

**THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER  
DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY  
THE OCTAVE OF EASTER**

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- Sun.      **Divine Mercy Sunday**  
April 24   **HOW WE GLIMPSE THE SECRETS OF GOD'S MERCY**  
A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Bernard
- Mon.      **Feast of St Mark, Evangelist**  
25         **THE FAITH OF ST. MARK**  
A reflection taken from discourses by St. Pope John XXIII
- Tues.     **Tuesday of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Easter**  
26         **A NEW BIRTH**  
A reflection by Fr Thomas Merton OCSO (Part 1)
- Wed.      **Memorial of St Rafael Arnaiz Baron, Oblate, OCSO**  
27         **FINDING LIFE BY GIVING ALL TO JESUS**  
Notes from the writings of St. Rafael Arnaiz Baron
- Thurs.    **Thursday of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Easter**  
28         **A NEW BIRTH**  
A reflection by Fr Thomas Merton OCSO (Part 2)
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri.      **Memorial of St. Catherine of Siena**  
29         **BECOMING ONE WITH GOD**  
A reflection from St. Catherine of Siena's Treatise on Divine Providence
- Sat        **Saturday of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Easter**  
30         **WITNESSING THE TRUTH OF THE EASTER MESSAGE**  
A reflection from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII

*Sunday*

## **HOW WE GLIMPSE THE SECRETS OF GOD'S MERCY**

### **A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Bernard**

Is there a place where all can find perfect safety? Yes, all can find it in the wounds of our Savior. The measure of one's security is Christ's power to save. The world may rage, my weaknesses may weigh me down, the devil may lay snares for me, but I won't fall because my feet are planted firmly on solid rock. If I had sinned gravely my conscience would be troubled but I would not despair—for I would call to mind the wounds of my Lord. Scripture says that Christ was wounded for our iniquities. What sin is so death-dealing that it cannot be forgiven because of the death of Christ? If I remember this powerful and effective medicine for the malignancy that is sin, then it can no longer terrify me.

Someone said: My sin is too great to be pardoned! That person was wrong! Whoever is a member of Christ can always obtain pardon. Such a person has a personal claim on Christ's own merits. Any member of the body can claim a share in what belongs to the body's head. I confidently seek all I lack in the heart of the Lord. That heart overflows with mercy.

And there are openings in the Body through which that mercy pours out. Christ's hands and feet and side were pierced and through these clefts, I may suck honey from the rock and oil from the hardest stone, as Scripture says. In other words, I am able to taste and see that the Lord is sweet. We are to be other openings for love and mercy.

My Lord was thinking thoughts of peace and I was not aware of it. After all, who knows the mind of the Lord or who has been the Lord's counselor? But the piercing nails became so many keys to unlock the door so that I might see the Lord's will. What did I see? Both the nails and the wound in the Lord's side cry out that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Christ's soul itself was pierced and the lance opened his heart. It was so that the Lord might feel compassion for us in our weakness.

Through the sacred wounds, the secret of the Lord's heart lies open. The great mystery of love is revealed. It was the tender mercy of our God that caused the Dayspring from On High to visit us. This is manifested through Christ's wounds. Where have God's mercy, compassion, and love shown out more luminously than from these wounds?

O sweet and gentle Lord of Mercy, greater mercy than this no one has, than to lay down life itself for those doomed to death. My every claim to merit comes from your mercy, so I lack nothing so long as you don't lack pity. If your mercies are so many, then I am rich. So what if I am aware of many sins? Where sin abounded, there grace has abounded all the more. Your mercies, Lord, are eternal and so I will sing your mercies forever. O Lord, our God has made you my hope and confidence and righteousness; I will not remember my sin but I will be ever mindful of you, my Savior.

*Monday*

## **THE FAITH OF ST. MARK**

### **A reflection taken from discourses by St. Pope John XXIII**

I want to remind you of two things. The first is St. Mark's faith; it didn't give up even when he was rejected by others. The second is his devotion to the Gospel message, traditionally said to represent the preaching of St. Peter. This stands for the treasure of truth which we have to guard in our hearts. It is our sacred inheritance, one which our parents in faith bequeathed to us. In this, they showed how greatly they honored it and that they refused to treat it as an embellishment of other enterprises. They taught us to accept it as our basic treasury of wisdom and Christian virtues.

Unlike the many ideologies that come and go during human history, no message has succeeded in giving peace to human hearts except that which calls all to faith in Jesus Christ. People long for the truth about what is good and brings more abundant life, and they have to avoid being lured astray by various utopias and easy answers. These are only deceit and illusion.

Christianity is not a complex system of oppressive rules, as unbelievers at times think. It is peace and joy and love, and a life that is continually being renewed. Faith works in us like the mysterious pulse of spring. We need to assert this as confidently as the apostles; we need to be as convinced of it as was St. Mark; we need to live it in a way that makes it convincing and attractive.

Only faith can give unfailing meaning and serenity to daily life. In it we find the source of these things, the Risen Christ. He has set us all free from the slavery that is sin; he invites us to become new creatures with him. This is a joyful mystery that has a meaning, affecting every single Christian life in its innermost sanctuary of spiritual life. Its power can make us like the Risen Christ.

Throughout the whole of Eastertide, the Church proclaims the joyful truth: The Lord is risen indeed! Those who were sinners and came to Christ are risen too. Those who doubted or were diffident about their faith, or were overly timid or lukewarm, are all risen. So too, those who have been sorely tried and who suffer or are poor and oppressed have new hope.

Those who are risen live joy in love. Love is not only a great spring of joy but joy draws its zest from love. God loves us and gives everything to us. We are called to follow him. If we love as Jesus loves we will love others as Jesus does, and we will bear witness to life in Christ as joy. It is a joy for the world. When all are filled with joy, who will have time for hatred and violence and injustice. Come to the Lord and find life. This is St. Mark's message to us now and always. Do not forget the evangelizing power of faith-filled joy.

*Tuesday*

## **A NEW BIRTH**

### **A reflection by Fr Thomas Merton OCSO (Part 1)**

One of the most important and characteristic themes of Christianity is that of renewal of the self. This is “the new creation” of the Christian in Christ. The death to the old self and new life in the Spirit sent by Christ from the Father means not only juridical salvation in heaven and in the hereafter but much more a dimension of one’s present life, a transformation and renewal not only of the Christian as a person but of the community of believers, the brotherhood of those who have received the Spirit of Christ and live in the grace of Christ.

The renewal of life cannot be understood if it is seen merely as a ritual affair, the result of certain formal exterior acts. Nor is it an emotional conversion followed by adherence to a set of new attitudes and convictions, based on a sense of inner liberation.

In the theology of the New Testament, particularly that of Paul and John, the new being of the Christian, his new creation is the effect of an inner revolution which, in its ultimate and most radical significance, implies complete self-transcendence and transcendence of the norms and attitudes of any given culture, any merely human society. This includes the transcendence of religious practices.

There is a dept in our hearts in which we hear a voice telling us “You must be born anew”. It is an obscure but insistent demand of one’s own nature to transcend itself in the freedom of a fully integrated, autonomous, personal identity.

Jesus tells the doctor of the Law, Nicodemus “You must be born again”. He was not only telling him something he could hear, if he listened, in the silence of his own heart. He was also telling him that ordinary answers were not sufficient to meet his demand. The be born again is more than a matter of good moral resolutions, of self-discipline, of adjustment to social demands and requirements, of finding oneself a respected and worthwhile role in society. The summons to be born again does indeed make itself heard in our hearts, but it does not always have the same meaning, because we are not always capable of interpreting it in our true dept. Sometimes it is little more than an expression of weariness, a sense of failure, an awareness of wrong, a half-hopeless wish that one might get another chance, a fresh start in the New Year. One desires to begin a new life because the burden of the old has now become an unbearable accumulation of fatigue, mistakes, betrayals, evasions, and disappointments. One longs for a new life because the old life is stale, unworthy, uninteresting, and cheap. One looks for a new way because all the old familiar ways are a dead end.

Wednesday

## FINDING LIFE BY GIVING ALL TO JESUS

### Notes on the Spiritual Life by St. Rafael Arnaiz Baron

“With Jesus at my side, nothing seems difficult to me, and I see more, that the road to sanctity is simple. Better still, it seems to me that it consists in continuing to get rid of things instead of collecting them, in slowly boiling down to simplicity instead of becoming complicated with new things. In the measure that we detach ourselves from so much disordered love for creatures and for ourselves, it seems to me that we are getting closer and closer to the only love, the sole desire, the one longing of this life. That is true sanctity, which is God.

“To savor the Cross, to live sick and unknown and abandoned by all—only you and the Cross, Lord. How sweet the bitterness, the loneliness, the grief, the pain, wolfed down and swallowed in silence, without help. How sweet the tears shed next to your Cross. Ah! If I knew how to tell the world where true happiness is! But this the world doesn’t understand, nor can it...because to understand the Cross one must love it. To love it one must suffer, and not only suffer but love the suffering in the Lord. O Lord, how few follow you to Calvary.

“When I left my home, by my own deliberate intent, I left behind a series of treatments that my illness required and I came to embrace a state in which it is impossible to care for so touchy a sickness. I knew perfectly well what awaited me. Nevertheless, sometimes, poor Rafael, without your being aware of it, you were suffering, seeing yourself deprived of many necessary things, stripped free of the liberty of giving in to the weakness of your illness and so giving it the remedies that out there in the world you did not lack.

“It is difficult to explain why one loves suffering! But I believe that it can be explained because it is not suffering in itself but rather as it is in Christ, and whoever loves Christ loves his Cross.

“If at times God is not in the soul it is because we do not want him there. We have such an accumulation of things to do, of distractions, of interests, vain desires, conceit, we have too much world within us, that God distances himself. But all we have to do is want him. Every day I am happier in my complete abandonment into his hands. I see his will even in the most insignificant and tiny thing that happens. In everything, I find a lesson that serves to make me understand better God’s mercy toward me. I love his designs with my whole being, and that is enough.

“My prayer is not good. I neither pray nor meditate nor do my *lectio* well. At work, I hardly work. When I eat and sleep, I do nothing else—just eat and sleep like a little animal. What one does is nothing in itself and is worth nothing. What is of worth is the way in which it is done. When will I understand that virtue is not in eating an onion, but in eating an onion for God? Sanctity is not in external things but in the interior intention of any act whatsoever.”

Rafael wrote this final reflection just two weeks before he died in a diabetic coma.

*Thursday*

## **A NEW BIRTH**

### **A reflection by Fr Thomas Merton OCSO (Part 2)**

Unfortunately, our weariness with the old, our longing for the new, is often just another trap of nature, another variation in the imprisonment we hope to escape. It may inspire us with bright hopes, and it may induce us to believe we have found a new answer: but then, after a while, the same despair regains possession of our hearts. Or simply we fall back into the same old routine. Modern commercial society is largely built on the exploitation of this need for a “new life” in the hearts of men and women. But by exploiting this need, manipulating and intensifying it, the marketing society also aggravates and corrupts it at the same time.

Thus, the need for the new becomes false. It is at the same time insatiable and deceptive. It is tantalized and kept in a state of excitement by all kinds of clever techniques, and it never receives anything but pseudo-satisfactions. We have more and more needs, more and more hopes, and yet we have become more and more suspicious, less and less able to bear the burden of anxieties and half-truths that we carry about in our hearts. We can become depressed and weighed down by the falsity and illusion of our lives. We can lose hope in the possibility of renewal. In the end, we opt for easier forms of escape.

In our quest, something tells us that we are trying to recover that which is deepest, most original, most personal in ourselves. To be born again is not to become someone else, but to become ourselves.

Our deepest spiritual instinct is that urge of inner truth that demands that we be faithful to ourselves. We need to be open to our deepest and most original potentialities. Yet, at the same time to become one's true self, one must die. That is to say, the false self must die.

In the Gospel of John, the scholar Nicodemus asks Jesus in bewilderment how is it possible for a grown man to be born again. We cannot reverse our course. He thinks it is not possible to change. But Jesus has another idea. He talks of an entirely different kind of birth. To be born again in this way is to be born beyond egoism, beyond selfishness, beyond individualism, in Christ. We are to be born beyond hatred, beyond struggles, in peace, love, joy, self-sacrifice, service, gentleness and humility. This rebirth is not a single event but a continuous dynamic of inner renewal.

Friday

## **BECOMING ONE WITH GOD**

### **A reflection from St. Catherine of Siena's Treatise on Divine Providence**

The person who is exalted by a very great desire and yearning for the honor of God and the salvation of souls should begin the spiritual life by working at the ordinary virtues for a time. One remains in what I call "the cell of self-knowledge". The point is to know well the goodness of God toward oneself. This knowledge must precede love, and only when one has attained love can one strive to follow and be clothed with truth and live in its brilliant light.

There is no way to receive a taste for truth as effective as humble and continuous prayer. This prayer has to be founded on knowledge of self. This kind of prayer unites one with God and teaches one to walk in the footsteps of Christ Crucified and Risen. Desire and affection lead to a union of love and make one another Christ.

It seems that this is what Christ meant when he said: "*To anyone who loves me and keeps my commandment I will show myself, and that person will become one reality with me and I with that person*". We find similar words in various places in Scripture and they show us that it is by love that one becomes another Christ.

I remember having been told by a Handmaid of God that when her mind was exalted and she was lifted up in prayer God showed her the great love he had for her and all his servants: "*Open the eye of your intellect and gaze into me and you will see the beauty I have given rational creatures. Then look at those beauties I have created in them by making them in my image and likeness, and especially in the ones I have clothed in the nuptial garment—the garment of love—and adorned with many virtues; by all this, they are united with me through love. If you ask who they are I would reply that they are my other selves—for they have denied their own wills, are clothed with my will and united to me as conformed to my will.*" It is, then, the veriest truth that one is united to God by love.

Saturday

## **WITNESSING THE TRUTH OF THE EASTER MESSAGE**

**A reflection taken from talks by St. Pope John XXIII**

Christianity is not that complex system of oppressive rules which some unbelievers try to make it. Christianity is peace, joy, love and a life that is continually renewed, like that mysterious pulse of nature at the beginning of spring. We need to affirm this truth as confidently as the apostles did. You must be convinced of it yourself. It is your greatest treasure and it alone can give meaning and serenity to your daily life. The source of this joy and love is the Risen Christ. The Lord has set us free—free from the slavery of sin. The Lord invites us to become new creatures with Him and look to eternal joy and love.

The joyful mystery which is Easter has a meaning which affects every single Christian person. It affects us in the innermost sanctuary of our spiritual life. It gives us the power to become like the Risen Christ. Easter is for all a mystery of death and life. As the clearly expressed commandment of the Church teaches, all of us are urged at this particular time to purify our conscience by confessing our sins and bathing in the Blood of Jesus. We are called to draw near to the Eucharistic feast and to do it with great faith. We are invited to nourish ourselves with the life-giving flesh of the Lamb of God. This illustrates just how the feast of Easter is an experience of the mystery of death and resurrection for all believers and for each of us personally.

Throughout the entirety of Eastertide, we are to proclaim the joyful truth: "*The Lord is Risen indeed!*" This is true for every member of the Lord's family. The person who was a sinner is risen indeed. The doubting, the distrustful, the diffident, the timorous, the lukewarm—they are all called to rise again. We are one with those who suffer, have been tried sorely, the poor and the oppressed. We proclaim, as Christ did, good news for the poor and marginalized.

The Lord's passion and Resurrection show us that there are two lives. There is one in which people barely live. There is one for which all long. Isn't Jesus—who bore this poor, earthly life for our sake—able to give us the life we long for?

Jesus wants us to believe this, to believe in his love for us and in his eagerness to share with us his own riches, as once he chose to share our poverty. It was because we all have to die that he chose to die too. And now he gives life!

We all know this. We know that birth is our beginning and death is our end. This is clear for our human sphere, this earth. Our Lord came from the Heavenly Sphere to ours, from the realm of life to that of death, from the land of bliss to that of toil and sorrow. He came to bring us his gifts and to bear patiently our sufferings. He brings the gifts in secret but bore our wretched lot publicly. He concealed his divinity and appeared in the flesh. He has taught us how to pass from one sphere to the other. Lift your eyes to the glorious light that streams from God's holy ones. Think of our remembrance of St. Catherine of Siena. The twenty-third child of humble people transformed into a bride of Christ and champion of the Church and an angel of peace. It was God's grace in her that did so much. It can do as much through you. Letting God work great things and small through you will reveal all the joy that is Christianity.