heineck, SSMO

April 18, 2017  
Easter Tuesday

*Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me,  
for I have not yet ascended to the Father.  
But go to my brothers and tell them, . . .  
Mary went and announced to the disciples,  
"I have seen the Lord," . . . (John 20: 17–18)*

Did Mary hear Jesus speaking to her? Yes and no. She was aware of his presence and heard his words but did not understand or realize who was speaking to her. It is only when he says: Mary! Then she realizes who is speaking with her. Mary's heart and entire being is filled with joy, wonder and astonishment; at that moment she realizes who is speaking with her. Mary is enveloped by Divine Love at that moment, and she reaches out to hold on to the Risen Lord. Yet, Jesus tells her; "don't cling to me." Jesus tells her why. Could she be clinging to him so fiercely for selfish reasons coupled with emotional feelings or for fear of losing him once again to a second kind of death? I don't know. Christ enlightens her and gives her a mission. Mary is entrusted with being the first person to announce that he *is not dead* but that Christ is risen from the dead!

The Risen Christ now speaks to us and entrusts to us the task of proclaiming with joy the Resurrection. Christ is alive! Christ has conquered sin and death. We are asked not to cling to him but to proclaim this message clearly and strongly. Being raised by him to a newness of life wrought by his divine and glorious Blood, we do not selfishly cling to the Resurrected Lord without understanding or faith but are changed by him and perpetually given life. We who profess his resurrection are commissioned by him, for "You have

made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

Now after the days of the Great and Holy Fast and Passion of our Lord, let us go forward with the conviction of Mary Magdalen and with the unswerving enthusiasm and confidence in the Divine Blood, which St. Gaspar had to proclaim. Let us go forward in our time, at our places of work, in our schools, to our families and friends, to those who are estranged or marginalized, and yes, even to our enemies: Christ is risen! Real life and real freedom are restored to humankind. Let the Risen Christ be encountered by every person who becomes acquainted with us.

Rev. George “Yuri” Kuzara, C.P.P.S. (Cincinnati)

**April 19, 2017**  
**Easter Wednesday**

*Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord! (Psalm 105: 3)*

In Acts 3: 1–10, we read of the lame man seeking alms in the temple. It is the hour of prayer, and he has seated himself at the Beautiful Gate, where worshippers would need to pass by and see him. He looks at Peter and Paul expectantly as they approach. “But Peter said to him, ‘I have no money at all, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!’” The lame man hoped for money, but what he got was so much more. We see him entering the temple, jumping up and down, praising God loudly. I think of game show contestants who jump up and down over having won a prize. Like them, the man is virtually bursting with gratitude.

In today's Gospel, we join Cleophas and his companions on the road to Emmaus. The big news of the day is the report of the women who went to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty. The disciples do not know what to make of this. They are on an emotional rollercoaster, filled with grief and disappointment over the death of Jesus, but also of wonder over the story of the women. As they walk and talk, they are met by a stranger who joins their conversation. He spends the miles explaining the scriptures to them regarding Jesus of Nazareth. They stop for supper and recognize Jesus when he breaks bread with them. They are so excited by their experience that they turn around immediately and retrace the miles they have come, to share their news with the Apostles.

There seems to be little that connects these two stories, but in each the lame man and the disciples are seeking something. The lame man receives the gift of wholeness in

the name of Jesus of Nazareth. It is this same Jesus who takes away doubt and disappointment from the disciples, replacing them with joy and gratitude.

Jesus' gifts often outshine our hopes. He shows his love to us in countless large and small ways. Are we bursting with gratitude and joy? "Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord!"

Sr. Mary Rose McCrate, C.P.P.S. (Dayton)

**April 20, 2017**  
**Easter Thursday**

*Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have. (Luke 24: 38–39)*

In today's Gospel we hear the story of one of the many appearances of Jesus after the resurrection. In spite of his salutation, "Peace be with you," his disciples are still frightened and believe that they are seeing a ghost. Jesus' invitation to look at him, to touch him and to watch him eat finally convinces them that he is not a ghost or a figment of their overwrought imaginations. It's in the common, ordinary things of their everyday lives that Jesus' disciples find him alive among them.

What about us? Do we find Jesus in the common, ordinary things of our everyday lives? Do we find his compassion in the understanding and support of our families and closest friends? Do we recognize his overflowing generosity in the food that we eat, the clothes that we wear, and the places in which we live and work? Or do we miss finding Jesus in the commonplaceness of these things and events?

On the other hand, do the people with whom we come into contact recognize Jesus in us? Do they find in us His compassion, his patience, his generosity, his acceptance, his understanding, his peace?

This reflection has turned into a lot of questions. It may seem that they are without answers. However, if you ask them of the Risen Christ honestly — that is, being open to whatever answers may come — and if you stop to listen to

the Spirit within you, you will find the answers waiting  
within your heart.

Sr. Clare Boehmer, ASC

**April 21, 2017**  
**Easter Friday**

*I am going fishing. (John 21:3)*

Whenever I am in the throes of loss, confusion or unwanted change in my life, I take refuge in some activity that feels normal, fleeing to something familiar. So I really empathize with Peter's announcement: "I'm going fishing!" I would be with the six friends who immediately chimed, "Count us in!" It must have been a chance to escape into the solace of the familiar after the dizzying task of pondering Jesus's life/death/resurrection/appearances/Pentecost events.

But of course, a no-fish day. But with a suggestion from Jesus, 153 big ones! The Risen Christ, who had stopped at the bakery for bread and charcoal for a seaside grill, lets himself be recognized.

Then it was safe—safe enough for Peter to declare his love three times after breakfast. That love was the fuel to endure beatings, nights in jail, being dragged before Annas and Caiaphas—just like the rejected Stone who became the Cornerstone.

And safe enough for Jesus to give them the mission of extending that feast to everyone—so that all are invited to bring about the new familiar world that Jesus initiated.

Isn't that what happens to us all? We respond to the love—and before we know it: loving Jesus leads us to leave the familiar for a sea-full of surprises. Change, every day.

Sr. Janet Dohr, C.P.P.S, (O'Fallon)

**April 22, 2017**  
**Easter Saturday**

*Go into the whole world and proclaim  
the Gospel to every creature. (Mark 16: 15)*

This command of Jesus is given to the eleven immediately after Jesus rebukes them for being hard-hearted and of little faith. All followers of Jesus need to keep this in mind. We are a people in need of transformation as well as called by God to not just proclaim the Good News, but actually be the Good News to others. We cannot do any of this without God's presence or grace. Jesus shed his blood upon the cross so we can live in God's grace. Living in God's grace is not always easy, fun and fulfilling. This is especially so when our hearts can be hard, heavy and lacking in faith. Yet we go forth trusting that God either through us or in spite of us will get God's message of love and redemption through to those around us. What is even more important than this is the transformation that will occur to others through the spreading of the Gospel.

All of this, like the resurrection, is God's doing. God is the true source of all authentic evangelization. We, who are the hard and broken-hearted, can find solace in the invitation to grace to be Good News through God's continual call to presence, grace and transformation.

Rev. Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

**April 23, 2017**  
**Second Sunday of Easter**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . .*

*(1 Peter 1: 3)*

The readings for the Sunday of Divine Mercy are replete with notions of Precious Blood spirituality: breaking (and sharing) bread, prayer, resurrection and reconciliation.

Where is there a reference to reconciliation, of bringing back into union, of forgiving the injury or insult? Look at Thomas! "I will not believe," he says. Was he thinking, "I wasn't here when you say the Lord came?" Did he feel excluded, hurt, slighted, and so he put out demands to be met? How merciful was the Lord Jesus to return, to bring him back into the circle of hope.

As we experience the world today, we may wish for the Lord Jesus to make another appearance to bring us mercy, hope and peace. What is our source of hope? As we break bread together, pray and await the Resurrection on the last day, we observe Divine Mercy present all around us. Jesus, Divine Mercy personified, is made visible and present every day by those who address the physical and material needs of others:

- ✘ feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty
- ✘ shelter the homeless
- ✘ clothe the naked
- ✘ visit the sick and imprisoned
- ✘ bury the dead
- ✘ give alms to the poor

or who help others with their emotional and spiritual needs:

- ✘ counsel the doubtful
- ✘ instruct the ignorant
- ✘ admonish the sinner
- ✘ comfort the sorrowful
- ✘ forgive injuries
- ✘ bear wrongs patiently
- ✘ pray for the living and the dead

These displays of mercy give hope! It is through the power of the resurrection that individuals and groups have the generosity to participate with merciful attention to the needs of others. As we celebrate the resurrection, how does our call to be a reconciling presence in the world manifest Divine Mercy today in a world still crying for justice, mercy and hope?

Sr. Charlene Herinckx, SSMO

**April 24, 2017**  
**Monday of the Second Week of Easter**

*When they had prayed, the place in which  
they were gathered together was shaken;  
and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit  
and spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4: 31)*

We had the honor of sharing in the Easter Sacraments with two of our students yesterday in our chapel at Saint Joseph's College. Surrounded by family, friends, students, faculty and staff, Derek and Jocelynn professed their faith loudly and boldly. And then left the chapel to continue their life as Catholic Christians.

Our RCIA process gave our candidate and catechumen opportunities to share their faith as well as hear from community members and campus ministry staff about their faith life. Bold and confident, we shared our faith with one another in the hopes the Spirit would shake something deep inside. And now we watch them and support them as they live the rest of their college careers, filled with the Holy Spirit, in the hopes they will confidently share their faith with those they come in contact with here and in their future together.

The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, went into their daily lives speaking boldly of Jesus' love and mercy. May we live our own Christian commitment in our daily lives and speak boldly of Jesus' love for us all.

Jesus, help me to serve you . . .  
Give me the confidence and courage I need to . . .

Rev. Vince Wirtner, C.P.P.S. (Cincinnati)

**April 25, 2017**  
**Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter**

*Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel  
to every creature. ... They went forth and preached everywhere,  
while the Lord worked with them ... (Mark 16: 15-20)*

The Gospel passage assigned for the Feast of Saint Mark, Evangelist, occurs when Jesus is about to ascend to heaven. This is his last command to his followers: go forth and proclaim the Gospel. How do we proclaim? What remarkable signs give *us* credibility?

We must allow the risen Jesus to work with and in us. Before proclaiming the Gospel, we must personally encounter the risen Christ through prayer, through the good works we see enacted around us, through the Gospel values we ourselves live every day by faithfully doing God's will. We must come to know the risen Christ as our friend who dwells within each of us. Our love for Jesus then shines forth, this very love giving credibility to our proclaiming the Gospel.

We must *enact* proclaiming the Gospel by living as Jesus did. Jesus' life was one of surrender. So must our lives be a living surrender to whatever God asks of us: our time and resources for the good of others, our very selves in falling daily more deeply in love with the risen Christ.

Proclaiming the Gospel is giving over our lives to the saving mission of Jesus, spilling our lives to proclaim the Good News that we are redeemed by the Blood of Christ.

Sr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S. (Dayton)

**April 26, 2017**  
**Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter**

*God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son  
so that everyone who believes in him might not perish  
but might have eternal life. (John 3: 16)*

I have always been a big-picture person. Today's Gospel definitely paints a big picture regarding the essence of Christianity. St. Gaspar would spend no less than thirty minutes per day meditating on the crucifix. He did this because he saw in the passion, God's great act of love. What Gaspar saw was salvation and eternal life.

In February, in Los Angeles, we had our annual pilgrimage from St. Agnes Parish to the *Cristo Arbol* (The Christ Tree). A tree in our neighborhood, about a mile from the church, was struck by lightning more than 20 years ago. From the remainder of the tree, the image of Jesus on the Cross was carved. In addition to the hundreds of people who participated in the procession, several ballet folklorico dance troupes participated in costume with indigenous drums, bells, conch shells, flutes, lutes and other instruments.

The procession was a celebration of life by a people who understand suffering. Through the incarnation, we have a God who understands life and suffering. St. Gaspar, during his time, understood life and suffering. As we continue to celebrate this Easter Season, let us embrace our God who walks with us, suffers with us, dies for us, and leads us to eternal life.

Rev. Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

**April 27, 2017**  
**Thursday of the Second Week of Easter**

*Remain in me, as I remain in you. (John 15: 4)*

Fifteen years ago I pruned two shefferella branches too closely. After three years, one began to show new life, and I felt excited. Thirteen years later, the other put forth a small green shoot. I was awed and amazed at the new life after thirteen years of dormancy. As I reflected on these two branches, I realized that they had remained on the vine, drawing life from it in ways I couldn't see. I asked myself: *Do I nurture others who appear cut off from the vine like I continued to water and fertilize those two branches?*

*Do I remain patient with those who deal with addictions, with myself as I struggle with the same areas of sinfulness? How does Jesus call me to relate to others and to myself?* Jesus responds, "Remain in me, as I remain in you."

Sr. Anna Marie Himmelberg C.P.P.S. (O'Fallon)

**April 28, 2017**  
**Friday of the Second Week of Easter**

*Jesus said, "Have the people recline." (John 6: 10)*

If we are really honest with ourselves, we will admit that we often bring problems on ourselves. We make things way too difficult, convoluted and stressful. This is a Gospel passage that reminds me of the truly simple way that Jesus can work in my life. He tells the people to just sit down. That was all they had to do in order for Jesus to work the miracle here. Just sit down. Perhaps there were people who left, thinking that Jesus' instructions were too simple, who left and missed the miracle because they made things too complicated.

At its core, our Roman Catholic faith is not complicated. It's not rocket science. I don't need a doctorate in theology to get to heaven. I simply need to listen to Jesus and his instructions to me, no matter how simple they may seem. That takes trust. That takes faith. And that takes confidence. We all know the saying, "God works in mysterious ways." But how often we forget that God works in simple ways as well. May we, during this season of Easter, ask for grace to see that and not make things so complicated.

Rev. Michael R. Mateyk, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**April 29, 2016**  
**Saturday of the Second Week of Easter**  
**St. Catherine of Sienna**

*It is I; do not be afraid. (John 6: 20)*

*As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another  
as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4: 10)*

In the first reading, the leaders of the Greek community complained that their widows were not getting the same distribution of food as the Jewish widows. The apostles went to the people and asked them to pick seven men from among themselves to help take care of this need. The seven men chosen were to be persons who have made a conscious decision to actively be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost. These men expressed their discipleship by being good stewards. They knew how important it was to give time to the needs of the widows. Each would give according to his talent, understanding that they had a duty and responsibility to use their gifts for others by virtue of their discipleship.

It is the post-Easter readings that give neophytes their continued instruction about how a disciple lives. Today's first reading gives us an example of what being a disciple of Jesus Christ living the stewardship way of life is all about. When we share our voice or play a musical instrument or participate in church ministries, we fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ, especially when it's helping parishes or church communities carry out their ministry to the poor, hungry, homeless and anyone in need. Money is also certainly a great asset and necessity for the growth of the mission of Jesus Christ. Stewardship is easier to live when we trust and believe what Jesus said, "It is I, do not be afraid."

Sr. Barbara Croom, ASC

**April 30, 2017**  
**Third Sunday of Easter**

*Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know  
of the things that have taken place there in these days?*  
(Luke 24: 18)

The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Easter is a familiar one. The recounting of the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus has been used for centuries to describe our relationship with Christ. The narrative offers preachers a rich variety of images that help frame our ongoing Christian journey.

The narrative also offers us, its readers, some subtle challenges that can help us deepen our relationship with Christ. The question that Cleopas poses to Christ is one that could easily be asked of us. On this Third Sunday of Easter, it is providential that we are asked, “Are you the only one who does not know what has happened?” It can seem like ages ago that our Lenten journey led us to the foot of the cross and a long time since our eyes were opened by the light of the resurrection.

“Are you the only one who does not know what has happened?” After these weeks, our enthusiasm and joy might have begun to wane. In the midst of our ministry and busy lives, we might have begun to forget what happened just a few weeks ago. Thankfully Cleopas and his companion tell us today of what they experienced. And this prompts Jesus to enlarge the story with his own experience and wisdom.

These weeks of Easter, in which we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord, is a time to ask ourselves and those around us, “Do you know what has happened? Do you remember what happened?” It is in the posing of the

question that we begin to deepen our relationship with others, in Christ. The posing of the question is an opening to ongoing dialogue and sharing of our hopes and joys, our disappointments and hurts.

The question posed to Jesus by Cleopas prompted Christ to ask his own question. This allowed the frightened disciples to recount their story and to share with the hidden Christ their fears and concerns. It is in this interchange of questions that the relationship between Christ and the disciples is grounded. The questions represent that desire to know each other on a deeper level. Isn't that what the Easter season is all about? Getting to know Jesus and experiencing the Risen Christ in our lives? Sharing with others the Easter message?

When someone asks you today, "What is new? What's going on in your life?" How will you respond?

Rev. Jeffrey Kirch, C.P.P.S. (Cincinnati)

**May 1, 2017**  
**Monday of the Third Week of Easter**  
**St. Joseph, the Worker**

*And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,  
the peace into which you were also called in one Body.  
And be thankful. (Colossians 3: 15)*

Today we celebrate St. Joseph the Worker or the Third Monday after Easter. I have chosen this verse from the first reading for the feast of St. Joseph because of the heart connection. "Whatever you do, do from the heart as for the Lord." What is it that unites us as Precious Blood people more than the life-giving, reconciling essence of that blood which flows through our veins from the heart, let the peace of Christ control your hearts. A lot of times I'll say, "God bless your heart" as the youth leave the PBMR Center or when I complete a message. It is a reminder to me that we are all connected in the heart of Christ.

There are so many expressions we hear in relation to our heart: you are always in my heart; you have a heart of gold; our children are our heart strings; harden not your heart. Is your heart heavy today? Does your heart feel twisted? Sometimes an angry heart enters the room, other times a compassionate heart, or a grieving heart, or a giving, generous heart is present.

It is when I allow myself silence, to be still and listen, that Christ can enter my heart. Sometimes I get too busy about many things that I miss the presence of God in my heart.

What is awakened in your heart? What does Jesus say or do during your quiet conversation? Does the peace of Christ control your heart?

Sr. Carolyn Hoying, C.P.P.S. (Dayton)

**May 2, 2017**  
**Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter**  
**St. Athanasius**

*Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently  
to heaven and saw the glory of God... (Acts 7: 55)*

This day, May 2, is dedicated in the Liturgy to Saint Athanasius, who was Bishop of Alexandria in the third and beginning of the fourth century. He dedicated himself in very difficult times to the preservation and clarification of basic Christian teaching regarding who Christ was and is. His role in the struggles with Arianism (which denied the Incarnation) was pivotal in the continuing proclamation of God's truly having come into the flesh and blood world of creation in Jesus Christ. Athanasius suffered deeply in his life in defending the wonder that is the teaching about the Incarnation of Christ.

Today, in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles that is the first lesson for the day, we see Stephen (the first martyr in Christian history) seeking to speak of who Christ is in his own heart. God speaks truth to us and seeks to reveal that truth in a way that helps us to face ourselves in an honest way. He challenges the authorities who have him on trial to look at history: even Moses struggled with Israel's unwillingness to face truth. When we are blind to truth, we are blind to God, who is eager to free us from blindness, so that we can see who God truly is. God is absolute and total LOVE!

LOVE entered into the flesh-and-blood world of creation, and sometimes the human race simply can't deal with that wonder. The Arianism that Athanasius struggled against would not deal with it. Athanasius proclaimed in his life and struggle, suffering, and growth in his heart came to

know God. God, in the Incarnation, sought and seeks to enter into the full human experience of our lives, encouraging us and the world to face ourselves and our need to fight against evil in all of the ways it seeks to blind us to our dignity, the dignity of our neighbor and to the presence of God in the midst of our lives calling us to LOVE.

Our Precious Blood spirituality takes to heart the full power of the message of the Incarnation and seeks to have us be bonded to all that it challenges to be about.

Rev. Michael Goode, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

**May 3, 2017**  
**Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter**  
**Sts. Phillip & James**

*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14: 6)*

The Gospel passage from John 14: 6–4 on this feast of Sts. Philip and James led me to focus on the one verse, “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” That in turn, led me to read and meditate on Isaiah chapters 51–65. These chapters present the suffering servant, the non-violent one, “Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth” (Is.53: 7).

Precious Blood spirituality is personified in Jesus, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14: 6). His way to glorify the Father was in his non-violent rejection of evil so that truth would triumph in the life of his resurrection. Reconciliation through the Blood of Christ is the new covenant of peace. Now he lives in us to glorify the Father. So in his name we ask, “Christ Jesus, help us be the living, nonviolent peace-loving sons and daughters who give glory to the Father.”

Sr. Joan Schnorbus, C.PP.S. (O’Fallon)

**May 4, 2017**  
**Thursday of the Third Week of Easter**

*Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.*  
*(John 6: 47)*

Today's readings remind me of the need for both, openness to the Spirit and adherence to the KISS rule (Keep It Simple, Stupid), in order to minister most effectively, especially to those who are outside society's gates. Philip's willingness to leave Jerusalem makes his meeting with the Ethiopian possible. He appreciates the journey, physical and spiritual, that this foreigner is already on. Philip doesn't try to qualify the desire of his fellow traveler or have preconditions for accepting his invitation to join him. He listens before he speaks.

Even though the Ethiopian in the story may not have been able even to worship with the Jewish community, Philip recognizes in him what is most important, his hunger for Jesus. So, Philip sees fit to baptize him without delay.

How does Philip's approach to evangelization compare with ours? Certainly, there is always a need for catechesis, for forming disciples, for preparation to receive the sacraments, and for programs that advance these goals. But when was the last time we examined a barrier that arose when engaged in a ministry and considered whether there was a bigger picture, something of larger importance to that person or God? Are there opportunities for us to be more open to the Spirit of simplicity? Can we accept that it is the Father who is leading all who are seeking Jesus, no matter who they are or how they're doing it?

Rev. Patrick Gilmurray, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**May 5, 2017**  
**Friday of the Third Week of Easter**

*This man is my chosen instrument to bring my name  
before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. (Acts 9: 15)*

This reflection was written in February, a time of anxiety and uncertainty for Latinos, especially those facing deportations. It felt like a persecution was happening in our country. We saw people who were intent on bringing down others by use of the law.

In the first reading, Saul is intent on persecuting those following the Way. Ananias was fearful to follow the Lord's direction to go to Saul. The Lord sent Ananias, saying, "This man is my chosen instrument to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel." We too are directed by God to overcome our fears and speak the truth of the way: Jesus.

Jesus came to teach us how to live and how to treat one another. We must remind each other constantly to live as children of God—not in fear, but in openness to all people. Through the Eucharist, Jesus sustains and nurtures us. Jesus promises that through him we have eternal life.

Cinco de Mayo is more of a feast in the United States than in Mexico. It remembers the Battle in 1862 between the Mexican and the French armies. As we enjoy Mexican food and drink today, let us remember the gift of each person with their cultural heritage and welcome them into our lives as Jesus did.

Hispanic Ministry Team in the Diocese of Belleville:  
Lucia Barragan (ASC Associate)  
Sr. Joan Hornick, ASC  
Ada Jimenez (ASC Associate)

**May 6, 2017**  
**Saturday of the Third Week of Easter**

*Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"  
Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go?  
We are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."  
(John 6: 67-69)*

Jesus addresses this same question to us: "Do you also want to leave?" If we should choose to leave, to whom would we turn? To whom could we possibly turn, if not to the Lord?

It is Christ alone whose words, forgiveness and unconditional love are eternal. The Lord's love for us is so great that he chose to suffer the indescribable pain of the passion and to die a callously cruel death on the cross. Not only did he suffer and die to save us, he is, as scripture tells us, the way, the truth, and the life; the Bread of Life; the Good Shepherd; the light of the world; the door; the true vine; and the resurrection and the life; in short, he is the center and joy of our lives. He is our ALL; leaving him is unthinkable. Since we were made for him, there is no happiness without him, as expressed so beautifully in the words of St. Augustine: "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

Let us pray for the grace to respond daily with abundant love to the question, "Do you also want to leave?" by keeping our eyes intently fixed on him who is our ALL.

Sr. M. John Therese, SSMO

**May 7, 2017**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**World Day of Prayer for Vocations**

*Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" (Acts 2: 14, 36-37)*

As I sat with the readings for this Sunday, the usual thoughts of sheep and the Good Shepherd did not come to mind. Instead I was struck by the phrase; "they were cut to the heart." Other common phrases regarding the heart came to mind: the heart of the matter, her heart wasn't in it, you touched my heart, heart and soul, give from the heart, with heartfelt gratitude. The heart or *cor* in Latin, is the core of our being. When we speak from the heart, we express thoughts, opinions, and sentiments from the deepest recesses of our being.

Peter, finding himself in an emotional freefall of grief, fear, guilt and after days of laying low with the other disciples, has found his voice! There was nowhere Peter could hide that the Spirit of God could not find him. Peter and the others were found and touched to the very core of their being by the God they had come to know so intimately. Peter, filled with the transforming love of God, knew in the depths of his heart what he had to do. He stood up boldly and announced the truth about Jesus, the Lord! Jesus, the Christ! This was a truth that all who heard him knew deep in their hearts, and thus Peter's words cut them like an arrow to their core.

With all this said, what about those sheep in our Gospel today? They, like Peter and the other disciples, have a very keen understanding that their lives depend on their shepherd. Not any shepherd, but the Shepherd whose voice they have come to know and trust in the core, the heart of their being. We, like Peter and those sheep, are also called to be keenly familiar with the voice of our Shepherd. May we always recognize this voice, this presence, and open ourselves to continual transformation so that we too can stand boldly and proclaim the truth we know in our heart.

Sr. Patty Kremer, C.P.P.S. (Dayton)

**May 8, 2017**  
**Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter**

*What God has made clean, you are not to call profane. (Acts 11: 9)*

In Peter's time, who you ate with and what you ate were matters of faith. Observant Jews were careful not to break the kosher laws, as Peter refers to. The vision breaks that model apart, saying everything is clean. But the vision isn't about food, it's about who belongs to God and who should belong in our hearts.

God has created all of us and claimed us as his own. He has called us all "clean." The line above calls us to respect everyone's dignity, and accept them at our tables as they are. Peter and the disciples worked that out at the first council of the Church; I'm not sure we have. We aren't just talking about building a wall today, we've been doing it for years. Being Christian is about sharing Christ with all, not about conforming to a particular rule or regulation about who is welcome and who is not. When we consider who we are, and who belongs to us, Christ has a simple answer: everyone belongs to him.

Rev. Keith Branson, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

**May 9, 2017**  
**Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter**

*The works I do in my Father's name testify to me. (John 10: 25)*

Both readings today reveal occasions that call out for reconciliation. Acts shows the situation in Antioch where Jews who have accepted the word show antipathy to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, who are accepting it as well. The Gospel presents the nonbelieving sheep and the believers. The non-believers demand that Jesus “tell them plainly” if he is the Messiah or not. Jesus tells them he has already told them, and they do not believe.

How to bring these two differing sides together? Through the example of love. Seeing can become believing. In Acts, Barnabas, sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Jews to check things out, sees the grace of God in the behavior of the newly named Christians. He rejoices, and encourages them all—both Jews and Gentiles—to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart—in loving.

In the Gospel, Jesus says, “Look at the works I do” — look at the love I show — and listen to me. Follow me and no one can take you from my hand or the Father's hand. We are one, and you can be one.

Today, let us allow God to use us as instruments of his love, especially in those situations where enmity and fear divide us.

Sr. Barbara Schlatter, C.P.P.S. (O'Fallon)

**May 10, 2017**  
**Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter**

*The Holy Spirit said: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13: 2)*

From the moment of birth until death, I am on a journey. Just as Paul and Barnabas were singled out by God to do his work, so am I, and so are you. But how do I know what that work is? A clue is contained in the reading of the day when I am asked to open myself up to the movement of the Spirit by prayer and fasting and having others pray for me. All this demonstrates to me that it is a movement from within, a deep sense that this is how God calls me to be fulfilled as a human being. I risk and do what I believe the Spirit is asking of me and leave the results up to God and trust in his loving kindness.

My task is to share the light that I have been given and to proclaim God's word by my actions and not just by my words. I need to follow Jesus. Jesus is the path, not the destination. I need to be more like him because in following in his footsteps, the Kingdom of God is made manifest in the here and now. It truly becomes an "aha" moment, not just for me, but for all.

Rev. Ron Wiecek, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**May 11, 2017**  
**Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter**

*No messenger is greater than the one who sent him. (John 13: 16)*

The introductory passage of John 13 is the familiar washing of the feet that we hear on Holy Thursday. Jesus had clearly expressed that his life and impending death are an expression of his love for his disciples. They had not yet received the outpouring of the Spirit so his message was not understood. As usual, Peter jumps in and expresses what probably some of the others were feeling. How could he let the master, dressed as a slave, do a slave's work of washing his feet!

With great patience, Jesus explains why he was acting thus. After he was physically gone from them, they would carry on in his stead—not as one to lord it over others but as one serving perhaps even as lowly as a slave. “In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master; no messenger is greater than the one who sent him.”

We who have had the rest of the story given to us in the Word are to incorporate the message in our lives. We are merely the messengers; we are not the message.

How do we interpret the message? How do we embody the message: “... whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.” Do we recognize a messenger or do we wear blinders? Perhaps sometimes the messenger is obvious, or perhaps is the messenger an unexpected person or event. Do we recognize the message in the Word? Is the message in the sunrise or sunset? Is it in the traffic jam?

And the other side of the question—how are we messengers in word? Or perhaps is it how we hold things in

our hands, as Thomas Merton said? What is the message we  
proclaim with our lives?

Sr. Renee Kirmer, ASC

**May 12, 2017**  
**Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter**

*Do not let your hearts be troubled.  
You have faith in God; have Faith also in me,  
I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14: 1-6)*

As I sit with a dying sister in the quiet of the night, I reflect on my faith. What a gift! A gift with many blessings as we know we are never alone.

There is more to life, and we always have our guide—Jesus—leading us. I just need to slow down, listen and let him guide me. To follow even when it is not necessarily my way. I need to take time in quiet places to listen, to hear him. I know he leads me through life. I gave myself to God—I need to stay open. He is my Way, my Truth, and my Life.

Jesus, you've led me through good times and difficult times. You are always there with me, carrying me. Help me to find the quiet place in my heart and listen. I know you are leading me to my eternal home with you. Thank you for always being present, carrying me through life.

Sr. Rita Watkins, SSMO

**May 13, 2017**  
**Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter**

*Here's Your Sign: Trusting in what we cannot see!*

Today we hear Philip speak up and ask Jesus to show them his Father, then they will believe in what Jesus is saying! Jesus must have been deeply disappointed in Philip and his need for proof. Philip had been with him for a long time but clearly he still did not completely believe or trust Jesus. He wanted to see the proof for himself.

After all their time together, did Philip and the other disciples still not understand who Jesus was? What would it take for them to believe and understand?

How often do we ask Jesus for proof? At times, we also want Jesus to send us a sign that clearly he is with us! Then we will "know." Faith and trust are difficult in our human relationships and perhaps even more so in our relationship with God. At least with human beings we can see, hear and talk with them. We see their facial expressions and their body language. These alone communicate volumes of information to us.

However, we can neither see Jesus, God nor the Holy Spirit. To believe without proof is difficult for most human beings. We have the old saying: "the proof is in the pudding." I assume that most of us like to see and taste our pudding. Then, we will believe! However, Jesus desires that we believe and trust without "seeing" him. We can choose to believe in Jesus and trust in his love and care for us. Or we can wander through life without an anchor, without anyone greater than ourselves to believe in.

Belief and trust in Jesus is challenging, especially during difficult and trying times. At these times, I want and need to have a tangible sense that Jesus is with me. And every once

in a while, I am given a sign of some sort! However, most times I simply have to trust that Jesus is with me. This is not easy. However, when I am able to trust that Jesus is present with me, then I do have more strength and hope. These gifts of trust, hope and strength enable me to open my mind and heart to “seeing” Jesus!

Today, may we ask Jesus to grace us with these gifts. Most of all, may we trust Jesus to gift us with all we need. Jesus is present with us every moment of every day, always strengthening and gracing us! However, we need to be awake and alert to his presence! Otherwise, we will miss him!

Charlie Salway  
Companion (Celina, Ohio)

**May 14, 2017**  
**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

*Living Stones*

As a Missionary of the Precious Blood, I have been fortunate to give retreats and attend gatherings in various places around the world. I always try to pick up a stone from the place where I have visited to remind me that I have been blessed to stand on holy ground. My prayer table at home has stones from Tanzania, Guatemala, Italy, Germany, Austria, Korea, Vietnam and almost every state in the U.S. These remind me of the “living stones” I met along the way whose love, fidelity, and compassion gave me a glimpse of the Risen Lord.

In today’s second reading from Peter, we hear the call to live our identity as “living stones” that are being built “into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.” Peter calls us to be a community of priests, of bridge-builders, of holy people. The Vatican II vision of a common priesthood of all baptized believers is founded here. Our priesthood is born in baptism, not ordination. Indeed, we see how the ministry of service and servant leadership in the early church community enacted in today’s first reading from the Acts of the Apostles as the ministry of deacon is born. Early in the evolution of the institution, it became clear that the eyewitnesses to the resurrection, the inner circle of the community, needed help in the rapidly growing community of faith.

Jesus, of course, is the cornerstone of whatever we build in faith. He is the “living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God.” He is the cornerstone of a new creation, this living temple, built at the very fault lines of society where the poor and homeless and

most vulnerable fall through the cracks. As living stones, we are being constructed by God into a new creation community, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own.” Jesus picks up this theme of construction by reminding his disciples that the blueprint for this new creation is made in heaven. He promises them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith in me also. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.”

We believe we are saved and redeemed in the Blood of Christ. How is this work of salvation being revealed in our lives right now? How are we being “living stones” being built by God into a new creation?

V. Rev. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

As May 14 is Mother’s Day, may we honor those holy women, our moms, living and deceased, whose love, service, and shelter revealed to us the true meaning of being a “living stone” built on the cornerstone of Christ.

**May 15, 2017**  
**Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter**

*Not to us, O Lord, but to your name give glory. (Psalms 115: 1)*

Perhaps many of us have had the experience of hearing someone else praised for something that we did. And that was followed by the prick of anger that made us want to yell out, "Hey, I did that!"

Today's readings present us with a similar, yet quite different, situation. Barnabas and Paul received much praise for something they did. And yet, like Jesus in the Gospel, they were very aware and quick to say that the glory did not belong to them, but to their God who should receive all the credit.

How appropriate is this time after Easter to begin giving credit where credit is due! As a Christian, I am very well aware that it is the Holy Spirit working in me that encourages and empowers me to use my talents, skills and inspirations to bring God's love and blessings to others. But I am not always so quick to admit it. As a Precious Blood sister I say that I want to allow Christ to use me as an instrument of his redeeming love,\* but in everyday situations, I do not so readily give the glory to God.

During this Easter Season, I want to invite Christ once again to use me as an instrument of his redeeming love, and I want to learn to spontaneously refer any praise I receive to God's glory, and not hold on to it for my own pleasure.

Sr. Rosemary Russell, C.P.P.S. (O'Fallon)

\*CONSTITUTIONS: Sisters of the Most Precious Blood,  
O'Fallon, MO #3 Pg. 8

**May 16, 2017**  
**Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter**

*They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town,  
leaving him there for dead. His disciples quickly formed  
a circle about him, and before long he got up and went back  
into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.*  
(Acts 14: 19-20)

Blind prejudice is a terrible thing to behold. In the reading from Acts, we see people who considered themselves good Jews defending their faith by attacking and injuring Paul. Paul was delivering the kind of message that flew in the face of the beliefs of the time, and we see the unwillingness of those who came against Paul to even listen to the wonderful new message that he bore. It is even more difficult to believe when we recall that he and Barnabas had just arrived from Lystra where they had cured a crippled man. Even faced with that wonder, these men refused to believe.

It begs the question then, what does it take to convince a person that a new wonder is before us? What does it take to make us realize that there is a new way of perceiving that which is factually before us? Perhaps it takes a leap of faith; after all, not all of us are thrown to the ground and blinded to get the point across to us, as happened to Paul! Are we then able to place our trust in those who have encountered the divine, who have received the true Word? If we have, can we then put that new knowledge into practice by the way we live in our world? Perhaps we do not have to reinvent the wheel of our faith. Maybe all we need to do is take a chance, believe—and then act.

Rev. Gary Luiz, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**May 17, 2017**  
**Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter**

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.  
He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,  
and every one that does, he prunes so that it bears more fruit.  
(John 15: 1-2)*

A Eucharistic image is deeply imbedded in John's passage, which begins the presentation of Jesus' discourse on the union of Jesus with his disciples. Jesus is the vine, the life-giving fruit of the vine, the source of union. I am a branch intimately connected to the vine whose purpose is to produce fruit. What must I do to be fruitful? Jesus states this fruitfulness is remaining in him and he in me.

I am given a choice to remain in Jesus, allowing him to remain in me, or to reject this union. And what are the consequences? If I am not fruitful, if I refuse to maintain my intimate relationship with Jesus, I, like the fruitless branch, am to be taken away, cut off. But if I choose to sustain this union that Jesus has established in his Blood, what awaits this choice? I am to be pruned in order to bring forth more fruit!

Am I willing to do what is necessary to allow Jesus to retain this intimate relationship with me, even though its implication is that I must be pruned, that I need to be willing to let go of something I cling to? Jesus, open my eyes to see what it is that I am clinging to that inhibits my being more fruitful.

Sr. Betty Adams, ASC

**May 18, 2017**  
**Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter**

*As the Father loves me, so I also love you.  
Remain in my love. (John 15: 9)*

Like Peter, we ask where we would go. Your love for us is so great. You became man to redeem us from sin. You suffered, died, and rose on the third day. What greater love does a person have than to freely lay down their life for another? When I dwell on this, the thought of your love and saving power for us mere mortals is too great to comprehend. Love is a word freely used and thrown around in our society but you have taught us what it means to truly love.

Sometimes your love overwhelms us. It overshadows us and fills us momentarily with such peace and joy that, like Peter, James, and John on the mountain, we do not ever want to leave that place. We are content to stay there forever and wait for the next encounter. "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." Your love is enough for us.

Help us to live daily in that love; to always be aware of your great love for us; and by our lives to spread your love to all those we meet in our life's journey by loving them as you would.

Sr. Juliana Monti, SSMO

**May 19, 2017**  
**Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter**

*No one has greater love than this,  
to lay down one's life for one's friend. (John 15: 13)*

When I think of this scripture verse, the idea of laying down one's life for a friend, I think about veterans, the men and women who fought to build and preserve the freedom that we enjoy today as people living in the United States.

Paul F. Keller, my grandfather, served in the Army during the Korean War and took pride in his military service. At the same time, his heart was torn every time our country would fight another war. He knew about the destruction that war brought to families. Grandpa spent just a few short years of his life in the military, but in all reality he spent his whole life in risking his life for a friend. In the years that followed the war, he spent his life providing for his family, working in a local factory and farming. A trait of Grandpa's that I remember most would be for his gift of gardening. Each year as he got older, the garden was supposed to get smaller but still he had more than enough produce from his garden to give away to neighbors, family, and many others.

Paul F. Keller, a man who was willing to give his life in the service of our country so that others could live. A man who was willing risk his life throughout his whole life so that other people could live. Grandpa is one example of many people who risk their lives each day so others can live. I would imagine many of you can think of examples of such people. Today, let's remember those people who are willing to risk their lives so that other people can live.

Matthew Keller, C.P.P.S. (Cincinnati)

**May 20, 2017**  
**Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter**

*...You do not belong to the world,  
and I have chosen you out of the world. (John 15: 19)*

There are times in my life when I wonder why I have been chosen. Being rejected, hated and persecuted are not on my bucket list.

But then I realize the honor of having been chosen, and my heart rejoices in that fact. Being chosen means Jesus wants to share his life with me. That life will no doubt include occasions of suffering. After all, I am choosing to follow him who shed his Precious Blood completely.

Being chosen also means being in mission, like Timothy who followed Paul on his missionary travels. Persecution and rejection were present, but never deterred them in their resolve to proclaim Jesus and his saving work.

So as we all journey in this Easter season, I choose again to accept this invitation to follow Jesus with a rejoicing heart. What a privilege to share in this mission of Jesus. Why he chooses me will always remain a mystery. But I humbly accept, and today and each day, I will seek to proclaim God's love—that love which gave ALL.

**GLORY TO THE BLOOD OF JESUS!**

Sr. Arlene Hirsch, C.P.P.S. (Dayton)

**May 21, 2017**  
**Sixth Sunday of Easter**

*The crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip. (Acts 8: 6)*

“The medium is the message.” Today’s readings remind me of these well-known words of Marshall McLuhan. Jesus’ life was both his medium and his message. Moreover, through the Advocate that Jesus gave to us, our lives, too, can become medium and message.

We hear in Acts, that the crowds paid attention to what Philip was saying. They believed because of what they heard and saw: unclean spirits left and the paralyzed and crippled people were cured. Philip was both medium and message, and the Samaritans were filled with joy! Yet, the apostles realized that there was more. Peter and John went to lay hands upon them so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. Imbued with the Spirit, they now were not only recipients but also bearers of the message.

We, too, are both recipients and bearers of the message. Today’s second reading from Peter tells us how we are to deliver that message, namely with gentleness and reverence. It is not only what we say but also how we say it that is important. How we live, how we present ourselves, how we allow the Spirit to be visible through us is an integral part of our response to the call to be Jesus’ continuing, reconciling presence in this world. Our lives are both medium and message.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus promises that he will not leave us orphans—“You are in me and I in you.” Jesus is with us, within us, around us. It is the journey of a lifetime to realize the truth and the import of this amazing gift and trust!

In these times, when there is so much pain and division in our country and around our world, it can be particularly

challenging to maintain the conviction that we are not orphans. Yet, in our brightest days and our darkest nights, we must “be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks [us] for a reason for [our] hope.” We must proclaim with gentleness and reverence our belief and trust in the unseen presence of the Spirit. Through the Spirit, the lives we live and the words we speak do have the power to bring peace and healing to our world even though we may never see the results. This Spirit who can use our lives as both medium and message is our source of hope.

Sr. Janice Bader, C.P.P.S. (O’Fallon)

**May 22, 2017**  
**Monday of the Sixth Week of Easter**

*On the Sabbath, we (Paul and his companions) went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God . . . (Acts 16: 13–14)*

As we celebrate this Easter season, it is encouraging to read the accounts of the early missionaries of the Church recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In the passage quoted above, Paul has arrived in Philippi, a key city in the Macedonian region of what is now Greece.

It is quite apparent from Paul's later letter to the Philippians, written when he was imprisoned, that he had a great love and affection for the believers in this city and had great faith that they could withstand whatever future persecutions might come their way for believing in Christ.

At its inception, the community must have been small, as they were not allowed to meet in the city itself. The reason they had to meet outside the city gate was because there was a prohibition, written on the arches of the city that forbade bringing any unrecognized religion into the city. Much like Jesus who was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, those who were unwelcomed in Philippi had to congregate outside the gates.

Adapting, as a good missionary would, sensitive to those whom others may have discarded or written off, and never allowing cultural or gender boundaries to deter his evangelistic spirit, Paul and his companions find a place conducive to prayer where they proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to a group of women! The one mentioned is an

influential merchant, who most likely was able to convince those in authority to give the fledgling Christian community some leeway. She most likely had a wealthy clientele, as purple was expensive back then and worn by the nobility.

As Missionaries of the Precious Blood men and women today, we must emulate Paul's example of going where the Gospel needs to be heard, engaging with all segments of society, but especially the most neglected, abandoned or judged. We must work together and help support one another in moments of trial and difficulty and look for opportunities to make Christ more known and loved. For when we do so, the Holy Spirit will work in us to extend the nets of God's kingdom ever wider.

Rev. Sam D'Angelo, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**May 23, 2017**  
**Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter**

*I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart  
... your right hand saves me. (Psalm 138: 1–7)*

Imagine Paul, Silas and the other prisoners in today's reading from Acts (16: 22–34) praying these words upon finding themselves unharmed after the earthquake that demolished the prison. And surely the jailer is thanking the gods that his charges are still in place in the earthquake-ridden jail. That saved his head! But then a conversation changes his perceptions about *who* really saved them, and his whole life is transformed into more than he ever imagined possible through baptism, quite a different sort of "earthquake!"

Baptism is unimaginable grace, newness that can't fully be expressed or understood. The grace of God comes with urgency to hearts open and ready; a free gift which really *frees*, liberating and opening the person to fullness of life in Christ.

Sixty-nine years ago today, this baptismal grace flooded my soul and, like the jailer and his family, my life has never been the same because of God's love and the faith of my parents who brought me to these saving waters. Perhaps today you might reflect on the day of your baptism and the graces and blessings that have been yours since then, simply *because* of those waters, those who brought you to them, and God's gracious gift. Then, together with Paul, Silas, the other prisoners and the jailer and his family, we might make the words of Psalm 138 our own.

Sr. Toni Longo, ASC

**May 24, 2017**  
**Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter**

*The God who made the world and all that is in it . . .  
gives to everyone life and breath and everything. (Acts 17: 24–25)*

As the flowers of spring burst forth around me, I am called to reflect on our care of the universe. God has given us “life, breath and everything.”

What is my response as I strive to live in a manner that will preserve God’s creation for the generations still to come?

I rise each morning with hope as I recite the Morning Offering and my vows. As the rain clouds spawn a rainbow that melts into sunshine, I am encouraged to be cheerful, live simply, and greet each person I meet as Christ. As I walk to Mass, I savor the trees’ new growth, feel the bite of the morning breeze, and appreciate the activity of life awakening around me.

As the day progresses, I thank God daily for the gift of retirement that gives me time to pray as I color mandalas, do research on sustainable practices, be mindful of living simply and caring for the use of water and energy, and enjoying the beauty of God’s creation around me.

Sr. Marcella Parrish, SSMO

**May 25, 2017**  
**Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter**  
**Ascension (Traditional)**

The Gospel reading for the Ascension of the Lord speaks about a mountain top experience for the 11 disciples. They saw Jesus and they worship him even though deep inside, they could not believe. On a scale from one to ten, I ask myself how much do I believe in a loving and forgiving God? Why is it harder some days than others? What can I do to believe even more?

Matthew Kelly, in his book, *Rediscover Jesus*, says that to know Jesus, we need to spend more time in sincere prayer and learn about him by reading the Gospels. A short read from one of the four Gospels everyday puts us in contact of who Jesus is. I started doing that several months ago, reading a paragraph or two each day, learning all kinds of things about Jesus that I glossed over before. Spending time in reflection not only helps me to know him but to experience him in my daily life. And yet most days when my prayer time is over and I get busy with life duties, I let Jesus behind. And it is at those times when I don't feel high with Jesus, and my faith falters.

Reading short versions of most of the Doctors of the Church, it was clear to me that dryness of faith was a struggle for most of them. And it goes back to when we were young, we heard that anything worthwhile comes with a struggle. And we can't forget that faith is a gift from God and the portion we receive is freely given by him. It is up to us to take up the struggle and learn to believe when we can't believe anymore.

The disciples were on a high, receiving the command from Jesus to make disciples of all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught them to observe all that he commands and reminds them that he is with us until the end of ages. The real work comes with the struggle to believe when doing what we think Jesus wanted of us has poor results. People do not always want to hear the Good News, and that pulls us down. Pope Francis speaks to us about the joy of the Gospel. Let us turn to the Gospel and find the joy and strength to do his will each day.

Br. Nick Renner, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

**May 26, 2017**  
**Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter**  
**St. Philip Neri**

*But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice,  
and no one will take your joy away from you. (John 16: 22)*

We are nearing the end of the Easter season. But the joy is still with us! The joy that the disciples experienced on the day of the Resurrection lives on. To me, joy is something that permeates one's whole being. It is not something that comes and goes. Rather it is always with us. Sometimes the joy may be tempered by a problem or a sorrow, but underneath it all is joy. In his encyclical, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis tells us that "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus." (#1) In paragraph five he reminds us, "The Gospel, radiant with the glory of Christ's cross, constantly invites us to rejoice."

Today is also the feast of St. Philip Neri. I found this as the opening line on his page on *Catholic Online*. "If one had to choose one saint who showed the humorous side of holiness that would be Philip Neri." Sort of fits the theme of the day! He sounds like a joyful, holy man. He seemed like someone who was fun to be with and who shared the joy that he knew by knowing Christ.

I hope that the joy of knowing Jesus would be as evident in me as it was in Philip Neri. I hope that the redeeming love of Jesus permeates my whole being.

Sr. Ann Clark, C.P.P.S. (Dayton)

**May 27, 2017**  
**Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter**

*Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father  
in my name he will give you. (John 16: 23)*

This almost sounds like a genie in a bottle. Too often, I think we treat God like a genie in a bottle, a celestial being who exists to fulfill our wishes and desires. Early in *Huckleberry Finn*, the Widow Douglas tells Huck about the power of prayer. Huck decides to try it out. First, he tries it out on something small. He prays for a fish hook. Sure enough, he finds a fish hook. Then Huck tries prayer on something a little bigger. He prays for a fishing pole. Well, time passes and he does not acquire a fishing pole. In the text, Mark Twain mentions that Huck doesn't have any more use for prayer from then on.

I find this literary anecdote amusing because this is an example of how many people treat God and prayer. I will try God and religion for a while and see what happens. God is the divine who dwells in our hearts, in the world, and in the universe. God does not grant wishes, or prevents bad things from happening to us. God is love and life who cares for us in God's own way and time. What we need to do is trust.

Rev. Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S. (Kansas City)

**May 28, 2017**  
**The Ascension of the Lord**

I remember as a child in Catholic School hearing the story of the Ascension and feeling a sense of emptiness for the disciples as Jesus was taken up to heaven. They had been with him three years; he was their teacher and guide. He gave them the ability to preach, heal, forgive and inspire; now he was no longer living with them. They watched him disappear physically from their sight.

It is an experience we can relate to because we have all watched friends and family, those who have been a part of our daily life, move away. Promises are made that we will communicate often, and even though we do, it's not the same. It leaves us empty. Life has changed, now what?

At first when Jesus ascends, the disciples stand there frozen, worshiping at the spot where he ascended. What is interesting in Luke's Gospel is that, the disciples, after worshiping, returned to Jerusalem with great joy! What happened in that moment of worship? Did the Holy Spirit inspire them to see and believe? Did it dawn on them that life would not change, and they had a mission to accomplish?

As we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus, we see that it calls us to be excited about witnessing. Jesus said, "You are witnesses to these things." We are called to be witnesses of our faith. God has touched us in so many ways. Do we live our lives with the excitement of the disciples? If we have been touched by God, how do we in turn touch others?

Ascension means pushing us into new ways and new directions. Remember, the disciples were changed after the Ascension. They were excited in new ways. Jesus taught them, and now they had the opportunity to put it into

practice. Jesus has come to us in prayer, Scripture and Eucharist. Are we, too, excited to go forth and witness? We are not alone. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us. Let's be excited about our faith, let us witness by example. It is our Christian call.

Rev. Jeff Finley, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**May 29, 2017**  
**Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter**

*In the world you will have trouble, but take courage,  
I have conquered the world. (John 16: 33)*

This may be the motto that we recite during this season of Easter. Is this not what we remember during this season, that Jesus has conquered death? That Jesus has conquered the world and that now we have nothing to fear. We know the end of the story: we win! Christ, though his Good Friday victory, has paved the way for all of us to be victorious as well. No matter what troubles, what worries, what anxieties come my way, I have the absolute assurance that because Christ has won, I too will win.

This is what we as Roman Catholics are to truly remember, live and celebrate each and every day. Whenever we look at a crucifix, we are reminded of that victory. That because Christ has conquered death, he has conquered the world. He has conquered Satan's rule, I have nothing to fear. These are truly words of joy, comfort and power.

When we focus on that victory of Christ, we have the strength, courage and perseverance to overcome anything and grow closer to Christ on the other side. May these words of Christ truly penetrate our hearts and minds during this Easter season and lead us to victory after victory in this world.

Rev. Michael R. Mateyk, C.P.P.S. (Atlantic)

**May 30, 2017**  
**Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter**

*Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the Gospel of God's grace. (Acts 20: 24)*

How is it that I have come to this place in sharing the sentiments of St. Paul that I need only to finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus? As I begin to lessen my activities to match my energy level, I am reminded daily that I still have a course to run, or walk more slowly, in bearing "witness to the Gospel of God's grace."

In my active years of ministry, I often shared with staff members that we were not to proselytize, but to be an example daily of the Christ within us. St. Paul's explanation of running the course of life has always appealed to me since I've always been active and energetic. Since it's time to slow down and stop to smell the flowers, I am finally at a point where I can be comfortable in simply bearing witness to the Gospel of God's grace.

Reminders of God's grace are so very much around us in the elders who share such wonderful wisdom, in the joyful spontaneity of the younger sisters, in the comings and goings of those still in ministry, in the happy noise of children at play or singing in the choir, in the songs of the birds in the trees, even in the wail of the sirens asking for our prayers for those in trouble.

And so each day is a new adventure in finishing my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the Gospel of God's grace.

Sr. Marcella Parrish, SSMO

**May 31, 2017**  
**Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter**  
**Visitation of the BVM**

*And how does this happen to me  
that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1: 43)*

Today the readings commemorate the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin, Elizabeth. It is a reminder once again, after the Incarnation, on how down to earth is God's love for us.

Many years ago, a very popular song from the 1946 musical *Annie Get Your Gun*, written by Irving Berlin, included in its lyrics the phrase: "doin' what comes natur'lly". The lyrics jokingly spoke about how the Oakley family and their community live happy lives despite their lack of education and, often, money. Even though, as we all know, life is not so simple, the song holds a clue related to today's Gospel reading. The mother of Jesus in helping her cousin Elizabeth was "doing what comes naturally." Her own pregnancy was not an impediment to her availability to serve and be of help in any possible way. This speaks loudly of the mystery of Incarnation, a reality that surpasses any privileges and seeks solidarity with the human condition. Jesus himself has "visited" us by becoming one of us.

As we celebrate the Easter season, let us remember with joy and hope the only privilege we already have, to be witnesses that Jesus came "down to earth" to serve and love.

Rev. Antonio Baus, C.P.P.S. (Cincinnati)

**June 1, 2017**  
**Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter**  
**St. Justin Martyr**

*I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one. (John 17: 20–21)*

Today's Gospel is the conclusion of Jesus' final prayer before departing for the Garden of Gethsemane and the passion. It is a prayer I find particularly compelling at this time in history when, all around us, seeds of disunity are being sown and harvested in equal measure. Jesus' desire for us was to embrace the love that God freely gave us and for us in turn to freely and unconditionally give it to others. Jesus died on the cross soon after saying this prayer and ransomed us from death.

Our baptismal promise should invite us to continue to bring reconciliation and hope through the power of his Precious Blood and be the countercultural prophetic voice needed at this time. As the Psalmist says, we should be confident of God's mercy, compassion and strength as we strive each day to do the will of our Heavenly Father.

In the first reading, we are reminded though through Paul's persecution that the way of the cross does come with its challenges. To be Christian leaves one open to mockery and sometimes persecution, but take courage in knowing that the Lord will always be at your side.

Sr. Mumbi Kigutha, C.P.P.S. Novice (Dayton)

**June 2, 2017**  
**Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter**

*Do you love me? (John 21: 17)*

As an aunt and a great aunt, I have read a lot of story books to children. When I reflect upon this passage, I remember a book that was a big hit in my extended family, *Guess How Much I love You?* In the story, Little Nutbrown Hare want to show his father how much he loves him. The father in turns shows his child the unbreakable love that he has for his son.

As I reflect upon this passage it seems that this is our own version of *Guess How Much I love you?* God reminds Peter, and reminds each of us, that we are loved beyond measure. As we go forth as his disciples to answer his call to follow him, God knows that the road ahead may be full of dangers and hard times. But because we are the daughters and sons of God that unbreakable bond of love will carry us when we laugh and when we cry, when we are jubilant and when we are scared, when we feel like dancing and when we fall, and all those other times in between.

The answer that God would give us when we ask "Guess how much I love you?" is through the outstretched arms of Jesus as he hung on the cross for us. May we truly celebrate this wondrous love by our fidelity to truly "follow him."

Vicky Otto  
Companion (Liberty, Mo.)

**June 3, 2017**  
**Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter**  
**St. Charles Lwanga & Companions**

*You follow me. (John 21: 22)*

In the liturgical calendar, we celebrate St. Charles Lwanga and companions, Martyrs of Uganda, on this day. But for me, it is dominated by the celebration of the Vigil of Pentecost. For 49 days we have been rejoicing in the mystery of death and resurrection. We have walked with Jesus and the disciples through days of doubt and joy. We've walked to Emmaus and run back with elation; we placed our hands into the wounds of Jesus; we enjoyed breakfast on the seashore and ate fish in the upper room. Have not our hearts danced and our voices shouted "Alleluia" a thousand times? Jesus is alive and is with us.

Yet, in the midst of our joy, we are confronted by the reality of our struggling world. While we are making headway in relieving poverty, millions still face famine and exile. Immigrants are still insecure in their flight for safety. And fluctuating temperatures and weather patterns keep reminding us of climate change that seems to threaten our way of living.

Is this the time to stand boldly with the disciples and publically proclaim that Jesus is alive and living through us in the power of the Spirit? Will it take us to where Charles Lwanga and his companions found themselves being faithful to our deep love of self, God and the poor of the world? "Lord, send out your Spirit and renew (through us) the face of the earth." Ps. 104: 30

Sr. Lucy Meissen, C.P.P.S. (O'Fallon)

**June 4, 2017**

**Pentecost**

*Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you...  
and when he had said this, he breathed on them  
and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' (John 20: 21–22)*

In a pre-Pentecost appearance, Jesus came before his fearful disciples and calmed them with his breath and the above words. After his resurrection, it seems he was always calming them by speaking words of peace and breathing upon them from his radiant self. As we reflect on this scene, let us imagine that we too are in that Upper Room, the recipients of this divine action.

After the Ascension, with Jesus' promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit hanging in the air, came that shining day of Pentecost, when the breath became a mighty wind and a blazing fire, pouring into those disciples and many others, emboldening them and strengthening them beyond all telling so that they went forth and changed the world.

Speed forward two millennia. What would *we* look like as Pentecostal people, having been baptized with that transformative wind-breath and fire? We would undoubtedly be filled with faith, but we would also be fortified and enlightened by all the new evolutionary understanding of people like Teilhard de Chardin, Illia Delio, Beatrice Bruteau and Gloria Schaab, who, in a new burst of Spirit, have breathed us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, revealing to us our connection and oneness with one another.

Think about it. Those molecules from the breath of Jesus could be among the ones we are breathing today, for surely Jesus is as close as the air we breathe. Musician Sara Thomsen captures this reality in her song, *By Breath*:

*The air that is my breath is the air that you are breathing; And the air that is your breath is the air that I am breathing. By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one.*

The whole movement of *in-spiration* has to do with drawing air into the lungs and breathing it out, as Jesus did, onto all peoples, into the cosmos, a sign, surely, that we are all one—beyond cultural categories, dualistic thinking, and political battlegrounds.

Although breathing is underrated as a Christian spiritual discipline, it is gaining popularity as a method for mindfulness and handling stress. It helped me personally, this taking in of long, deep breaths, when I found myself overcome by the results of the November presidential election. Now I consider my breathing to be a prayer. I inhale Jesus and exhale love and peace into the world. I do it again and again.

Sr. Diana Rawlings, ASC