

This Week's Sunday Readings: Easter Sunday, Year A

First Reading: Acts 10:34. 37-43

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household: 'You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead – and he has ordered us to proclaim this to his people and to tell them that God has appointed him to judge everyone, alive or dead. It is to him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.'

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 117:1-2. 16-17. 22-23. R. v.24

(R.) This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
for his love has no end.
Let the sons of Israel say:
'His love has no end.' (R.)
2. The Lord's right hand has triumphed;
his right hand raised me up.
I shall not die, I shall live
and recount his deeds. (R.)
3. The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.
This is the work of the Lord,
a marvel in our eyes. (R.)

Second Reading: Col 3:1-4

Look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is. Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.

Sequence

Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer sacrifice and praise.
The sheep are ransomed by the Lamb;
and Christ, the undefiled,
hath sinners to his Father reconciled.
Death with life contended: combat strangely ended!
Life's own Champion, slain, yet lives to reign.
Tell us, Mary: say what thou didst see upon the way.
The tomb the Living did enclose;
I saw Christ's glory as he rose!
The angels there attesting;
shroud with grave-clothes resting.
Christ, my hope, has risen: he goes before you
into Galilee.
That Christ is truly risen from the dead we know.
Victorious king, thy mercy show!

Gospel Acclamation: 1 Cor 5:7-8

Alleluia, alleluia!
Christ has become our paschal sacrifice;
let us feast with joy in the Lord.
Alleluia!

Gospel: Mt 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And all at once there was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him." Now I have told you.' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples. And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings,' he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there.'

Scripture readings from the English Translation of the Lectionary for Mass, © 1969. 1982, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL); The Grail Translation of the Psalms © 1962.

Gospel Reflection by Greg Sunter, © LiturgyHelp

On this, the most important celebration in the Christian calendar, it is a shame that the reading chosen for the Lectionary is something of a let down. Certainly, within the gospel reading we have the discovery of the empty tomb by Mary of Magdala; the disbelieving disciples running to find things exactly as Mary had described; and the dawning realisation of what Jesus had meant when he so frequently spoke about rising from the dead. However, if the editors of the Lectionary had chosen to also include the next nine verses of the gospel we would have also heard the magnificent encounter between Mary and the risen Lord, confirming that it was a woman, Mary Magdala, who was the first witness to Christ's resurrection. As it is, we never hear this account as part of the cycle of Sunday readings.

The discovery of the empty tomb – although so simply told – is an astounding event that completes the Paschal Mystery: the passion, death AND resurrection of Jesus. Whilst Christ's willingness to go to his death on the cross was an extraordinary statement of God's love for humankind, it is his rising again from death that offers all Christian people hope. It is the second disciple – the one whom Jesus loved – who is the first to grasp the meaning of what has happened inside the tomb. The gospel tells us that upon entering the tomb and seeing Jesus' burial cloths lying there, 'he saw and he believed'. Unlike the later encounters with the risen Lord, this disciple recognised the truth and significance of what he saw in the empty tomb. He didn't need to see the risen Lord to believe. Perhaps it is he that we today can best identify with. Not in a position to physically encounter the risen Christ, we are capable of seeing the signs of his resurrection and continuing presence in the world and choose to believe.

Historical Context – Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala, plays an important role in the gospel accounts of the resurrection. She was obviously a significant follower of Jesus, being named as a witness to the crucifixion, discovering the empty tomb and the first to encounter the risen Christ. One would think that she would hold a prestigious place in the Church, but for many years she was confused with another character identified in the gospels and was portrayed as a prostitute and sinner. Mary is named in each of the four gospels and not once is it indicated that she was a sinner or prostitute. She has been a victim of mistaken identity for 2000 years.

Gospel Focus – The disciple Jesus loved

In this week's gospel we see reference to a disciple as 'the one Jesus loved'. It is generally agreed that this disciple is John. There is some suggestion that the disciple, John, is in fact the John ascribed as the author of this gospel. If this is so, to describe himself as the disciple Jesus loved is merely a means of avoiding using a personal pronoun – I or me. Just as Jesus described himself as 'the Son of God' or 'the Son of Man' rather than say 'I', John uses the same convention to avoid naming himself. It is not to suggest that Jesus didn't love his other disciples.

Different View – An empty tomb?

There are some writers who have questioned the historical accuracy of the empty tomb account of the resurrection. Some theologians and biblical scholars (e.g. members of the 'Jesus Seminar') argue that historically, it is far more likely that the victim of Roman crucifixion would be left to rot on the cross or buried in a shallow criminal's grave – not laid to rest in an expensive private tomb. However, they do not argue against resurrection. They maintain that Jesus' body was not 'resuscitated' or 'reanimated'. What happened to his corpse, they argue, is irrelevant to Christ's resurrection.

Homily by Fr Michael Tate: Dawn has Broken – The Son is Risen, © LiturgyHelp

Anyone who has been up at the crack of dawn in Hobart will know of the beauty of the first hint of the sun rising. It is a moment of anticipation.

As it was for the women hurrying to the tomb 'as the day was dawning', 'just as the sun was rising', as the gospels tell us.

What a setting of the scene! Dawn is breaking. The power of darkness is being dispelled.

The Power of Darkness which had Jesus unjustly sentenced,

the Power of Darkness which had Jesus cruelly tortured,

the Power of Darkness which had Jesus buried in the pitch-blackness of the tomb.

That Power of Darkness is being conquered by the life-giving energies of the now Risen Son.

The menacing and gloomy power of the Prince of Darkness, whose principal warrior is Death, was vanquished by the Son-Rise of all sunrises flooding our world and the whole of human history with divine light and energy.

Those women who had gone to the burial site with oils and spices to do loving service to the body of Jesus were inspired to understand that the empty *tomb* was, in reality, an empty *womb*.

The earth could not contain the death-annihilating new life of Jesus the Nazarene, Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Son of God.

Our world, our history was earth-quake opened and filled with the creative presence of the Risen Lord.

This is the heart of our faith as Catholic Christians, which we celebrate with bon-fire (good fire) in darkness at the entry to the Church.

From that earthly element we lit the Easter Candle,

we processed in: the Exsultet was sung.

'Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her,
ablaze with light from her eternal King,
let all corners of the earth be glad,
knowing an end to gloom and darkness.'

Our faith is that an earth-shattering event occurred – that the tomb carved out of the earth was unsealed by Divine Power!

That is what the women first saw, simply an empty tomb. They did not see the resurrection itself, which is nowhere described in the gospels. But they were inspired to believe that he was risen as he said.

And the women went running to tell the news to the disciples.

It was *women* who were the first bearers of the message of Our Lord's victory over death, a message which they proclaimed to *men*:

men who did not believe that the *grave* injustice done to the most innocent man to walk the earth could be set right;

men who did not believe that the *deadly* violence done to the greatest exponent of non-violence could be healed;

men who did not believe that Death could be done to death.

Eventually, the men *did* believe, and we gather here today because *we* believe:

that grave injustice has been set right – and can be set right again and again

that deadly violence has been healed – and can be healed again and again

that Death *has* been done to death – and *can* be done to death again and again

because the Son has risen.

'O Death, where is thy sting? O Death, where is thy victory?'

His body was transformed by the energy of Divine love. The power of love had risen superior to the merely biological. The power of Divine love had risen superior to death and its warriors; entropy, exhaustion and decay.

This power is not confined to the body of the Nazarene. We can, by grace, participate in the resurrection life of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

A glorious destiny awaits us, heralded on the first day of the week as dawn was breaking.

The Son was Risen, flooding our world, our history, with divine light and energy.

The Son is Risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!

LOCKDOWN, A PRAYER.

Yes there is fear. Yes there is isolation. Yes there is panic buying. Yes there is sickness. Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise, you can hear the birds again. They say that after just a few weeks of quiet, the sky is no longer thick with fumes but blue and grey and clear. They say that in the streets of Assisi people are singing to each other across the empty squares, keeping their windows open so that those who are alone may hear the sounds of family around them. They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound, sick and elderly.

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting. All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way. All over the world people are waking up to a new reality, to how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that yes there is fear. But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation. But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying. But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness. But there does not have to be disease of the soul.

Yes there is even death. But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now, today.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic, the birds are singing again. The sky is clearing, and we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul and though you may not be able to touch across the empty square, share love.

*Adapted from Lockdown - A Reflection by
Brother Richard Hendrick OFM Cap*

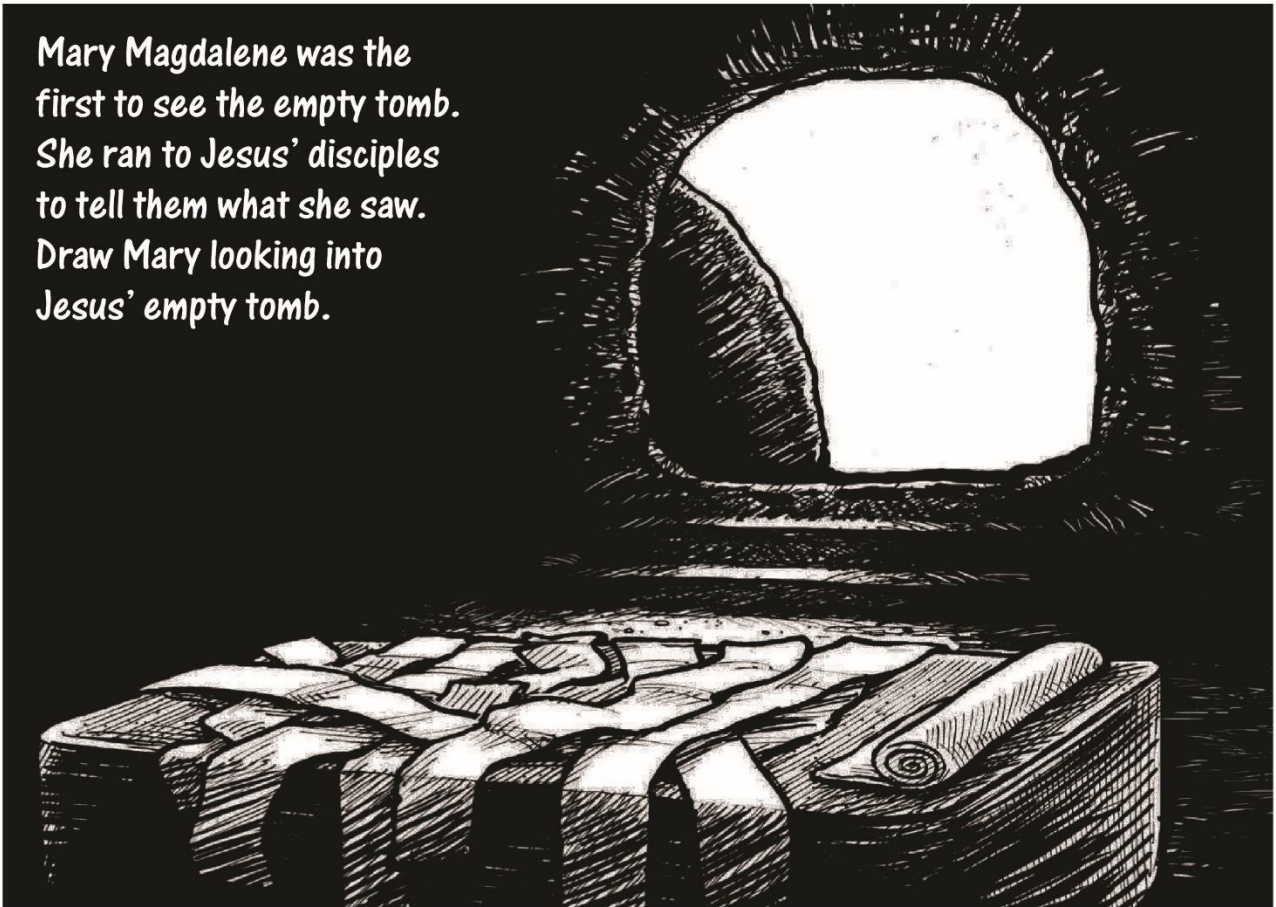
EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Jn 20:1-9

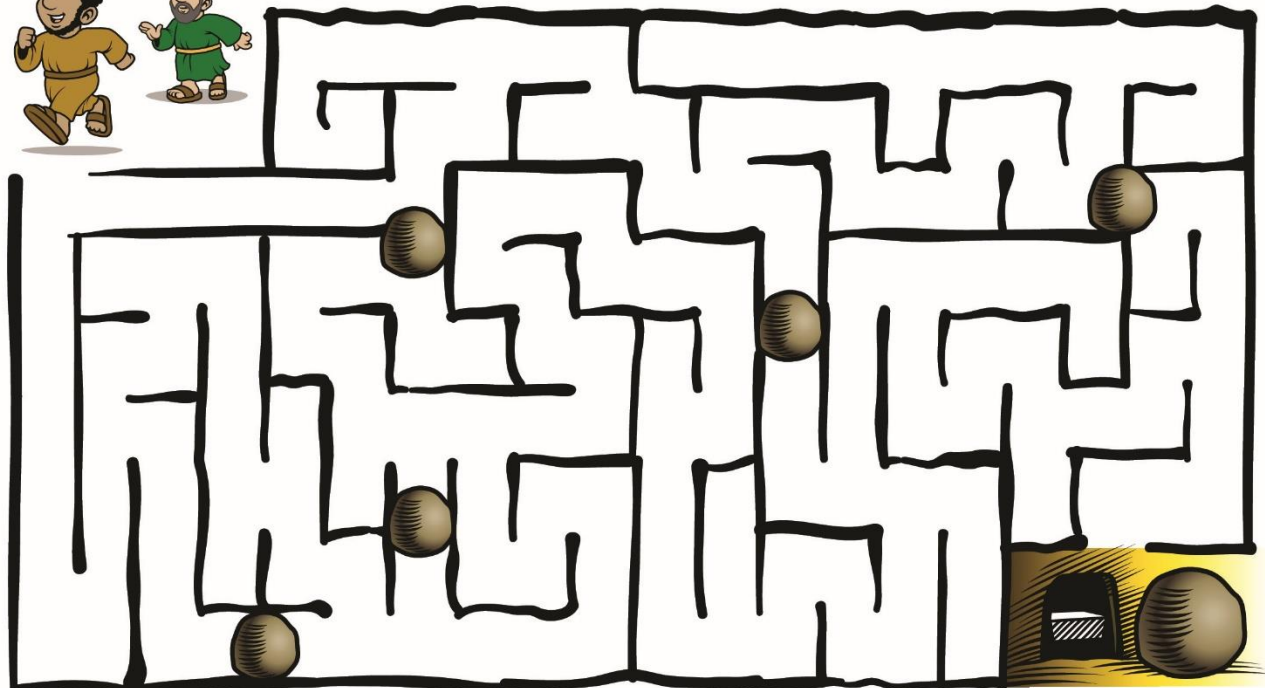
My name is

He is risen! Alleluia!

Mary Magdalene was the first to see the empty tomb. She ran to Jesus' disciples to tell them what she saw. Draw Mary looking into Jesus' empty tomb.



Help the disciples find their way to Jesus' empty tomb.



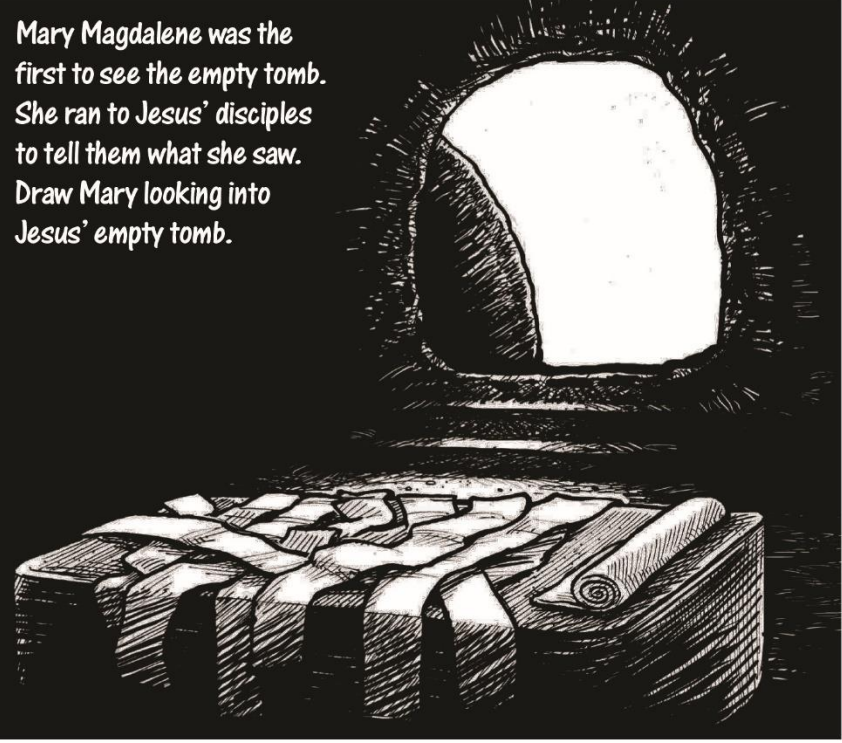


He is risen! Alleluia!



Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

Mary Magdalene was the first to see the empty tomb. She ran to Jesus' disciples to tell them what she saw. Draw Mary looking into Jesus' empty tomb.



Gospel Jn 20:1-9

After the Sabbath, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And all at once there was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples. "He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him." Now I have told you.' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.

And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings,' he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there.'

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice!



What can you do to make people glad today?

Fill in the missing words below to find out what the letters in the boxes spell.

Mary M went to the tomb.

"They have taken the from the tomb", she said.

Peter was a d of Jesus.

The other disciple ran f than Peter.

He saw the strips of cloth lying inside the tomb.

B he did not go in.

When he saw he believed.

The Scriptures s Jesus would rise to life.

The scriptural quotations are taken from the Jerusalem Bible, published and copyright 1966, 1967 and 1968 by Darton Longman and Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Co Inc, and used by permission of the publishers.

VIEW MASS AT HOME

There are several options to tune into Mass at home, here are a few:

- ❖ Diocese of Lismore Youtube Channel: 8am Sunday Mass from Lismore
- ❖ Macleay Valley Catholic Parish: 9.30am Sunday Mass livestreamed and available for viewing anytime from www.facebook.com/macleayvalleycatholicparish
- ❖ St Francis Xavier, Lavender Bay Mass on Demand comes to you every day from the Jesuit church of St Francis Xavier via the CathNews YouTube channel, view via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeiO1-PBHwU>
- ❖ Daily Mass Archdiocese of Melbourne: <https://melbournecatholic.org.au/Mass>
- ❖ The 1.00pm Mass is streamed live daily (Mon - Fri) from St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and is then available as a recording on demand until one hour prior to the next 1.00pm Mass. On Sundays, the 11.00am Mass is streamed and it is also available as a recording on demand.
- ❖ Daily Mass Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn: <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/mass/>

FREEVIEW TV:

Tune in to channel 10 on Sunday mornings at 6:00am for 'Mass for You at Home'.

SOME OPTIONS FOR DAILY PRAYER

We encourage you to read the Sunday readings, perhaps with your family and friends. Take some time to reflect on them and share your reflections with each other. If you don't have access to a missal you can find the readings online here: <https://www.dow.org.au/media-resources/daily-mass-readings/>

The Diocese of Lismore has a Youtube channel. This includes hours of video reflections from Bishop Greg on a range of topics. Sunday Mass is also livestreamed Sundays at 8am.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference now have a dedicated portal of resources specifically for those homebound during the pandemic. These are listed in four categories: Masses Online;

Sunday Readings and Liturgical Resources; Holy Week Resources; Prayers and Scripture. <https://www.catholic.org.au/prayathome>

LiturgyHelp is a wonderful resource, which many dioceses, parishes and other church agencies subscribe to. It is currently offering free access to a range of prayer resources for personal and family prayer, with resources for all age groups. In particular, they hope that Catholics in social isolation around the world can gain a sense of prayerful solidarity with their local faith community and the whole Body of Christ. Head to their web page and sign up for free. <https://liturgyhelp.com/aus/pray>

Bishop Robert Barron's Word On Fire has many prayers, videos, reflections and other resources, including Daily Mass.

The Irish Jesuits have a wonderful website of reflections and prayers based on the Daily Mass

Readings: <https://livingspace.sacredspace.ie/>

The Catholic Online website has a whole range of prayers, <https://www.catholic.org/prayers/>
These include the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, The Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Information about the Saints of the Day.

Living Word – Daily Gospel reflections. Subscription available at <https://cgcatholic.org.au/LivingWord/> or view daily at www.catholicvoice.org.au.

MAKE A SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

An ancient practice of the Church for those who cannot be present at Mass is to make a spiritual communion. We have a simple prayer you can pray with longing in your heart to be united to Jesus:

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite
myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.