



## April Toolkit – *Homily Helps*

### 1. O Happy Fault – Holy Saturday – April 8

- On Holy Saturday, we heard an ancient prayer of the Church called the *Exsultet*. This is the proclamation of Easter. In it we hear, “O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!” These words were originally attributed to St. Augustine. What exactly does this mean, and in what ways can we contemplate this passage?
- First, the passage is a reference to the original sin. When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, sin and death entered the world. The effects of original sin remained, and Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden.
- Second, there is the fact that, as an antidote to the original sin of Adam and Eve, God became a man. Jesus, true God and true man, took on our very nature to redeem us. He shared in the human experience, with all its joys and its pains. He experienced hunger and thirst, sadness and gladness. Because of this, our redeemer is relatable to us in more ways than one. In the *Exsultet*, the greatness and gloriousness of our redeemer is tied up in his humanity and human kingship.
- Third, God, who walked among us, also died for us. He chose to die an ignominious death on a cross. He took the weight of the original sin upon his shoulders and carried it to Golgotha. Where our forefather Adam sinned by eating of a tree, Jesus gave his entire life up on a cross, physically deprived, so that we can attain eternal life.
- Even when evil is perpetrated in our world, God is so powerful that he can use it as an instrument for good. Let us remember that we are each called to greatness, that greatness informed by sacrifice and love. Let us thank God for such a redeemer.

### 2. The Race to the Tomb – Easter – April 9

- The 3-day period between Christ’s death and resurrection were tumultuous. The disciples went into hiding, and many of those who believed in Jesus’s divinity were bound to question his ministry. But then, Mary Magdalene, while going to visit the tomb of Jesus, found the tomb empty. When she shared the news with the disciples, they immediately rushed into action.
- We read in the Gospel of John, “So Peter and [John] went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first ... they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead” (John 20:3-9).

- It was only when Jesus approached Mary Magdalene after the disciples had left that they began to come to an understanding of the scriptures surrounding him. Christ had conquered death, and he would soon walk among his disciples again.
- Looking back on these historical events, sometimes we feel like we can laugh at the misbelief of the disciples. But today, in our own lives, do we live in accordance with this truth, that Christ came to earth, died, and rose for us? Do we run to Jesus in spirit, and believe wholeheartedly in his goodness and mercy? Do we have a firm grasp of the scriptures, the sacred word of God and divine revelation?
- This Easter season, let us rejoice that Christ rose for us, and pray that we might grow in a deep trust in God's eternal plan.

### **3. St. George and the Dragon – April 23**

- We all know the imagery surrounding St. George. He is depicted as a soldier on horseback, fighting a dragon with a lance. It is uncertain whether he was a real-life man, or if he was a figment of pious legend, and historians debate it to this day. But who do we think that he was, and what can we learn from his life?
- George was said to have been born somewhere in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century in the Roman Empire into a noble family. He was raised in the Christian faith, and by his late 20's he had become an imperial guard for emperor Diocletian. When the emperor, who persecuted Christians, found out that George was a Christian, Diocletian attempted to bribe him into sacrificing to the Roman gods. When George refused, Diocletian ordered his execution. In preparation, he gave all of his money to the poor, and was tortured. He was beheaded outside of the walls of Nicomedia on April 23, 303. Thus, he was later canonized as a martyr by Pope Gelasius I. He is regarded as the patron saint of England and Catalonia.
- The lore surrounding the dragon is an occurrence that may have taken place later in George's life. The story goes that a large crocodile (or dragon) was guarding an important body of water in Libya. The people in need of water began to sacrifice sheep and even women to the beast. St. George saved the princess by protecting himself with the sign of the cross and slaying the dragon.
- Regardless of who the man in real life was and what he did, St. George is a model for Christian heroism. Let us strive to conquer the difficulties and obstacles of this life for Christ, and stand fast when our faith is questioned or persecuted.

### **4. St. Gianna Beretta Molla – April 28**

- St. Gianna Beretta Molla is a saint whose life is a very recent memory to many. She was born in 1922 in Magenta, Italy. Her family was large: she was the 10<sup>th</sup> of 13 children. She was raised in the Catholic faith, and she found consolation in prayer from a young age. At 20, she became a student of medicine in Milan. In 1950, she opened her own medical office.
- Gianna discerned her vocation to marriage and was espoused to Pietro Molla in September of 1955. The family grew with three children between 1956 and 1959. Two years later, she became pregnant again. However, this time would be different. She suddenly experienced great pain, and it was found that she had

developed a fibroma in her uterus, meaning that she was carrying both a child and a tumor.

- She was suddenly faced with a moral dilemma. In order to protect the life of the child, she opted not to have an abortion. Rather, she decided to have surgery performed that would only target the fibroma. The operation to remove the tumor was successful, but Gianna's energy waned throughout her pregnancy. Days before she was to give birth to the child, she told the doctors around her, "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child. I insist on it. Save the baby." And that is ultimately what took place. On April 21, 1962, baby Gianna Molla was born, and one week later, St. Gianna passed away from sepsis.
- Gianna was beatified in 1994 by St. John Paul II and canonized in 2004. Her husband and their children were present for her canonization. She is the epitome of a pro-life and sacrificial spirit that we should all be inspired to emulate. She is the patron saint of mothers, physicians, and unborn children. St. Gianna Beretta Molla, pray for us!

#### **5. Easter is just the beginning – Toward Pentecost (May 28)**

- It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Easter, the culmination of our faith and the end of Passiontide, is simply the end of the story. However, Easter is just the beginning. For us, we have to live a life that honors and elevates Christ's birth, death, and glorious resurrection.
- When Christ conquered death, he opened the gates of heaven to give us an opportunity to experience the beatific vision. Not only that, he invited each one of us to accept his mission on earth, to win souls over to the Father. This is not a task as anointed ones to be taken lightly. Rather, we should dedicate our entire lives to serving truth, goodness, and beauty, living lives that are pleasing to God.
- After Easter, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on Pentecost. As Jesus was sent forth by the Father to redeem us, so too are we commissioned and sent out to proclaim the good news of the Gospels. We are called to build the Kingdom of God, and to prepare for Christ's Second Coming.
- We are also reminded that, just as Christ conquered death, that we too will have to share in the experience of dying, not just the death of our physical bodies, but death to self, to sin, and to anything which keeps us from God.
- This Easter season, let us take special care to contemplate the Risen Lord, and ask him for the grace and the strength to emulate him in our lives. Let us gracefully accept the tasks that he lays before us, and give all the glory to He who is the source of all goodness. Cling to the Eucharist, the physical presence of the living God among us. And spread the word among the world that He is risen.