



GOD MOUNTS HIS  
**THRONE**  
TO SHOUTS OF  
*Joy;*

A BLARE OF TRUMPETS FOR  
**THE LORD.**

PSALM 47

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD  
MAY 24, 2020

## FROM THE DEACON'S DESK

*Dear friends in Christ,*



Airports are vulnerable places. Since 9/11 – and who knows what will happen to airline travel since the outbreak of **COVID 19** – in the various sections of the airport at any given moment you might witness or be part of tearful farewells or joy-filled reunions. Even before you are required to have your baggage weighed and screened, and before you are forced to take off your shoes, remove your laptop from your carry on and now, probably have to wear a mask throughout the whole flight – travelers will continue to find themselves saying goodbye at the curbside drop off. Departing often means leaving those whom we care deeply about – parents, spouses, children, grandchildren. And for those we have not seen for such a long time, the longing for return begins almost immediately.

When it came time for his ascension, **Jesus** knew that parting would be difficult – for him and for those he loved. As we celebrate the **Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord** this weekend, the conclusion of the **Gospel of Matthew** tells us that on the mountain the disciples doubted. We can imagine that they each felt a myriad of real emotions – doubt, but also sadness, fear, even anger. **Jesus** knew that it wasn't going to be easy for them, so he gave them – and all of us – something to do.

Of course, it wasn't just something to do like a scavenger hunt. It would become known as the **GREAT COMMISSION**, the call to ministry for the men and women who were to lead a community and eventually build a church. And now, as we start the very slow and careful process of returning to our church sanctuaries we still may continue to sit in our kitchens or living rooms watching **Mass** on **YouTube** or **Facebook** full of fear and anxiety and doubt and, maybe, rage, **Jesus** is somewhat commissioning us in the best way we can to do the same... build my church.

This journey through the **COVID-19** "stay" began in the middle of the **Lenten Season**, proceeded through the days of **Holy Week**, and has lasted through this season of **Easter**, continues. Just as that journey of faith didn't end in death, it didn't end at the empty tomb or a locked room. It didn't end with **Jesus** being lifted up, nor has it ended in the centuries of longing that have followed, as his disciples have continued to carry out the **GREAT COMMISSION**. May our own journey continue the **Great Commission**, our call to ministry, our call to community, our call to love.

**Saint John the Baptist, pray for us!**  
**Have a good week,**  
**Deacon Frank**

## MASSES AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Tues. 5/26	1:00 p.m. Padre Pio	Diamond Jaconetti Boggs & Sean McCreary by Joanne Paesano Celebrated at Our Lady of Victory Church
Sun. 5/31	9:30 a.m.	Cesidia Cugini by Cesidio Cugini & Family
Sun. 5/31	9:30 a.m.	Fr. Romano Ciotola by Maria Ciotola & family
Sun. 6/07	9:30 a.m.	Antonetta Contino Prosser by Mr. & Mrs. Eugene C. Molinaro
Sun. 6/07	9:30 a.m.	Joe Agriesti by Vince Militello

*Celebrant for Sunday Mass,  
 May 31st, Fr. Cotton*

**ALL EVENTS/MEETINGS  
 CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

## 2020 Liturgical Calendar &amp; Mass Readings

May 24 – *The Ascension of the Lord*

Acts 1:1-11/tEph 1:17-23/Mt 28:16-20

*Seventh Sunday of Easter*

Acts 1:12-14/1 Pt 4:13-16/Jn 17:1-11a

May 25 – *Easter Weekday*

*Saint Bede the Venerable, Priest and Doctor of the Church; Saint Gregory VII, Pope; Saint Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi, Virgin*

Acts 19:1-8/Jn 16:29-33

May 26 – *Saint Phillip Neri, Priest*

Acts 20:17-27/Jn 17:1-11a

May 27 – *Easter Weekday*

*Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop*

Acts 20:28-38/Jn 17:11b-19

May 28 – *Easter Weekday*

Acts 22:30; 23:6-11/Jn 17:20-26

May 29 – *Easter Weekday*

Acts 25:13b-21/Jn 21:15-19

May 30 – *Easter Weekday*

*Morning: Acts 28:16-20, 30-31/Jn 21:20-25*

May 31 – *Pentecost Sunday*

*Vigil: Gn 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5/Rom 8:22-27/Jn 7:37-39*

*Day: Acts 2:1-11/1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13/Jn 20:19-23*

*\*Pray for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated religious life.*

**PLEASE REMEMBER OUR KNOWN ILL  
 AND ELDERLY IN YOUR PRAYERS\*\***

*\*\*If you know of any additions or corrections, please call the parish office. Due to privacy laws, we depend on your input. For Vienna D'Alberto, who is residing at the Worthington Christian Village and Lucian Susi, who is at St. Ann's Hospital, Westerville, Ohio.*

Dear St. John Parishioners, Please join me periodically on our **St. Brigid of Kildare Parish** livestream. If you missed it, the videos are available at our [YouTube channel](#) and our [parish Facebook page](#).

**Renovation in Sala Hall:** Sala Hall will be closed for renovation of the bathrooms. All ENTRY to Sala Hall will be closed until further notice.



**There will be NO Confessions before Mass on May 31st.**

**Confession Information as of 4-27-2020**

Please visit our website: [www.sjbitaliana.com](http://www.sjbitaliana.com) to view **Confession Information** from **Bishop Brennan** for a listing of churches for an appointment!



**Office Hours:** The Parish office hours are **Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Office will be closed Monday, May 25th, Memorial Day.)**



**BANNS of MARRIAGE**  
**Mitchell Ludwig and Nicole Weiss**  
**June 12, 2020**

**Bishop Brennan's letter to the Diocese  
on the Reopening of Parishes:**

**Dear Friends,**

With the anticipation of reestablishing public worship, we must do so in a way that does not irresponsibly place the health of our people in grave danger. We are still learning a lot about the **COVID-19 Coronavirus**, we have seen its tragic force in the death of so many people. We pray for all those who have died these months as well as for those who mourn. We have also seen heroic efforts by those particularly in the health care field but so many others who in invisible ways have provided for our needs. We are all united in sincere gratitude for the work and the sacrifices of these people.

We also pray for and give thanks for those who have prudently guided us through these difficult times at the national, state, and local levels. We are grateful for the respect, which the state of **Ohio** has shown, for our religious rights and liberties. At no point have they disparaged our essential right and duty to worship **Almighty God** at the sacrifice of the **Mass on Sunday** and encounter the **Risen Lord in the Eucharist**. Rather, partnering with our brothers and sisters in the civil order, we prudently decided that though divine worship is an essential activity so also is the protection of the common good and the dignity of human life. The medical and public safety officials have been warning us urgently that gathered assemblies of persons was gravely dangerous to the individuals present and to the common good. Faced with these dangers, we have exercised together our moral responsibility to safeguard human life and to allow the local healthcare systems to manage the care of the sick. This prudential judgment on our part required great sacrifice for all in the **Church**. You have also sacrificed in various ways these days. For us, as **Catholics**, the loss of our **Sunday** gathering for worship is a great sacrifice. You have made these sacrifices in a spirit of extreme charity and I am deeply grateful. These measures we have undertaken together, we are advised, have made a difference. Our plans for reopening need therefore, to respect all those sacrifices in a way that is responsible with care for the well-being of individuals and of the wider community.

As one public official told me, the **COVID-19 Coronavirus** will be with us for a long time and we need to learn how to live with it. Many of the dangers of gathered assemblies remain. The measures proposed in our guidelines and the work that is being done at the parish level will help to mitigate those dangers to some degree. Cognizant of your many sacrifices, I need to ask patience and flexibility as we begin this process of the return to public worship.

This week some churches are beginning to open for individual prayer. The hours will be limited and subject to the necessities of social distancing. Meanwhile Confessions continue to be available by appointment. During the week of **May 25, 2020**, some churches will begin to celebrate **Weekday Mass** publicly under limited circumstances as the **Churches** are ready.

On the weekend of the great **Solemnity of Pentecost, May 30/31, 2020**, most of our churches will begin the public celebration of **Sunday Mass**. Please note, many things to which we are accustomed will be different. Schedules will need to be modified for a variety of reasons. Not every **Church** will be prepared, and some parishes may need to work together. As a matter of fact, since the fall we have been looking at ways that we might need to adjust schedules so that priests and parishes might work together and, in some cases, we may need to do so right away. We also need to leave time to disinfect the churches and we may need to change locations to accommodate some of the larger populations. Parishes are not in competition but rather meeting the individual needs using the guidelines we are implanting. I thank you in advance for your understanding.

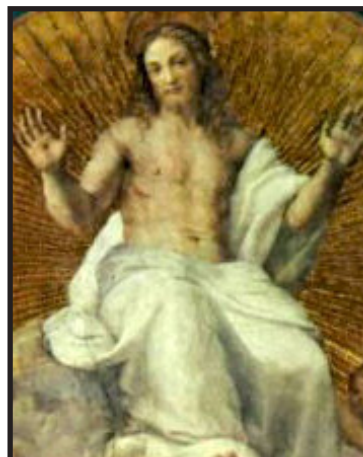
**All Catholics in the Diocese of Columbus are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass at least through September 13, 2020.** Please, if you have any concerns, do not come at this point. In fact, I encourage all to follow the public guidelines here in **Ohio** as much as possible. If you are in one or more of the "high risk" categories, it is still too early to come out. And, of course, if you are experiencing any signs of illness, you have a serious obligation to stay at home. Given that the obligation is dispensed, individuals who wish to participate at **Mass** and receive **Holy Communion** might consider coming at a less crowded time, perhaps during the week. The **Cathedral** will continue to broadcast **Mass** each day on **St. Gabriel Radio** and to stream via our diocesan **YouTube** channel as will many of our parishes.

We will need to be flexible with last minute changes to schedules, and further changes may be necessary even after we begin. Out of care for you, the priest is subject to the same obligation not to offer **Mass** if he is showing even the slightest signs of not feeling well. No one is required to receive **Holy Communion** and the reception of **Holy Communion** on the hand is strongly encouraged. Please be respectful of the guidelines for social distancing and please understand that when the **Church** has reached capacity allowed for health and safety reasons, we cannot admit any more people under any circumstance.

Please take the time to read carefully the guidelines. And most of all, please pray. Pray for me, for your parish priests and the teams with whom they are working to prepare for the return to public worship. These days the Gospels take us spiritually to the table of Jesus with his Apostles on the night of the Last Supper. Reading these chapters little by little (**John** chapters **13, 14, 15, 16 and 17**) might be a good spiritual preparation. And know that I pray for you with gratitude every day.

**Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us.**  
**Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan**  
**Bishop of Columbus**

**AROUND US**



**Prayer**

**Dear God, I come before You to lay my panic and anxiety at Your feet. When I'm crushed by my fears and worries, remind me of Your power and Your grace. Fill me with Your peace as I trust in You and You alone. I know I can't beat this on my own, but I also know that I have You, Lord, and You have already paid the ultimate price to carry my burdens. For this I thank you, Amen.**

# Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

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“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” ~Saint Benedict, from the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (73:3)

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***“There is nothing more dangerous to the spiritual life than to wish to rule ourselves after our own way of thinking.” ~SAINT PHILIP NERI***

**Monday, May 25 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter  
~ Memorial Day ~**

**Holy Gospel: John 16:29-33** The disciples said to Jesus, “Now you are talking plainly, and not in any figure of speech. Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you believe now? Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.”

**Meditation:** Notice how Jesus warned his disciples that their faith would be put to the test and that they would fail. Jesus spoke plainly about the tragedy of betrayal and the triumph of the cross. Jesus knew the hearts of his disciples better than they knew. He knew they would desert him in his hour of trial. Such knowledge could have easily led to bitterness and rejection. Jesus met the injury of betrayal and disloyalty with supreme love and trust in his disciples. He loved his disciples to the very end even when they left him alone to die on the cross. He knew that the cross would not bring defeat but victory over sin and death. Jesus speaks the same word to us today. “My love for you is unconditional and I will never abandon you.” While we cannot avoid all pain and suffering in this life, Jesus, nonetheless assures us that he will guide us safely through any difficulty or trial we may have to undergo for his sake. Jesus calls each of us to take courage, because he has overcome the world. The Holy Spirit gives us a living hope in the power of the resurrection and a confident trust in God’s abiding presence. Nothing can overcome this faith and hope in Christ’s victory – no trial, suffering, temptation, or testing. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength and courage we need to overcome adversity and to persevere in faith.

**Memorial Day Prayer:** God of power and mercy, you destroy war and put down earthly pride. Banish violence from our midst and wipe away our tears, that we may all deserve to be called your sons and daughters. Keep in your mercy those men and women who have died in the cause of freedom and bring them safely into your kingdom of justice and peace. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Contemplation:** How did Jesus convince his disciples that he was the Son of God? Jesus could read their hearts like an open book. He answered their questions before they could even speak them out. And he showed them the glory of God. For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his “beloved Son,” in whom the Father is “well pleased.” We can believe in Jesus and in the words he speaks because he is himself God, the Word made flesh. Since he “has seen the Father,” and is “one with the Father,” Jesus is the only one who knows the Father as he truly is and can reveal him to us. Our faith is “certain” because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. Faith is already the beginning of eternal life. Saint Basil the Great says: “When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall enjoy one day.”

**Memorial Day: A Lesson in Service and Sacrifice (by Tom McGrath, Loyola Press):** What we remember—and honor—on Memorial Day is heroic sacrifice. We acknowledge those who nobly gave of themselves, even unto death, for a purpose they believed was greater than themselves. Since the days just following the end of the Civil War, Americans have gathered in late May to honor those who died in military service to their country. In the spirit of the day, we can also recall, honor, and pray for all those we know who have lived lives of service and sacrifice for the good of others.

One definition of *sacrifice* is “the destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.” Though suffering is always a part of sacrifice to some extent, seeking suffering for its own sake is *not* sacrifice. Sacrifice implies giving up one good for a higher good. For example, a child gives up a day of play to visit an ailing grandparent, or a parent sacrifices watching a favorite television program to help a child who is struggling with homework. Life in the family is full of opportunities for service and sacrifice.

What counts in this definition is the phrase “for the sake of something else.” Is that “something else” worthy of the sacrifice we make? True sacrifice is always at the service of life. We learn this from Jesus, who made the ultimate sacrifice and remained faithful through his Passion, death, and Resurrection. Jesus’ greater purpose for this sacrifice was our well-being—that we might have life and have it abundantly.

This Memorial Day, as we remember all who have served and sacrificed on our behalf, let us not forget what Jesus was willing to give up for us—and the lessons we can learn from that perfect example of sacrifice.

## **Tuesday, May 26 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter Saint Philip Neri, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: John 17:1-11a** Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, just as you gave him authority over all people, so that your son may give eternal life to all you gave him. Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began. I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them. And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you.”

**Meditation:** What is this “glory” of which Jesus speaks in this scripture passage? It is the cross which Jesus speaks of here. How does the cross reveal his glory? In the cross God reveals the breadth of his great love for sinners and the power of redemption which cancels the debt of sin and reverses the curse of our condemnation. Jesus gave his Father the supreme honor and glory through his obedience and willingness to go to the cross. In times of defense the greatest honor belongs not to those who fought and survived but to those who gave the supreme sacrifice of their own lives for their fellow citizens. Jesus speaks of the Father bringing glory to the Son through the great mystery of the Incarnation and Cross of Christ. God the Father gave us his only begotten Son for our redemption and deliverance from slavery to sin and death. There is no greater proof of God's love for each and every person on the face of the earth than the Cross of Jesus Christ. In the cross we see a new way of love – a love that is unconditional, sacrificial and generous beyond comprehension.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty and merciful God, that the Holy Spirit, coming near and dwelling graciously within us, may make of us a perfect temple of his glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer ~ Saint Philip Neri:** Father, you continually raise up your faithful to the glory of holiness. In your love kindle in us the fire of the Holy Spirit who so filled the heart of Philip Neri. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Jesus tells his disciples that they can know the only true God. Knowledge of God is not simply limited to knowing something about God, but we can come to know God personally. The essence of Christianity, and what makes it distinct from Judaism and other religions, is the knowledge of God as our Father. Jesus makes it possible for each of us to personally know God as our Father. To see Jesus is to see what God is like. In Jesus we see the perfect love of God – a God who cares intensely and who yearns over men and women, loving them to the point of laying down his life for them upon the Cross. Jesus is the revelation of God – a God who loves us completely, unconditionally and perfectly. Do you seek unity of heart, mind and will with God and unity of love and peace with your neighbor?

## **Wednesday, May 27 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop**

**Holy Gospel: John 17:11b-19** Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."

**Meditation:** Jesus prayed that his disciples would be sanctified and consecrated in God's truth and holiness. The scriptural word for consecration comes from the same Hebrew word which means "holy" or "set apart for God." This word also means to be "equipped with the qualities of mind and heart and character for such a task or service." Just as Jesus was called by the Father to serve in holiness and truth, so we, too, are called and equipped for the task of serving God in the world as his ambassadors. God's truth frees us from ignorance and the deception of sin. It reveals to us God's goodness, love, and wisdom. And it gives us a thirst for God's holiness. The Holy Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness. As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, he transforms us by his purifying fire and changes us in the likeness of Christ. Is your life consecrated to God?

**Prayer:** Graciously grant to your Church, O merciful God, that, gathered by the Holy Spirit, she may be devoted to you with all her heart and united in purity of intent. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer ~ Saint Augustine of Canterbury:** O God, who by the preaching of the Bishop Saint Augustine of Canterbury led the English peoples to the Gospel, grant, we pray, that the fruits of his labors may remain ever abundant in your Church. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Contemplation:** Have you ever given time, thought and prayer to know what your purpose and mission in life is? Jesus' aim and mission was to glorify his heavenly Father. All he said and did gave glory to his Father. On the eve of his sacrifice and in the presence of his disciples, Jesus made his high priestly prayer: "Holy Father, keep them in your name that they may be one as we are one". Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples and for all who would believe in him. Jesus' prayer for his people is that we be united with God the Father in his Son and through his Holy Spirit and be joined together, in unity with all who are members of Christ's body. Jesus saw glory in the cross rather than shame. Obedience to his Father's will was his glory. Jesus kept his Father's word even when tempted to forgo the cross. His strength was not in himself but in his Father who kept him. We, too, must take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus wherever and whenever he may call us.

## **Thursday, May 28 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter**

**Holy Gospel: John 17:20-26** Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed saying: "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, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

**Meditation:** The unity of Jesus and his Father is a unity of love and obedience, and a unity of personal relationship. Because Jesus loves us and united us through the Sacrament of Baptism we are called to live in a unity of love. Through the Eucharist, we are united to Christ in the greatest gift to us – Christ's Body and Blood. Through his teachings, we follow him wherever he leads us as his disciples. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we demonstrate our heartfelt desire to reunite ourselves with him,

recognizing our sinfulness, our sorrow for having sinned, and our pledge not to sin again. Jesus' prayer on the eve of his sacrifice shows the great love and trust he has in his beloved disciples. He knows they would abandon him in his hour of trial, yet he entrusted to them the great task of spreading his name throughout the world and to the end of the ages. The Lord entrust us with the same mission...to make him known and loved by all. Jesus died and rose again that all might be one as he and the Father are one.

**Prayer:** May your Spirit, O Lord, we pray, imbue us powerfully with spiritual gifts, that he may give us a mind pleasing to you and graciously conform us to your will. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Look around at the people in the pews who are with you in Church. Look around at the people in your office, your school, your home, your neighborhood. The distinctive mark of Jesus' disciples is their love for God and their desire to do his will, and their love for one another. Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper concludes with the prayer for all men and women who will come after him and follow him as his disciples. In a special way Jesus prays here for us that as members of his body we would be one as he and his Father – God the father – are one.

## **Friday, May 29 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter Saint Paul VI, Pope**

**Holy Gospel: John 21:15-19** After Jesus had revealed himself to his disciples and eaten breakfast with them, he said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

**Meditation:** Jesus calls us, even in our weakness and sin, to love him above all else. Saint Augustine in his book *Confessions* wrote: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new. Late have I loved you! ...You shone your Self upon me to drive away my blindness. You breathed your fragrance upon me... and in astonishment I drew my breath...now I pant for you! I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me! - and I burn to live within your peace." Nothing but our stubborn human pride, our sinfulness, and our willfulness can keep us from the love of God. God's love is a free gift, unmerited and beyond payment. We can never outmatch God in love. He loved us first; we must reciprocate with total love for Him by following His commands, and the teachings of His Son and His Catholic Church.

**Prayer:** O God, who by the glorification of your Christ and the light of the Holy Spirit have unlocked for us the gates of eternity, grant, we pray, that, partaking of so great a gift, our devotion may grow deeper and our faith be strengthened. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer ~ Saint Paul VI:** O God, who entrusted your Church to the leadership of Pope Saint Paul VI, a courageous apostle of your Son's Gospel, grant that, illuminated by his teachings, we may work with you to expand the civilization of love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Do you want the fire of God's love to burn in your heart? John the Evangelist tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). His love is unconditional, without limit, and everlasting. It's the beginning and the end; and it's the essence of Christianity. It draws us to the heart of God and it compels us to give to him our full allegiance and our very lives. Saint Paul the Apostle tells us that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us (ref. Romans 5:5). As so we must ask ourselves: Do I love God with all my mind, all my heart, and all my soul? If not, then ask yourself: what is holding me back?

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011; Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from the Irish Jesuits' *Sacred Space* web page and *Biblical Medications for Easter* by Rev. Carroll Stuhlmuehler, C.P.; information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.



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