

Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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BULLETIN B 21 – 18TH APRIL 2021
THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Regina Caeli (Latin for “Queen of Heaven”) is offered us by the Church as a hallmark of Easter. Lasting for a full 50 days, Easter is a very long season — 10 days longer than Lent. The Regina Caeli is integrated especially into two daily Catholic devotions.

First, in the Divine Office prayed by priests, religious and many laypeople, the Regina Caeli is the Easter season Marian antiphon at the end of Night Prayer.

Then, the Church replaces during Easter the daily Angelus prayer with the Regina Caeli, traditionally prayed thrice daily (at 6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m).

The Angelus/Regina Caeli is prayed publicly by the pope and pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square on most Sundays. The pope offers a short greeting (usually with a reflection on the day’s readings) before leading the people in the prayer.

According to legend, this prayer dates back to the sixth century with Pope Gregory the Great. As the story goes, when the city of Rome was plagued with an epidemic, St. Gregory led a procession out from St. Peter’s Basilica past the Mausoleum of Hadrian in prayerful petition to end the plague.

Then, on top of the mausoleum, he saw an angel singing the words of the Regina Caeli. He responded in words also in the prayer, “*Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia!*” or “Pray for us to God, alleluia!”

Inspired by this event, the faithful henceforth referred to the mausoleum with a different name: *Castel Sant’Angelo* (Castle of the Holy Angel) and the nearby bridge became known as the *Ponte Sant’Angelo* (Bridge of Angels).

The Church in Rome received two gifts that day. The disease of the city was cured and a new prayer was established to help remind the faithful of joy even in times of great suffering.

What, specifically, do we meditate on in this prayer?

First, the prayer assures us that Jesus truly is risen. This reflects the journey that all the disciples had to undertake, encountering the Risen Christ and thus leaving behind their doubt to become Christ’s witnesses. Second, the prayer reminds us what the season of Easter is all about. We offer joyful praise to God with the word “alleluia” six separate times. Also, we proclaim different variations of the word “joy” five times (rejoice, rejoice, glad, joy, joys).

The Regina Caeli reminds us of the Resurrection and the meaning that it has for our lives. The Lord is risen and we can share in Easter joy with Mary, the Queen of Heaven. We can truly proclaim “alleluia,” giving praise to God for the great gift of everlasting life he offers us.

We need help on this journey to heaven. So we turn to Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord whose openness to the will of God led to her coronation in heaven. We ask for her intercession daily so that we, like her, can experience the full joys of heaven in unity with her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Regina Caeli is a few-second way to get a little taste of heaven and keep the Easter joy alive.

Joy to thee O Queen of Heaven, alleluia.
He, whom thou was meet to bear, alleluia.
As he promised has arisen, alleluia.
Pour for us to God thy prayer, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
For the Lord is truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray:

O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, his Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

This version is sung, to the Tune of Jesus Christ is Risen today, at the end of the 10am Sunday Mass

TIMES OF MASSES HIS WEEK

Sun	18	3 rd of Easter	1000 Mass	Philip Duke of Edinburgh (RIP)
			1800 Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	20	feria of Easter	1900 Mass	Irene Wall (RIP)
Wed	21	St. Anselm	1300 Funeral Mass	Patricia Eden
Thu	22	feria of Easter	1000 Mass	Vera White (RIP)
			1030 Adoration	
Fri	23	St. George	1000 Mass	HM the Queen
Sun	25	4 th of Easter	1000 Mass	people of the Parish
			1800 Mass	Gertrude Finden (RIP)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

There's a theory in psychology called "cognitive dissonance". At its heart is the idea that if people try to hold together two contradictory ideas, attitudes or behaviours, then they experience psychological stress ("dissonance") which they try to reduce or remove at all costs, to make their ideas, attitudes or beliefs consistent with each other. This means that when we do hold conflicting ideas or beliefs, something has to give – one of our beliefs, attitudes or behaviours has to be either abandoned or modified in some way to make it consistent with the other. The theory was first proposed by an American psychologist called Leon Festinger, who in the 1950s studied a religious cult which believed that the earth was going to be destroyed by a flood. Cult members bought into this idea wholeheartedly – giving up their jobs and their homes. When the flood didn't happen, this set up cognitive dissonance: their belief was in conflict with the facts. But instead of simply acknowledging that their belief in the flood was wrong, some cult members still clung to it, but modified it somewhat. They said that they had been right all along about the flood, but they reinterpreted their belief, to say that the earth had been spared because of the faithfulness of the cult members. Festinger concluded that some people would resolve their psychological stress by blindly believing whatever they wanted to believe, rather than abandon their beliefs.

The theory has been applied by some people to the followers of Jesus. They believed he was the Messiah – that he would set Israel free and establish God's kingdom. But this was empirically proved to be wrong when Jesus was crucified. According to this theory, Jesus' disciples were unable to cope with the trauma of the crucifixion and so, rather than abandon their belief in Jesus, they came up with the idea of resurrection as a coping mechanism to help them deal with their psychological stress at his death.

Today's very unusual Gospel almost seems to have been written as a rebuttal to any idea that the first disciples "invented" the resurrection as a coping strategy. Not only does Jesus appear among them – he asks for something to eat. He's not a ghost or a figment of their imagination. And the sight of him is described as something terrifying, rather than wishful thinking. Look at the words used to describe the disciples' experience: "alarm and fright", "agitated", "dumbfounded", "they could not believe it". Rather than welcoming Jesus with great joy, it is almost as if they have to be shaken out of their disbelief by Jesus. "Touch me," he says, and he asks for something to eat. Far from clutching at straws to explain away the death of Jesus, they are so immersed in the brutal fact of his death that they are unable to process seeing him in the flesh. There is a stunned lack of understanding among those first disciples, even as they are overcome with joy. Perhaps the greatest proof of the authenticity of their experience lies in their lived-out response to these events. "You are witness to this," Jesus tells them – witnesses that he is the Christ who suffered, died and rose, for the forgiveness of sins for all people. And that was precisely what so many of them did: witnessed not simply by their words but by their actions, even to the point of giving their lives to share this astounding news with the whole human race.

Our faith has to have the same elements we see in those disciples: the honesty of their struggle to accept the news of Jesus' resurrection, so that it can also become real for us, so that we too can "see for ourselves"; a genuine personal encounter with the risen Lord, with his love, his presence; and a desire to witness, to share this good news with the people of our time. Like them, we do this by our lives – by giving of ourselves in a genuinely self-sacrificing way, so that others may find life. We are called to bear witness to the truth that Jesus' cross is the way to life. This is no denial of the death of Jesus, but an affirmation that he shows us the way to life, precisely by his dying. There are no shortcuts to that struggle for faith, or to that personal encounter with Jesus. And there can be no passing the buck to others to do the work. We are his witnesses today.