A king ordered everyone to bow and worship at a golden statue he had built. Most people were so afraid of the king that they went ahead and bowed to the statue. But three men refused. The king was furious and ordered them thrown into a white-hot furnace. The men were prepared to die before they would worship anything other than God, so into the furnace they went. But God sent an angel to protect them, and they walked through the flames without even a burn. The shocked king began praising God right then and there. What a story! What a great God we have!

Dear God, help me put you first every day.

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95 • Daniel 3:52-56 • John 8:31-42
Keep on the Path!

You might not be asked to bow to a silly statue like the men in the story, but there are plenty of things that can tempt us to turn away from God. Help these kids keep their Lenten promises and stay close to Jesus. (And remember to keep praying, fasting and sharing with others during these last days of Lent!)

Answer on page 111.
Yesterday we saw how three men refused to bow down to a golden idol and how God saved them from death. You might be wondering, though, about all the people who have made the same kind of choice and who did die. Wasn’t God looking out for them too? But Jesus reminds us that God our Father is more powerful than kings or rulers or anything, even death. Jesus himself died on the cross and rose from the dead to show that death is not the end for his followers who love him, live his teachings and receive him in the sacraments. That is his loving promise to us.

Jesus, help me keep your word!

Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.

John 8:51
Jesus always practiced what he preached.
He taught us to pray, and he spent time in prayer. He told us to love our neighbor, and then he helped and healed others. He said that God wants us to forgive, and then he forgave those who hurt him. What about us? Do our actions match our words? We can say we follow Jesus, but do we act like it? Do we go to church? Are we kind to others? Do we share with the poor? How will you show that you follow Jesus today?

Jesus, help me follow you in word and in deed.

Jeremiah 20:10-13 • Psalm 18:2-7 • John 10:31-42
Nations have allies—friendly countries that work and cooperate with them. Nations can also have enemies. What about you? You have friends, but are there people you don’t get along with in your family or at school? When we don’t feel close to someone, it’s easy to focus on the differences in how they look, think or live. But no matter how many differences we think there are, we actually have much more in common! The most important thing is that God loves each of us. He made us to live as one family. He wants us to treat each other with kindness and respect, even when we disagree.

Loving God, help me treat all people like family.

Ezekiel 37:21-28
Jeremiah 31:10-13
John 11:45-56
Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners.

Matthew 26:45

Throughout Lent, we’ve been getting ready for our holiest time of the year: Holy Week. But as we read in the gospels, Jesus has been preparing for this his whole life. Jesus accepts what is about to happen because it is his Father’s plan and because he loves us so much. It will be hard for us to hear some of the things that happen to Jesus. He will be betrayed. People will say awful things about him. He will suffer terrible pain. He will carry the heavy wooden cross. And he will die. Don’t be afraid to think of Jesus on the cross. Don’t be afraid to think of how much he loves you.

Jesus, I love you. Help me stay close to you.

Matthew 21:1-11 • Isaiah 50:4-7 • Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:6-11 • Matthew 26:14—27:66
What would it be like to have a superhero as a friend? Someone who can fly or fight injustice and evil? It’s fun to imagine, but we know that superheroes are make-believe. Jesus, on the other hand, is really real! He is the Son of God who was born into our world, and who lived, taught, healed and worked mighty deeds. This week, we especially remember how he suffered and died on the cross and then rose from the dead to save us from the greatest evil—sin. Jesus is our Savior, who brings real justice, and our true eternal life.

Jesus, thank you for your life, death and resurrection!

Do you ever need to talk but nobody will listen? That’s frustrating, especially when you have something important to say. You could talk in a loud voice, but that might make things worse. After all, who wants the whole world hearing what’s on your mind?

There are times when others really are too busy to give us their undivided attention. It’s not that they don’t care, but you might have to wait a little while. Just remember that God always wants to hear from you. He will always listen.

Lord, help me be patient!

Isaiah 49:1-6
Psalm 71:1-6, 15, 17
John 13:21-33, 36-38
Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear.

Isaiah 50:4

Morning after morning this week, we wake up to learn something new about the days leading up to Jesus’ death and resurrection. Today in the gospel, we read about Judas and his plans to betray Jesus. This is hard to hear. Yet, morning after morning, we know that Jesus loves us. Morning after morning, God asks us to open our hearts to his great love for us. This week, pray about the Scripture readings you hear. What can you learn about Jesus that can help you follow him more closely each day?

Lord God, open my heart to your great love for me.

Isaiah 50:4-9 • Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34 • Matthew 26:14-25
If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet.

John 13:14

In Jesus’ time, there were no sidewalks. People walked on dusty paths, and their feet got dirty. So if you were invited to someone’s house for dinner, a servant might wash your feet. But Jesus himself did this for his disciples, and he told them to do the same for others.

We no longer need to wash one another’s feet, but we can help in other ways. Our Lord helps us through our difficulties when we ask. Why not do the same for others? Start with your family and friends. Think about it—wouldn’t life be great if everyone did that?

Lord, help me do what you ask of me.

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 • Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18
1 Corinthians 11:23-26 • John 13:1-15
When we hear these words at church today, we get down on our knees. Everything goes quiet so that we can spend a few moments thinking and praying about what is happening to our Lord. Whether you go to church today or you are someplace else, spend some quiet time thinking of Jesus on the cross. If you want, use the space here to write or draw how you feel. Share your feelings with God.

It is finished.

John 19:30
I imagine that Mary Magdalene, Peter, James, John and the other disciples didn’t sleep much on the long, terrible nights after Jesus died on the cross. I imagine them tossing and turning, staring into the darkness, and weeping for their friend, and for themselves too. How would they ever get over this awful ache in their hearts?

Now, you and I know they wouldn’t be sad for much longer. The disciples would see Jesus again. And tonight in Catholic churches everywhere, the Easter fire will light up the darkness to show that Jesus has defeated death. People will pray and sing with joy:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
...and he saw and believed.

John 20:8

Have you ever seen something so unusual, so strange, so...crazy that you just couldn’t believe your own eyes? When the disciples entered the tomb on Easter morning, they probably couldn’t believe their eyes. Jesus, who had died on the cross three days earlier, whose body had been laid in this tomb, was gone. We don’t know what Peter thought when he first saw all of this, but we know that John saw and believed. He knew there was only one explanation: God. God works every day in our lives, in big, unusual ways and in small ones. Believe it!

Jesus, you are risen! I believe!

Acts 10:34, 37-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Colossians 3:1-4 or
1 Corinthians 5:6-8
John 20:1-9 or Matthew 28:1-10
By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. Psalm 118:23

What sign can you see in God’s creation that is wonderful in your eyes today? Draw or write about it here. Then share your joy with a friend!

Happy Easter! Jesus is risen!
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed...

Matthew 28:8

Monday within the Octave of Easter

When the women first met the risen Lord, they felt a mix of emotions. Jesus was alive, but what did it mean? They were overjoyed to see him, but what were they supposed to do next? We’re all unsure of ourselves sometimes. We love God and want to follow Jesus, but how? It’s okay if you don’t have an answer for this. Just get started! Spend time in prayer. Treat others with love. Help take care of our world. Just try—and keep on trying!

Risen Lord, help me follow you in everything I say and do!

Acts 2:14, 22-33 • Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11 • Matthew 28:8-15
Our soul waits for the **Lord**…

Psalm 33:20

**TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER**

**All through Lent, we waited for Easter.** It’s the happy ending we all want. Jesus is risen! Even so, the story is not over. Our own faith journey continues. In some ways, we live in an in-between time. Jesus is alive, but he is not here in the same way he was during his earthly lifetime. He completed his mission, but we continue to carry it out. The Lord has come, but our soul still waits for him. The fact is, God isn’t finished yet. The good news is that we get a small idea of the glory that awaits us when we receive Jesus’ body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. That strengthens us for the job of loving and serving the Lord while we wait!

**Risen Lord, be with me in the in-between.**

Acts 2:36-41 • Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22 • John 20:11-18
Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?

Luke 24:32

Wednesday, April 15

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

The two believers walking to Emmaus are so caught up in their worries and sadness that, at first, they don’t recognize Jesus walking with them. Then again, all throughout Jesus’ lifetime, many people didn’t recognize that he was the long-awaited Messiah promised by the prophets. But as Jesus’ words fill these two believers’ hearts, they recognize him. They are filled with hope and joy!

When you are worried or sad, speak to Jesus. Let him fill you with hope too.

Jesus, hold my hand as I bring my worries and cares to you.

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth!

Psalm 8:2

THURSDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

During breakfast, Monica’s family listens to a Catholic program on the radio. “God created everything,” the priest says. “Praise him with your words.” Monica remembers this when she gets to school and her classroom is in an uproar. The room stinks because of a dead mouse. Larry is holding his nose and using God’s name in a bad way. When Mrs. Holmes opens the windows, Monica says, “Thank you, God, for creating the sweet-smelling breeze.” Monica shows her classmates the right way to use God’s name. You can too!

Lord, help me to always speak your name with love.

Acts 3:11-26
Psalm 8:2, 5-9
Luke 24:35-48
So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.”

John 21:6

FRIDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

The disciples had been fishing all night without success. They were ready to give up. Jesus came along the shore and asked them to try one more time. He told them exactly where to place their nets. The disciples didn’t know it was the risen Jesus—yet! But when they followed his directions, they caught so many fish they could hardly lift the nets! That’s when they began to realize, “It is the Lord!” Sometimes we feel the same way—ready to give up. But Jesus has something to say to us too. When we listen and follow him, he gives us all that we need!

Jesus, tell me where to cast my net!

Saturday April 18

SATURDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

The apostles couldn’t believe it when others said they’d seen Jesus after he had died on the cross. When Jesus appeared to the apostles, he spoke sternly to them because they hadn’t believed. But do you know what? Jesus still sent them on a mission to spread the gospel. And that’s exactly what they did! Like the apostles, we may have trouble believing sometimes. Our faith may be challenged. But faith is a gift that God himself gives us. Trust in God that your faith will help you get past times of unbelief. And trust that God has a mission in mind for you too!

God, help me trust that you are with me always.

Acts 4:13-21 • Psalm 118:1, 14-21 • Mark 16:9-15
Celebrate Divine Mercy!

If you’d met Sr. Faustina at her convent in Poland, you might not have noticed anything special. During her lifetime, few people knew that Jesus had chosen this shy nun as his Apostle of Mercy, and that Faustina would help spread Jesus’ message of mercy to the whole world!

During the 1930s, Jesus appeared to Faustina, telling her that he wanted us to know about God’s merciful love for all of his children, even when we sin. Jesus wanted people to trust in his Father’s Divine Mercy, and be merciful to others. He asked Faustina to have his image painted so that people could understand. Faustina wrote all of this in a diary. Thanks to St. Pope John Paul II, we celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy every year on the Sunday after Easter, remembering that Jesus lived, died and rose to save us from our sins so we could live with him forever in joy. Today, many people say a prayer called the Chaplet of Divine Mercy on regular rosary beads. What a beautiful celebration of God’s love and mercy!
How many “merciful” words can you find here? (Look for the words in **boldface** type on page 24.) And celebrate God’s great mercy all this week!

A Divine Mercy Prayer

Jesus, I trust in you.

Answers on page 63.
Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.

John 20:29

Sunday April 19

Second Sunday of Easter
(Divine Mercy Sunday)

Do you know which disciple Jesus is talking to here? If you said Thomas, you’re right. But Jesus is also talking about you. Yes, you! You probably haven’t seen the risen Jesus like Thomas did. But you believe because, as Jesus says, you are blessed. You’re blessed with God’s gift of faith. Your faith is what helps you follow Jesus’ command to love God and your neighbor. Your faith helps you believe that Jesus is really and truly present in the sacraments you receive. Your faith can give you hope that even though we all die, Jesus’ followers can live forever with him in peace and joy. Blessed are we! Blessed are you!

Jesus, thank you for your blessings.

1 Peter 1:3-9 • John 20:19-31
Amen, amen I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

John 3:3

Monday April 20

Have you ever heard the story about the day you were born? Maybe your parents had to rush to the hospital. Or maybe you were born at home. But there’s another story about the time you were born—into God’s family. That was at your baptism, and it’s what Jesus means about being born from above, and of water and Spirit. At our baptism, we are washed clean of original sin. We receive the Sign of the Cross to show that Jesus’ cross saves us from sin and death. And through the Holy Spirit within us, we can work with Jesus to build up God’s kingdom. How will you build God’s kingdom today?

Holy Spirit, give me strength and wisdom.

The wind blows where it wills...but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

John 3:8

When you wake up each morning, do you know what will happen that day? You’ll probably get up, go to school, and maybe go to practice or play with friends. But what if God has other things in store for you? Maybe a neighbor will need help or a friend will need cheering up. We can’t see the future. Sometimes we may even feel like leaves carried by the wind—we don’t know where we will be next. But if we let God carry us like the wind and send us where he wills us to be, we will find the great adventure he has in mind for us!

Lord, move me where you will!

Acts 4:32-37 • Psalm 93:1-2, 5 • John 3:7-15
The Sadducees were powerful people. But the teachings of Jesus didn’t make them look good. They were angry with the apostles for preaching about Jesus and wanted them to stop. A Sadducee high priest sent the apostles to jail, not because they did anything wrong, but because they were followers of Jesus.

Little did the apostles know when Jesus chose them that one day their lives would be in danger. Little did they know that centuries later, we would still be able to share the Good News of Jesus, thanks to their faith and courage. How will you share the Good News today?

Jesus, thank you for choosing apostles to share your Good News!

Acts 5:17-26 • Psalm 34:2-9 • John 3:16-21
He does not ration his gift of the Spirit.

John 3:34

Thursday April 23

When Rosie’s dad lost his job, the family had to cut back. Rosie had to give up swimming lessons and go without new clothes. She understood and did her best until one Sunday after Mass, her dad drove past the doughnut shop without stopping like he usually did. Rosie sat in the back seat and pouted.

At home, Rosie’s dad took her aside. He encouraged Rosie to count her blessings—the kind that can’t be seen, touched or bought. “There is never any shortage of God’s love,” he said. “And God takes care of us no matter what.” As Rosie felt her dad’s loving arms around her, she realized how blessed she was!

Thank you, God, for your unending love!

Acts 5:27-33
Psalm 34:2, 9, 17-20
John 3:31-36
There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?

John 6:9

Friday April 24

ST. FIDELIS OF SIGMARINGEN

It's one of Jesus' great miracles: feeding a huge crowd with five barley loaves and two fish. It's also pretty neat because the bread and fish were given to Jesus by a young boy. It may have been the only food the boy's family had. But he freely gave it to Jesus, who fed thousands of people with it. They even had leftovers! People were amazed and wanted to carry Jesus off and make him king. But Jesus wanted them to understand something else: it is God who provides everything we need. Not only can we trust in God’s love, we can share it too.

God, help me appreciate all the gifts you give me.

Whenever Victor does something good, he makes sure people know about it. Last week, he waited until the church was full of people for Mass before he walked around straightening up the loose hymnals. He liked hearing people say what a nice young man he was. Nathan does good things too, but he doesn’t have to talk about it. Once, he got up extra early to shovel snow from the church steps to give Fr. Pat a break. Nathan begins every day asking God for help. He doesn’t feel like he needs to talk about the good things he does because he knows God loves him. That’s all he needs.
Would you like to be happy?
When you find the right path in your life, that’s when you find your joy. But what is the right path, and how do you find it? Jesus can show you. He always loves you, and his love will never stop. He asks for your love in return. He asks you to love others and help them when they need it. And Jesus asks others to do the same for you. That’s the path to life Jesus opened for us. Can you see how following it can bring you great joy? Think about it.

Lord, help me stay on the path you have shown me.

Jesus answered them and said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled.”

John 6:26

My friend Marlene once fed a stray cat at her house. The little guy came back day after day for food but would never let Marlene pet him. One day, he stopped coming. (Marlene spotted him at a neighbor’s house, so she knew he was okay.) Still, she was sad because she knew the cat didn’t understand that she loved him and would have taken care of him forever.

Jesus tells us he will give us food to eat and that he loves us and will take care of us forever. He asks us to believe that he can do this because he is the Son of God. Jesus is forever, and we are his forever children.

Jesus, I believe you will take care of all my needs.

What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you?

John 6:30

Tuesday  April 28

ST. PETER CHANEL; ST. LOUIS GRIGNION DE MONTFORT

Jesus performed great signs, or miracles, to help people believe that he was who he said he was—the Son of God, who came into the world to bring us to his Father. In our own way, we can share signs to help people know Jesus better. St. Peter Chanel was a missionary who traveled to distant lands to teach about Jesus. He worked hard to learn the local language and share people’s food and customs. This was his sign to help people believe what he was teaching. What sign can you share with others to show Jesus’ great love for us?

God, bless all those who do missionary work.

Acts 7:51—8:1 • Psalm 31:3-4, 6-8, 17, 21 • John 6:30-35
Saul, meanwhile, was trying to destroy the Church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment.

Acts 8:3

Saul persecuted Christians. He wasn’t a bad person, but he was doing bad things. But God changed his life, and Saul traveled all over the known world bringing the Good News of Jesus to many thousands of people. He became the great apostle we know as St. Paul. It is because of Paul that the Church grew so fast after Jesus’ death and resurrection. God forgave Paul’s terrible sins and gave Paul the courage to preach the gospel everywhere. Never doubt God’s power to forgive our sins and make us better people.

God, help me trust in your mercy and love.

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?”

Acts 8:30-31

Thursday April 30

Do you ever have this problem? You read something over and over but you just can’t understand it. Whether it’s math, spelling or even something you read in the Bible or hear at Mass, don’t be afraid to ask for help. Remember that God has sent people to help us, just as he sent Philip to help this traveler understand the Scripture passage. Parents, teachers, catechists, priests, deacons and others can all help us understand more about Jesus. But don’t forget that you can help others understand too—by the love you show everyone!

Holy Spirit, send me the help I need today.

Acts 8:26-40
Psalm 66:8-9, 16-17, 20
John 6:44-51
DEAR MARISOL—

How do I handle waiting? Honestly, Marisol, not always as well as I wish. As I type this, I am sitting by myself in a hospital far from home, waiting for the doctor to bring news about my niece’s health. Hopefully she will be okay, but I don’t know.

So, I am waiting.

Waiting is hard, isn’t it? Maybe we’re waiting to find out if we’ve been picked for a team or if we’ve passed a test. Perhaps, like you, we’re waiting to hear if we will have to move or, like me, for the doctor to give us news. This in-between time that we call “waiting” is hard. But it is also an important time.

When we are “in-between,” we might be tempted to rush to fill the emptiness in ways that are not helpful. Instead, if we can stay with it, God can do something good in our hearts that wouldn’t normally happen.
Instead of running from painful feelings, it is good to tell God about them. Then we try to keep part of our heart quiet. When we don’t expect it, love will show up. Perhaps it’s through the kindness of a stranger or a friend; maybe it comes in a moment when we sense wisdom or peace in our hearts. Perhaps there will be some blessing we just don’t see right now. But love will come in our waiting.

Marisol, let’s pray for each other as we both wait. No one likes waiting. But it is truly an important time.

In Christ,

Fr. Joe

Father Joe Kempf is the pastor of Most Sacred Heart parish in Eureka, MO, author of children’s videos and books and founder of “Gospel Values,” an organization dedicated to proclaiming the message of Jesus to all children. Visit him and his blue, furry helper, Big Al, at GospelValuesOnline.com.
Fatima Prayer
O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of your mercy.

Hail, Holy Queen
Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, your eyes of mercy towards us. And after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.
Answers to the Activities

Keep on the Path!

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