

The Saints and Feasts during Lent

February 22, Chair of Peter, Apostle

Readings

1 Peter 5:1-4,	Be shepherds of the flock
Psalms 23,	The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want
Matt 16:13-19,	You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church

St. Gaspar

The Archconfraternity under the very noble title of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, established by your Holiness at the altar of the Crucifix in S. Nicola in Carcere, which has as its principle objective the propagation of the devotion and the frequenting of the sacraments by the people, not finding any better means for succeeding in this sublime purpose than the promotion of the practice of holy Missions, already carried out in various dioceses... so as to attain the aimed-for objective of the institution of the Archconfraternity, that is, that souls will be cleansed in the Blood of the Redeemer through the Sacrament of Penance. ¹

He is our shepherd. Because Jesus while praying to the Father calls out to us with *inexpressible groanings*,² he is also the Shepherd who *lays down his life for his sheep*.³ But in seeking his little flock, how reddened is the path of the good shepherd with blood. How costly we are to Jesus, oh [you his] faithful ones! He calls out to us with as many mouths as he has wounds. He shows us his opened heart: "Come," he says, to cleanse yourself in this blood. ⁴

Reflection

We do not normally celebrate feasts about furniture. This feast focuses on the ministry of Peter, on his mission of teaching and on the unity of faith.

As we believe in the Word made flesh, in salvation becoming visible to us, we also rejoice in the visible church, in the outward signs of its sacraments, and in the word remaining visible in the ministries of the church and in the charity exercised among its members. Without that visible principle of unity in the successor of Peter we could well spin off into competing ideologies and theories, based on our own opinions and our individual efforts. Instead we belong to the body of Christ recognizing that the successor of Peter fills that office as head of the Body.

St. Gaspar had a great respect for the office and ministry of the Holy Father. He suffered

¹ Letter to Pius VII, November 1818, petitioning the Holy Father for various faculties for the preaching of Missions

²Cf. Rm. 8:26.

³Cf. Jn. 10:15.

⁴ From the Treatise by St. Gaspar del Bufalo, "In omnibus divites factis in Illo" The treatise is based on the text of 1 Cor. 1:5: "In everything you have been enriched in him."

exile with Pope Pius VII, rejoiced in his return to Rome, and responded to his wishes in exercising this ministry. He was also deeply pained with the Holy Father's criticism based on false information, and he was not afraid to challenge the Holy Father on his decisions about the town of Sonnino.

The readings today challenge us on our willingness to serve as shepherds, to pour out our lives for another. As Jesus chose Peter, he also chooses us to follow him in a particular way, to give of ourselves in service to one another. St Gaspar is our example in his respect for the Successor of Peter, but also in his desire to shepherd the people in the Redeeming love of Christ.

- Whom am I called to shepherd?
- What can I do to further the unity of my family, of my church?
- What must I do to gain greater respect for the Office of the Holy Father?

March 19, St. Joseph

The Readings

2 Sam 7:4-5,12-14,16

I will be a father to him, and he a son to me, the throne of David will endure forever.

Psalms 89

The Son of David will live forever

Rom 4:13,16-18, 22

Abraham believed and became the father of many nations.

Matt 1:16, 18-21, 24

Joseph awoke from the dream and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

St. Gaspar

"As for me, I am cheerful, tranquil and content, only because I am doing the will of God. I proclaim that I want to live and die with total abandonment to him."⁵

"I adore the will of God"⁶

"Likewise I would like you to be assured of the will of God in regard to your vocation. Excessive fear causes agitation too, as one can readily imagine. Oh, my beloved friend, why become anxious as long as we are in the hands of God? Is he not a most loving Father? Does he not take care of us? Does he not dispose all things for our own good? He used Moses to humiliate Pharaoh and, in general, infirma eligit, ut fortia quaeque confundat.⁷ When we use the 24 hours of the day for God, in the mystical bed of his will, we have done everything. This does not deny, however, the necessity of prayer and faith in God."⁸

5 from Letter No. 22 to Countess Virginia Malaspina Carocciolo, June 18, 1811

6 from letter 873 to Mr Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, April 14, 1824, Resources 8, pg 54

7 see 1 Cor 1:27, God chose the weak...to shame the strong

8 from letter 1101 to D. Domenico Silvestri, April 19, 1825, Resources 8, pg. 54

"But how is Jesus to be imitated? Look at him for just a short while. As an example to us, he is obedient to Joseph and to Mary and lives in the humblest of homes. He is employed in manual labor, shows himself to be a model of silence and is withdrawn from the world, a benefactor to all." ...Seek, then, to be of service to the Society and respect the will of the Creator in his creatures. No task is menial if it tends to glorify the Almighty. On the contrary, your work is similar to that of Jesus Christ who aided his foster father, St. Joseph. Purity of intention alone is necessary for you to properly regulate your interior and exterior actions. Realize, too, that a hidden and humble life is a special shield against vanity and human glory."⁹

I give thanks to God for the concern that you nourish in promoting the glories of the Divine Blood and I hope that abundant blessings will be your reward. Our Father Amici is putting the final touches on the little work on St. Joseph to be printed after having gathered together a good number of supporters, the printing will be undertaken. This great saint is the special protector of our death. People are interested in this devotion.¹⁰

Reflection

St. Joseph was a just man. He was faithful to the laws and customs, the ways of Israel. And yet he was also faithful to dreams, hopes and a vision of what God desires. More than being the patron of the Church, he is the patron of the hidden doing of God's will. In the silence of his sleep, we hear and see nothing. In his dreams he sees everything.

Imagine what his anxious moments must have been like. He desired to do what was right and just, but he also desired to do what was fair for Mary. Gaspar would have us look at our own anxious moments and know that just as Joseph was in the hands of God, so are we. Gaspar would encourage us to seek God's will with the same energy and devotion as Joseph.

Joseph challenges us to love the will of God and to trust the will of God with the same tangible faith. This faith would get us up from our sleep to follow a dream of God's way without fear or anxiousness.

- How do I show I love the will of God?
- What dreams have I failed to follow?
- In what ways could I follow God's will even as it goes against social values of my time?
- What makes me anxious?

⁹ From Third Circular Letter, 1829

¹⁰ Letter 1786, July 31, 1828, Giovanni Francesco Palmucci

March 25, The Annunciation

The Readings

Isaiah 7: 10-14	The virgin will be with child, and bear a son.
Ps 40	Here I am Lord, I come to do your will
Hebrews 10:4-10	I have come to do your will O God
Luke 1:26-38	I am the Handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.

St. Gaspar

Think no longer about the past. Do not be the cause of your own crosses. Live joyfully with the Center of every good gift ... the will of God. May this be our mystical food, our comfort, our every good. Let us live in God, for God and with God.¹¹

So, let us leave everything in the hands of God and, in this regard, we will be doing everything to fulfill the divine will.¹²

Let us remember that the most holy Virgin is the aqueduct of divine mercy, our advocate and, after Jesus, our hope and our protection.¹³

I have entrusted our congregation and its members to Mary most holy. From heaven, she will see to its protection and will bless it lovingly.¹⁴

The love of Jesus Christ that I nourish for you urges me to have you participate in the delightful consolations that the Lord has given to me during the missions in Umbria which I completed today. I attribute everything to the efficacy of the Blood of Jesus Christ, the prayers of most holy Mary and St. Francis Xavier, my most beloved protector.¹⁵

The Reflection

We celebrate the day that God turns the world up side down. It is in Mary and through Mary that the situation of humanity and of the world has been reversed, and we have in some way re-entered into the splendor of the first creation. Mary is the instrument that links Jesus to the human race. God visits earth, comes to us where we are, and raises our humanity now to an incomparable dignity.

The greatest events, human or divine, takes place in absolute silence. The world does not notice or pay attention. The invitation comes from a messenger of God and God's Word takes

11 Letter 2752, to Mother Maria Nazzarena De Castris, July 18, 1834

12 Letter 2961, to Ignazio Lesinelli, August 28, 1835

13 from Letter No. 65 to Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi, May 10, 1813

14 from Letter No. 122 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, August 27, 1815

15 Letter No. 293 to Msgr. Bellisario Christaldi, June 5, 1820

flesh in the assent of a young girl.

There is nothing to prevent us from doing the will of God. No human deficiency can ever prevent us from doing God's will. Here I am, she says, I come to do your will. We gather in wonder and awe, also like St. Gaspar to fall in love with God's will. For him, her "yes" becomes the aqueduct, the font of all the graces of living water flowing to us in the sacraments.

- How does the world avoid noticing God's will?
- How do I show love for the will of God?
- When was the last time I said, "I am the servant of the Lord?"