



Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God
January 1, 2017

Mary: Like the Morning Star

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For the first four centuries following Jesus' ascension, Christians grappled with how to understand how his humanity and divinity commingled in his person. His humanity was evident to all who walked and talked with him. His divinity was also evident to his disciples because of the miracles he worked, not least his death and resurrection. In short, they knew he was fully human, and they knew he was fully God, but how could he be fully both at the same time?

The Council of Ephesus in 431 settled the issue definitively. The Church declared that in the one person of Christ there are two natures: one divine and one human. This same council also declared, as a natural consequence, that the holy virgin is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), since she conceived and gave birth to the Word of God. So today's feast is one of the oldest, shared by all Christians from the earliest times.

When Mary said "yes" to the Incarnation and gave birth to the Savior, all of us could bask in his divine light. She is like the morning star that first breaks the horizon and mirrors the light of the sun that she both foretells and follows. In loving Mary, we truly honor her Son. God was the first to praise her through Gabriel—"Hail, favored one!"—and the one who blessed her beyond all other creatures. We are merely following his example. †

Sunday Readings

Numbers 6:22-27

"The LORD bless you and keep you!
The LORD let his face shine upon
you, and be gracious to you!"

Galatians 4:4-7

"God sent his Son, born of a
woman, born under the law,
to ransom those under the law."

Luke 2:16-21

"And Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart."

*"In loving Mary,
we truly honor
her Son."*

A Word From Pope Francis

Mary said her "yes" to God: a "yes" which threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil, and not only once. Any number of times she had to utter a heartfelt "yes" at moments of joy and sorrow, culminating in the "yes" she spoke at the foot of the Cross....God asks us to be faithful to him, daily.... This is the real journey: to walk with the Lord always, even at moments of weakness, even in our sins. Never... prefer a makeshift path.... That kills us. Faith is ultimate fidelity, like that of Mary.

—Mass,
St. Peter's Square,
October 13, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How is Mary like a guiding star in your life?
- How can you move closer to an unconditional "yes" in your relationship with God?



Learning Christ From Mary

From Pope St. John Paul II's *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*

Christ is the supreme teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of “learning him.” From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ.

But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother.

Contemplating the scenes of the rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to “read” Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.

As we contemplate each mystery of her Son’s life, she invites us to...humbly ask the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

In the rosary,...the life of Jesus and that of Mary are deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ! If Jesus, the one Mediator, is the Way of our prayer, then Mary, his purest and most transparent reflection, shows us the Way.

The rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the Mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son. The rosary is also a path of proclamation and increasing knowledge, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again at different levels of the Christian experience. †

Source: *Catholic Update*,
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In the Icon, Mary Is Teacher and Evangelist

By Br. Daniel Korn

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is a *Hodergetria* icon, meaning, “One who shows the Way.” This perfectly describes Mary’s role in revealing to us the message of the gospel.

She stands before us looking intently out to those before her with her right hand pointing toward the Child she’s holding. In this icon, Mary is teacher and evangelist. Mary’s mission is to lead others to Christ, and, in the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, we encounter Mary as the “Way Shower”—the sign that proclaims the mystery of Christ to the world.

The whole image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is about Jesus Christ and

Mary’s role as his mother. When we look at this icon, we’re invited to read what’s contained in the image. We’re invited to read the icon as we would read a page in Scripture. This reading of the icon leads us into an experience of Mary that deepens our devotion to her. Through reading the signs and symbols presented in the icon, we’re led into a deeper experience of God.

Read the icon as you would read Scripture.

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is the gospel in image form. Stand before this icon, read the elements that present themselves to you, and allow the holy presence of God to embrace you. Mary will provide this for all who come before her icon with humility and faith.

She will form Jesus in us. This is her mission. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, January 2016
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Lord, your Spirit has been poured into my heart, making me a child of God. Help me to see every person as my brother and sister, and show deep respect and love.

— From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 2–7

- Mon. Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen:
1 Jn 2:22–28 / Jn 1:19–28
- Tue. Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 2:29—3:6 / Jn 1:29–34
- Wed. St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton:
1 Jn 3:7–10 / Jn 1:35–42

- Thu. St. John Neumann:
1 Jn 3:11–21 / Jn 1:43–51
- Fri. Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 5:5–13 / Mk 1:7–11 or Lk 3:23–38
- Sat. Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 5:14–21 / Jn 2:1–11



Bringing Home the Word

The Epiphany of the Lord January 8, 2017

Enter the Mystery

By Mary Katharine Deeley

A quick glance at the Internet or a magazine rack will reveal multitudes of personality quizzes. Some actually help us understand why we do things and interact with people the way we do. Many just make us laugh. From the ridiculous (“if you were a dog, you would be a cocker spaniel”) to the sometimes uncomfortably true (“you are an introvert who really likes to plan things”), these human-made signs can point us in particular directions that may or may not be helpful.

But the God of mystery can and does use the signs we look at to reveal his presence and call us to discipleship. To the Magi who looked at the heavens, God’s sign was a star. To people who had lived for so long in dark times, God revealed himself as light and truth. To those who understood that their faith in God could strengthen them when times were rough and exhort them when all was well, God presented himself as one of them, fully human and fully divine, the very essence of love.

We look in many places and faces for evidence of God, but we get distracted and often miss what we’re looking for. God uses whatever is necessary—personality quizzes, magazines, plans, books, nature, and other people to get us moving in the right direction. “We saw his star,” said the Magi. What have you looked at this Christmas? And have you seen God there? †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 60:1–6

“Though darkness covers the earth,...upon you the LORD will dawn.”

Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6

“The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise.”

Matthew 2:1–12

“Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

*“The God of mystery
can and does use
the signs we look at
to reveal his presence.”*

A Word From Pope Francis

The Wise Men entered into the mystery. They passed from human calculations to the mystery: this was their conversion. And our own? Let us ask the Lord to let us undergo that same journey of conversion experienced by the wise men. Let us ask him to protect us and to set us free from the temptations which hide the star. To let us always feel the troubling question: “Where is the star?” whenever...we lose sight of it. To let us know ever anew God’s mystery, and not to be scandalized by the “sign.”

—Homily, Epiphany,
Vatican Basilica,
January 6, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What attitudes are you hoping to grow in your life this Advent?
- What miracles of growth has Jesus provided in your life?



Revealing God's Plan

By Margaret Nutting Ralph, PhD

As we dive into the mysteries of our faith, it's important to know from where those mysteries spring. The Catholic Church understands both Scripture and Tradition as expressions of the word of God. Each is a form of revelation.

Scripture is the result of a long, five-step process that took place within a believing community. First, there was experiencing God in the events of salvation history. God revealed God's self through events including

the Exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt and their entrance into the Holy Land. Second came the sharing of stories of the people of God by word of mouth. Third came committing the stories to writing, and fourth, the editing of these written stories. Then, the fifth and final step, came prayerfully selecting which written and edited stories to include in the Bible. The books that became part of the Bible are those that the believing community received and found nourishing, used in their worship

services, and chose to pass on to every generation.

It is one of the Church's roles to interpret Scripture so that it is not just a historical word but a living word. This is how Tradition is now rooted, nourished, and ruled by that Bible, while at the same time having given birth to the same Bible. The Church's ongoing teaching, rooted in the apostolic tradition but applied to new settings for each generation, is called Tradition. As the Church is nourished and ruled by Scripture, its teaching voice applies core biblical teaching to new situations, and because we believe that the Church continues to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, these teachings become part of Tradition, part of the revelation that God has given God's people. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, January 2013
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A Sign From God

By Dennis J. Billy CSsR

The star that guided the Wise Men from the East to Bethlehem is an enduring symbol of a divine mystery. Tradition says these men were astrologers who searched the heavens for portents of things to come. They followed this star because they believed it would lead them to a sign from God.

Indeed, it was a sign from God promising to guide them to a distant place where God would reveal himself in a palpable way. Yet what they found at the end of their journey was not what they expected. God not only embraced our human condition but did so in extreme poverty.

God's entrance onto the world stage

was humble and without airs. He came in the silence of night. Even the star of Bethlehem that shone in Judea's western sky was modest and subdued. Many saw it but failed to understand its significance. Many yearned for a sign but did not know what to look for.

Only the Wise Men saw the star and sensed its meaning. Only they had the faith and courage to follow it on a journey that would change their lives and those of all humanity. Only they would greet God's gift to the world with gifts of their own: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts of Christmas point to Jesus' kingly status, his divine origins, and his impending death: gold representing royalty; frankincense, the prayerful worship due to God; and myrrh, the ointment that would embalm the body of the crucified Lord.

Together, they point to the mystery of the Incarnation and embody the meaning of Jesus' name: "God saves." †

Source: *Liguorian*, December 2011
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Lord, your light gives us strength and shows us the way to God. Remove my blindness that I may see the light of goodness, peace, and love within myself and others.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 9–13

Mon. Baptism of the Lord: Is 42:1–4, 6–7 or Acts 10:34–38 / Mt 3:13–17

Tue. Weekday: Heb 2:5–12 / Mk 1:21–28

Wed. Weekday: Heb 2:14–18 / Mk 1:29–39

Thu. Weekday: Heb 3:7–14 / Mk 1:40–45

Fri. Weekday: Heb 4:1–5, 11 / Mk 2:1–12

Sat. Weekday: Heb 4:12–16 / Mk 2:13–17



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time January 15, 2017

Called By Name

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I was ten, my teacher decided to call me by my first name, Mary, rather than by my family name, Kathy, part of my middle name. My teacher felt we should honor the Blessed Virgin by calling me Mary. The name Katharine had been in my mother's family for years, and she liked its strength. It was an abrupt switch, but like many children, I quickly got used to responding to either name—and sometimes to both.

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 49:3, 5–6

"I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

1 Corinthians 1:1–3

"You who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy..."

John 1:29–34

"He is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit."

Names tell us something about a person. Today's Scriptures speak to the singularity of the Incarnation by talking about names people gave Jesus. The early Church looked through the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament and realized that Jesus was like the figure in the prophecies of Isaiah, so they came to know him as servant (one who does God's will), covenant (a promise between two parties), and light to the nations. Paul calls him Messiah (*Christos* in Greek) and Lord. And John refers to him as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" and the "Son of God."

We haven't yet been able to articulate the fullness of who Jesus is. We believe he is fully God and fully human and that he came out of love for us to save us from sin and death. In our attempt to understand that, we've given him many names. Each reveals a little more about who he is for us and who he is with God.

What is your name for Jesus now, and what does that mean to you? †

*"Saint Paul calls Jesus
Messiah and Lord."*

A Word From Pope Francis

Saint Bonaventure tells us that, "from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, he would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of 'brother' or 'sister.'" Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behavior. If...we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.

—*Laudato Si'*,
May 24, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- What do you call Jesus?
- The next time you pray, ask Jesus to call you by name. Then spend time in silence listening for that call.



Jesus the Jew

By Fr. J. Patrick Mullen

At Mass on Christmas morning, we hear the litany of names in Jesus' ancestry. Clearly, Matthew's and Luke's genealogies intend to root Jesus as a descendant of the tribe of Judah all the way through David's ancestors and beyond. In one way or another, all the Gospels seek to portray Jesus as a Jew.

His parents were observant Jews who had him circumcised and then went to the Temple themselves for purification rites.

Jesus clearly knew the Law and the Scriptures sacred to the Jews. When asked, "What is the most important commandment of the law?" he quoted the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6:4. The Pharisees, who strictly maintained the Sabbath rest, disagreed with Jesus' practice of healing on the Sabbath. Jesus did not renounce the Sabbath but challenged any interpretation that valued it above human welfare.

In effect, Jesus was an observant Jew

but one who had gone back into the roots of Scripture for its deepest and truest meaning. Jesus not only observed the Law himself, he called for others to do so as well, requiring the lepers he cured to show themselves to the priests, in observance of the Law's dictates (Leviticus 13; Matthew 8:2-4; Luke 17:12-14).

We see that Jesus was clearly Jewish. Judaism was the context into which he was born; it was the way he used Scripture; it was the way he lived his life and ministered. It was the way he asked his fellow Jews to live. It was the way he died. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, December 2008
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The Mission of Our Lord and Savior

By Kenneth R. Overberg, SJ

As with each Gospel writer, Luke develops a unique picture of Jesus' identity and mission. We read this in the marvelous and powerful scene of the keynote address in Nazareth (4:14-30). Scripture scholars help us to appreciate Luke's creativity as artist and as theologian. Writing his Gospel many years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Luke wanted to share his community's experience, commitment, and vision. So he felt free to rearrange his primary source, Mark's Gospel, by moving this Nazareth synagogue scene (Mark 6:11) to the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Luke 4:14 and following). Luke's creativity is also found within the text itself, as he weaves together selections from several different chapters of Isaiah and omits some other

points. As it stands, the exact text Luke puts on Jesus' lips would not be found on a synagogue scroll.

This passage is truly a keynote, establishing the basic themes of Luke's Gospel. Jesus, the anointed one (the Messiah, the Christ) teaches, heals, and proclaims the presence of God's reign. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises for the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned.

Indeed, Luke's Gospel goes on to describe many examples of Jesus teaching and helping the poor, including Peter's mother-in-law and the leper. Then, when some disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come?" Jesus replies: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: The blind gain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them"

(Luke 7:20-22). God's reign breaks into the world through Jesus. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, December 2013
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Lord, may your light of love and peace shine brightly in my heart so that others may come to know of your goodness.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 16-21

Mon.	Weekday: Heb 5:1-10 / Mk 2:18-22
Tue.	St. Anthony: Heb 6:10-20 / Mk 2:23-28
Wed.	Weekday: Heb 7:1-3, 15-17 / Mk 3:1-6

Thu.	Weekday: Heb 7:25-8:6 / Mk 3:7-12
Fri.	Weekday: Heb 8:6-13 / Mk 3:13-19
Sat.	St. Agnes: Heb 9:2-3, 11-14 / Mk 3:20-21



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 22, 2017

A Great Light

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In the upper Midwest, where I live, deep winter sets in around mid-December, and generally it gets really cold at the beginning of January. That's followed by two or three months of more clouds than sunshine, more wind than calm, and days when the cold seems to go right through all outerwear.

Sometime in the last two weeks of March, after weeks of gray and gloom, there comes a day that holds all the promise of glorious summer. The sun shines, the sky is blue, and the

temperature suddenly soars to sixty degrees—or even seventy. Neighborhood streets and lakeside paths are filled with folks just glad to be alive. We suddenly realize why our ancestors worshiped the sun.

Scripture says, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Isaiah and Matthew knew the power of light shining in darkness, but for them, it wasn't the sun. It was the Word of God piercing a world in which power and greed seemed rampant. That Word was incarnate in Jesus, calling all to conversion.

I don't think it's an accident that Matthew recalls the words of Isaiah just before he records the call of the disciples. Perhaps light is what Peter, Andrew, James, and John saw when Jesus walked by their boats and called them into new lives as his disciples. It was light that made them drop everything to follow him. Jesus is our light, too, and he's never stopped calling us to follow him. Maybe it's time to come out of the dark ourselves. †

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

A Word From Pope Francis

There is an urgent need to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God....Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see....Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time.

—Lumen Fidei,
June 29, 2013



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 8:23—9:3

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone.”

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

“I urge you...that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.”

Matthew 4:12–23

“He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When has Jesus been a light in darkness for you?
- How can you bring the light of Jesus to someone this week?



Conversion: Our Response to God's Call

By Rev. James B. Dunning

Over and over we are born again and again. Over and over God rolls back stones from our tombs of complacency. Some unexpected event—whether heart-lifting or heartbreaking—nudges us toward questioning the meaning of life. A baby is born. Someone betrays us. We lose a job. We find a friend. We celebrate a marriage of twenty-five years. A relationship sputters and dies. A child leaves home. A

spouse dies. Catholics believe that these are revelation times. These are times when life pushes us to our limits. Therefore, such times can be conversion times. These moments of revelation are God's call, God's reaching out to us. Conversion is our turning toward God, who is always turning toward us. Conversion is the ongoing response of our whole person turning in faith and love to the God who loves us. If revelation and grace are the gift of God's very presence and life and self to us, faith is the giving of our whole self back to God. That takes time. It takes time and humility to find that healing

love is not self-made but pure gift.

Catholics agree that God's Spirit is behind it all. Catholics also believe in a Spirit incarnate, a Spirit enfleshed in persons and events. The Spirit was never more incarnate than in the person of Jesus. Jesus reveals this Spirit of God's love to us in what he says, but more by who he is and what he does, as embodied in the events of his life: healing the sick, forgiving and eating with sinners, caring for the poor, dying and rising. He is the Word made flesh by the power of God's Spirit. Jesus gives us that same Spirit who speaks through the events of our lives—babies born, jobs lost, and friendships found. In these times the Spirit can reveal the God of hope and healing. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, April 1988
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God's Will, Our Joy By Fr. Dan Lacke, OFM

What is God asking of me? We face all kinds of dilemmas: midlife career changes, decisions about medical care, life vocations, or just looking for that something more....When faced with these difficult decisions, the saints can make discerning a vocation look simple.

Image St. Clare, the first female follower of St. Francis, leaving the refined luxury of her noble home, dodging guards in the dark of night, and joining Francis and his companions outside Assisi's city walls. In doing so, she committed herself to a life of poverty and dependence on God alone. But these decisions don't come easily, even to saints.

Historians researching saints' lives often

find realities closely mirroring ours. Christ's followers, then and now, are immersed in social tensions—violence, division, materialism. The saints didn't deny these forces had infected them, nor did they magically rise above them. They probed their hearts and faced their life decisions, guided by the Spirit and Christ's example.

Whatever the context of our vocational discernment, we can be assured that, as disciples of Jesus Christ, where two or more are gathered, there he is in our midst, ready to confound, delight, and orient us in the direction of our deepest joy.

In the end, blessed hungers or holy longings will head us to where God wants us to be. Daily prayer, facing our fears, and being honest about our own habits of

thinking and acting are fundamental in approaching life decisions. When they're rooted in a personal assurance of God's loving embrace, we can make life choices that reflect God's will in our lives. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, July 2013
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Lord, fill me with the desire and courage to be your instrument of peace and love.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 23–28

Mon. Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:
Heb 9:15, 24–28 / Mk 3:22–30

Tue. St. Francis de Sales:
Heb 10:1–10 / Mk 3:31–35

Wed. Conversion of St. Paul:
Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 / Mk 16:15–18

Thu. Sts. Timothy and Titus:
2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 4:21–25

Fri. Weekday:
Heb 10:32–39 / Mk 4:26–34

Sat. St. Thomas Aquinas:
Heb 11:1–2, 8–19 / Mk 4:35–41



Bringing Home the Word



Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time January 29, 2017

The Beautiful Beatitudes

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

To follow Christ is to seek lowliness, humility, mercy, and righteousness. The Ten Commandments summarize God's teaching to his people. Jesus gives us a new law that builds on the old. Before it was, "You shall not..."; now it is, "Blessed are you when..." He calls us to greater happiness, greater blessing, but it comes with a challenge. Saint Augustine says that Jesus went up the mountain to preach the Beatitudes because he was preaching a higher moral doctrine:

Sunday Readings

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

"A people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the LORD—the remnant of Israel."

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

"God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise...the weak of the world to shame the strong."

Matthew 5:1-12a

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

"greater precepts of righteousness."

The new law contradicts what our wounded human nature tends to think and feel. We are challenged to believe blessings can come from tears, meekness, and poverty.

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness" (Matthew 5:10). Appreciating these truths requires transforming our minds and hearts. Faith is required. Deeply desiring and living in the right does bring satisfaction. There is consolation in mourning the things that sadden Christ's heart.

If we live by the Beatitudes, many will treat us more generously. We know people who are merciful, and we are quick to show them mercy. When our hearts are clean, we can see God more clearly. Those who seek and create peace are considered by all to be children of God. They are not without trials and suffering, but they are blessed and happy. Christ calls us to store up treasures in heaven, spiritual blessings that cannot be taken away. Even if we experience difficulty, we will still receive the highest and greatest gift: the kingdom of heaven. †

A Word From Pope Francis

What must we do, Father? Look, read the Beatitudes: that will do you good. If you want to know what you actually have to do, read Matthew chapter 25, which is the standard by which we will be judged. With these two things you have the action plan: the Beatitudes and Matthew 25. You do not need to read anything else. I ask you this with all my heart....But do not forget: make yourselves heard; take care of the two ends of life, the two ends of the history of peoples: the elderly and the young; and do not water down the faith.

—Morning Meditation,
Chapel of the *Domus
Sanctae Marthae*,
July 25, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- In what areas of your life do you need to focus on living the Beatitudes?
- How can you show others they are creatures of God this week?



The Beatitudes: An Overture to the Sermon on the Mount

By Leonard Foley, OFM

An overture introduces and plays with various themes of the music to follow. A hint here, full promise there, a startling burst of color. So it is with the Beatitudes. They're the overture to the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's Gospel, there are eight or nine, depending on how you count. They are explained in the sermon that comes after the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:13—7:29). Some Beatitudes would be unintelligible without the words of Jesus that follow.

As we look at the Beatitudes found in Matthew (as distinguished from those in Luke), we see a definite Jewish cast, written as they were for a predominantly Jewish Christian community. The Gospel is divided into five booklets, suggesting that this is the new Pentateuch, or Torah—the Law of Moses contained in the first five books of the Bible. Jesus is the new Moses, far outshining the former. As Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, so Jesus

goes up a mountain in Galilee to present his Beatitudes and teachings. Jesus' "commandments" go far beyond—but do not supplant—those given Moses.

The Beatitudes call up the picture of heroic saints, of incredible courage in suffering, total generosity to others. But we shy away from questioning these statements too closely. They are certainly not self-evident, and some people find them to be beyond human reach: "Of course you can't really run a business or a life on such principles!" we say. "They're just ideals, right? That's it! They're ideals for a favored few to follow." The Beatitudes haunt us. They are like the thorn in St. Paul's side. Are we ready to hear Jesus say, "Congratulations! You are blessed for being poor in spirit?" †

Source: *Catholic Update*, December 2013
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Reconciliation

By Dr. Shawn McCauley Welch

Self-examination can be difficult. At times we may seem too busy. Saint Gertrude the Great, a German nun who entered the convent of Helfta at five years old, was often worried about the poor souls who didn't have enough time to pray, like the sisters who worked hard making things to sell to pay off the debts of the convent.

Gertrude brought these concerns before the Lord. He assured her that what he wanted most was their wills oriented to him. It didn't matter whether their labor was exterior or spiritual. He explained that if all he wanted was spiritual exercise, he would have changed

human bodily requirements after the fall. Instead, we were created with these bodily needs.

It may be tempting to say we can't be like Gertrude or other saints. We don't have enough time to reflect or pray. We have real work responsibilities, but we also have a responsibility to pray. Practicing regular self-examination along with prayer is important and will help us be devout in ordering our deeds and help ensure all of our service is oriented toward God. While those deeds, done lovingly, can be another form of prayer and worship, it is important to be in constant communication with God and not neglect prayer itself.

When we do find ourselves falling short, trapped in a hedge of thorns of our own making, we need to reach for the Lord's hand as Gertrude did. The sacrament of reconciliation is a good place for this.

When we grasp his hand and experience his mercy, we can heal and become more open to love. We become more whole, and thus we have more love to offer our neighbor. †

Source: *Liguorian*, April 2014
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Lord, you dwell in the depth of my being. May your Spirit help me to seek and to know you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.

— From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 30–
February 4

Mon. Weekday:
Heb 11:32–40 / Mk 5:1–20


Tue. St. John Bosco:
Heb 12:1–4 / Mk 5:21–43

Wed. Weekday:
Heb 12:4–7, 11–15 / Mk 6:1–6

Thu. Presentation of the Lord:
Mal 3:1–4 / Heb 2:14–18 / Lk 2:22–40

Fri. Weekday:
Heb 13:1–8 / Mk 6:14–29

Sat. Weekday:
Heb 13:15–17, 20–21 / Mk 6:30–34

Bringing Home
the **Word** 
January 29, 2017

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