



Impact

Discipleship. Stewardship. Evangelization.

April, 2017 April is a month full to the brim with meaning for us as Christian disciples. We conclude Lent, celebrate Triduum, and begin the Easter season this month. Our focus for Impact mirrors the dynamism of this month. In this issue, we consider Christ's command to "do this;" we consider the Paschal Mystery, and the real-life implications of living as people of faith. We pray this month is filled with every grace and blessing for you and all you lead and serve in this holy season.

— Leisa Anslinger and Amberly Boerschinger

Homily Connections

April 2: This Fifth Sunday of Lent features the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus. The Elect celebrate the third and final Scrutiny today, and through the Scrutiny, all in the assembly anticipate the initiation of the Elect and candidates for reception into full communion at the Easter Vigil. In the Gospel, Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life," and Martha responds, "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Connecting with everyday life: What does our faith really mean in our lives? Do we, with Martha, acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God? What is the meaning of this acknowledgement in our daily lives? Think about the ways in which faith intersects with daily life: times of crisis or illness, death of a loved one, separation from a relationship, or simply the pace of daily life. Everything changes when we address such moments through faith. Through faith, we find resolution in conflict, comfort and peace in times of trial, grace and life in the midst of stress and busy-ness.

April 9: On this Palm Sunday of Our Lord's Passion, we begin Holy Week. Our annual immersion into the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord begins this day with the first of two proclamations of the passion narrative.

Connecting with everyday life: In our surrounding secular culture, the word "passion" is used almost exclusively in relationship with sexual intimacy. This Sunday invites us to re-think the word, and to consider Christ's passion for humanity, his willingness to suffer and die for our sake, and all this calls us to be as Christian people. Ask your parishioners: What are you passionate about? How is this passion a sign of Christ's life and love? What does Christ's passion and death tell you about what (who) is important to God, and how we should respond to this love in our daily living?

April 16: Alleluia! He is Risen! This Easter Sunday, we will find many among us who rarely come to Mass. Yet, they will be with us today. Help all who are gathered to reflect upon the mystery and miracle of Christ's resurrection, and the new life which we are promised.

Connecting with everyday life: Think about your own life. How have you experienced death? Perhaps the physical death of a loved one, or the death of a hope, dream, or relationship. How did you experience the new life of resurrection in this midst of this death? Share your experience in a way that brings the meaning of this day to life for those who gather.

April 23: This Second Sunday of Easter is also Divine Mercy Sunday. We hear in the Acts of the Apostles the depiction of the ideal Christian community, in which people worship, grow as disciples, serve and give of themselves and their possessions, and are drawn to one another in community. We are called to such life as well, as witnesses to the Risen Lord who is with and among us through the Holy Spirit.

Connecting with everyday life: For most people, their parish is the way they experience the Christian community. Today is a good day to highlight the ways in which people come to know the presence and mystery of Christ's love and mercy. Share a story of your parish's life and ministry as an example of this, and invite all who are present to become more deeply rooted in Christ's life through your parish.

April 30: On this Third Sunday of Easter, we hear the familiar and striking account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and their encounter with the Risen Jesus.

Connecting with everyday life: The disciples recognized Christ in the breaking of the bread. This is a perfect opportunity to speak about the gift, blessing, and mystery of the Eucharist, and all that it means to be Eucharistic people. Mention the many ways people lay down their lives for others — parents for children, children for aging or ill parents, parishioners for those who are in need, friends for friends. We bring these many relationships and experiences of brokenness and service to the Eucharistic table, and we encounter Christ's presence in those experiences and especially in the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ, which we share in Holy Communion.

At Parish Meetings or in Adult Faith Formation this Month

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, your life, death, and resurrection show us God's saving love, which is beyond our comprehension.

Our only response to this great love is thankful praise, lived in word and deed, day-by-day, life-to-life.

Forgive our failings, show us the way from darkness to light, and urge us to share your love in the world.

You are one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
Now and forever.
Amen.

Listen to Sacred Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Second Reading, Holy Thursday)

Read: "Do this" from the April issue of Impact

Share: your thoughts, using these questions to guide your reflection:

In what ways do you live as a Eucharistic person at this time?

How might you be called to grow in your willingness to give of yourself for the sake of others?

Commit: Make a promise to prayerfully discern how you are called to live and grow as a disciple during this Easter season.

Offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.

Do This

We hear it every time we go to Mass. “Do this in memory of me.” Yet how often do we stop to think about what it means and take it to heart? Jesus’ command is at the very center of Christian discipleship. What does it mean to “do this?”

Do this. Wash feet. On the night before he died, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, saying, “I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” Foot washing is about humble service. To wash another’s feet is to touch the most needy part of that person’s life with the love of Christ. Do this.

Do this. Become Eucharistic. At the Last Supper, Jesus said, “This is my body, which is given for you. This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Lk 22:19-20) Jesus gave himself completely for our sake. Taking part in the Eucharist is more than “going to Mass.” In the words of St. Augustine, “we become what we receive.” Through active participation in the Mass, we become more like Christ, ready to give of ourselves, to sacrifice. Do this.

Do this. Be united to Christ in community. Receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord is a sacred moment of unity with Christ. It is about more than “me and Jesus” however. Our union with Christ draws us to be in communion with others. Do this.

Do this. Live Christ’s mission. We are sent into the world to share Christ’s presence through our loving attention and service. Christ’s mission is our mission. Do this.

Christ’s commission at the Last Supper is to be the guiding principle of our lives: “Do this — wash feet, become more like Christ, be united to Christ in community, live Christ’s mission — in memory of me.”

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Triduum: Three Days

Holy Thursday: On Holy Thursday we participate in the washing of feet. How do you “wash” others through your actions or attention, your ministry, service, and care?

Good Friday: On Good Friday, we kiss or reverence the cross. How do you show reverence or love for the people in your life? What about those who are difficult to love?

Easter: At Easter, we light the Paschal candle, bless water, and feast in the Holy Eucharist. What or who lights your life? How does Mass lead you to follow Jesus as your model and guide?

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From darkness to light. From death to new life.

In this most sacred season, we take time to reflect on the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' life, passion, death, and resurrection.

The Paschal Mystery provides a pattern through which we may reflect upon and find deep meaning in our own lives. In faith, we know that death and darkness will always give way to life and light.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus were deeply saddened by Jesus' crucifixion. It was as though their hopes had been killed on the cross. They could not bear to remain in Jerusalem. And as they walked, they came upon Jesus. As often happens in the Gospels, Jesus sought them out. Jesus showed them the meaning of his life, passion, and death, and in their conversation with him, they began to grasp the real meaning of their faith in him. While still confused and uncertain, they invited him to remain with them. Then, they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. With burning hearts, they hurried back to Jerusalem to share the good news with the other disciples. Their darkness and despair was transformed. Suddenly, they knew the hope of new life.

Like the disciples on the road, we all experience sadness, disappointment, and loss. It is in these moments that we most need to know God's love. At times, we encounter Christ in prayer, especially at Mass, in the breaking of the bread. At other times, we experience God's presence through the care of another. Not only can we place our hope in our Risen Lord, we know that he walks with us, as one who has experienced darkness and death. In his resurrection is our promise of life and light.

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“The temptation to put God to one side, to put ourselves at the center is ever-present and the experience of sin wounds our Christian life, our being children of God. This is why we must have the courage of faith, we must resist being led to the mentality that tells us: "There is no need for God, He is not that important for you". It is the exact opposite: only by behaving as children of God, without being discouraged by our falls, can we feel loved by Him, our life will be new, inspired by serenity and joy. God is our strength! God is our hope!”

(Pope Francis, April 11, 2013)