

Do not fear: I am with you;
do not be anxious:
I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you.
~ Isaiah 41:10

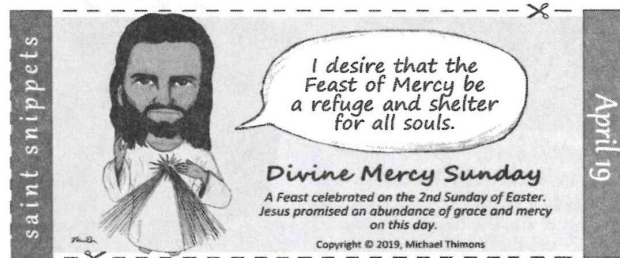


Saint Anselm (1033-1109)

April 21

For anyone disheartened at how easily contemporary discussions of disputed church-state issues escalate from civil discourse to shrill polemic, Anselm provides perspective. Grounded in the Benedictine Rule's balanced "prayer and work," this monk-scholar, called from his abbey to become Archbishop of Canterbury, was thrust into firestorms of political intrigue, himself the target of warring bishops and nobles, kings and popes. Yet from depths of inner peace, Anselm wrote this moving exhortation by which today's Liturgy of the Hours celebrates him: "Rise up, insignificant man! From your preoccupations, flee a while. From your turbulent thoughts, hide for a time. Your crushing responsibilities cast aside. Your burdensome business lay down. Free a little space for God. Rest a little while in him!" "Faith seeking understanding" was his strikingly contemporary motto; and though renowned as an erudite philosopher-theologian, Anselm also left personal letters, profound for their insights on Christian friendship. Along with those, he composed "A Prayer for My Friends" and "A Prayer for My Enemies," reminding us that those who love God most passionately are also those who love others most humanly.

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Get Real!

Those of us who flatter ourselves that we have a "realistic" view of the world may listen to the first reading today and say, "Get real!" when we hear Luke's account of the early, Elysian days of the Christian movement. All seems to be rosy, lots of wonders are performed, everyone shares selflessly, they eat together in "exultation," and the Lord added to their numbers? Well, who wouldn't be attracted to a group like this? From the wind that swept through the upper room at Pentecost as the Spirit of God blew over the face of the waters in Genesis, and the fire that appeared over each disciple as the light appeared at the dawn of creation, Luke's intent in Acts is to show a new creation, a restoration of creation's original goodness through the working of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who continues to make us into the Body of Christ. We may occasionally, like Thomas in the Gospel, say, "Get real!" but our ultimate reality in the Spirit is to work continually to make our Christian community a new creation, one in which others will find God's joy and beauty.

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Readings for the Week

- Monday:** Acts 4:23-31; Ps 2:1-9; Jn 3:1-8
Tuesday: Acts 4:32-37; Ps 93:1-2, 5; Jn 3:7b-15
Wednesday: Acts 5:17-26; Ps 34:2-9; Jn 3:16-21
Thursday: Acts 5:27-33; Ps 34:2, 9, 17-20; Jn 3:31-36
Friday: Acts 5:34-42; Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14; Jn 6:1-15
Saturday: 1 Pt 5:5b-14; Ps 89:2-3, 6-7, 16-17; Mk 16:15-20
Sunday: Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-11; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35



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Saints and Special Observances

- Sunday:** Second Sunday of Easter (or Sunday of Divine Mercy); Julian Calendar Easter
Tuesday: St. Anselm; Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day)
Wednesday: Administrative Professionals Day; Earth Day
Thursday: St. George; St. Adalbert
Friday: St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen; National Arbor Day
Saturday: St. Mark

Today's Readings

First Reading — All who believed were devoted to the teachings of the apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42-47).

Psalm — Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting (Psalm 118).

Second Reading — God has given us an undiminished inheritance, safeguarded for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-9).

Gospel — The risen Christ comes to his disciples with peace and the Spirit. The absent Thomas doubts (John 20:19-31).

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Treasures From Our Tradition

One of the great Easter traditions is “mystagogy,” an ancient word meaning “reflection on the mysteries.” It is a style of catechesis, or passing on the faith. People who have shared an experience, in this case those who have been baptized at Easter, are urged to recall their experience, reflect on its meaning, and apply their insights to their new way of life.

There is an aspect of an experience that is simply not available until you’ve had it. For example, you may think you know weddings inside out; you’ve been to dozens, seen hundreds in the movies or on television, but until you’ve said “I do” to another, there is a certain knowledge unavailable to you. Those who go down into the waters of baptism as adults have similar experiences; they have all taken baths before, but not like this one! Mystagogy helps such persons to uncover the deep meaning of the experience, their sense of a new beginning, of God’s abundant love, of forgiveness, of community. It takes time for the power of the Easter Vigil to work its wonders for us. Those who are newly baptized are called “neophytes,” meaning “newly planted.” The tender buds of spring need care and nurturing, and our new brothers and sisters need your prayer and your faithful example.

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Poor Thomas. Singled out from among the disciples because he refused to believe what they were telling him—that they had seen, in the flesh, their friend and their Lord, Jesus Christ. Can any of us really blame him? All of the disciples were terrified, crestfallen, hiding. But what of Thomas? Just where was he when Jesus appeared the first time to the group huddled in fear? He had gone “out”—out of the community where his faith had life. Maybe this was actually a blessing for Thomas and not the curse associated with the “doubting Thomas” moniker bestowed on him by tradition. Oh, the divine mercy of the Lord! Could Thomas be the forerunner of all of us who come in fragile hope and uncertainty to the Christian community, so beautifully described in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles? Could Thomas be an ultimate exemplar of the faith described in the First Letter of Peter?

You Should’ve Been There!

Most of us have had the misfortune of missing something important simply by being absent, and then hearing about what happened. In today’s reading, unique to John’s Gospel, Thomas is the only apostle who was not around when Jesus appeared to his friends for the first time after his death and resurrection. They were frightened and grieving, not knowing what would happen to them. Remember, they found themselves to be fugitives, seemingly guilty by association with a criminal executed by government officials. Suddenly, Jesus was with them, beaming peace and mercy to his fragile followers. What joy! What a shock, too!

We will never know why Thomas had left their hiding

Divine Mercy Prayer

You expired, O Jesus,
but the source of life gushed forth for souls
and an ocean of mercy opened up for the whole
world.

O Fount of Life,
unfathomable Divine Mercy,
envelop the whole world
and empty Yourself out upon us.

O Blood and Water,
which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus
as a fount of mercy for us,
I trust in You.
Amen.

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place. All we know is that he returned to wild stories about Jesus being alive after dying a brutal death. He must have thought that the other apostles in their grief had a shared delusion of what they wished were true. When Thomas finally saw Jesus, he gave what is considered the most profound profession of faith: “My Lord and my God!” In his tender mercy, Jesus ministered to Thomas by helping him to see for himself.

We Walk By Faith

But what of us? The early Christian community could only trust the words of these same apostles, the ones Thomas couldn’t believe, when they preached Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Who could believe what they said? The Holy Spirit, breathed upon the disciples in that first encounter, emanated so powerfully from them that they were able to convene seemingly utopian communities of faith. Filled with “divine mercy,” their lives became an evangelization to the world. And this is how we too are sent out, like the disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit and bearing the Lord’s peace and mercy to a troubled, suffering world. The wounds of Jesus are very real today in the needy and broken. May we always work to bind up those wounds wherever we find them.

Today’s Readings: Acts 2:42–47; Ps 118:2–4, 13–15, 22–24; 1 Pt 1:3–9; Jn 20:19–31

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