# Friday 24th April

Jn 6:52-59

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.*"*

Jesus couldn’t be clearer: “\_*my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed\_”* and “\_*he who eats me will live because of me\_”*. He didn’t say ‘my flesh is \_like\_ food’ or ‘kind of food’ or ‘reminds you of food’ or ‘if you \_sort of\_ eat my \_kind of\_ flesh...’ It was so obvious the meaning that the Jews were scandalized.

On October 1995 St John Paul II was to greet the seminarians at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore (USA). He wanted first to visit the Blessed Sacrament. The security personnel quickly flew into action; doing a sweep of the building and especially the chapel. They brought highly trained dogs used to locate survivors in collapsed buildings after earthquakes and other disasters. The dogs went through the halls, offices and classrooms quickly, and then ran through the chapel and into the side chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. Upon reaching the tabernacle, the dogs sniffed and whined and pointed out at it, refusing to leave; as if they had discovered Someone there and firmly remained, their attention riveted on the tabernacle, until called out by their handlers. We Catholics know they were right; there is a real living Person in the tabernacle!

# Saturday 25th April. St Mark

Mk 16:15-20

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” ... And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.

How many people have left everything to devote their lives to preaching the Gospel! One of them is St Mark, whose feast we celebrate today. Tradition suggests that the Upper Room was in the house of his parents, so he was a Christian from childhood. Mark went with Paul and his cousin Barnabas on their first apostolic journey, but on arriving in Cyprus he left them and went back home. Paul was so upset that, later on, when Barnabas and he were planning their second journey, Paul would not hear of Barnabas bringing his cousin Mark with them again. They argued and eventually went their separate ways.

About ten years later we find Mark in Rome, this time helping Peter as interpreter, and writing his Gospel. In Rome he met Paul again and started serving him also. So the man who Paul didn’t want to be with on his second missionary journey, later became a “\_faithful companion\_” and a “\_comfort\_” (Col 4:10-11) to him in Rome. Around the year 66, shortly before his death, the Apostle writes to Timothy: \_*Get Mark and bring him with you; for he\_ @is very useful in serving me@* (2 Tim 4:11).

All had been forgotten in the end. Mark had fled in the past, was weak, but he came back. It’s never late! “\_It is a great example of how we should never write people off, and a wonderful lesson, should we ever need one, on how to reconstruct a friendship that appears to have been ruined forever!\_” (Fernandez Carvajal).

# Sunday 26th April

Jn 10:11-18

*"*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me."

A group of boys went for an excursion to the forest. As they were having lunch on a little hill they saw a shepherd coming with his sheep. Out of curiosity the leader of the group took advantage of the opportunity to check what they had read in the Gospel. When the shepherd was close enough he asked him what he would do if a sheep were lost. The shepherd with total indifference said: —\_Too bad for it!\_, and kept walking unconcerned.

Well, he wasn’t a good shepherd; was he? at least not like Jesus: He ‘\_knows\_’ His sheep, He follows them up, He looks for them if they are lost, He lays down His Live for them. Jesus never gives up any of His sheep. And we do the same with our friends: But the sheep also have to be responsible to help other sheep to remain with the shepherd.

Richard the Lionheart was once caught in an ambush by Saracens during the Crusades, while hunting with some other knights. They fought bravely but were outnumbered; all the knights died except William de Pourcellet who, in order to save the king shouted: ‘\_I’m the King\_’. The enemy captured him and took him to the sultan Saladin. There they found out the trick. But Saladin was so taken by the loyalty of that man that he spared his life.

# Monday 27th April

Jn 10:1-10

Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Jesus was warning His disciples that not everything that sounded like the voice of God was actually the ‘Voice of God’. In that time there were many religious leaders, many rabbis; some people would follow them, at least for a while. But with time, they proved not to be ‘true shepherds. They had people following them, but they were not following God, so they didn’t help people to follow ‘\_the\_’ Good Shepherd.

The great success of those rabbis was to have ‘followers’, even if they went nowhere. It’s a bit like us being obsessed with getting ‘\_followers\_’ in \_Twitter\_ or ­\_Facebook\_ but we don’t really go anywhere, so they don’t follow.

You, Lord, are the real Door; and that door is always open for us: for everyone. It cost You all Your Blood to open that door. If we cross it we can enter into intimacy with the Most Blessed Trinity. And yet, some people may pass in front of the door and not get in; for that reason we feel the need to push those in with our apostolate, evangelizing. Not forcing them, for they are free; but showing them the open door so that they can understand that they can always become intimate with God: Always! Besides, Our Lady is by the gate, holding the door open and calling us.

# Tuesday 28th April

Jn 10:22-30

The Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep."

The problem wasn’t that Jesus didn’t speak plainly enough. The problem was that they didn’t want to listen. Some people ask Jesus questions but don’t listen to answers. They may say: ‘\_If God wants me to do this or that... He can tell me plainly!\_’ He does; but you don’t get it because you are not ready to listen.

Winter, 1917. A 15 year old boy is walking through the little town of Logroño (Spain), early in the morning. He stares at the spectacle of the snow-covered town. Then something catches his attention that will change his entire existence: some footprints in the snow. He examines them and follows their trail until he catches up with the Carmelite friar whose bare feet had made them. He is dumbfounded: there are people in the world, like this man, who make great sacrifices for God and for others. ‘\_*What about me? Am I not going to be able to offer him anything?*\_’ That was the beginning of his vocation. Young Josemaría - that was his name - became a priest, and a saint.

How many other people saw those same footprints? Did they react as Josemaría did? He was ready to listen to the voice of God, not with words, but with deeds.

Lord, Jesus, if You want to say something important to me, please help me to listen, and follow You.

# Wednesday 29th April. St Catherine of Siena

Mt 11:25–30

At that time Jesus declared, " Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Some people think about religion as a kind of exhausting and painful way to Heaven, and the commandments and acts of piety as a burden we need to carry on our shoulders. But Jesus insists that his “\_burden is light\_”. If we walk along with Jesus, He carries the yoke with us, and between the two of us, the weight is easier to take. Allow Jesus to share the burden with you.

A man had a dream: He was walking along the beach with Jesus. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to Jesus. At the end he looked back at the footprints in the sand and saw that many times along the path of his life there were only one set of footprints. He recognized that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life. This really bothered him and he asked Jesus: ‘\_Lord, You said that if I followed You, You'd walk with me all the way and we’d share the burden. But during the most troublesome times in my life, there's only one set of footprints: When I needed You the most You left me alone!\_’ Jesus replied. "\_My precious child, I love you and I’d never leave you. During those times of suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you\_."

A child of God can sing every day \_I’ll never walk alone\_, because Jesus would never allow it.

# Thursday 30th April

Jn 13:16-20

After he had washed the feet of his disciples, Jesus said to them: “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled."

\_*”I know whom I have chosen*”\_. You, Lord, know those you had chosen. You knew them better than they knew themselves. You taught them and gave them example, and they learned from You, the Master. And it reassures me to remember that You know me as well, and You know what You made me for.

You, Lord, are like a film director who is trying to find the perfect actor for a perfect role in a particular plot. Film directors have to go through catalogues of actors until they find someone who fits the description of the character they need. In the end they find someone who \_*may be*\_, more or less, \_*suitable*\_ for the job, [even] though he is rarely perfect.

The difference between the film director looking for actors and You, Lord, is that You don’t look for them: ‘You make them!’ And therefore, You make each one perfect for the role that they have to do: ‘You know whom You have chosen’ and ‘what You have chosen them for’.

I too am made perfect for my role, my mission in life; and I beg You, Lord, for the grace I need to fulfil it. I want to do with my life exactly what You think is best, for You know me better than I know myself. You know what I can do, Lord.

What do You want me to do?

# Friday 1st May. St Joseph the Worker

Mt 13:54-58

Coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?”

Has it ever happened to you that someone meets you for the first time and ask you: ‘\_are you the son of...\_’? And you answer proudly: ‘\_Yes, he is my dad\_’. I imagine that Jesus loved to be remembered as the son of Joseph. And I can imagine why: all the people of Nazareth knew Joseph, but all they can recall of him is that he was ‘the carpenter’. They didn’t remember Joseph by any extraordinary deed or ability; just by his daily task. And they remembered him because he was very good at it.

St Joseph is considered the greatest saint after Our Lady. Why? Because holiness is about love: who could love Jesus more than Mary and Joseph? But you don’t find miracles in the life of Joseph; no crowds of people coming to listen to his speech; no extraordinary things. We don’t even have a word spoken by Joseph in the Gospels - which says a lot about his humility and prayer life. He didn’t see the Angel, just heard him in dreams According to tradition, Joseph died before Jesus’ public life of miracles, preaching and crowds of followers.

All he saw was the saw, the chisel, the nails and the wood of his workshop, and the smiling face of Jesus and the comforting presence of Mary. Jesus, Mary and his work were enough to transform this humble carpenter into a great saint.

May I always work like him, in the presence of Jesus and Mary, proud to call St Joseph, ‘my father and lord’.

# Saturday 2nd May. St Athanasius

Jn 14:7-14

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip?*"*

Sounds like a kind reproach, doesn’t it? I have been with you all this time, *“\_and yet you do not know me\_”.*

The Cure of Ars told the story of St Alexis, the only son of a rich Roman senator, who left everything for God and, in disguise, he travelled to the East and lived in great poverty. One day, after seventeen years, he came as a beggar to his own home. His parents did not recognize him, but they were very kind to all poor people and so they let him stay in a corner under the stairs, where Alexis lived for seventeen years. His own mother was taking care of his corps when she recognised her son who had lived for years under the stairs in her palace. Then she exclaimed: “\_O my son! too late have I known thee!\_”

Commenting on the story, St John Vianney said: “\_The soul leaving this life will at last see Him, whom she possessed in the Eucharist, and at the sight of the consolations, beauties and riches that she had ignored, she will likewise cry out: “O Jesus! O my Life! O my Treasure! O my Love! too late have I known Thee!\_”

After so many Masses and communions and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, it would be sad to meet Our Lord at the end of our lives and listen to His Words: *"\_Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip?\_"*

# Sunday 3rd May

Jn 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit ... As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

The branch receives sap from the vine; but even if the branch is united to the vine, it doesn't give fruit automatically. It needs to want to transform the sap into fruit. We, Christians, are united to Christ and receive Life from Him; but we don't necessarily give fruit. We could become \_*spongers*\_ that take sap and give nothing; but those branches, in the words of Our Lord, are ‘taken away’.

Saints give fruit, but they never forget that it’s Jesus (the Vine) who gives fruit through them; they were always aware that they are just branches, united to the Body of the Vine. And there is always something common and attractive in the life of all the saints: the ‘\_disproportion\_’ between their talents and their fruits. But what's a branch, anyway? It is part of the production of grapes if it receives the sap, or it becomes a stick for the fire if it isn't united to the vine.

We have to remain united to the Vine, the Body of Christ: the Church, because it connects us to the roots: to God Himself. From the roots, the sap (supernatural grace) reaches to us, and then we can give apostolic fruit. Do I give fruit?

Jesus, keep me always perfectly united to You, perfectly alive, with Your Life: your grace.

# Monday 4th May. The English Martyrs

Mt 10:17-22

When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

A nurse came to tell to the hospital chaplain of a dying patient, who didn’t want to see a priest or hear about it. Without hesitation, the priest said he wanted to see him, and so the nurse escorted him to the room. As soon as the patient saw the priest coming in, he shouted at him to go away. But the priest calmly went in, leaving the nurse in the corridor.

After ten minutes the priest went out with a big smile and asked the nurse to come in. The patient was smiling with his eyes full of tears, calmed and muttering: ‘\_Thank You, God, thank You, God!\_’ As the nurse accompanied the priest to the lift, she asked: ‘\_How did you do it?\_’

‘\_As always\_’ the priest replied: ‘\_asking the Holy Spirit to do it Himself\_’. ‘\_But father...’ the astonished nurse insisted: ‘in just ten minutes!?\_’ ‘\_I was ten minutes\_,’ answered the priest, ‘\_but the Holy Spirit has been working in him for many years...\_’

That was the promise of our Lord: the Holy Spirit will take care of it. There is no better speaker in the world than the Holy Spirit; and in our mission to evangelize He never leaves us alone: “\_Alone! You are not alone. We are keeping you close company from afar. Besides..., the holy Spirit, living in your soul in grace — God with you, — is giving a supernatural tone to all your thoughts, desires and actions\_” (St Josemaría).

# Tuesday 5th May

Jn 14:27-31a

Jesus said to his disciples: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father.”

Jesus is preparing His disciples for his Ascension: He will go to Heaven, but they shouldn’t be troubled or afraid. Christians have no reason whatsoever to be anxious, because He didn’t leave us by ourselves, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete is in charge now.

One day someone asked St John XXIII if he could sleep well with all the worries of the church. He explained that he had problems at the beginning, until one night he told himself: “\_John, why don’t you sleep? Is it not the Holy Spirit who governs the church? Well then, what are you worried about? Go to sleep John!\_” Since then, he said, he ‘\_could sleep like a log\_’.

God wants us to be at peace always: interior peace (not being anxious about anything) and exterior peace (to be at peace with everyone). By the action of the Holy Spirit in us we are \_sowers of peace and joy\_. One of the features of saints is that when you are with them you feel at peace. Their own peace ‘infects’ everyone around them.

Peace is a gift of the Holy Spirit we need to ask for: ‘\_See, my children, a person who is in a state of sin is always sad. Whatever he does, he is weary and disgusted with everything; while he who is at peace with God is always happy, always joyous\_’ (St. John Mary Vianney).

**Wednesday 6th May**

Jn 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser... If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.*"*

If we remain in Him, and His words abide in us: "*\_ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you*." To abide in Him is to be always in union, as a branch to the trunk. We also need to make sure that His Words abide in us; the Words of the Gospel that we meditate every day. Ask Him now to help you to keep His Words in you.

But the promise “\_*it shall be done for you\_”* doesn’t mean, obviously, that God is like a slave that has to give us ‘anything’ we ask for; for you know that we can ask for things that would do us no good. It can also happen that God may delay granting your wish, as St Augustine explains: "\_*He Who takes time to give wants to increase your desire with the delay, so that it does not seem of little value what He gives in the end\_*". So we need to insist when we ask.

And then, of course, some things more important to pray for than others. Joyce Kilmer, a soldier in WWII, wrote from the battle fields to a priest asking for prayers. He didn’t ask that life might be spared; or that he might soon get back safely to his loved ones or that his family would be fine... no. He said: “\_Pray for me, Father, that I may love God more and that I may be unceasingly conscious of Him. That is the greatest wish I have\_”. This is one of the best things to ask for.

# Thursday 7th May

Jn 15:9-11

Jesus said to his disciples: “abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

Have you ever felt happy... very, very happy? Can you imagine what does it means for our joy to be “\_*full*\_”? No, you can’t. Because human beings still don’t know what fullness of joy means, how ‘\_*full*\_’ the human heart can be. If we ‘abide’ in the Love of God, we will be filled with that joy. The joy that all saints had: have you ever seen a sad saint?

Charles IX, King of France, once asked the poet Torquato Tasso: ‘*Who do you think is the happiest person?*’ —‘\_*God, most certainly*\_’, said Tasso. ‘\_Bah! I know that; I mean among men\_’ replied the king. ‘\_The happiest man?\_’, replied Tasso, ‘\_he who is closer to God\_’. Obviously: if we are close, He can fill up our souls with joy ‘to the brim’.

When she was a child, St Therese of Lisieux was upset to learn that not all souls enjoy the same joy in heaven. Her sister Pauline told her to get her thimble and her father's water tumbler and fill them with water. She asked Therese which was fuller. But neither was fuller than the other; one simply contained more because it was bigger. That was it! Each soul is filled to its brim and can hold no more; each, being full of God, is completely happy.

Jesus, enlarge my heart, make me abide in Your Love, here on earth, and forever in eternity.

# Friday 8th May

Jn 15:12-17

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends... No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."

Free choice is part of the definition of friendship, isn’t it? You choose your friends, and Jesus chooses His. And in the list of His friends your name is written. But friendship, as you know, is like a delicate plant. You need to take care of it every day; you need at least to put it in the light and water it; but in particular seasons plants require more attention (pruning, feeding, changing its pot...).

Friends sometimes argue; they may have a crisis, but they always make up; as we do in confession when we fail [to] our Friend Jesus Christ. But disagreement isn’t the main enemy of friendship: the main enemy of friendship is forgetfulness. If you forget your plant and neglect it... the plant dies. The same could happen to our friendship with Jesus.

You chose me, Lord, to be your friend, and you made our friendship possible by giving Your Life for me on the Cross: there is no greater love than that. For that reason, I choose You as my best Friend; I want to grow in friendship with You every day, to be with You: help me not to forget You ever. “\_*This very moment I may, if I desire, become the friend of God*\_” (St Augustine).

# Saturday 9th May

Jn 15:18-21

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you ... Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me.*"*

Those who hate Christians or Jesus Christ do so “\_*because they do not know him who sent me*\_”; they just don’t know! Do you remember the words of Jesus on the Cross? "\_*Father, forgive them; for they don’t know what they are doing\_*." St Stephen, too, as he was stoned, said a similar prayer.

And do you remember [also] the reaction of the centurion when Jesus died? He said: "\_*Truly this man was the Son of God!*\_" And [one] among the people stoning St Stephen to death of was one Saul, who became St Paul. You see? a way to help people to find the truth is in giving example of Christian virtues.

The 40 Martyrs of Sebaste were a group of Christian soldiers condemned in 320AD to freeze to death in a frozen pond. They set a warm bath in front of the pond to tempt them to give up. One of them yielded leaving his companions. But at that, one of the guards watching over the martyrs, who had seen their example and faithfulness, [at once] proclaimed himself a Christian, threw off his garments, and joined the other martyrs to complete the number of 40.

The centurion, Saul, or the guard weren’t evil people: they were just ignorant. To convert they didn’t need any speech, just [to see] the example of Jesus (Master) and the saints (disciples).

# Sunday 10th May

Jn 15:9-17

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you ... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another*"*.

I see the different things You say: You chose us to ‘give fruit’; we become Your friends if we do ‘what You command’; You command *”\_to love one another*\_”; Conclusion: Love is the fruit that You expect. That’s the example that You left to Your disciples and Your disciples to us.

We have a mission: to love one another. And to love them as You love them; to love them with ‘deeds’, which are the fruits that endure. Acts of love remain forever. We don’t have any chairs or tables made by You, Lord, but we have Your Cross as ‘The Act of Love’. Besides, all the acts of love that we have with the others, we have them with You, isn’t it?

On one occasion, St John of God found a beggar lying on the road seriously ill, and carried him on his back to the hospital. He washed his feet and laid him in a bed. As he was about to kiss the feet of the poor man, according to his usual custom, he saw that they were \_*pierced*\_ like Christ’s. Looking at the face of the beggar he found himself in front of Jesus Himself, smiling and saying: "\_*Whatever you do to the needy and suffering, you do it to Me*\_".

# Monday 11th May

Jn 15:26-16:4a

But when the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you ... he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning. "I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away ... the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them.

The Holy Spirit, the Counsellor makes us witnesses of Jesus. We become witnesses because we have been ‘with Him’. We have to bear witness to our Faith. That’s what ‘martyr’ means: witness. But don’t get it wrong: martyrs didn’t become saints only because they ‘died’ for Jesus, but because they ‘lived’ for Jesus. Martyrs could give witness with their ‘deaths’ because they have given witness with their ‘lives’ before. They were ready ‘to die’ for Christ because they have ‘lived’ for Christ.

In many cases those who killed them thought they were “\_*offering service to God*\_”, as those who asked the crucifixion of Jesus, or those who stoned St Stephen... This shouldn’t take us by surprise, because Jesus warned us about it.

But you and I probably won’t be martyrs in that same sense. We will be ‘witnesses’ [martyrs] of Jesus Christ with our lives: when we get down to study when we should, or we pray on time, or we do the dishes when it’s not my job, or we pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or we speak without fear about our faith with our friends... That’s how you bear witness to Jesus: that’s your martyrdom!

# Tuesday 12th May

Jn 16:5-11

“But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

It’s to our advantage that You, Lord, have to go, because then we can receive the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless sorrow fills the hearts of the Apostles because they won't be able to see You until the end of their lives, and they love You. I can understand it; You are the Light. And our lives with You are like hiking in beautiful mountains capped with brilliant snow at the light of the sun. But when You aren't with us night falls: it is dark and freezing.

One day in Rome, during an audience with St John Paul II, a lady was greeting the Pope with her husband. After a few sentences of introduction she took the hand of her husband, put it in the hands of the Pope and said: "\_Holy Father, could you say something to my husband who doesn't want to go to confession?\_" St John Paul II pressed the hand of that man and staring at his eyes answered: "\_Go to confession. It's so hard to be away from God!\_" (¡se está tan mal lejos de Dios!)

It's so hard to be away from You! Because we were meant to live with You, Lord. And we thank You, Lord that You have left us the Holy Spirit so that we may be His temples and take Him all over the world as walking tabernacles of God. That’s what I am: a walking tabernacle that can bring God close to my friends and relatives: It’s so good to be with You!

# Wednesday 13th May. Our Lady of Fatima

Lk 11:27-28

As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Ninety-eight years ago Our Lady appeared to three little shepherds who were 9, 8 and 6 years old. The message was basically twofold: ‘make reparation for sins’ and ‘pray for sinners’. An angel had explained to them a year before: "\_*Make of everything you can a sacrifice and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and in supplication for the conversion of sinners*\_."

Our Lady stressed the importance of praying the Rosary every day for peace. That could be a good resolution for this month of May. In actual fact, a decade of the rosary takes you less than three minutes [time it, and you’ll see!].

Another important part of the Message of Fatima is devotion to Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart, which is terribly offended by the sins of humanity. She showed them Her Heart, surrounded by piercing thorns (representing the sins against Her Immaculate Heart), and said that their sacrifices could help to console Her.

During the 2nd apparition, Our Lady explained that Jacinta and Francisco would go to Heaven very soon but Lucia was to remain on earth for longer. Lucia asked with sadness: “\_Am I going to be left alone?\_” Our Lady said: "\_No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God\_."

# Thursday 14th May. St Matthias

Jn 16:16-20

"A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me." Some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us ... Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.*"*

Sometimes we don’t see our Lord, but that is only for “\_a while\_”; moments in which we “\_*weep and lament*\_”. During these moments the enemies of God will rejoice, thinking that they have won; but not for long, because we have been promised by Him that we are on the winning side and God always fulfils His promises.

The city of Troy was protected by a 20 feet high wall. The Greek warriors had been trying to breach the wall around Troy for about ten years. Finally, Odysseus, a Greek general, had an idea. They built a beautiful and huge wooden horse, and left it outside the gate. The Greek army pretended to leave, as if they had finally admitted defeat. But the horse was hollow and 30 men were hiding inside. The following morning the Trojans thought they had defeated the Greeks, and rushed outside cheering. They found the horse and dragged it inside the city as a ‘\_trophy of victory\_’. That night, while the Trojan people were sleeping, the men hiding inside the wooden horse climbed out and opened the gates. The waiting Greek army entered Troy. That was the end of Troy.

The devil thought that the Cross was his ‘\_trophy\_’. But he was wrong. He has been defeated on the Cross!

# Friday 15th May. 1st day of devotion to the Holy Spirit

Jn 16:20-23

Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

He never promised it was going to be ‘easy’; he said it was ‘worthwhile’. And we should always be cheerful. Consider slowly this promise of Jesus: “\_*no one will take your joy from you*\_”: No one; ever! Even if the enemy [may] try very hard, (and he will). Know it well: gloominess is the scum of the enemy. And the joy of the children of God is like rubbing salt in his wound. St Paul said it: “\_*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice*\_”.

Our joy is deep within us and nothing can touch it; like a child hidden inside of a large metal box: archers can discharge their arrows at it that the child will remain untouched. Nothing from the outside-no matter how hard- can touch it, unless we open the lid.

In 1534 two martyrs were in trial for refusing to sign a formal document explicitly acknowledging Henry VIII as head of the church in England. The judge said plainly: ‘\_*If you don’t sign you’ll tied up and thrown into the Thames*\_’. The replay of them, with a big smile was: ‘\_*We just want to go to Heaven. We don’t really mind if it is by water or by land*...\_’ Consider slowly: “\_*no one will take your joy from you*\_”.

# Saturday 16th May. St Simon Stock. 2nd day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 16:23b-28

Jesus said to his disciples: "I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father."

Now I understand that You don’t need to speak well of me to The Father, for He loves me madly already. It would be like trying to convince my mother that I am a good child when she loves me madly and says that [almost] all the time! God loves His children.

In 1989 an earthquake collapsed many buildings in Armenia. A father run to his son’s school and found it demolished. He remembered the promise he had made to his son: "\_*No matter what, I'll always be there for you!*\_" He remembered where his son's classroom was and started digging through the rubble. Some people tried to stop him saying: "\_It's too late!\_" "\_They're dead!\_" or "\_Go home!\_" but he proceeded to dig stone by stone. Even the fire chief and the police tried to dissuade that man, but he just answered: "\_Help me or leave me alone\_”. No one helped him. He dug for 8 hours, 12, 24, 36 hours ... then, after 38 hours, he pulled back a boulder and shouted his son’s name. Then he heard his son's voice: "\_Dad!? It's me, Dad! I told the other kids not to worry. I told 'em that if you were alive, you'd save me and then they'd be saved. You promised: 'No matter what, I'll always be there for you!' You did it, Dad!\_" Fourteen more boys were saved that day because that father fulfilled his promise.

Could ever God forget about me?

# Sunday 17th May. The Ascension. 3rd day of the Holy Spirit

Mk 16:15-20

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.

After His Ascension we are in charge now; we have been sent: “\_Go! Go into the whole world!\_”, yes, but remember that He is ‘\_working\_’ with us - the apostles of the XXI century. Remember also the words of St Francis: "\_Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words\_." To preach the Gospel we don’t always need to speak: actions speak louder; we teach people with the example of our lives.

“\_Go out!\_” go in search of those who need to be told that Christ has died for them, that God has paid for their sins, that they are worth all the Blood of the Son of God and they can’t sell themselves cheaper than that; “\_Go out!\_” and tell them that God loves them madly, that He is looking for them, that He is longing for them. We have to spread the fire of the Love of God, and set the world in fire.

‘\_*Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Make yourself felt. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love. With your apostolic life, wipe out the trail of filth and slime left by the corrupt sowers of hatred. And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart*\_’ St Josemaría.

# Monday 18th May. 4th day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 16:29-33

*Jesus said to his disciples, "The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

Emperor Julian of the Roman Empire struggled against Christians with all his might. His zeal against the Christians surprised some because he had been brought up as a Christian. He determined to suffocate Christianity restoring the traditional pagan religions to supremacy; old temples were rebuilt and new ones started, the pagan priesthood restored. At the end of his life devoted to fighting against the followers of Christ, the Galilean, on June 27, , Julian lay was groaning in agony with a spear shoved into his guts. He was only 32 years old. As he bled, the dying emperor groaned, "\_You have won, O Galilean!\_"

Since the beginning the enemies of Christ have certainly tried their best. But think about it. The Church survived and even flourished during centuries of terrible persecution, the Roman Empire, the barbarian invasions, wave after wave of Jihads, the age of revolution, Nazism and Communism. After 2,000 years there are over 1,000,000,000 Catholics in the world.

We will always “\_*have tribulation; but be of good cheer\_”,* said Jesus, “\_*I have overcome the world\_*." \_Christus vincit! Christus regnat! Christus imperat!\_ [Christ wins! Christ reigns! Christ commands!] sings the Church: Christ always wins.

# Tuesday 19th May. 5th day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 17:1-11a

Jesus said, "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gave me to do; ... I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gave me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gave them to me, and they have kept thy word ... and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world.

Men are obliged to glorify God, to worship Him. And the best worship that men can give to God is when we glorify God with Jesus Christ. The summit of Christian worship is the Holy Mass; in it Jesus ‘\_glorifies the Father on earth\_’ and we (who are still in the world) unite ourselves to Him. For that reason there is nothing more important in the world than the Mass; one Mass; every Mass, because it is the Sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary.

During the WW II, Nazis forced many priests into concentration camps and the majority were sent to Dachau Concentration Camp. At least 2,720 priests were together in a single area, the ‘\_Priesterblock\_’ and they were permitted to have a single altar in which to celebrate one Mass a day. One priest said the Mass and others attended it. Bl Karl Leisner was the only man who was ordained a priest there. On December 17, 1944, against the orders of the Nazis, he became a priest after 5 years in concentration camps as a deacon. He said his first Mass on December 30; he was in such poor health, that that Mass became his first and last, his only Mass, before he died. None of the priests that attended it [that Mass] could ever forget his love and devotion for the Mass.

How would you attend the Mass if it were your first Mass, your Last Mass ... your only Mass?

# Wednesday 20th May. 6th day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 17:11b-19

“Holy Father ... I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil one ... As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

There are trains that are so comfortable that once you are on them you forget you are travelling. But every stop reminds us that we didn’t get on the train to stay: we are going somewhere else. The same happens with the world. We are not ‘from’ the world, but we are ‘in the world’. The world is not our ‘destiny’, but our ‘way’. You, Lord, have sent us into the world, and You didn’t ask the Father to take us “\_out of the world\_”; and that is not a mistake. We are from Heaven and to go to Heaven, we need to walk through the world; the world is then a ‘path’ towards You. And we believe that You didn’t send us through a dangerous and evil path full of traps. In fact You made the world (the path).

You, Lord, have sent us in the world, and we love this path that is taking us to You. But the evil one is also here. You made a good path, but the path has become dangerous; not because of Your design (Your path is perfectly safe), but because there are thieves or wild beasts (the evil one) making our journey difficult. That’s why You ask the Father not to take us “\_out of the world\_” (because it’s our way to Heaven), but to “\_keep us from the evil one\_”.

You have sent us into the world with a mission: to remind people that we don’t ‘stay here’, we are ‘on our way’.

# Thursday 21st May. 7th day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 17:20-26

"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me ... Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am."

It fills me with confidence to know that You, Lord, prayed for me to the Father. Because I’m one of those who believed in You “\_*through their word*\_”. As Easter comes to its end, that we commemorate the moment in which You gave the last push to Your Church to keep moving forward, steadily, we hear Your prayer for the unity in Your Church: ‘\_that we may be one\_’.

The Church will be effective if we are united, as happens with a football team. We have one manager: the Father; one Founder: Christ; one coach: the Holy Spirit; one captain: the Pope; one goal: the holiness of everyone. If we are united there is no enemy that could be a threat. Nothing is impossible if we are one.

Do you remember the song of U2 ‘\_One\_’? The lyrics say: “\_We're one, but we're not the same\_”. In the Church also, we are all different; as in the football team all the players have different positions. It would be ridiculous to have 11 goalkeepers on the field!

An old man gave his grandson a tiny stick and asked him to break it. He broke it easily. Then he gave to him ten sticks all stuck together: The boy couldn’t break it. Then he explain: ‘\_This is like the family: you can’t break it if we are together\_’. And the Church is our family.

# Friday 22nd May. 8th day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 21:15-19

Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, "Follow me."

Peter had denied Jesus three times on Good Friday so Jesus asked him three times for an act of love. Peter wasn’t perfect. He failed. But his love for Jesus was sincere and intense. Jesus called him to follow Him, and he did ever since, until his crucifixion upside down in Rome. God doesn’t need perfect instruments. He needs people who know how to love and follow Him.

“\_*When Christ at a symbolic moment was establishing His great society, He chose for its cornerstone neither the brilliant Paul nor the mystic John, but a shuffler, a snob, a coward–in a word, a man. And upon this rock He has built His Church, and the gates of Hell have not prevailed against it. All the empires and the kingdoms have failed, because of this inherent and continual weakness, that they were founded by strong men and upon strong men. But this one thing, the historic Christian Church, was founded on a weak man, and for that reason it is indestructible*\_” (G K Chesterton).

# Saturday 23rd May. 9th day of the Holy Spirit

Jn 21:20-25

*This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

This is the end of the Gospel of John, who saw all these things and many more. This witness couldn’t write everything. So Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and founded the Church. The meaning is clear: The Sacred Scripture isn’t everything; we need also what the Spirit has said through the apostles (Tradition) and their successors (Magisterium). In this way, the Holy Spirit can still reveal the content of the Scripture to us*.*

That’s how Jesus made sure that everyone could receive His Words with their proper meaning. That’s the mission of the Church, governed by the Holy Spirit watching over the Scripture, the Tradition, and the Magisterium. How beautiful the Church is, and how much we should love her!

But not everyone sees her beauty. It is likethe stained glass windows of an old cathedral: seen from the outside, the only thing you observe are strips of dark glass joined with black lead. However, seen from the inside, against the light, you will contemplate a spectacle of colours and figures that will take your breath away. The same happens with the Church. Seen from the outside, with a worldly vision, you don’t see anything but dark sides and miseries. But from the inside, with the eyes of faith, you will see a wondrous edifice, a perfectly assembled body, a beautiful wife without blemish.

# Sunday 24th May. Pentecost

Jn 20:19-23

Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

In the 1st reading of the Mass today we hear the account of Pentecost, the day that the Church exploded; the day on which three thousand people from all walks of life listened to a fisherman about Jesus Christ and were baptized.

O Peter! How can we recognize you now? You don’t run away today, and don’t hide for fear of the Jews; you now deploy more energy preaching than before in hiding. Yesterday you were frightened by the voice of a servant, and now you stand unshakable under the blows of the chief priests: You, the same who recently fled and abandoned him when He was driven in front of the Council. Who could doubt the power of transformation of the Holy Spirit now? Who wouldn’t pray to that same Spirit: ‘\_Come, O Holy Spirit, do the same with me\_’?

Holy Mary, my Mother, you were there on that day too; I can imagine your eyes glowing with love and joy as you saw that transformation. And you are now with me... every day... helping me to be ready for the Holy Spirit, to take after you: Mother, help me to be a good living temple of the Holy Spirit: a true Apostle!