

**THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – C**  
**May 11 – 17, 2025**

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- Sun.    **The Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
May 11   **WHAT JESUS GIVES US**  
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          A Reflection developed from a homily by Bl. Gueric of Igny

*Sunday*

## **WHAT JESUS GIVES US**

### **A Reflection by Abbot Anscar Vonier**

“Jesus said, “The sheep who belong to me listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life!” At many places in Scripture, the metaphor of a shepherd and a flock is used to help us understand vital truths. Its primary meaning has little to do with ruling or our response to someone placed over us. In the classical world, kings were sometimes compared with shepherds, but that isn’t how Christ uses the metaphor. What a shepherd does primarily is to see that sheep get the sort of food and nourishment that suits their needs. How does Christ nourish you? That’s the question placed before us.

If we follow Our Lord as sheep follow their shepherd, we will have all we need to grow into eternal life. No one will be able to take us away from Christ unless we deliberately stop following him. Listen once more to today’s Scripture: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them life everlasting, and they will never perish because no one can take them away from me. Those the Father has given me overcome everything because the Father is greater than all others, and no one can snatch anything out of the Father’s hand! I and the Father are one.” Those who follow Christ show themselves the best, most faithful and most enthusiastic followers anyone ever had. Why?

It is because Christ never disappoints those who follow him! Think of all the merely human leaders who have badly disappointed those who followed them. They have led people astray in all sorts of ways. That means they haven’t led them to life, let alone to a new life. Christ always nourishes us with what leads to real and full life, and a life that never ends. The only condition is that we accept what Christ gives us and that we learn to seek nothing more or less than this.

At one point, some Jewish leaders confronted Jesus and wanted to know why he wasn’t feeding them what they wanted. “It was winter, and the time of the Feast of the Dedication, and Jesus was walking in Solomon’s Portico in the Temple area. The Jewish leaders gathered around him and asked: How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you really are the Messiah, tell us so in plain words!” They wanted a certain kind of Messiah, and Jesus wasn’t that kind of leader. That is why he hadn’t told them he was the Messiah, because he wasn’t what they were seeking. Who do you seek? Do you want a leader who will try to nourish you with what the world around us thinks will satisfy us?

But if we want to know whether Jesus is truly the leader of the people who has been sent by God to lead them to his New Kingdom, he responds that he is. But then he tells us something that is a bit frightening. If we don’t want what Jesus offers us, then we aren’t his sheep. We face a stark choice! Is Jesus himself your nourishment? Do you want God as made present to us in Jesus? Then listen to his voice and no other. If you don’t find what you want in Jesus, you have to admit you’re looking for a different shepherd. At Easter time, we are shown, again and again, what Jesus really offers. He teaches us to want God more than anyone else and to want to love others as Jesus has. That is what gives us the strength to walk our path of life, day by day.

*Monday*

## **OUR KINSHIP WITH JESUS**

### **A Reflection by St. Cyril of Alexandria**

The mark of Christ's sheep is their enthusiasm for listening to him and then following him obediently. The sin of those who are not Christ's is an unwillingness to listen and follow where He leads. Those who "hear" God, and so follow God, are known to God. More, to be known and to know God in the way Jesus knows God is to become God's kindred and child. When Jesus says, "I know mine!" he is talking about the spiritual-mystical kinship that makes us like him. He leads us to love God above all else and to love and help one another as Jesus does. By hoping only in God's grace, we become Jesus' kin.

The Son of God has become human, and in that sense, all who are human are like him. But those who are like him spiritually and mystically are like him in a deeper way and are even made divine like Him. Yet one has to persevere in this holiness—the dedication first to God and being God's kin. That is what makes us more than just human. "My sheep follow me!" That's what Christ says! One no longer looks for life from the Mosaic Law, or human law, or from the directions and values our world proclaims as the way to life. Rather, one is guided by the Law of Christ, which is the law of love. That is how we come to be called and to be children of God. We follow Christ to the Cross, and we follow him in the resurrection, and then we follow him in his ascension into heaven.

Christ promises to those who follow him a never-ending life in God's Kingdom. Christ also promises to free us from the many torments that result from seeking life by following someone other than Him. For those who look to other guides, everything falls apart; i.e., those others lead us only to corruption and its misery. Christ is by nature life, and no one can find true and fulfilled life from anyone but Christ. He doesn't receive life from another but is life in Himself. He doesn't just give a long life but a full life, one filled with peace and joy.

We look for this when we come to the Eucharist. It is by this seed –by the Eucharistic body and blood—that Christ implants in believers the life of God. "The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life!" If you look at the Eucharist without faith, that seems a foolish declaration. Clearly, the Eucharist doesn't visibly change the body and spirit of those who receive it in a way that makes them visibly live a life of joy and peace. This sort of change does take place, but it comes gradually, as we become more and more like Jesus in his love of the Father and of neighbor. That is something you believe because Christ has said it. Are you following him with your faith? Show by your love that you really are Christ's kin.

*Tuesday*

## **HOW MARY'S LIFE INSPIRES US**

### **A Reflection from Journeying With the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini**

Not far from the Garden of Gethsemane, near the church of St. Anne, the mystery of the Madonna's birth is venerated. A few yards away, on the Temple Mount, we find a spot where the mystery of her presentation is commemorated. And beyond Jerusalem, in the hill country to the west, the mystery of her visitation to Elizabeth is recalled. Across the road from the Garden of Gethsemane, we venerate the mystery of Mary's death and Assumption into Heaven. Thus we contemplate all the mysteries, the sufferings, the glory, and the Resurrection of Jesus.

The Book of Revelation (11:19, 12:1-6) provides us with a curious synthesis, not always easy to explain, of the mystery of the Church as a participation in the mysteries of Jesus. And so when we remember Mary, we remember too, the mystery of the Church dying and rising with Christ. We celebrate the mystery of our life and our communities, which are equally called to share in the mystery of Christ and Mary.

I invite everyone to ask for the grace that our Church be like Mary. May it be a Church that reflects Jesus, which is entirely related to Him, which has no meaning in itself except for its relationship to Him, and which, therefore, manifests Him and lives Him.

And let us ask, too, for each of us the experience of this same mystery in our own lives. It is a mystery of combat and of struggle. In fact, the Book of Revelation speaks of a mysterious struggle. To be with Christ, to be in the Church, means combat. An easy existence is not promised or foretold.

To be with the Lord in his victory over death also means to be together with Mary in all the humble and joyous services which she renders to humanity. Think of Lourdes, of Fatima, of all the places in which the Madonna has appeared to assure us that she continues to be near the daily life of the Church. The place where we are now is, so to speak, the source of all the other Marian presences. Because Mary is alive in Christ, she can show and manifest herself to human history.

*Wednesday*

## **WHAT MATTHIAS AS APOSTLE TEACHES US**

### **A Reflection developed from a text by Fr. Romano Guardini**

What makes one an apostle? It isn't a matter of having special talents, even special spiritual capacities! It isn't a matter of being what is described as "a great religious personality". Personal giftedness, spiritual creativity, dynamic faith, and all such things are not the decisive marks of an apostle. People often think of St. Paul or St. John as exceptional individuals in various senses, but that didn't make them apostles. If it were, what would we make of the fact that Judas was an apostle?

If you consider all these facts in the light of what we know about Matthias, it becomes clear that being an apostle is simply a matter of being called. What counts is that Jesus Christ has called and, in some way, placed the seal that is his choice upon a person. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and I have appointed you to go and bear fruit". An apostle is one who is sent by God!

What is an apostle's task? It is to bear witness to Christ. As St. Paul says, it won't be the apostle who speaks through deeds and words but Christ in the apostle. One has to be as much like Christ as possible – otherwise, one becomes like Judas. One becomes like Christ by seeking only what Christ seeks. St. Paul makes a clear distinction between Christ's message and his own advice. The Lord's words constrain us to follow them, but an apostle's advice or even commands are only his own and don't require following them as we do Christ's.

To be nothing in oneself but everything in Christ, to be obliged to contain such tremendous contents in so small a vessel, to be a constant herald of a life that is not one's own, is difficult. Something of the trials such a life involves dawn on us when we read about an apostle's work in the Acts of the Apostles.

Listen to Paul and apply the words to Matthias and yourself. "I think God has sent forth us apostles as though doomed to death and as a spectacle to the world, to angels and to humans. We are fools for Christ, we are weak, ...we are without honor, to this very hour we hunger and thirst and are naked and knocked about and have no fixed place to live. We work hard and with our own hands. If badmouthed we bless those who do it; if we are persecuted, we put up with it. When put down, we ask for help gently. Indeed, we are the refuse of the world and its throw-aways, right up to the present."

Would you want to be an apostle? You would need to love God and Christ far above self to want, let alone fulfill, the requirements of such a call. But, then, you are not asked. You are appointed an apostle. You are chosen even though you did not choose on your own.

The only appropriate response to God's calls is to trust in God and God's grace. That alone can enable one to show the living Christ in one's own living. That is how Christ draws people to himself through you. That is what we are reminded of when we gather to celebrate the choice of Matthias as an apostle. He teaches us what Christ has called each of us to do in a way that matches the life God gives us.

Thursday

## **THE MONK'S WAY TO GOD**

### **A Reflection from The Instructions of St. Pachomius**

My child, turn to God and love him. Flee the enemy and despise him. May the graces of God come your way, and may you inherit the blessings of Judah, son of Jacob, that your brethren may praise you. Keep away from pride, for it is the beginning of every evil. The beginning of pride is keeping your distance from God, and hardening your heart follows this. If the Lord loves you and gives you glory, persevere in humility. Blessed is the one who is found watching for that one will enter the kingdom with gladness. The friends of the bridegroom will love him because they have found him keeping watch over his vineyard.

My child, be merciful in all things. Approach God as one who sows and into whose barn God's goods will be gathered. Don't pray for show, but give up your whims and do what you do simply for God. If a passion arouses you, whether it is love of money or jealousy or hatred or any other passion, watch out. Fight against these passions. May Jesus fight for you. Do not be fainthearted. Faintheartedness fills you with pretexts for laziness, mistrust, and negligence until you are destroyed.

If you are in the desert, do battle by prayers, fasting, and mortification. If you are with people, be wise as a serpent and simple as a dove; if someone curses you, put up with it cheerfully, hoping that God will bring about what is best for you. Do not curse the image of God in others. If, on the other hand, someone praises you, don't take delight in it but put your hope in the glory of Heaven.

My child, shun the satisfactions of this age so as to be happy in the age to come. Don't be negligent, letting the days pass until you arrive at the door to a dark place and in danger of death. Be sad only when you sin. Scorn vainglory. Vanity is the devil's own weapon. That was how Eve was fooled. No one wrote to her to warn her of this battle before she was tempted, but that is why the Word became flesh of the Virgin. You have been warned by the saints who have gone before you. Become guileless like a sheep whose wool is sheared without its saying a thing. Don't go from one place to another thinking you will find God better there than where you are. God has said, "I fill the earth and the heavens". Be aware, then, that God is within you. Wherever you are, you dwell in God's law and commandments. Look, a thief was on the cross and entered paradise, but Judas was among the apostles and betrayed the Lord. In every place, then, seek out God and at every moment seek God's strength.

My child, as long as you are negligent, there will be no progress for you. You stand where God's battle is being fought. Don't fall asleep because the devil lays ambushes. He whispers not to be concerned, but if you listen, you become weak and without strength. Watch out, then, and keep your promises in mind, and don't let the devil cause you to neglect the counsels of the Spirit. You might forget the way to the City of God. Watch yourself, put up cheerfully with one who insults you, be merciful to all, and don't fear the sufferings of the flesh. Flee to God, for it is God who created you and suffered for you. He will grant your requests if you carry your cross and follow your Lord.

*Friday*

## **SHARING OUR TASTE FOR GOD**

**A Reflection by St. Aelred of Rievaulx**

Like newborn infants crave spiritual milk that you may grow up to salvation, if indeed you have tasted how sweet the Lord is! Why are we encouraged to want this if we have already tasted how sweet the Lord is? You have seen and reflected on Jesus Christ on his cross and have seen his arms outstretched as if to embrace you. You have seen this with the eyes of your heart and so seen it more clearly than many did when they saw it with their eyes. So, you have tasted how sweet, humble, meek, merciful, gentle, and caring the Lord is. And you have tasted this at the table of His Body and Blood. He willed that it should always be before our eyes, and that it should not only be our ransom but our food.

What are we to do now that we have tasted so much? We are to go with the holy women to the tomb. We are to go with the aromatic oils of devotion and love. We are to seek our Lord with faith, devotion, and charity. These are the ointments we have to bring it we expect to find the Risen Christ.

How wonderful it is that Christ willed that women first learn of his resurrection and announce it to the other disciples. It falls to women to provide milk to little ones. They, and we, experience such milk in Christ's great compassion. And we who see and taste this must keep craving it! Cave it and taste it. Taste the faith which works through love. Draw this love from your remembrance of Christ's resurrection. Let's become like newborn infants. Infants have innocence and simplicity. Once we have put off the old person, left behind all that we were which was not of God, once we have allowed ourselves to be crucified with Christ, and so found ourselves rising to a new life with Christ, we are ready to share all that we have received. This is what Christ commanded the women to do. He commanded all the disciples to do it, as he commands us.

What is it that we do when we gather for prayer? Isn't our prayer in common a way of sharing Christ Risen? What is it that we do when we encourage one another to rise up and come to prayer? Isn't our mutual encouragement a way of sharing Christ Risen? What do we do when we help each other do the work that gives us bread to eat? Isn't our work and its product a sharing given to us by God so that we might in turn share with others?

Let all that we do be a way of sharing God's gifts to us. This is what God called Adam and Eve to do at the beginning of our race. Now the New Adam and his Church help us to join in the sharing of the Bread that comes down from Heaven. That bread is Christ become one with us so that our lives may be offered to God as the life of Christ. You have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Share what you have tasted as you share your delight.

*Saturday*

## **THE MANY WAYS OF WALKING WITH JESUS**

**A Reflection developed from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny**

A group of women went to the tomb of Jesus but didn't find him there. They met him as they went home. Two disciples were going to their home at Emmaus and met Jesus as they walked along, but didn't recognize him. How can I meet Jesus and also recognize him? Think first of how many different walks in life there are and remember that all of them can bring us into Jesus' company.

There are people who devote themselves to obtaining justice for all, and there are those who devote themselves to contemplation. Jesus deigns to meet and manifest himself to those concerned with justice, just as he does to those who contemplate. Many of you remember that you experienced such a meeting with Jesus. Maybe you sought him at an altar, but he unexpectedly came to you while you were working. You tried to draw near and hold onto his feet, but you couldn't, not until you ceased to be sparing of your own feet and obeyed God's command to work in a particular way. Ordinarily, work demands a lot of coming and going, and some think this gets in the way of Jesus walking with us. Yet Jesus didn't spare his feet from working and walking any more than from the nails. He did all this on our account. And with Jesus, every walk is a work of love. Isn't every walk in life, when one is genuinely seeking Christ, a work of love?

I ask all of you who have had such experiences: Wasn't your heart burning in you on account of Jesus when he spoke to you as you were doing this or that, and so helped you see the practical and spiritual meaning the Scriptures had for you? Let those who have experienced this remember. Let those who haven't believed what they hear and pray to be given this grace of experience.

We are still celebrating Easter. Let the spirit of each one of us rise and come to life, whether by watchfulness in prayer or by constancy in work. This is how we are to experience a share in Christ's resurrection. The first sign of life's return after illness is energy and diligence in action. Its perfect realization is contemplation. So, there is, so to speak, a growth in our resurrection, as though it took place by stages. For instance, we work and then we contemplate.

Remember the story of the child Elijah raised to life. First, his flesh grew warm, and then he yawned, and finally, he opened his eyes. First, our hearts find new warmth and a new hope that can carry us beyond previous torpors. Second, we meditate on what is happening to and within us, and we experience a kind of flame in our hearts. Third, we experience a hunger for God's justice, and want it to be realized in a love that seeks to supply everyone with what they need to walk and find Christ. When we open our hearts under the influence of God's Spirit, we long to do God's commandments in love. The first sign of life is the good works done by love. The second sign is the longing for prayer and God's closer presence. The third is contemplation. Love alone can recognize the Lord, and so it alone leads to contemplation.