

Priests Minister

Every baptized person is a priest. We were anointed with chrism and consecrated to fulfill the mission of Jesus as priest, prophet and king. The angel at Jesus' empty tomb told the women, "He has been raised; he is not here!" Paul echoes these words to us, "You were raised with Christ!" The angel continued, "He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." And Paul concludes, "Set your minds on things that are above, where Christ is!"

Both these texts speak of a fact and an act: the fact that Jesus has risen and that we have risen with him to new life; and the act of seeking him where he is. And the truth is, all our acts, and everything we seek in life, depend on how we understand the fact of our existence, what we are, and what we are called and able to do.

The basic fact of our baptized existence is simply "You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." That is a fact, and that fact changes everything. Because we "set our minds on what is above, where Christ is," our whole outlook on life is different: we now think of what is above, not of what is on earth. Our life's goal and all our objectives, short-term and long-term, are on a different plane.

Concretely, what specific goal should give unity and direction to all our efforts? John Paul II teaches that "Jesus' way of acting and his words are the moral standard of Christian life"; that is, of Christian direction-setting. And he specifies, "Jesus asks us to follow him and to imitate him along the path of love which gives itself completely to the community out of love for God." (*The Splendor of Truth*, #20).

This amounts to priesthood—the priestly ministry to which every Christian is consecrated at Baptism. And the model for this "path of love" was presented by an earlier Pope in one of the earliest evangelizing sermons on record: "You know ... how God anointed Jesus of Naza-

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EASTER SUNDAY

Acts 10:34a, 37-43;
Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

areth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses..." (Acts 10:38).

That, in a nutshell, is what Jesus came out of the womb to do—and out of the tomb to continue doing. As he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power during his earthly life, so is he still anointed in the risen life he lives in his Body, the Church. To all the baptized he says the

words he first spoke to the apostles, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses."

The power we receive through the Holy Spirit is the power Jesus showed when he went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil. We are empowered by the love of

God poured out in our hearts to go about doing good—in family and social life, in business and politics—and to heal all those oppressed by the devil, who works through the darkness and distortions of our culture, or through the divisions and indifference to others which turn our communities cold.

All the baptized can echo Peter's words: "He commanded us to preach to the people ... testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Priests in Holy Orders are

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commissioned to minister publicly; that is, in the name of the whole community. Therefore, they are bound by special ties of obedience to the bishop who, since he is responsible or “answerable” for anything done in the community’s name, must have authority to regulate it. (Every right exists only by virtue of an obligation.) And when nonordained priests do ministry that is public, this is always under the authority of the bishop, either directly or through a pastor. But the private exercise of priesthood in family, social life and business should be just as all-embracing and continuous as the ministry of the ordained. It was to continue serving as priest, both publicly and privately, that Jesus came out of the tomb. In all we do as his Body, our goal is to be his priests.

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

Easter Week

Pray daily: Lord Jesus, you rose from the dead to continue your ministry as priest in me and in all who have become your Body by Baptism. Make me a faithful minister and witness to you. Help me to “go about doing good and healing” all I meet today.

Monday: Matthew 28:8-15. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” Where, when, how do you “see” Jesus acting in your life? Is it when you try to minister to others?

Tuesday: John 20:11-18. “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and repeated what he told her.” How have you experienced the risen Jesus? With whom have you shared this?

Wednesday: Luke 24:13-35. Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. How is the Mass an experience of the risen Jesus? Is it for you?

Thursday: Luke 24:35-48. “You are witnesses of these things.” Do you think of yourself as a “witness” to the events of Christ’s life? When, where, to whom could you be a witness?

Friday: John 21:1-14. “He said to them, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some [fish].’ So, they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.” When have you experienced Jesus filling your net? How often do you cast it?

Saturday: Mark 16:9-15. He said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” Do you understand this as a mission entrusted to you? How are you fulfilling it?

LIVING THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

As Christian: Begin each morning this week by saying, “He is risen; he is going ahead of me.” Then renew your baptismal commitment to live and work as Christ’s Body that day.

As Disciple: Each time a situation arises which calls for a response, ask how Jesus would handle it.

As Prophet: Each morning identify one thing you will be doing that day which in fact, recognized by others or not, bears witness to the risen Jesus living in you. Be conscious of that act or fact during the day.

As Priest: Each morning ask how you can “go about doing good and healing” that day. Be sympathetic to those who offend you.

As King: Ask what good initiatives you have been afraid to take—in family, social or professional life—and reflect on your fears in the light of Christ’s victory over sin and death.