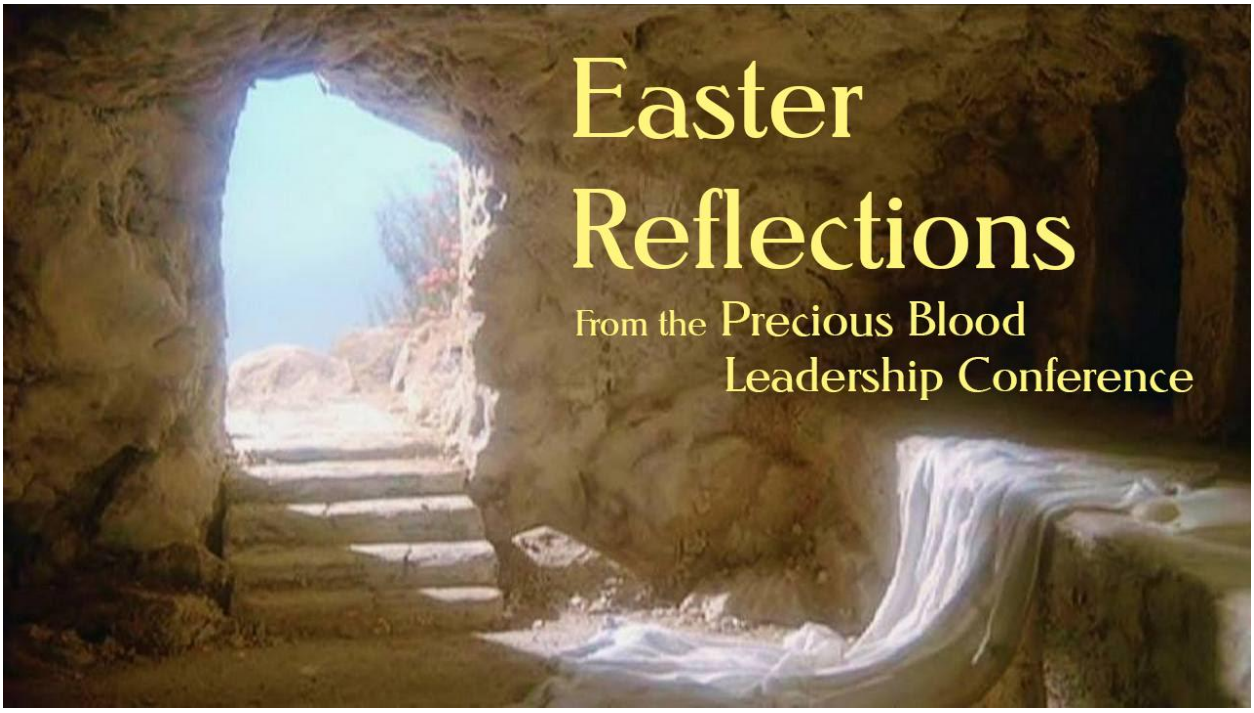

Prepared by the Precious Blood Family of Communities:
Adorers of the Blood of Christ (US Region)
Missionaries of the Precious Blood (Atlantic, Cincinnati & Kansas City Provinces)
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood (O'Fallon, Mo.)
Sisters of the Precious Blood (Dayton, Ohio)
Sisters of Saint Mary of Oregon

March 27, 2016
Easter Sunday

The tomb has become the womb

Today we look with Mary of Magdala and we see that the stone has been rolled back and the tomb is open. Like the opening of the Holy Doors to begin the Jubilee year, the image of the open tomb holds all the promise of mercy and the invitation to live anew.

Peter and John anxiously peer into the tomb to discover that the burial cloths had been discarded, no longer needed by one who was alive. They failed to see the significance; that Jesus was dead and entombed, but Christ has arisen to give forgiveness of sins to all who believe. The tomb of Jesus has become the womb of the mercy of Christ.

Two millennia later, do we appreciate the significance of the risen Christ and the empty tomb? Surely, we do rejoice that the tomb is open, but have we been reborn by the mercy that is given? Have we discarded the burial cloths of anger and resentment that we use to bind the wounds of our hurts and disappointments? Do we celebrate today that, with Christ, we walk out of the tomb of our sinfulness and are reborn as witnesses to mercy first received and then given to others?

Today, the great Alleluia resounds throughout the Church. May it inspire us to live the words of the psalmist: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

March 28, 2016
Easter Monday

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed,
and ran to announce the news . . . (Matt 28: 8)

Pope Francis challenges us during the Year of Mercy, ". . . to be vigilant and to reawaken in ourselves the capacity to see what is essential." In today's Gospel, Matthew contrasts the way two groups used their capacity to see what is essential. The guards, having experienced Jesus' resurrection, were fearful and chose to take a bribe and hide, rather than announce their experience. The two Marys, on the other hand, having experienced Jesus' resurrection, were fearful and chose to announce their experience. In doing so, the two Marys met and embraced Jesus and heard his message to let go of fear and proclaim the reality of God's tender mercy with joy.

How will you use your capacity to see what is essential today?

Sr. Susan Borgel, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)
Sr. Charlene Grieshaber, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)

March 29, 2016
Easter Tuesday

Mary stayed outside near the tomb, weeping. . . .
they have taken my Lord away . . .
Jesus said, "Mary." She knew him then. . . . (John 20: 11–17)

Mary stood outside the tomb—afraid, upset and sad because she had expected so much from Jesus. Now he was gone. She had just witnessed his greatest act of love but did not know it led to the Resurrection.

What was she to do? We give our lives to God. Am I sometimes blind to God's presence in my life, like Mary was?

He didn't leave Mary standing by the tomb. He called her by name to go and announce His Resurrection. Like Mary, He calls me. He gives me the help I need to love and forgive. He taught me love and mercy by calling me—giving me Himself in the Eucharist, the Mass, and the sacrament of reconciliation. Do I recognize Him in my daily life?

Sr. Rita Watkins, SSMO

March 30, 2016
Easter Wednesday

"In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"
Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up.
And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened . . .
(Acts 3: 6–8)

Jesus has compassion for his people and provides healing. Through the action of the apostle Peter, Jesus cures the man with crippled feet and ankles which prevented him from walking. The darkened, discouraged minds of the two disciples who felt betrayed by the death of Jesus are healed. They were giving up hope and were returning to their former way of life. However, with the presence of Jesus and his powerful word, they were able to face life with renewed vigor and enthusiasm.

Do I believe that Jesus can take my crippled moments and transform them? Can I slough off discouragement and frustration when I realize that Jesus is always present with me? Will I rely on the mercy of Jesus and Precious Blood spirituality to assist me in my walk through life? Merciful Jesus, grant me healing.

Sr. Martha Bertke, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

March 31, 2016
Easter Thursday

While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed,
he asked them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' (Luke 24: 41–42)

Breaking bread, baking fish. Luke's foodophile Jesus pops up again. I'm on board with Luke here—especially as a Precious Blood candidate who connects eating and preparing food to hospitality. The peak experiences with folks in my life haven't always been around food, but they've been with folks I'd eaten with too many times to count. Troubled hearts soul-full conversations are more easily entered into with some food around a table. A béchamel sauce doesn't lessen the reality of suffering in our lives, but there is a radical equality around the table and an ability to subvert our cultural values which impede the Gospel in our world. How are we responding to Jesus at the tables of our lives, feeding and finding nourishment?

Mr. James Smith, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

April 1, 2016
Easter Friday

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." (John 21: 12)

Eating freshly caught fish, seared in garlic and butter is one of life's happy, happy moments.

Imagine . . . breakfast around a campfire as the sun comes up and light dances on the water, fishing with friends, jumping into the water. That morning there were no questions, no criticisms, no harking back to past events nor judgment of a group of followers who weren't at their best just days before. Only breakfast.

This is mercy, connection with others, sharing time and space and welcoming the God present who forever welcomes us. May our day, this feast of fools, be a celebration of that which feeds us and allows us to feed others.

Sr. Kris Schrader, ASC

April 2, 2016
Easter Saturday

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have been my savior. (Psalm 118)

As Catholics, we often fall prey to stagnation. Having just been through Holy Week and the Triduum, climaxing with Easter Sunday, we can think, "Well, it's over for another year," when that is the farthest thing from the truth. We need to take that momentum, that joy, that peace that was given to us these past days and share that with those we meet. Whether that is through acts of charity, works of mercy, instruction to others, or simply by our witness, we can't fold our arms and say, "See you next year." The acclamation we sing now is, "This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it."

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

April 3, 2016
Second Sunday of Easter

Many signs and wonders were done among the people . . . (Acts 5: 12)

The resurrection of Jesus is a powerful reality. How can any person begin to understand that reality? But we think we understand it while at the same time we are like Thomas and bring our doubting attitude to our daily life. Imagine for a moment the incredible range of feelings the disciples must have experienced at the sight of Jesus in that upper room: fear, amazement, joy and disbelief. That is the Easter experience that we celebrate. Imagine the power in death brought back to life. Now imagine the power to forgive or to hold someone bound by a lack of forgiveness. Forgiving and not forgiving are everyday actions that we take for granted. We give little thought to the power that exists in these actions. While this Divine Mercy Sunday calls us to remember the mercy and forgiveness that we receive from our God each day, we also hear in John's Gospel today a direct call for our lives. Jesus tells us, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Do we believe this? We are sent with the power of the Resurrection and with the Spirit. Our ultimate goal? To follow Jesus, to give forgiveness. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, as members of Precious Blood communities, what better directive can we follow than to give forgiveness and encourage others to give forgiveness? Through this action, many signs and wonders will be worked among the people.

Sr. Barbara Hudock, ASC

April 4, 2016
The Annunciation

Let it be with me according to your Word. (Luke 1: 38)

Mary was a young woman engaged to be married. Very soon, she would be Joseph's wife. She had her dreams and expectations. Then the angel Gabriel came to her door and put her plans into a whirlwind. He announced to her that she had found favor with God, she would conceive a son, and he would be called the Son of the Most High. "How can this be?" she said, "I am a virgin and am engaged to Joseph. I have plans." Even though Mary had plans, she said yes to what God was now asking of her. If we truly listen to God, are we willing to allow his Word to change our plans?

Fr. Joe Deardorff, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

April 5, 2016
Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter

The wind blows wherever it wants.
Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going,
so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit. (John 3: 8–9)

Imagine staying up all night to talk to Jesus . . . because you're too afraid to be seen talking with him during the day . . . and Jesus talks with you anyway.

Nicodemus didn't understand about being "born from above," "born of the Spirit." Jesus compares the Spirit, as well as those who are born in the Spirit, to the wind.

This Spirit "blows wherever it pleases."

You can "hear its sound."

"You cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going."

This Spirit seems to move us from within, giving us a freedom to act with trust, to live mercifully, to share in the One Table, like the early community of Acts.

We can hear the Spirit's sound, but we can't tell where it comes from or where it is going. We go with the flow without analyzing too much.

We do know, though, from where this Spirit flows: from the pierced side of Jesus, together with his Blood.

Jesus, as I stand at the foot of your cross, I am washed by your redeeming Blood and born of your flowing Spirit. Give me courage to let that Blood call me and that Spirit guide me.

Sr. Terry Walter, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

April 6, 2016
Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter

The men whom you put in prison are in the temple area and are teaching the people (Acts 5: 25)

All of us struggle these days with acquiring a certain sense of security in the midst of much terrorist activity so prevalent in our world lately. We are aware of mighty forces like terrorist groups engaged in fighting super-world powers. Do we have faith in these military forces that somehow promise us safety and security? If we do, maybe this is a false kind of security. Look at Peter and John and their imprisonment by the powerful forces of the Sanhedrin and the police force guarding them. Notice when the temple guards have to spring into action they do it without any show of force. Who brought about this peaceful submission? Let's have faith in Jesus who delivers us from all evil and terror in the world.

Br. Daryl Charron, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)

April 7, 2016
Thursday of the Second Week of Easter

The Lord hears the cry of the poor. (Psalm 34)

How comforting to know with certitude that the Lord hears our cries! We know that this statement excludes no one for we are all poor—in myriad ways—and totally dependent on our gracious God! According to the inspired Word of today, it isn't just that we are heard; we are also assured that the Lord is close to us who are broken hearted, rescues us from our distress, and delivers us from all our troubles. May we strive to bless and thank the Lord at all times! And may the praise of our merciful Lord, who is so close, be on our lips today and every day of our lives!

Sr. M. John Therese Miller, SSMO

April 8, 2016
Friday of the Second Week of Easter

One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. (Matthew 4: 4)

How much do I really trust God? That is a question for us to reflect on every single day. How much of myself am I willingly putting in God's hands? This Gospel is a powerful reminder of giving our all to God and letting God multiply it. The Psalm verses today show us the blessings and joys that we receive when we enter in God's house. Of course if we take that a bit further, it means we need to follow God's rules and ways of doing things if we wish to stay in God's house. For it is when we leave our ways of doing things and give our all to God, that God can truly bless us.

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

April 9, 2016
Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

Jesus said, "It is I. Do not be afraid." (John 6: 20)

But, Jesus, do you not see what is going on in our world today? The waters are tumultuous with violence, terrorism, hatred, and vengeance. How can you allow all this to happen and do nothing to stop it? I feel like one of your disciples in that boat so long ago. I feel forgotten. My hands are calloused as I continue to struggle in my rowing. I cannot find your watchful presence.

Lord, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, help me to hear your voice and feel your presence. Help me to see you in the story of my life just as John saw you in the story of his life. When everything becomes stirred up within me, Lord, let your mercy be on me, and help me to place my trust in you. Help me to not be afraid, and in this most sacred time of the year, help me to devote myself to prayer.

Mrs. Debbie Whited, C.PP.S. Partner in Mission (O'Fallon)

April 10, 2016
Third Sunday of Easter

Simon, son of John, do you love me? (John 21: 16)

We throw that word "love" around so easily. But most of us have no idea what it really means or the implications that are involved in it. Remembering that the New Testament was written in Greek, we have to be clear with language. The Greek word here for love was agape. Agape love is self-sacrificing love. It is love that wills the good of the other as other and then does something about it. So Jesus hear is asking Peter, "Will you sacrifice yourself for me? Will you will my good before your own?" Love is a choice, it is a decision, it is an act of the will. This is the kind of love that Jesus is asking of Peter. And this is the love that Jesus demands of us as well. We remember the new commandment at the Last Supper, "Love one another as I have loved you."

So today we ask ourselves, "Do I have this kind of love, this agape, this self-sacrificing love for Christ in my life?" For this is the true love that the world needs today.

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

April 11, 2016
Monday of the Third Week of Easter

Jesus answered and said to them,
'This is the work of God that you believe in the one He sent.' (John 6: 29)

This scripture surely resonates with women and men dedicated to the Precious Blood of Jesus! Are we not committed to being followers of the One sent? Is our life not about accomplishing the works of God that flow from our belief in Jesus?
Reflect upon the power of belief. Danny Thomas' belief in a cause resulted in the incredible St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. Martin Luther King's belief in a dream precipitated the Civil Rights movement. Mother Theresa worked miracles on the streets of Calcutta because she believed in a Jesus who lived in the poor.

Never underestimate the power of belief. Jesus speaks to us as he did to the confused people of Capernaum, "This is the work of God that you believe in the one he sent."

The infinitely merciful God sent us the gift of Jesus who became one with us. If, as has been said, mercy is the form love takes when it encounters misery, witness Jesus' mercy at every turn: bringing Good News to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and restoring sight to the blind. Not satisfied to be incarnate with us, Jesus further laid down his life for us and rose in glory where he prepares a place for us. A place determined by the ways in which we respond to Jesus' invitation to live out our lives responding with our personal kind of love to any kind of misery. What can we/I do to accomplish the works of God?

Sr. Maryann Bremke, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

April 12, 2016
Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

A Gluten Free God

St. Steven Catholic Church, where I preside at Mass on Sundays, offers gluten-free hosts for people who are sensitive to this protein composite found in wheat. Jesus says in today's Gospel passage that he is "the bread of life." For most people during the time of Jesus, bread was so basic to their diet that bread and life could be understood as interchangeable words.

Through baptism, we become one with the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Several of the after-communion prayers in the Roman Missal make reference that through the grace of God we may become that of which we have just partaken. As God's people, we are to become life giving bread for others. Even with our sins, flaws, scars, fears, and doubts, we, like Jesus, are to give life, gluten-free or otherwise.

Fr. Timothy Guthridge, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)

April 13, 2016
Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,
and I will not reject anyone who comes to me . . . (John 6: 37)

Do you recall the first time you received a rejection letter? It might have been for one of your college applications or for a grant you worked so diligently to write to support a much-needed ministry. Perhaps the rejection occurred more recently; perhaps it wasn't a letter, but in the form of a person, a friend. Whatever the circumstances, it happened, and it was not what you had hoped for, and it hurt! Imagine now, the huge contrast as you consider your desire to grow closer to Jesus, our Savior, and you know he will not reject anyone who goes to him. May this realization and the accompanying sense of relief be the source of your mercy and love for others!

Sr. Charlene Herinckx, SSMO

April 14, 2016
Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

No one can come to me unless the Father
who sent me draws them . . . (John 6: 44)

We hear a lot about energy fields today. In today's reading, Jesus speaks of a divine energy, a power at work in each of us, in all of us and in the whole universe. A divine energy seeking us out, finding us, and drawing us home. As we let ourselves be influenced by the positive energy of God's love, we can experience our inner-connectedness with all peoples and with all of creation; all negative energy melts away.

Be in the presence of this positive energy of God's love. Feel and experience the mercy of God. God who knows your inner core of goodness, invites you to see that inner core of goodness in yourself and in others. We are all wounded, but good. God says ABSOLVED! FORGIVEN!

Sr. Rose McKeown, ASC

April 15, 2016
Friday of the Third Week of Easter

Saul was still breathing threats (when) . . . a light flashed around him . . .
a voice said . . . Why do you persecute me? . . .
(Paul said) Who are you? . . . I am Jesus. (Acts 9: 1–20)

What an unlikely person to be chosen by God to bring the Gentiles, us, to Jesus, to Christianity!

What a compassionate God we have who invites us to participate in the ministry he gave Saul/Paul/us, inviting us to come as we are. We are invited to be a reconciling presence in a world torn by war, injustice, prejudice, rejection, fear and loss of hope. A world where the rich and strong are honored and the poor and weak exploited. Yet a world filled with loving, compassionate people if we can just let the Risen Jesus scratch our surface. If we can just help each other scratch this surface so as to recognize that I am made in the image and likeness of God, and so is the other.

Sr. Doris Rechtiene, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)

April 16, 2016
Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go?" (John 6: 67–68)

The disciples began to have second thoughts as Jesus promised he would give them his Body and Blood. Was the commitment to Jesus and to their mission worth the opposition it would invite? The mission we share with the disciples invites the same commitment and the same opposition. How do we remain faithful to our mission in the face of the inevitable opposition? The answer lies in the very gift that Jesus left to his disciples and to us. In the gift of his Body and Blood, Jesus promises his fidelity to us. It is that fidelity that empowers us to remain faithful to our mission of touching the heart of our world with the mercy of God revealed in the Blood of Jesus.

Fr. Andy O'Reilly, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

April 17, 2016
Fourth Sunday of Easter

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
No one can take them out of my hand. (John 10: 27–30)

In the Easter season, we hear about sheep. I don't have any experience with sheep, but I have grasped the hand of a friend who did not let go when I needed help.

"I know my sheep and mine know me." Knowing Jesus is an ongoing journey of discovery and surprise. Do we really know Jesus? And, more importantly, do we hear his voice and follow when there are so many busy voices calling for our attention?

Paul grew in his understanding and knowing of Jesus. He was so convinced of the Gospel message that he traveled and endured hardships to extend Jesus' message of light and life to anyone who listened.

If we, like the sheep, listen and follow, then John's vision of people from every nation and race standing together worshipping God comes true. Together, all people will have enough to eat and drink, will have life-giving water, and no tears or suffering.

In all three readings, Jesus, the Lamb, and Paul, extend their hands to all people in an invitation to be in the light. This is not a demand but an invitation. Mercy lets people make choices, always extending the hand of invitation without blame or guilt. Can we be any less merciful?

Sr. Fran Raia, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)

April 18, 2016
Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

You entered the house of the uncircumcised and ate with them. (Acts 11: 3)

We want to hang with our friends. People who are safe, people like us. Peter was no different, and Jewish kosher laws kept him away from undesirables, from socializing and eating with Gentiles. But God gave him another vision and sent him to a Gentile house to break bread and open the Word of God with them.

Pope Francis calls us to accompany the marginalized, the Gentiles of our day. To walk with them as equals, to share table and open hearts with them. It's difficult; our desire is usually to stay with safe people we know, people of our social class. Christ calls us to be like Peter, to find God in places we would not usually go.

Fr. Keith Branson, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)

April 19, 2016
Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

The hand of the Lord was with them . . . (Acts 11: 21)
No one can take them out of the Father's hand . . . (John 10: 28)

How many times have we wondered where is God when we need him/her? I know that for me, I felt God was not only not with me, but had dumped me from his hand. Our faith is often tested in ways we never expected. While knowing God is with us does nothing to help the pain go away, in retrospect it often is evident that God was with us all the while we were struggling.

In 2015, my faith was challenged (and continues to be challenged). I suffered a stroke which has left me as a quadriplegic. What sustains me is God's mercy and love. I feel God's hands every day in the gentle loving hands of those helping me in my daily activities. We all suffer challenges, but knowing God is holding us makes the burden more bearable.

Sr. Marie Poland, ASC

April 20, 2016
Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

I came into the world as light,
so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. (John 12: 46)

One of the joys of the Easter season is that we are reminded that we have been created for eternal life. That death is not the end. As Jesus was raised from the dead, we too shall one day rise to meet God. Reminding ourselves of that and reflecting on that helps us to enter more deeply into God's mercy and love. That we have Christ as the light to guide us, to lead us, to strengthen us, to keep us warm with the flame of his love. But we have to want to follow it. We have to want with all our hearts to obey that commandment to eternal life and be open to letting that light of Christ bring us back to God.

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

April 21, 2016
Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Whoever receives the one I send receives me. (John 13: 20)

The most difficult thing for us to grasp is the mystery of the incarnation. In Jesus, God has taken flesh and pitched his tent among us. He has so invested himself in us that whatever we may do to the least of humanity, we do to him.

How useful a lesson of humility it teaches you, and how directly this virtue leads to God. Because serving God is as close as the person next to you. "If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it" (John 13: 17). Even if you do not understand it, it is a blessing. We are not commanded to understand our neighbor, but to love them.

And this service of God in our neighbor will bring opposition and suffering. "The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me" (John 13: 18). We are not social workers. We do not serve the poor and the sinner because it is a good thing to do. We do it because they are the Lord in "His most distressing disguise" as Blessed Theresa of Calcutta used to say often.

Fr. Jeffrey Keyes, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

April 22, 2016
Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

I am the way and the truth and the life, says the Lord;
no one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14: 6)

Jesus is the way, the channel of radical forgiveness and mercy. He is the truth which sets us free; we are his people, and he is our God. Jesus is the fullness of life; he gives us his Body and Blood for the journey, lifting us up in loving mercy to eternal life.

Jesus came to teach us about forgiveness and love. A love stronger than death. A merciful love expressed in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We go to the Father by dying to self and living for God alone. Our God is a God of forgiveness and hospitality, a companion on the journey here on earth and in heaven.

Sr. Josephine Pelster, SSMO

April 23, 2016
Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father . . .
Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,
. . . whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do;
and greater works than these will he do . . .
If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14)

We recognize the Father in Jesus and in the people we meet each day. How do we experience God working in our ministries as members of the Precious Blood family? Jesus´ Blood continues to flow into all of humanity—reconciling, purifying, giving new energy. Let us ask in Jesus´ name, with confidence, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, that we may accept the challenges Jesus presents to us as his disciples. May the works of mercy be our fountain of inspiration as we experience the Father and Jesus present in our family, in community, in those with whom we work, in the most vulnerable of our society, in the sick, in the immigrants, in the imprisoned—Christ among us today.

Sr. Maria Luisa Miller, C.PP.S. (Dayton)
Sr. Edna Hess, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

April 24, 2016
Fifth Sunday of Easter

My children, . . . I give you a new commandment:
love one another. As I have loved you,
so you also should love one another. (John 13: 35)

In the final verse of today's Gospel, Jesus once again calls us his children and commands us to love one another as he has loved us. In others words, we are to love each other as a parent loves his or her child.

The love a parent has for his or her child is probably the most powerful example of selfless love I have witnessed. Most parents will do almost anything to care for, protect or lead their child in the right direction even when it is painful for them.

It is comforting and challenging to know that this is the kind of love that God has for each one of us. He was willing to and did make the ultimate sacrifice for us through Jesus the Christ and his death on the cross. But it didn't end there. The resurrection brought new life. It is not the same as life before the resurrection, but transformed. We too are transformed as we walk with the Lord through this life. God can and does work through every situation and will transform us if we allow it to happen.

How does our love mirror that of our parent God? Where does it fall short? What more can each of us do to better imitate Christ and by so doing, build the kingdom?

Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

April 25, 2016
St. Mark, Evangelist

Greet one another with a kiss of love. (I Peter 5: 14)

In a first reading of I Peter 5: 5-14, it can seem dull and uninspiring, just like Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Both are words of practical advice. Peter is writing to both the young and the elderly about relating to each other in a hostile environment. He closes with "Greet one another with a kiss of love" (1 Peter 5: 14a). In the Eucharist, we share the kiss of peace as a sign of our unity before we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. In today's Eucharist, will my kiss of peace be the "kiss of love" of which Peter writes? If not, what do I need to do to make it a "kiss of love," mercy, peace?

Sr. Olivia Woltering, ASC

April 26, 2016
Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. (John 14: 27)

Today's Scriptures tell us that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead and so enter into his glory. We are aware that no follower of Christ will be spared trials and crosses in this earthly life either. Yet no matter what suffering may come our way, in John 14, Jesus assures us in these comforting words: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. . . . " With the firm promise of this priceless gift of peace and of his presence, may we bravely endure our sufferings in union with him on earth, and eagerly anticipate the delight of being in his loving presence forever!

Sr. M. John Therese Miller, SSMO

April 27, 2016
Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit . . . (John 15: 1–8)

God is the vine, we are the branches. What does this quote from scripture mean in light of the Year of Mercy? One thought is a posture of being in the world. God offers mercy to us daily, and we, in turn, offer acts of mercy to the world. How will we, as Precious Blood people, respond with acts of mercy? How will we respond as Christ's reconciling presence of mercy in our world? Spend some time during this Easter season thinking about those questions. Permit the ministry of mercy to flow through your veins. The world is crying out for mercy. Let's be branches of mercy.

Sr. Joni Belford, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)

April 28, 2016
Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love. (John 15: 10)

It is always so nice when Jesus is clear and straight to the point. No riddles here, no parables, no cryptic language. If we want to remain in God's love, we are to keep the commandments. That is the litmus test that Jesus gave us. Do I want to call myself a Christian? Do I want to remain in God's love? Do I want to feel the infinite mercy of God? Then I need to keep the commandments. And we know that Jesus always tells us the truth. And so today we remember his words, "I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete" (John 15: 11).

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

April 29, 2016
St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain,
so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.
This I command you: love one another. (John 15: 16–17)

Precious Blood spirituality is crying out to reconcile and to heal the needs in our world: bullying, wars of words, public rhetoric villainizing an entire faith tradition, the hardening of our hearts to the pain and the needs of the poor and the immigrant, using people as a means to an end, all rooted in the rampant fear of anyone who is "other."

How does St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Doctor of the Church, encourage and inspire the recognition of God "who chose you" in the struggles of our time? Catherine understands our struggles having lived during the arduous era of the Black Death, mercenary armies warring throughout the city states of Italy and Europe, as well as a divided papacy. Catherine's response to the overwhelming difficulties of her time was to embrace being chosen by God to engage in the ministries of caring for others, preaching God's word, and reconciliation. May St. Catherine of Siena inspire us to respond to our call to be deeply rooted in prayer, to live courageously with moral integrity, and to engage in reconciliation as we live our Precious Blood spirituality.

Sr. Karen M. Elliott, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

April 30, 2016
Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Misunderstanding, Grace, and Mercy

One of the things that each of us strives for in life is to be understood by friends, co-workers and family members. To be understood means that we have been able to express our views on a particular issue, and whether or not someone agrees with me, at least the person knows the context of my thought. Within conflicting areas, being understood means that I am still a good person in faith and reasoning, but I have simply arrived at a different conclusion. Frequently, the area of disagreement does not cause great concern if the understanding has taken place.

To reach this level of understanding in life is difficult and sometimes impossible. To be a person of mercy in light of the Gospel of Jesus means that I am called to take the first step in reaching out to people for greater understanding. As Jesus was also misunderstood, let us persevere!

Fr. Daniel Torson, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)

May 1, 2016
Sixth Sunday of Easter

The Advocate . . . will teach you everything
and remind you of all that I have told you. (John 14: 26)

Lord, your promise of One Who would remind us of all that you told us
drops like soothing oil on hearts too often cranky and cold.
Try as we might to remember
we still so quickly forget:
Don't be afraid!
Forgive as you have been forgiven!
This is my Blood shed for you!
I am with you always!
Instead we let ourselves become anxious and afraid,
hold on to grudges like penny candy,
and exclude others when we know the pain of exclusion.
Your words are not written on some ancient rock.
Rather they pour from your heart
in such a torrent of mercy
that only the Cup of the New Covenant can hold them.

Sr. Joyce Lehman, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

May 2, 2016
Monday of the Sixth Week of Easter

I have told you this so that you may not fall away. (John 16: 1)

We all know that living our Catholic faith is not easy. All around us we are bombarded with the ways of the world. We are ridiculed, called ignorant, intolerant, you name it. And we can feel like we are losing. But it is in times like this that we remember the words of Christ from today's Gospel. We have been given the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to guide us and to strengthen us. We need to hold on to that reality and let it give us the courage to live our Catholic faith proudly. The Holy Spirit is God, and with God on our side we have nothing to fear.

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

May 3, 2016
Phillip & James, Apostles

Show us the Father. (John 14: 8)

"Show us the Father" was an opening for Jesus to affirm the oneness in being of the Godhead present in the midst of those who followed Jesus and witnessed the works flowing out of the divine unity. He gives a hint of the mystery of the Trinity and of the potential union of humankind with God. Do you want to know God? Listen to Jesus, marvel at his works, and ponder his relationships with people in his life. Whatever is asked in his name he will do.

In Jesus' name we ask for the courage to love our enemies, so that our hearts and theirs be converted to compassion and peace, and that terrorism and violence be erased from the human family.

Sr. Eileen Schieber, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)

May 4, 2016
Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Being Challenged and Being Empowered

Many of us in ministry have been sneered at by others. Our motives are questioned. In today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles, those in Athens dismiss Paul with a "we must hear you again sometime." If you are/have been a teacher or a rectory office worker, you remember the challenge of a warm day in May.

What does God call us to in this time? For religious sisters and brothers, we remember many times when others dismiss our words because we are just a _____.

It takes courage to follow Jesus, but not my personal courage. The writer of the Gospel of John offers us hope today. Jesus will ascend into heaven but the Holy Spirit will return. God may come and go in our lives. We are not defined by others who are negative to us. The Holy Spirit blows in the spring air. May we enjoy ourselves because of God's promise, not the world's indifference. John reminds us that every dog, with the help of the Holy Spirit will have its day, even Ohio professional sports fans.

Br. Tom Bohman, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

May 5, 2016
Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter

I will not leave you orphans, says the Lord;
I will come back to you, and your hearts will rejoice. (John 14: 18)

Everyone grieves at one time or another during his or her life. For some, it comes sooner rather than later. Some grieve over the loss of parents; some over a spouse or a close friend. It seems that the deeper the love, the deeper one feels the separation. One of the gifts God gives us to cope with such a loss is the gift of memory. If there are no memories, there is no feeling of loss (as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says). During the loneliest moments of our lives, one has only to look at a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Sorrows, or the Divine Savior on the cross. Love has a way of lessening our sorrow for He tells us daily with outstretched arms, "I love you this much."

Sr. M. Juliana Monti, SSMO

May 6, 2016
Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Promise and Fulfillment

The Lord promises to Paul what he promises to all: "I will be with you." Even though Paul often seems like a very bold person, he probably had his moments when life seemed to overwhelm him. This is one of those moments. So the Lord gives the usual command: "Do not be afraid. You're doing my work; keep going; You'll be okay. I am with you. I have many people there."

Those words are fulfilled when Paul is brought before Gallio. Paul does not even have to defend himself because Gallio sees through the jealousy and hard hearts of his accusers and knows there is no case against Paul. Paul must have remembered the words of the Lord: "Do not be afraid; no one will harm you."

Fr. Joseph Uecker, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)

May 7, 2016
Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me and have come to believe that I came from God. (John 16: 27)

Faith, all we need is faith. Faith is more than just a word. In Acts, the Christian faith is often called "the Way." As Christians we must show our beliefs by what we do. The Lord requires us to do justice and to love goodness and to walk humbly with our God. We are called to loving mercy and doing justice for ALL. Apollos had a strong faith and defended that faith in public. Do you stand up for your faith in public? Do you stand up for others in public? Do you treat everyone with compassion and dignity no matter their race, gender, financial status, sexual orientation, age or appearance? Are you judgmental? Are you welcoming to everyone? Do you believe?

Mrs. Connie Vincent, ASC Associate

May 8, 2016
The Ascension of the Lord

. . . that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,
would be preached in my name to all the nations. (Luke 24: 47)

". . . To all the nations!" How these words must have struck the disciples with fear and concern! If we put ourselves in that time and place, we would likely say: "You're kidding, of course. Not everyone believes in you! Not everyone in our nation believes in you so it is impossible to think about all nations! It doesn't appear that you have a kingdom here to be part of!"

Perhaps it is a challenge today as well to think about preaching in his name to all nations. Maybe you do not feel like you have a call to be a missionary in another culture. Maybe you do feel the desire to evangelize far and wide but circumstances limit your options at this time.

In this time of globalization, it would be helpful to think how the call to preach to all the nations can happen quite locally, unlike any other time in our history. Who are those people who dress differently; who look different; and who eat food from a special market? Most likely they are from your neighborhood. Have they been welcomed? Do they have what they need?

After we find the "nations" in our neighborhoods then the question becomes what are the ways that we can "preach?" Rather than preaching with words, remember that actions speak louder than words.

Sr. Charlene Herinckx, SSMO

May 9, 2016
Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter

I have conquered the world. (John 16: 33)

In today's Epistle, Paul baptizes some of the Baptist's followers and "when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. . . . Altogether there were about twelve." One thing we learn is that the power is not as much in numbers as in awareness of the Spirit who lives within US. Psalm 68 reinforces the Lord being this source of power: "God arises; those who hate him flee." He is "father of orphans" who "gives a home to the forsaken." Our global village feels as though the numbers of desperate people in need of our God's strength multiply daily. Our Community charism of reconciliation says we are "called to be a sign of his continuing presence." Our hope and power is stated in John's Gospel: "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

Sr. Donna Olson, C.PP.S. (O'Fallon)

May 10, 2016
Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world . . . (John 17: 11)

As the Easter Season draws to a close, we are reminded of our awesome responsibility to be Jesus' presence in the world; to glorify God and to bear witness to the Good News. This is no small responsibility, but it is ours through baptism. We are the hand God extends to those who need him. Ours is a smile that shows the world God's loving face. Fidelity to our mission may bring hardships, but we know that we are united with the saints and our founders who have walked this way before us. Fidelity to Jesus and to the charism of our community demands our courageous response. To follow Jesus is to reach out into a world that may not want our help. Yet we continue to reach out because the Blood that was shed on the Cross was shed not just for a select few, but for the whole world.

Fr. Steve Dos Santos, C.PP.S. (Cincinnati)

May 11, 2016
Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name,
. . . so they may be one just as you and I are one. (John 17: 11)

In the reading for today, we hear Jesus pray, "Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name . . . so they may be one just as you and I are one." As we wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, we are invited by Jesus to become one with him, his Father and each other. How can we respond to this invitation when there are so many differences that separate us? God, in his mercy, has created a kaleidoscope of beauty among us. Jesus, who invites us to recognize everyone as brothers and sisters with the diversity of race, religion, color, culture or language, shed his Precious Blood for all. Through our Precious Blood charism, how can we be an instrument of unity today?

Sr. Bela Mis, C.PP.S. (Dayton)

May 12, 2016
Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Oneness with God

No other religion, except Christianity, can have a situation where God prays to God. The Blessed Holy Trinity permits the second person of the Trinity—Jesus—to pray to the first part of the Trinity – God the Creator. Jesus prays for all believers, may all be one as Jesus, God, and Spirit are one. There is more going on here than praying so that we may go to heaven when we die. This Easter Gospel passage invites us to reflect on a revelation of an intrinsic unity, not sameness, between humanity, God, and all of God's creation. All of creation exists to praise God by simply being that which God created. We who are united to the divine through baptism praise God by living in union and harmony with God, humanity, and creation. Jesus came to live with us to show us the way. He shed his Blood on the cross to make our oneness with God a reality.

Fr. Timothy Guthridge, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)

May 13, 2016
Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter

It is not the custom of the Romans to hand over a man without giving him an opportunity to defend himself in front of his accusers. (Acts 25: 16)

Today's reading about Paul's right to a fair trial is still upheld in our U.S. Constitution. No matter how horrible the crime, the accused is guaranteed the right to trial by a jury of peers. We don't usually have to deal with criminal activity. However, how easily we seem to get our moral hackles up and become judge and jury in day-to-day circumstances. Pope Francis urges us to refrain from judgment and condemnation, "to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment, our presumption to know everything about him." Therein lies the challenge.

Sr. Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC

May 14, 2016
St. Matthias, Apostle

Who is like the LORD, our God, who is enthroned on high
and looks upon the heavens and the earth below? (Psalm 113: 6)

As we celebrate the feast of St. Matthias today, we focus on the commandments of God. And in particular to ask ourselves the question, "Do I keep them?" That is the litmus test that Jesus gave us. If we want to abide in Christ's love, mercy and grace, we need to keep the commandments and, for us as Catholics, the teachings of the Church—even those we may not understand fully. St. Matthias can be a powerful example for us in doing that. He was a simple man, but he knew to trust in Christ's words and wanted more than anything to abide in God's love. If he could do it, why not me?

Fr. Michael Mateyk, C.PP.S. (Atlantic)

May 15, 2016
Pentecost

Wind Surfers of the Spirit

Visiting our missionaries serving in Berkeley, I took a walk around the Emeryville Marina. It was a warm but very windy day. The strong winds whipped up white caps on the water as the waves crashed into the shore. It was a perfect day for windsurfing. As I watched the surfers ride the winds at breathtaking speeds, today's first reading came to mind: "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind." This gale-like force of the Spirit sparked a wildfire as "tongues of fire" appeared that became like lasers to unleash a new language of love.

The Holy Spirit surrounds us, is all around us, and abounds in each of us. Like those windsurfers working hard to ride the wind, there will be harsh waves of rejection and indifference that cause us to crash at times. But the Spirit cannot be contained in sanctuaries; she must be lived out in the streets and from shore to shore. She cannot be imprisoned in small rooms, small minds or small hearts, but released in the larger world, expanding minds and hearts, and calling us to a greater and deeper love for one another.

Pentecost invites us to ride the wind of the Spirit that moves out into the world to be ministers of mercy, shapers and makers of peace, as we seek to live with courage and compassion, justice and love.

Fr. Joe Nassal, C.PP.S. (Kansas City)