



# PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

*Facilitated by Racine Dominican Preaching Committee*

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## A Different Kind of Garden

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As Easter dawns upon us as welcome as the blossoming of springtime, I am struck by the fact that so much of our salvation story takes place in a garden. There is the Garden of the Sinning in Genesis, when forbidden fruit was eaten from a tree. There is the Garden of Sorrow where Jesus suffers the agony of turning his human will to the will of his Father, to reverse the sinning. There is the Garden of Burial, where they quickly bury Jesus, because the Sabbath is coming, without knowing it is just a temporary measure.

Then this Garden of Death and Burial becomes the Garden of Life and Resurrection. The marvel, I think, is that all of these gardens exist within us. We know about the sin thing. We know about the agony of struggle thing. We know about the deadening thing, but what does the life and resurrection thing look like? We ponder the Easter readings to find out.

I suggest we position ourselves in the doorway of our tombs, and peek out as we peel the burial clothes from our new skin. There is a lot of light...we notice as we blink the darkness away. There are flowers everywhere, and their fragrance almost takes our breath away. Lilies and roses, gladiolas and pansies, violets and zinnias. There are lilacs and orange blossom bushes. All of them are drinking of the sweet water drawn up from the same moist earth.

In this garden all are on a level plane. There are bishops and clerics, nuns and religious brothers and sisters, associates and laity of all sorts. They all draw their strength for loving from the same redeeming blood and water flowing from the side of the Living One. Each of them grows in its own little patch of turf, fed by the same rich humus. These companions in this human garden share differing gifts. Some share deep contemplation. Some share administrative gifts. Some freely offer different works of mercy. Some are proclaimers of the Word who will not be silenced in the witness of their lives or from the pulpits of their churches, classrooms, or writing desks.

As I continue to peek out from the deadening safety of my tomb, and keep shaking off the burial clothes that cling to me, my new nose and eyes tell me that truth comes from this fragrance, like a symphony; that all class systems are a thing of the past. That tribalism and racism are a hangover from the sin garden, and no longer have a place here. The Spirit blows where it will, we will not dictate how it bestows its gifts and charisms, and on whom.

As we move forward in this Resurrection Time, we remember that this newness already exists within us. We are fed by this resurrection life each time we receive the Risen One. The old burial clothes need to be folded up and put aside.



*Special thanks to associate Judy O'Connor for these reflections.*

### **Palm Sunday • April 5 • Matthew 21:1-11**

Everyone likes a parade. The smiles, the waving hands, cheers and happy atmosphere. That is the way things started out for Jesus on Palm Sunday as he rode on an ass and a colt. But as Jesus entered Jerusalem everyone there was shaken. Who is this man? Why is everyone cheering him? As we begin Holy Week these are the same questions we ask ourselves, too. The story is a familiar one. Take time to reflect on something in your life that began so gloriously and ended in shame.

And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, “Who is this?” And the crowds replied, “This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee.” Matthew 21:10-11

### **Easter Sunday • April 12 • Acts of Apostles 10:33b-34, 10:34a, 10:37-43**

Peter was speaking to all of us when he spoke to the apostles and others that were present in Jerusalem waiting for the Holy Spirit to empower them. In Jerusalem, Christ gives his disciples both a commission and a promise. The disciples, and we as believers, receive the Holy Spirit that empowers us so that we can proclaim Christ to all people.

Peter opens his statement to Cornelius (10:33b), “Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to listen to all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” We may feel it was easier for them to preach. However, all of us are called to affirm and testify to all Christ has done in our lives. Truth is glorious and heart-warming!

### **Divine Mercy Sunday/Second Sunday of Easter • April 19 • 1 Peter: 1-3-9**

It can be hard to believe in mercy (Hebrew—hesed) in light of our sins and disbelief. Only God in his great mercy can give us the inheritance of living hope. This new gift of hope is available to all, Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. Through God’s kindness, generosity and love, we know God’s mercy!

Our daughter, Anne Marie, traveled to Rome with her Catholic parish choir and all were privileged to sing in St. Peter’s Basilica for the mass celebrating the ending of the Year of Mercy and closing of the holy door. It was a big moment spiritually for her and our family. May the closing of the Mercy door open our hearts to extend forgiveness and mercy to others.

### **Third Sunday of Easter • April 26 • Luke 24:13-35**

As Peter and the other apostles struggle to understand the message of Jesus, they preach and discuss with each other what his message meant to them singly and as a whole. We are all walking together to seek truth, an essential trait of being Dominican. Discussion, conversing, and debating is a method close to our hearts. Jesus used this type of teaching to reaffirm what had happened to him and to Cleopas and another disciple. On return to Jerusalem they recounted how Jesus had opened their minds to realize that the meaning of his life was for them (the disciples). It is the same for us in the breaking of the bread. Praise God!

