



April: Preparing the Soil

What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. . . . [It] preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.
—Catechism of the Catholic Church

April is known as the Easter month because Easter Sunday often falls within its thirty days. Even if Easter falls in March, the Easter season continues throughout April. It is the time when we are deeply aware of the Eucharistic presence and sacrifice of Christ. For this reason, April is the traditional month of devotion to the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is also a call to examine the state of our hearts so that God can nourish our souls—the core of who we are. I see my soul as similar to the earth. It is from this central element that the terrain of my spirit is formed. The soul is the soil in which the seeds of faith are planted, and as all good gardeners know, the condition of soil is critical for proper growth. All soils nourish some form of life. There are many kinds of soils, and different forms of plant life are specific to the soil's condition; prairie grass will not grow among woodland ferns.

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April Saints for the Gardener

April 1: St. Valéry of Leucone, ca. 622 (Variations: Valerian, Gualaric, Wala(e) ric(h) us)

April 2: St. Urban of Langres, 327– ca. 390 Patron of Vine Growers, Viticulture

April 29: St. Catherine of Siena, 1347– 1380 Patron against Sickness

April in the garden

Practical Gardening: Amending the Soil: Composting

Faith-Filled Gardening: Holy Week and Eastertide - set symbolic practices in your garden for each day of the Triduum.

A garden dedicated to the Divine Mercy could have red and white bicolor flowers (plants, vegetables or fruits) depicting the rays that appear to flow from Jesus' heart. The most popular flower is bleeding heart, *Dicentra spectabilis*.

Biblical Reflections

This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now inhabited and fortified. "Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate. —Ezekiel 36: 35–36

I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts. —Malachi 3: 11–12

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth. —Isaiah 61: 11

Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. — Galatians 6: 7–8

Prayer Focus for April

We are made of earthen clay, the firmness of the soil of God, and in this we know there is no such thing as marginal land. Even deserts are productive.

Considering Palm Sunday, could you pull apart your life and lay it all down for the good of another? In what small ways have you done this? Do you recall a moment of conversion when your faith began to take root? What gave you the needed push to claim it? Have you had times of depression or hardness of heart? What did you believe or do during those times to maintain your faith? Develop it further? Seek new avenues? Finally, consider the terrain of your spirituality; we are not all the same, nor should we be. Consider how the diversity allows for differing growth.