

INTRODUCTION

These weeks, we continue to deepen on the themes of the National Disciples' retreat. These are under the spirit of the Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Pope Francis entitled 'Evangelii Gaudium'(The Joy of the Gospel). As people filled with Easter joy, we are invited this week to a renewed experience of our encounter with Jesus recognizing that he is the source of our missionary option and the inspiration of all our efforts of evangelization. **"Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization."**(EG 8)

This renewed encounter with Jesus strengthens our commitment to evangelize. Through this encounter with him, we are brought more to the fullness of our being as missionary disciples. No longer do we focus on ourselves, a life of narrowness and self-absorption, rather a life that seeks always the good of others.

Let us be open to the missionary impulse and strength that Jesus brings us in our relationship with him – a missionary impulse that brings renewal and transformation.

EASTER MONDAY

Renewal of our personal encounter with Jesus

37 On the last day, the great day of the festival, Jesus stood and cried out: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! 38 Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! As scripture says, "From his heart shall flow streams of living water."' ' (John 7:37-38)

3. I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least

an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unflinching love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!

(Evangelii Gaudium 3)

We are all seeking for a personal encounter with Jesus. This is our thirst and deep desire. Let us be grateful to him because he always reaches out to us and makes himself available so that we can

renew and deepen our relationship with him.

EASTER TUESDAY

Prayer is renewed conversation with Jesus

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.' ¹⁶ Jesus said, 'Mary!' She turned round then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' -- which means Master. ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' ¹⁸ So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that he had said these things to her.

(John 20:15-18)

²⁰ and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, ²¹ and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' **(John 20:20-21)**

Jesus knows that we are looking for him. He presents to us a new way of relating with Him as missionary disciples by sending us out with him in the mission. He wants us to relate with him as shepherds entrusted with many lives and not just for our own needs.

EASTER WEDNESDAY

Prayer is an important foundation in building our relationship with Him

8. Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? **(Evangelii Gaudium 8)**

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.

(John 10:10)

In this loving dialogue with Jesus, our relationship with him grows. It blossoms into an enriching friendship not towards narrowness and self-absorption, but beyond ourselves; going towards the fullness of our being.

EASTER THURSDAY

Prayer restores our being missionary disciples

9. Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good.

In this regard, several sayings of Saint Paul will not surprise us: "The love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14); "Woe to

me if I do not proclaim the Gospel" (1 Cor9:16). *(Evangelii Gaudium 9)*

10. The Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: "Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others". When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. For "here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means". Consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that "delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ".

(Evangelii Gaudium 10)

This renewed relationship with Jesus restores meaning to our lives. It restores our true identity as missionary disciples. Goodness and life then grows and develops within us the more we profoundly live out this relationship.

EASTER FRIDAY

Jesus is the source of our missionary option

27. I dream of a "missionary option", that is, missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion".

(Evangelii Gaudium 27)

What is my dream? What are my options in life? Are they mission-oriented? How wonderful that we can be one with the same dream of Jesus – a missionary impulse that brings renewal and transformation in the Church and the world.

EASTER SATURDAY

Jesus strengthens our commitment to evangelize

⁶ That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my

hands. ⁷ God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control. ⁸ So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to our Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but share in my hardships for the sake of the gospel, relying on the power of God

(2 Timothy 1:6-8)

Where do you get strength in your commitment as missionary disciples? How can we strengthen our commitment to evangelize?

EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Week 4

First Reading: **Acts 2:14-41**

Psalm: **Psalm 23:1-6**

Second Reading: **1 Peter 2:20-25**

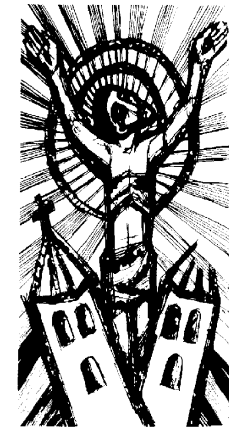
Gospel: **John 10:1-10**

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

**In this encounter,
we find the source
and inspiration of
all our efforts of
evangelization.**

May 5-11, 2014



Objective of the week:

To renew our encounter with Jesus that strengthens our evangelizing commitment and missionary option.