



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Easter (A)

May 3, 2020

Our Good Shepherd's Voice

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Saint Peter, the first pope, zealously preached the word of God, challenging the Romans and the Jews to believe. Astoundingly, on various occasions their hearts were moved and they asked, "What are we to do?" The answer from the apostles was often twofold: be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. Both are necessary first steps.

The same is true today: We receive baptism and confirmation. We keep cultivating this gift of faith and life in the Holy Spirit, listening to Jesus and the

Spirit's promptings so they blossom and take over all of our life.

The Good Shepherd verses in John 10 reveal there are many messengers who promise fulfillment and happiness. Jesus warns that these others try to slip in the back door of our souls and trick us into following them. Initially their message is only slightly different than Jesus' message, but once they lead us out of his fold, we can end up in very distant fields, and it is a long, hard path back home.

How do we distinguish Jesus' voice from the others? Compare their words with the words of Jesus and his Church. If they don't align, beware. Another criterion is to see if there is an element of the cross and true peace. Jesus reminds us that the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep and leads them to pasture and rest. The cross, although not everything, is always a part of the shepherd's path. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 2:20b-25

For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

John 10:1-10

[Jesus said,] "The sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

Compare other messenger's words with the words of Jesus and his Church.

If they don't align, beware.

A Word from Pope Francis

We should never forget: the Church is not a static reality, inert, an end in herself, but is on a continual journey through history, toward that ultimate and marvelous end that is the kingdom of heaven, of which the Church on earth is the seed and the beginning.

—General audience, November 26, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How often do I listen to the Good Shepherd over the other messages around me?
- How do I stay informed of what the pope and other shepherds of the Church are saying?

Will My Grandbabies See Heaven?

By Gloria Hutchinson

An anguished woman sent her question to a Catholic advice columnist. Her sons live with women who aren't their wives but are the mothers of their children. These parents hadn't had the little ones baptized. "I have several friends who share this heartache," she wrote. "They have sprinkled each baby and baptized them. Can I do this?" the grandmother inquired.

Fr. Pat McCloskey, OFM, understood her intentions. Yet, he advised against baptizing her grandchildren without parental consent. Parents must be willing to raise their children as Catholics. He affirmed the Church's teaching that the unbaptized can be saved.

"Don't underestimate the power of your example," Fr. Pat added. "Children are sometimes more influenced by the faith of their grandparents (or great-grandparents) than by the apparent lack of faith of their parents."

We might smile at the prospect of a wild-eyed elder in orthopedic shoes sneaking off with an infant for a baptismal rite over the kitchen sink. However, if we also have unbaptized grandchildren, our hearts will accommodate her sorrow.

Like many older Catholics, this grandmother was probably unaware of refinements to the Church's teachings



on the salvation of the unbaptized. She was still operating with the theory of limbo, "a state which includes the souls of infants who die subject to original sin and without baptism, and who, therefore, neither merit the beatific vision, nor yet are subjected to any punishment, because they are not guilty of any personal sin" (*The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized*).

Updated Insights on Salvation

I well remember when our granddaughter was born. Her parents weren't intent on having her baptized. As young adults, our son and his wife hadn't so much left the Church as drifted to its fringes. I was torn between a compulsion to nag them into baptizing their baby and a less willful desire to pray them fondly toward the font.

I also had been raised with the theory that unbaptized infants who died went to limbo. As a grandmother, however, I couldn't take this teaching to heart. Could God be less merciful than grandparents tempted to baptize without consent? Surely upon death these babies would return to their heavenly home.

Within a few months, our family celebrated our granddaughter's baptism. The grace of the sacrament splashed elation over my head as Kirsten Ann

sailed through "the gateway to life in the Spirit" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213).

For parents (and grandparents) of grown children who have yet to choose baptism for their children, there is strong consolation in the findings of the Vatican's International Theological Commission. Their conclusion is that there are "serious theological and liturgical grounds for hope that unbaptized infants who die will be saved and enjoy the beatific vision" (*HSI* 102).

Although difficult, we should humbly admit that we aren't responsible for our grandchildren's salvation. Our vocation requires us to be loving, merciful, and faithful examples of the difference baptism has made in our lives. When we get the itch to become stealth baptizers, we can smile at the baby pictures on the refrigerator door and repeat three times the advice of St. John Vianney, "God commands you to pray, but he forbids you to worry." +



Risen Lord, you are the Good Shepherd who leads me along safe paths. Help me to be a good shepherd to all people.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 4–9

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:1–18 / Jn 10:11–18

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:19–26 / Jn 10:22–30

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 12:24—13:5a / Jn 12:44–50

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:13–25 / Jn 13:16–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:26–33 / Jn 14:1–6

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:44–52 / Jn 14:7–14



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Easter (A)

May 10, 2020

Rely on the Cornerstone

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

One of the great accomplishments of Roman construction was the arch. It enabled them to span larger distances and make bigger buildings without sacrificing strength. Just think of the Roman aqueducts, basilicas, and coliseums standing today.

The key to the Roman arch is that each stone is well cut. Additionally, the cornerstone takes all the stress and stabilizes the whole. Saint Peter uses these construction images as a metaphor for the Church. We are all living stones, built into a spiritual house founded on

the cornerstone, Jesus Christ. Like the deacons in the early Church, we each have a role to play.

What is asked of a stone in a building structure? Every stone needs to be strong. It needs to be formed and shaped. Accepting and seeking formation in faith is key to finding our place in life and in God's house. A stone needs to be connected to the stones alongside it. Finally, the stone needs to accept where the master builder places it. If a stone could move itself from one place to another, there would be chaos.

Our active participation in God's plan and the Church is important. We must build on the one sure foundation and follow the plan of the master builder and those who represent him. Jesus has prepared a place for each of us in the Church and in heaven. Jesus is the way. Follow him and he will lead you to your place. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 6:1-7

The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly.

1 Peter 2:4-9

Come to him, a living stone...and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.

John 14:1-12

Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Accepting and seeking formation in faith is key to finding our place in life and in God's house.

A Word from Pope Francis

Be my ambassador, [Mary] says to us, giving food to the hungry, drink to those who thirst, a refuge to those in need, clothe the naked and visit the sick. Come to the aid of your neighbor, forgive whoever has offended you, console the grieving, be patient with others, and above all beseech and pray to God.

—Homily, February 13, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Have I sought out a place to serve and build up the Church in my local area?
- What spiritual means do I use to discern Jesus' plan for me?

Feeding the Hungry in a Land of Dieters

By Jim and Susan Vogt

A man holds a sign at an interstate exit: “Will work for food.” You’re moved with compassion but have just seconds to act before the traffic moves again. What might a conscientious Christian do? Do you drive him to your home and pay him to weed the garden? Probably not.

Do you hand him \$5 and wish him well? Most likely you drive by, saddened and conflicted. After all, Jesus clearly tells us to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty (Matthew 25:31–46). One family we know stores a bag of nonperishable food in the car to hand out the window—a good idea, but few of us are this prepared. What’s a Christian to do?

It’s one thing to meet a hungry person on the street and another to read about children dying of hunger in an impoverished country or suffering from malnutrition in poor areas of your community. Conscientious people are disturbed knowing that many Americans are concerned about losing weight, while others would welcome our leftovers.

Let’s say you raise vegetables, have reduced meat consumption for your health, and don’t overeat. Are you home free in the feeding-the-hungry department? Well, as many moral issues go, yes and no. It’s virtuous to use food wisely. Consider, however, the



connection between what we eat and the reality that some people in the world are hungry. For example, Colombian farmers grow coffee for export, yet their own families go hungry because of insufficient income. One can’t survive just on coffee.

Globalization shows that our planet is interconnected.

Overconsumption of resources, pollution, and economic irresponsibility in one part of the world will eventually impact all. Jesus’ command to be like the Good Samaritan rings in our ears. Our neighbor is anyone who needs us to be a neighbor, since anyone in need presents a claim on us. It can sound overwhelming and intimidating, for how could any one person—even a well-intentioned Christian—respond to the masses of humanity suffering in Africa?

What Can I Do About Hunger?

You can make a difference—both through lifestyle changes and by leveraging your influence with others.

- Eat responsibly. Don’t overeat or waste food. Reduce or eliminate meat from your diet. Eat nutritiously and organically when possible.
- Eat locally as much as you can. Locally grown food supports area farmers, and reduces transportation costs and use of preservatives.

- Eat humanely. Animals are often raised inhumanely. Find meat and eggs from cage-free animals.
- Consider fasting so others may eat. Consider fasting from a meal or dessert. Donate the money saved to a hunger cause. Fasting is a form of prayer and puts us in solidarity with those who are hungry.
- Plant a vegetable garden. You’ll get fresh vegetables and the joy of watching your labor turn into food. Consider donating half your produce to a food bank.
- Educate yourself about food and hunger issues. Books like *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* bring light to an important topic.
- Work for systemic change. Once your diet is under control, look at food systems around you to see if they need improvement.

The bottom line? Eat responsibly, share, learn, and advocate. Keep some food in your car and don’t let it go to waste—or waist. +



Risen Jesus, you heal our broken hearts and give us peace. Help me to be a source of encouragement to those troubled by pain and suffering.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 11–16

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 14:5–18 / Jn 14:21–26

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 14:19–28 / Jn 14:27–31a

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 15:1–6 / Jn 15:1–8

Thursday, St. Matthias:
Acts 1:15–17, 20–26 / Jn 15:9–17

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 15:22–31 / Jn 15:12–17

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:1–10 / Jn 15:18–21

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

May 10, 2020

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Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter (A)

May 17, 2020

Shepherd, Advocate, Savior

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Jesus promised he wouldn't leave us orphans. As a good shepherd, he was concerned that he would eventually have to leave his sheep. How would he care for them while he was away preparing a place for them? He promises to pray to the Father for an advocate who would be with us always. We are entrusted to an advocate who cares for us until Christ returns.

That advocate is Jesus' very Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of truth. The apostles understood this. That's why their first order of business after baptizing a new

believer was to place hands on him or her and pray for the Holy Spirit to come down and confirm the new believer with his gifts. They knew this was essential since it was Jesus' way of staying close to his believers.

This Spirit, which we received at baptism and whose gifts we more actively embraced at confirmation, is a friendship we absolutely need to cultivate. Its inspirations are constantly present, and listening to them is key to maturing as disciples. Who wouldn't want to have direct access to the heart and power of Jesus? Who wouldn't want to have the zeal of the first apostles? Who wouldn't want to have the same spiritual gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, courage, knowledge, piety, and awe?

We can. We do. We have the Holy Spirit! If you don't notice his action in your soul the way you'd like to, simply ask the Spirit to help you hear and respond better. Then just stand back and watch him work. +

This Spirit, which we received at baptism, is a friendship we absolutely need to cultivate.

A Word from Pope Francis

There are so many people waiting for us to go out and meet them and look at them with the tenderness that we have experienced and received from our relationship with God. That is where our power lies: not in our ideals and in our personal projects, but rather in the strength of his mercy.

—Address to the order of Augustinian recollects, October 20, 2016



Sunday Readings

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people.

1 Peter 3:15-18

Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.

John 14:15-21

[Jesus said,] "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth...You know it, because it remains with you."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What increases my awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence in me?
- Which one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit do I most need?

Beyond Suicide: Yes, Trust God

By Pegge Bernecker

Weeks after my only child died unexpectedly, the victim of teenage suicide, I sent an email to a friend: “I’m eating chocolate for Lent. That’s a first for me. But I decided that I’m suffering enough and don’t need to give anything up. I think my son’s un-lived life is enough.”

Justin died on a Tuesday, probably around noon. No one knows the time for certain—he had stayed home from school, sick with the flu—or so we thought.

Monday night, before going to an evening class, I opened mail while standing at my kitchen island. A few feet away, Justin sipped chicken soup. An unexpected package contained an advance copy of *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul II*, which included “One Mother’s Dream,” my story about becoming a foster adoptive mother—Justin’s mother.

I spontaneously asked Justin if he wanted me to read the story to him. He nodded yes and gave me a big smile. Reading the few pages took awhile, but his sixteen-year-old blue eyes grew brighter as I spoke our story: my dream of being a mother, his dream of a forever family. A palpable love flowed between us. I didn’t know this would be the last conversation I would have with my son.



Had I had any inkling of the depth of his medical condition, I never would have left him home alone the next morning. But I didn’t know. He simply said he still didn’t feel well and wanted to sleep. I decided to make my weekly office trip to Denver, an hour away. When I called home that afternoon, the phone rang

and rang. Unable to shake the feeling that something was wrong, I called my husband, insisting he drive home to check on Justin.

Take Up Your Cross

Half an hour later, as I walked through downtown Denver, my phone rang. Answering quickly, I listened to my husband carefully speak five words: “Justin has taken his life.”

I stumbled toward the sidewalk moaning, “No, no, no.” I needed to stop time. Questions erupted inside: Why? How? What if? If only? Suddenly I stopped. A deep part of me began to ask, *What am I going to do with this?*

I didn’t want this, but from a faraway place, I knew I had a choice to make. Shock flooded my veins, numbing me to full comprehension of the unfolding nightmare. My life had previously borne witness to God’s transformative grace in difficult circumstances, and this would be no exception.

My Journey as a Survivor Taught Me...

- Suicide is first a medical issue—not a moral issue.
- No mentally healthy person jokes about suicide. Get professional help!
- Suicide can carry a burden of shame and a social stigma.
- A crisis of faith in God can erupt. God doesn’t interrupt our free will, cause deliberate suffering, or punish us.
- God forgives. Therefore, our question becomes, “Can we forgive?”
- Choose a joyful, expansive memory of the person who has died by suicide. Allow this image to override what you may have seen, imagined, or heard described.
- Go online to research suicide facts, resources, and prevention tips. Share what you learn with others.

Since Justin’s death, suicide has impacted five close friends. Whether days or decades since a suicide death, stories detail unresolved grief, regret, shame, guilt, confusion, blame, anger, denial, and eventual healing. My advice is simple: be present to one another, offer compassion, listen, and just show up. Friendship will then become a healing balm. +



Risen Lord, you remain with us and command us to love one another. Help me to show your love to all people.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 18–23

Monday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 16:11–15 / Jn 15:26–16:4a

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 16:22–34 / Jn 16:5–11

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 17:15, 22–18:1 / Jn 16:12–15

Thursday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 18:1–8 / Jn 16:16–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 18:9–18 / Jn 16:20–23

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 18:23–28 / Jn 16:23b–28

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May 17, 2020

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Bringing Home the Word

Ascension of the Lord (A)

May 24, 2020

Truth Revealed

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Pinturicchio’s wall painting, *Ascension*, is found in the apartments of Pope Alexander VI Borgia and was painted around the same time as one of Columbus’ voyages to America: 1492. When the Alexander died in 1503, these rooms were shut and not opened again until 1889. How could such artistic treasures have been locked up and forgotten for 400 years?

The same thing can happen with the feast of the Ascension. We don’t always give it much thought. Its powerful beauty is locked away, collecting dust.

The great truth revealed today is that Jesus is in heaven, in bodily form, seated at the right hand of the Father and watching over us all. From there he intercedes for us; from there he sends us on mission.

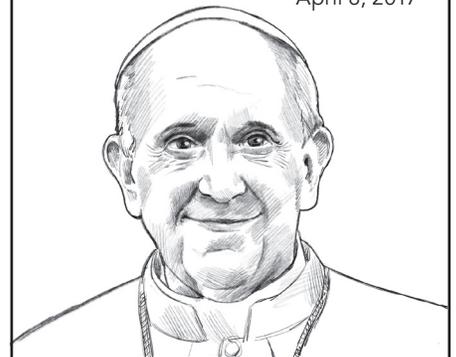
What are we to do with this truth? Treat it like a myth or an ancient story? Just stare at the sky and wonder like the apostles? No, we are to get busy building God’s kingdom. His kingdom will not happen automatically. He calls us to be his witnesses until the end of the earth. We cannot sit by and let our politics, our schools, our churches, and our arts evolve unguided by the gospel. We are called to roll up our sleeves and get involved. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19). Remember the good administrator who was left some talents. His master went away only to eventually return asking for a rendering. Jesus has left only to return again. Until then, it’s time to build his kingdom. +

*We are to get busy
building God’s
kingdom.
His kingdom
will not happen
automatically.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The Church holds out a mission, and I would like to entrust you with this mission. It is to go back and talk to your grandparents. Today more than ever we need this bridge, this dialogue, between grandparents and grandchildren, between the young and the elderly.

—World Youth Day prayer vigil,
April 8, 2017



Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

As they were looking on, [Jesus] was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

Ephesians 1:17–23

And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

Matthew 28:16–20

[Jesus said,] “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I accept the responsibility of actively building up God’s kingdom?
- How can I showcase the truth of the ascension in my life?

Faith and Finances: Managing Debt

By Phil Lenahan

There's a link between our faith and how we handle money. Examining this link begins with considering what really matters. Money touches many aspects of life—family, work, and our faith. Are your financial goals determined by our culture, with its emphasis on *having*?

Or are they based on the principles of Scripture and the Catholic faith, which emphasize *being*?

I remember my dad sharing stories of the Great Depression. He spoke of families setting spending priorities—because if they didn't, there wouldn't be enough for basic needs. Now we're taught by our consumer culture to buy all we want, when we want, without concern for repayment. If we don't have money today...well, that's what credit cards and home-equity loans are for, right?

The Financial Drug

Debt has become a financial drug, creating dependencies for millions of Americans. There is no doubt that the misuse of debt played a major role in recent economic crises. Some statistics:

—Seven of ten of households with credit cards don't pay the full balance every month.

—The average household carries a credit card balance of \$8,000.



—About eight of every ten undergraduates have credit cards, averaging \$2,200 in credit card debt.

Does Catholic teaching give insight into debt? People are often surprised to find that Scripture and other Church writings have much to say about finances. “The borrower is the slave of the lender” (Proverbs 22:7).

Productive, Unproductive Debt

It makes sense to borrow when debt is used prudently to buy assets that increase in value. That's *productive* debt. For debt to be used productively, there must be guards to limit excessive borrowing.

Borrowers must have a financial cushion to manage debt during crises.

Some types of debts are *unproductive*. Unproductive debt is used to purchase depreciating assets, those that decline in value. The most common example is credit card purchases that aren't paid off each month. Americans would do well to eliminate their unproductive debt and develop a more cautious attitude even when using productive debt.

Eliminating Unproductive Debt

Straightforward steps can be taken to eliminate unproductive debt rapidly.

Once you've committed to becoming free of debt, your first step is to prepare a financial plan. Jesus says, “Which of you

wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion?” (Luke 14:28–29). Your plan should include a balance sheet, debt summary, an annual budget, and strategies for savings and paying down debt.

Accelerating Payments

Many with unproductive debt pay the minimum required balance. This strategy will keep you in debt forever. Instead, I recommend an aggressive approach that will eliminate unproductive debts in short order. This requires changing spending habits and perhaps temporarily taking a second job. But by increasing the amount of money allocated to debt repayment, you can be debt-free quickly.

Our financial priorities have ramifications for our families and faith. Becoming financially free is foremost a function of fulfilling our call as stewards of God's providence. We must grow to understand God's principles for managing money and apply them. +



Risen Lord, you share with us the mission of God. Help me to use my gifts and talents to do God's work.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 25-30

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 19:1–8 / Jn 16:29–33

Tuesday, St. Philip Neri:
Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:28–38 / Jn 17:11b–19

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / Jn 17:20–26

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 25:13b–21 / Jn 21:15–19

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 28:16–20, 30–31 / Jn 21:20–25



Bringing Home the Word

Pentecost (A)
May 31, 2020

Unity of Spirit

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The whole group of believers was gathered with Mary, Jesus' Mother, in the upper room. They were waiting for power to be given to them from on high, as Jesus had promised. They were like children with their mother, keeping the family together. Being the one on earth closest to Jesus, Mary was the disciples' physical and spiritual connection to him, and they listened to her.

Consider what a colorful group the first Christians were. Each believer was different, each unique, each had his or her own background. Yet when the

Spirit called them together with Mary, there was a beautiful harmony and complementarity. Opposite of the spirit of the evil one, which causes division and exaggerates individuality, the Spirit of God celebrates legitimate diversity while creating from these different parts one body and one spirit in Christ.

If you have ever been in Rome for an audience with the pope on Wednesday morning or at a large papal Mass like World Youth Day, you have experienced how the Spirit brings unity amid diversity. These gatherings comprise thousands of people of many different nationalities and languages, but all are united in prayer and a common spirit. This is the miracle brought about by the Spirit.

It's not easy to maintain this unity. It requires we each listen to and strive for the unity Jesus asks of us. Selfish individualism is a constant tendency, but it's much easier to resist it when we are united by Mary and the Church to Christ's Spirit. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 2:1-11

Suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and...Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire.

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

John 20:19-23

[Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

When the Spirit called the first Christians together, there was a beautiful harmony.

A Word from Pope Francis

As he did on Pentecost, the Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; he wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands to continue building the world of today. And he wants to build that world with you.

—Prayer vigil with young people, July 30, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can I encourage greater unity within my family and parish?
- Is there a way I can be more of a team player?

Reverencing the Bible

By Richard Rohr, OFM

Many of us have been privileged to be present with someone on his or her deathbed. In this setting we are concerned about listening to every word the person is saying—and about choosing our own words carefully. It is with this degree of reverence that we should approach the Bible: with humility.

Biblical language is more poetry than prose. It doesn't so much describe events historically as it seeks to lead us into those experiences. We can change words, but an experience changes us. Good biblical interpretation finds the balance between words that get us started, and encounters that are beyond words.

At the transfiguration (Matthew 17), Jesus appears to several disciples, his face shining "like the sun" and clothes "white as light." Afterward, Jesus cautions them: "Do not tell the vision...." In this example we observe the spiritual tradition balancing darkness and light, presence and absence, speaking and silence, seeing everything so well that we don't need to see anything in particular.

The Bible repeatedly finds the balance between knowing and not knowing, between using words and having humility about words. To read the Bible well, we should appreciate the

balance and allow the Spirit to stir its meaning for us. But for most of us in the contemporary West, it is an uphill struggle. We prefer to read the Bible literally and to turn to it for precise answers to questions.

Need for Grounding

Ours is a time of such change that the human psyche struggles to handle it all. Terrorist attacks and political turmoil have shaken us deeply. No wonder many of us look to certitudes for grounding. Subconsciously, we seek to make God our private property by taking the Bible literally, reading it from our own perspective and cultural interpretation. When we do this, we lapse into a kind of rigid time capsule that does not enlighten us. God gives us just enough light for the next faith-filled step, never a blueprint for our lifetime.

The "Jesus Seminar" offers an example. Here scholars combed through New Testament texts in an effort to determine if Jesus said this or that and did or didn't use certain precise words. When we take that approach, more is lost than gained. We risk moving out of sacred space and trivializing what we might have experienced. We risk declaring victory before we have even struggled. We settle the dust by giving

ourselves answers, when the raised dust might have revealed the right questions.

Journey of Faith

Though we often wish it were so, the biblical God is not a cure-all, a cosmic answer man or woman. The God living inside of history uses it and suffers from it, gives us truths on which we can rely. But he doesn't give us all the answers. In fact, God leads us through the dilemma of our lives and invites us into a daring journey of faith. God always comes to us disguised as our lives.

The Bible offers hope, but not an escape from life. It is in life that we meet God. So very little in life is ever resolved or solved, settled or answered. There is only the crisis itself, the struggle. Our need for an answer leads us toward eternal life. God calls us to stay in the struggle—still wanting to know, but as people of faith being willing not to know. All because we can trust the One who knows all. +



WEEKDAY READINGS

June 1-6

Monday, Blessed Virgin Mary: Gn 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14 / Jn 19:25-34

Tuesday, Weekday:
2 Pt 3:12-15a, 17-18 / Mk 12:13-17

Wednesday, St. Charles Lwanga and Companions:
2 Tm 1:1-3, 6-12 / Mk 12:18-27

Thursday, Weekday:
2 Tm 2:8-15 / Mk 12:28-34

Friday, St. Boniface:
2 Tm 3:10-17 / Mk 12:35-37

Saturday, Weekday:
2 Tm 4:1-8 / Mk 12:38-44

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your Spirit fills the world with love and peace. Empower me to be an instrument of your peace, love, and forgiveness to all people.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney