

April 27<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2014

## **The First Sunday After Easter**

*Low Sunday*

### THE MEDITATION



Jesus appears to the Disciples - wood carving, Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France

*The Holy Gospel according to St. John; Ch. 20, Vs. 19 - 23*

( The 1928 Book of Common Prayer, Page 171 )

( The People's Anglican Missal, Page C 15 )

( St. Joseph Continuous Sunday Missal - ( 1958 ed.), Pages 479 - 480 )

*" Sing we merrily unto God our strength : make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob." - Psalm 81*

**Gospel Meditation Summary: Jesus' appearance to the Apostles proves to them that He had truly risen from the dead and He institutes the Sacrament of Penance.**

**THROUGH CLOSED DOORS**

Today (Low Sunday) closes out the great week-long feast of Easter. In the Gospel account from St. John, our risen Lord makes a special appearance to the Apostles as they were gathered together on Easter Evening, in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. They were in a great state of bewilderment and were fearful that the Jews would come and arrest them all as accomplices to the recent events. They now knew of the empty tomb, and they had twice received messages instructing them to proceed to Galilee; one through an angel speaking to the three Holy Women, and the other from Jesus Himself, who had chosen Mary Magdalene as His messenger. The disciple John believed Christ had risen from the dead the moment that he saw the empty tomb. Peter, as usual needed more convincing and received it from a visit by Jesus Himself. To top things off, the two disciples who had set off for Emmaus earlier had returned with their story of the risen Jesus. We can easily picture the scene in the Upper Room and the place buzzing with excitement, infused with the afore mentioned feelings of anxiety, as the two disciples told their story, along with Peter and John, trying to further convince the others that it was all true . . . the rest still very doubtful about all of it.

Could this really be true that Jesus had really risen from the dead? Was this not only against all logical thinking, but above all . . . just too good to be true?!

Suddenly, Jesus Himself appears to them in the midst of the room, though the doors had been bolted in fear that the Jewish authorities were planning the Apostles' imminent arrest. The appearance of Christ to the Apostles on Easter evening comes to us in two distinct Scriptural narratives by St. Luke (*Chap. 24 Vs. 33- 49*) and St. John (*Chap. 19; Vs. 19 – 30*) and is very briefly mentioned by St. Mark. (*Chap. 16, Vs. 14 – 18*). The Church gives us today, the account from St. John's Gospel. The narrative of St. Luke formed the Gospel for Tuesday in Easter Week.

It might be helpful to combine the two accounts and consider them together, along with the short version from St. Mark in order that we better understand the events taking place on Easter Evening.

As was said, while the two Emmaus disciples were speaking and giving their account, Jesus stood in the midst of all and said to them: "*Peace be unto you*". But as St. Luke writes: "*they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.*" Jesus then says to them: "*Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*" Then He showed them His hands, feet, and side . . . and still they doubted. Jesus asks for some food, and according to St. Luke, was given some broiled fish and a piece of a honeycomb and ate it before their eyes. They were, at last, all fully convinced that the Man standing in front of them *was* indeed Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

Jesus then, "*opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures*" (*St. John*) - especially the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. At the same time, "*he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*" (*St. Mark*) Even on this most joyous Day of days, our Blessed Lord has found Himself challenged by the very men He has called to found and lead His Church! Only His abiding love for all of them may have produced a little smile as He perhaps took stock of the great events that had occurred on this day.

### 3.

## RECEIVE YE THE HOLY GHOST

Having now at last convinced His Apostles that His *Messianic triumph* had really begun by His rising from the dead, Jesus went on to give them the first of a series of instructions concerning the New Kingdom that He had been preaching would come about. It would be their duty to go forth and preach the Gospel of the risen Jesus, and all that it would imply. This course of instruction lasted throughout the forty days which continued between the Resurrection and the Ascension.

We know also from St. John's account of the appearance on Easter Evening, that Jesus, on this same occasion, conferred upon His Apostles the wonderful power to forgive or retain sins, which clearly establishes the institution of the Sacrament of Penance. This power was conferred to the Apostles by our Lord's very own words which St. John provides for us: "*Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I unto you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them : receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*" We can clearly see that the "Gospel of penance and remission of sins" is no mere preaching office, but it comprises the "baptism of penance for the remission of sins", and additionally, the power to forgive sins after baptism, in the Sacrament of Penance , a power that emanates from the Holy Ghost that was given to the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church especially for this purpose. If this sounds a bit too academic for our meditation, then here's St. Thomas Aquinas' take on this: "*In material things, a key is an instrument for opening a door. Now, the door of the kingdom is closed to us through sin. . . Since the Sacraments on which the Church is built, flowed from the side of Christ while He lay asleep on the Cross, the efficacy (effectiveness) of the Passion lives in the Sacraments of the Church. Wherefore, a certain power for the removal of the afore mentioned obstacle is bestowed on the ministers of the Church, who are the dispensers of the Sacraments, not by their own, but by a Divine power and by the Passion of Christ. By way of metaphor, this power is the Church's key and is turned by way of the ministry.*"

One thing is very clear from this Gospel. Only the most undeniable evidence could have convinced the Apostles of the reality of the Resurrection, and the truth of these appearances of the risen Jesus in Jerusalem. The initial doubt, skepticism, bewilderment, and fear the Apostles all felt that evening in the Upper Room, is not a reflection on their failings, lack of faith, or character . . . they were all simply exercising their humanity. A humanity that spans a spectrum of countless emotions as affected by countless of situations that one encounters in life. These men were no different than we are today in that light.

The message of the angel sent through the Three Holy women spoke only of an appearance of Jesus to be expected in Galilee. If the Apostles had been inclined to believe this message, they would certainly not have supposed that Jesus was going to appear to them in Jerusalem that same day. As a matter of fact, they did not believe the angel, or the Holy women, or even the two disciples from Emmaus, and only believed when they saw the risen Lord with their own eyes, and spoke with Him. Their early disbelief and doubts are the best and most convincing evidence that Jesus actually rose from the dead, and later that day, appeared to them. They would later go on to seal their faith in the Resurrection with their own blood.

We too, must live our lives and one day die in that very same faith . . . if we desire to be considered true followers of Jesus Christ.

4.

**PRAYER FOR THE DAY:** Almighty Father, who hast given thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification ; grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth. - (from the Collect of the Day)



**“ My Lord and My God ! ”**

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## FEASTS, FASTS, and OTHER THINGS



### *Eastertide and Low Sunday*

The fifty days from the Sunday of the Resurrection, (the last day of the *Easter Triduum*, to evening prayer (*Vespers*) on Pentecost) now, just as in the early centuries of the church, constitute a season of uninterrupted rejoicing, a foretaste of eternity when those who are called to the 'marriage supper of the lamb' will pass the time in perpetual praise. The liturgical color of the season is white, the symbol of happiness, and the 'Alleluia', the song of the redeemed resounds once again recalling; “ *the voice of*

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*mighty thunderings, saying Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” ( Rev. Chap. 19, Vs 6 & 9). Here at the Priory, by the way, we are especially reminded by Father Prior to pay attention to the Antiphons in our Antiphonals on Easter Week, because there are so many “Alleluias” sung together in the antiphons, some of us have been known to get over-excited and from time to time throw in an extra “Alleluia” . . . which while an admirable act of joyful expression, can throw off the choir like a car hitting a deep pothole . . . (whoops!) . . . !*

The Paschal Candle, a viable symbol of the risen Christ's presence, remains in the sanctuary. At *Compline*, the last office of the day, and on other occasions, according to the customs of each religious house or congregation to which they belong, the ***Regina coeli laetare***: “*Queen of Heaven, Rejoice*”, the Eastertide anthem, is sung standing, which was the posture used in the early Church for this season. A legend which prevailed up to the thirteenth century, attributes this lovely anthem to pope Gregory the Great, who at the height of a great epidemic, which was decimating the population in Rome in 590, ordered the icon of the Blessed Virgin, said to have been painted by St. Luke, to be borne through the city in a penitential procession. Angels were heard singing the first three lines as it was carried across the bridge over the Tiber River calling upon Mary to rejoice because her Son had risen. Gregory completed the quatrain with a fervent; *'Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia!'* ( *'Pray for us to God, Alleluia'*). The Archangel Gabriel, at that moment, appeared above the mausoleum of the Emperor Hadrian and sheathed his sword, a sign that the plague was over. A chapel was built on the monument which was renamed ***Castel Sant' Angelo***: ' The Castle of the Holy Angel.'

The earliest known text of this anthem, in fact, dates from about the end of the twelfth century, possibly based on the legend that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, sorrowing after the entombment of her Son, and bade her to rejoice, ' for the Lord has risen indeed! ' The anthem was popularized by the Franciscans and later included in the Divine Office.

***Regina coeli laetare***

*Rejoice, thou Queen of Heaven ! Alleluia!*

*For he whom thou was found worthy to bear – Alleluia!*

*Has arisen as he said. Alleluia!*

*Pray for us to God . Alleluia!*

*V: Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary – Alleluia!*

*R: For the Lord hath risen indeed. Alleluia!*

***Let us pray:*** *O God, who by the resurrection of thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, hast vouchsafed to gladden the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen*

## 6.

Today we observe **Low Sunday** or it's official Liturgical title; ***Dominica in albis*** (*The Sunday in white*). It's also known as *The Second Sunday of Easter*, or the *First Sunday after Easter* . . . take your pick, but we like '*Low Sunday*' or, '*Dom-albis*' in our monastic slang . Now, I have to make some mention about the title; **Low Sunday**. Contrary to a popular misconception, the name does not refer to the *low attendance* that most churches experience following Easter Sunday . . . although that is usually not far from being true. Another running joke at the Priory, is if that were really true, what would one call a Sunday if no one showed up at all; '*No Sunday* . . . ? ! We monks *do* have a sense of humor, although it can be a little twisted at times. Back to "Low Sunday"...

*Low Sunday*, on an instructional note, is the name which this day has been called in English churches and is not meant to contrast with the high celebration of Easter Sunday previous. The qualifying adjective is the anglicanization of the Latin; *laudes*: 'praise' , a reference to the sequence in the day's Mass, *Laudes Salvatori*; 'Praise to the Saviour.'

We conclude the Octave of Easter today, and in the Liturgy, today is also known in many English Churches by it's Latin connotation as ***Quasimodo Sunday***. This is because of the Latin introit or entrance psalm, which begins; *Quasi modo genti infantes*; " Like new-born babe (*I Peter*; *Ch. 2, Vs. 2*) . . . a phrase appropriate to the newly baptized, known as *infantes*; 'babies', because they had been born again in the waters of baptism and become 'children of the Lord'. We recall the ancient Church practice of the baptism of the neophytes during the Easter Vigil. The neophytes, at the baptism, were given a white robe and a burning lamp. They left the baptistry with these and marched into the church or cathedral where they took full part in their first holy Mass. The white garments symbolized baptismal innocence and grace. What remains of this venerable and ancient rite? Today, at the baptism of an infant the priest places a white linen upon the child while saying: " Receive this white garment and see that you wear it without stain to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may enjoy life everlasting." The custom has developed over the years that the sponsors provide a white dress ( also called a *christening gown*)for their godchild ( that's right, even the boys get one, but remember, it's a symbolic action, fellas). The gown should be kept for the child after the baptism, as a remembrance of the greatest day in their life. Oftentimes families will pass the gown along as a family heirloom from one generation to another . . . another nice tradition indeed.

Dressed in white, the neophytes took part in their first Mass and received their first Holy Communion. They did not divest themselves of their baptismal apparel after the service, but wore it during the whole of the ensuing week of Easter. They were treated as guests of honor in the parish. Each morning they came to Mass in their white robes, and in the afternoon returned as a group to the church for services held at the baptismal font. Their presence served as a living sermon, reminding all Christians that they too had risen with Christ to a new life on Easter. The Sunday after Easter they came to the church of their baptism for the last time in their white garments. They removed their garments and brought them to the church wardrobe where they were kept for next year's neophytes. This served as a viable reminder of the vows the new members of Christ's Church had made. We can certainly see the ancient connection the title ***Dominica in albis*** has with the long-standing traditions of the Church and its important symbolism. The importance of symbolism and ritual cannot be underestimated. These are vehicles in which great mysteries can be presented to the overall senses. We are sensual beings after all . . . creatures that rely on our senses to round us out as whole beings. Removing ritual and symbolism ( as has been occurring these past fifty years or so), is almost like cutting off a part of one's body . . . but I'll leave such dissertations to our Br. Raymond in one of his **Out on a Limb** presentations. It's a place he's much more comfortable writing from than I am !

-Br. Chip, O.S.B.

**Feasts, Fasts, and Other Things; from "The Chipmunk's Nutshell Library"**

Presented by Br. A. Chip Monk, O.S.B.

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**PLEASE NOTE THIS SCHEDULE CHANGE: DUE TO THE CONTINUED RECENT COLD AND DAMP WEATHER, SUNDAY MASSES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC WILL RESUME ON SUNDAY, MAY 25<sup>th</sup>, THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER ( ROGATION SUNDAY ) AT 8:30 A.M.**

*Also, Please Note: There are no Public Rest Room facilities at the Priory, please plan accordingly.*

## **PRIORY KALENDAR**

**A.D. 2014**

Week of April 27<sup>th</sup> to May 4<sup>th</sup> - A.D. 2014

**April 27<sup>th</sup> . . . . FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER - ( Low Sunday)**

**Monday, April 28 . . . . ST. Mark (transferred) Ev.**

**Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> . . . . St. Robert of Molesme, Ab. Cistercian founder, (11<sup>th</sup> cent.)**

**Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> . St. Catherine of Sienna, V. - (13<sup>th</sup> cent.)**

**Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup> . . . . Sts. Phillip & James, Aps. - (1<sup>st</sup> cent.)**

**Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> . . . . St. Athanasius, B.C.D. - (4<sup>th</sup> cent.)**

**Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> . . . . Finding of the Holy Cross**

**Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup> . . SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER . . . comm. St. Monica, (4<sup>th</sup> cent.)**

**KEY:** Ab. = Abbot, Abs. = Abbess, Ap = Apostle, Bp. = Bishop, C. or Conf. = Confessor, Comm. = Commemorate, Dcn. = Deacon, Doct. = Doctor of the Church, Ev. = Evangelist, K = King, M. = Monk, Myr. = Martyr, N. = Nun, P= Priest Po. = Pope, Q. = Queen, Vir. = Virgin, A = Abstinence, F = Fast, F & A = Fast and Abstinence

**WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR BENEFACTORS TO HELP FINANCIALLY WITH THE ANIMALS. IF YOU OR SOMEONE THAT YOU KNOW WOULD LIKE TO HELP, SIMPLY MARK YOUR CHECK "FOR THE ANIMALS". IT WILL BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND DEEPLY APPRECIATED.**

**PLEASE CONSIDER INCLUDING OUR ANIMAL OUTREACH AND RESCUE IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING. CONTACT SR. MARY FRANCIS, O.S.B. FOR DETAILS.  
THANK YOU!**

