

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

April 2014

**St. Cecilia Church**

Rev. James L. Secora, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Maria Faustina

Born Helena Kowalska in Poland, Faustina was

20 years old when she joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She began to receive messages from Jesus which she recorded in her diary at his request.

These messages emphasized Jesus' mercy and forgiveness for sins acknowledged and confessed. On May 5, 2000, five days after St. Faustina's canonization, the Vatican declared the Second Sunday of Easter to be Divine Mercy Sunday, as Jesus had asked of Faustina.

### Jesus loves me

The beloved children's song, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so," speaks of unshakable faith in Christ's love. Easter, as at no other time of the year, is testament to that love. Let our faith be like that of little children who know without doubt that Jesus loves us.

"Show me the path I should walk, for I entrust my life to you"  
(Psalm 143:8b).



## We are: priest, prophet, and king

The Israelites anointed their priests and kings with oil as a sign that they were set apart for special work. When we were baptized, we were also anointed with oil to show that we have been set apart for Christ and share in his threefold roles as priest, prophet and king.

**Priest.** A priest mediates between God and humans and offers sacrifices on behalf of others. We accept our ministerial priesthood when we pray intercessory prayers, when we perform penitential acts for other people, and when we regularly participate in the Mass fully and joyfully.

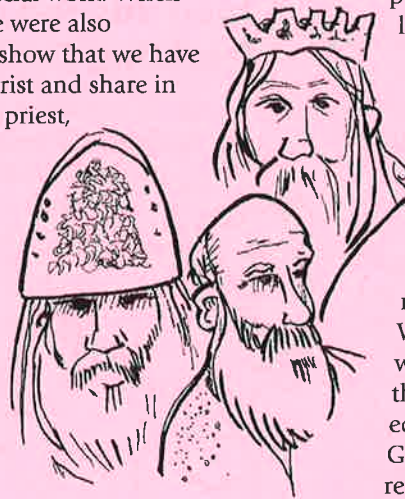
**Prophet.** A prophet is a messenger sent by God to speak for God. The message is credible because the prophet

lives a holy life and also calls people to conversion. We share in Jesus' prophetic ministry by living our faith, teaching others about God and his love, and by spreading Jesus' Gospel messages.

**King.** Kings protect their people from harm, exercise leadership, and act as models and examples. We are servant kings when we participate in the leadership and education of those within God's Church, when we resist bad influences and live lives of virtue, and

when we work to lead others to salvation.

By living our faith, participating in our parish and in the Sacraments, we help to build the reign of God.

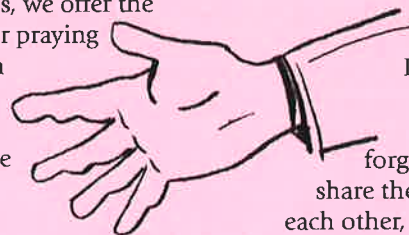


## Why Do Catholics Do That?

## Why do we offer peace at Mass?

During the Mass, we offer the Sign of Peace after praying the Our Father, in preparation for Communion. In the Our Father, we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who

trespass against us." We offer the Sign of Peace in the confidence that if we forgive our neighbors, God will forgive our sins. Since we share the Peace of Christ with each other, the Sign of Peace can also be a sign of spiritual unity.



## Invite a friend to Mass ... really?

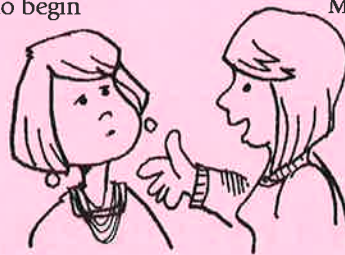
Do you invite non-Catholics to Mass? For some it's a good start to learning our faith. For others, it's better to begin slowly. Consider these steps:

**Do life first.** It can be a stretch for someone who doesn't know Christ to find him at Mass the first time. If unused to ritual, Mass may be confusing and seem exclusive because non-Catholics can't receive Communion. Instead, try sharing the warmth of a Christ-centered community by including your friend in a parish dinner or fundraising event where

she can socialize with others who live for Christ.

**Make it small.** Bring your friend along to your Bible study, prayer meeting or small study group. Adult faith formation classes also make good introductions to faith in a small setting for someone unused to formal religion.

**Let it come naturally.** Your friend will let you know when it's time to graduate to Mass. By that point, he will be more comfortable in the parish setting and will have a better idea of what to expect.



### from Scripture

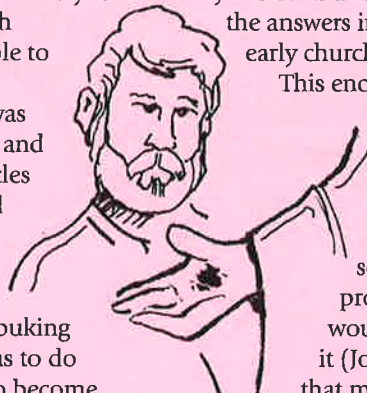
#### John 20:19-31, Doubting Thomas.

Have you ever struggled with doubts or questions about your faith? Do you sometimes feel that tough questions aren't acceptable to people of faith?

Even though Thomas was with Jesus for three years and witnessed amazing miracles first hand, he still needed evidence and first-hand observation before he could accept the Resurrection. Far from rebuking him, Jesus invited Thomas to do whatever was necessary to become convinced of the truth.

It is important to note that in spite of his misgivings, Thomas didn't leave the

group of believers, nor was he excluded by them. As a result, he was able to find the answers in the context of that early church.



This encounter with Thomas suggests that every seeker is welcome to bring his or her doubts to God. He delights in guiding our search for the truth and promised that the Spirit would aid those who seek it (John 16:13). God knows that many faithful people who probe their doubts and fears finally reach the truth - and faith in the truth is what Christ desires for us.

### Q & A What is required to keep the Lord's Day holy?

Sunday - the Lord's Day - is the day of the week we set aside just for God. We gather at Mass to listen to his Word and take part in the Eucharist.



Our activities on Sunday should center around thanking God for our blessings and promise of salvation.

One of the best ways we can show God how much we love him is to show love to each other. Sunday is a great day to devote to the care of relatives and friends, which may be tough during the week. Performing works of mercy is also a fitting observation of the day.

Sunday is also a time for the reflection and meditation necessary for our spiritual growth. It can be the one day in the week during which we slow down and listen for the voice of our Father, and actually have a chance of hearing it.

### Feasts & Celebrations

**April 2 - St. Francis of Paola (1507).** After a pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome when he was thirteen, St. Francis became a hermit in a cave. Others joined him and formed the Hermits of St. Francis of Assisi. While he preferred solitude, St. Francis was called to active service and influenced international relations. He was canonized for blending active and contemplative service.

**April 4 - St. Isidore of Seville (636).** Born to a family of three other saints, St. Isidore succeeded his brother as archbishop of Seville. St. Isidore

established seminaries in every diocese, and founded schools that taught every branch of learning. Some of his writings helped shape the spiritual outlook of the Middle Ages.

**April 27 - Divine Mercy Sunday.** In 1931, Jesus appeared to St. Faustina and asked that the Sunday after Easter become the "Feast of Mercy." Jesus promised special graces to those who honor him as the King of Mercy and pray The Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

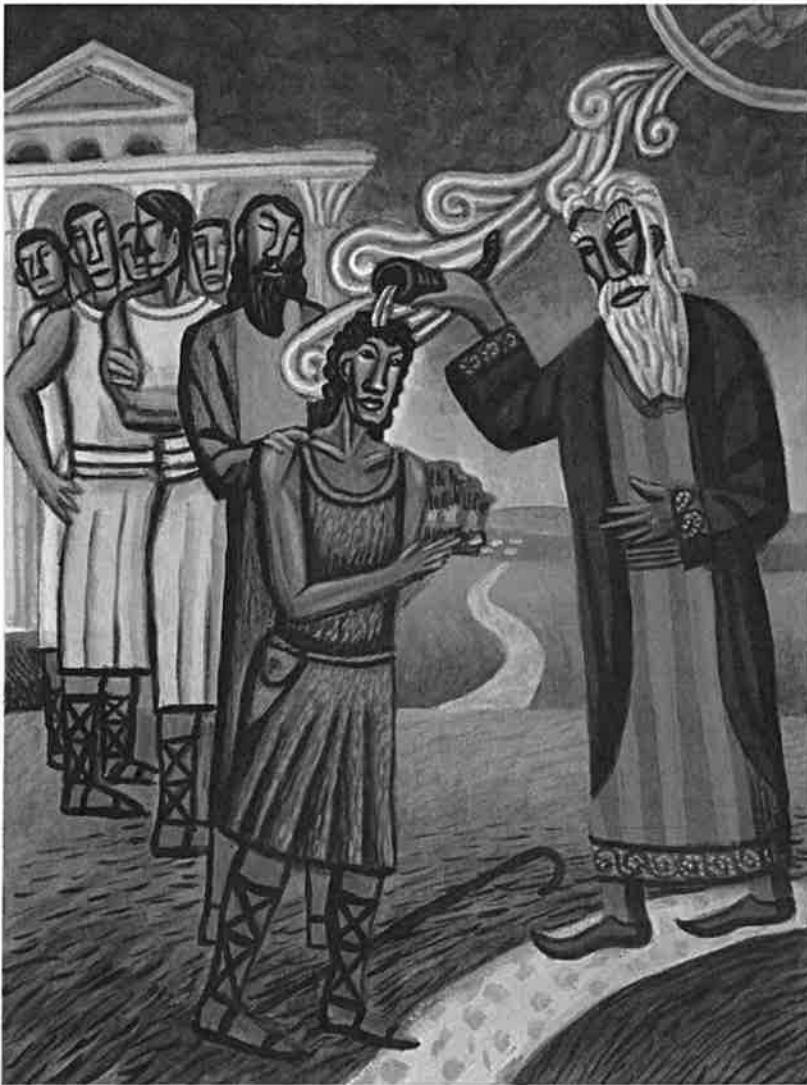


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# FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



## Light for the Journey

Father of light,  
you see differently than humans.  
You chose the young David as your  
anointed king of Israel.  
Anoint us with the oil of gladness,  
**we pray,**  
and help us learn what is pleasing  
to you.  
Your Son, our gentle Shepherd,  
leads us out of darkness, awakening  
**the light of our faith,**  
and gives us strength to keep our  
Lenten disciplines.  
Illumine the path as we continue  
**our journey**  
to the holy mountain of Easter.  
We ask this through our Lord  
**Jesus Christ,**  
your Son, who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, March 30, 2014

“Surely we are not blind, are we?”

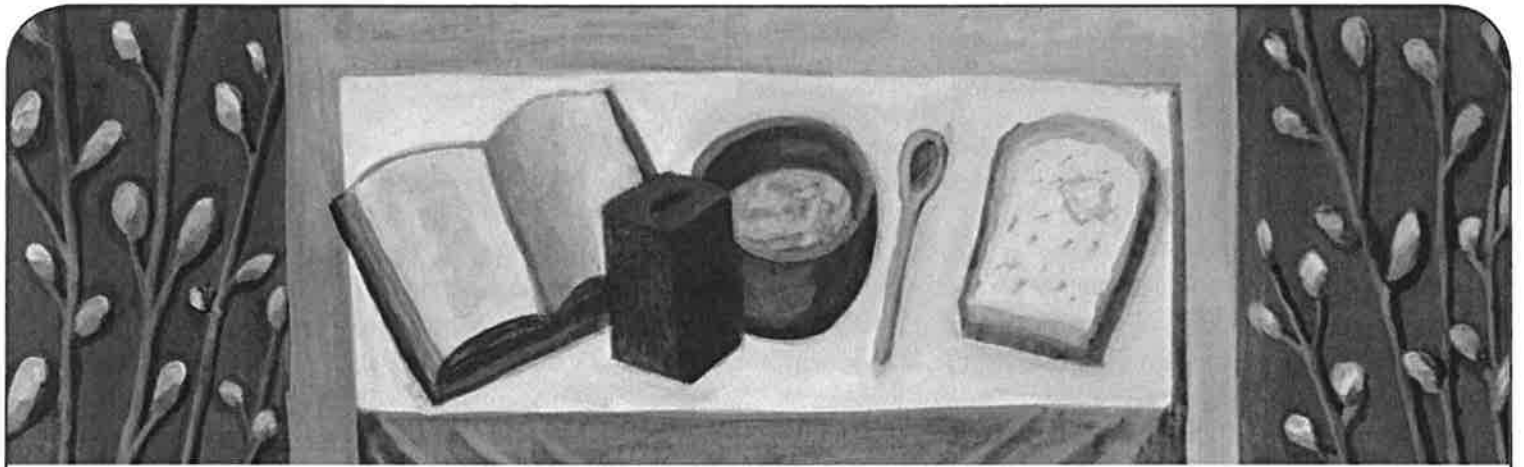


Today's Readings: 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a; Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6 (1); Ephesians 5:8–14; John 9:1–41. Today's Gospel is about choosing between spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. The Pharisees cannot move beyond their limited worldview. They bully the blind man in order to find fault with Jesus. Perhaps in some areas we cannot move from limited views either. Lent is the time to remove blinders that hinder us from acting out of the light of Christ, from recognizing the beauty of each human person—a reflection of the face of God. Jesus wants to give both physical and spiritual sight.

Catechumens have been gradually moving from the darkness of a life not illuminated by the light of Christ to a

life of Christian radiance. In another public ritual of the Church called the second scrutiny, we pray for light for their continuing journey toward faith in Christ. We, too, continue our own movement from the darkness of sin and self-absorption. We commit ourselves once again to the Good Shepherd, who chooses and sustains us in his light, even when we find ourselves in the “dark valley.”

Consider lighting a candle each evening at the family dinner table and talking about living in the glow of Christ. For a deeper appreciation of light, first spend a few moments sitting in complete darkness and silence. Go around the table, letting each person describe the experience of light after darkness. How does Christ bring light to your life?



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, March 31

#### New Life

Today's Scriptures are filled with images of new life and second chances. In the midst of weeping, sickness, and death, the Lord provides life. For believers, this new life flows from faith in God's providence through the healing hand of Christ. Are you called to minister to the sick and homebound in your community? Consider training to bring Holy Communion and God's Word to the sick. Today's Readings: Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b (2a); John 4:43-54.

### Tuesday, April 1

#### Wade in the Water!

Jesus poses a question in today's Gospel: "Do you want to be made well?" The waters of Bethseda and those flowing from the threshold of the Temple in today's Ezekiel reading remind us of our Baptism. We all strive for wholeness, wellness, and holiness. Let us continue to walk with the elect on the holy road to the Easter sacraments. Find the words to the Gospel spiritual "Wade in the Water" at <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/pattygriffin/wadeinthewater.html> and reflect on its baptismal imagery. Today's Readings: Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9 (8); John 5:1-16.

### Wednesday, April 2

#### Passing from Death to Life

Just as Isaiah speaks God's words of a future comfort and restoration, John describes Jesus saying that soon the dead in their tombs will hear his voice and come out! Defending his healing work against those who protest that he does it on the Sabbath, he says, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." Who in your life needs to anticipate Easter through these hopeful words? How could you be a source of comfort and hope to them? Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalm 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18 (8a); John 5:17-30.

### Thursday, April 3

#### Losing Trust

We hear much about Moses during Lent. He followed God's instructions and led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness. He brought the Ten Commandments to the people, who promised to be faithful to them. In today's episode, the people have quickly lost trust in God and are worshipping a golden calf! God calls them a stubborn, "stiff-necked" people and plans to punish them. But Moses implores and God relents. In what ways do we sometimes lose trust in God? Have you ever implored God? What happened? Today's Readings: Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 106:19-20, 21-22, 23 (4a); John 5:31-47.

### Friday, April 4

#### Saint Isidore

Isidore was born around the year 560, and was educated in the cathedral school of Seville, Spain. He became a learned bishop who promoted education and compiled a famous encyclopedia. In the Gospel, Jesus responds to those who are sure he's only an imposter from Galilee: "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true." What do you think Jesus was sent to do? What especially has he been sent to do for you today? Today's Readings: Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; Psalm 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23 (19a); John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30.

### Saturday, April 5

#### Let Justice Reign!

In today's Gospel we hear about plots against Jesus. The authorities are alarmed over his growing popularity; arguments break out about who he might be. Nicodemus defends Jesus, citing the law that no one should be condemned without "a hearing to find out what they are doing." Do we condemn others without hearing the complete story? Let us act with justice and upright hearts. Today's Readings: Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12 (2a); John 7:40-53.

