



Bringing Home the Word

The Ascension of the Lord (C)

June 2, 2019

Putting Prayer First

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In Luke’s ascension account from Acts, Jesus admonishes his apostles to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit because they are witnesses of his mission and message. When the time for his ascension comes, Jesus blesses them, then “was lifted up” (1:9). We don’t hear the great commission to go out to, preach to, and baptize all nations as we do in Matthew’s Gospel (28:19–20). Instead, Luke’s account leaves us with an image of the apostles joyfully returning to Jerusalem: “They were continually in the temple praising God” (24:53).

Returning to Acts, I love that the early disciples’ first order of business—even before Pentecost—was to gather to pray (1:14). Paul often admonished the early Christians to pray constantly. He knew that prayer grounds us in the Lord and strengthens us to lay down our lives and carry our crosses. Prayer focuses our attention on God’s call and our response to it. The apostles’ prayer opened them to receive the promised gift of the Spirit and strengthened them for their mission—to let the world know that Jesus is Lord, that the kingdom of God has come, and that we have been restored through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Thus should our week begin: in praise and worship before God, in gathered prayer. Like the disciples in Jerusalem, the Lord will open our minds “to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45). We, too, will be filled with the Spirit and be sent out as joyful witnesses to God’s presence and saving work. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days.

Ephesians 1:17–23 or Hebrews 9:24–28; 10:19–23

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

Luke 24:46–53

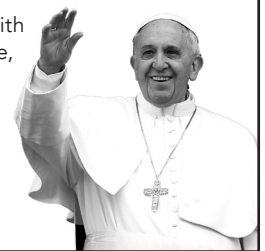
As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven.

The early disciples’ first order of business—even before Pentecost—was to gather to pray.

A Word from Pope Francis

Do I speak with Jesus or am I frightened of silence?
Do I allow the Holy Spirit to speak in my heart?
Do I ask Jesus: what do you want me to do, what do you want from my life?...
Speak continually with Jesus, in the good times and in the bad, when you do right, and when you do wrong. Do not fear him! This is prayer.

—Prayer vigil with young people, July 27, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I make prayer a priority or is it low on my to-do list?
- When I pray, do I focus my attention on God’s call or do I allow my attention to wander?

Is “‘Til Death Do Us Part” Realistic?

By Jim and Susan Vogt

In addition to leading marriage preparation and enrichment programs, we've been responsible for divorce ministries in two dioceses. It's humbling to hear experiences of those who expected lasting marriages but instead saw their hopes and lives crumble. Here are some of the lessons we've learned.

The three most important things for a healthy marriage are commitment, commitment, and commitment. With divorce rates around 50 percent, commitment seems unfashionable. Has human nature changed so much? Perhaps human nature hasn't changed, but our culture has. We live in a throwaway society; if something breaks, our impulse is to get a new one rather than fix the old.

Modern society also has more temptations than ever. With men and women working as colleagues, spouses spend more time with members of the opposite sex who share common interests and are on their best behavior. (Workplace morals aren't necessarily higher, but at least colleagues don't have spit-up on their clothes or wear raggedy T-shirts.) Your spouse may have been alluring during courtship, but coworkers sharing career goals can be tempting. This makes commitment harder than ever.

In some ways, marriage is getting



better. Once it was enough for husbands to be providers and for wives to care for the home and children. Now we expect couples to share dreams and be friends and life partners.

We expect couples to practice commitment skills—especially communication. Spouses unwilling to speak

honestly and listen respectfully have hollow commitments. Shared values also support commitment. If one spouse values a simple lifestyle and another wants to accumulate wealth, there will be tension. If faith and morals are important to one but not the other, key decisions become reasons to argue.

Church Wisdom

What does the Church say about marriage, besides the conventional wisdom of commit, communicate, and seek common values? The Church says, of course, what Jesus said: “Love one another as I love you” (John 15:12). Wedding vows take a lifetime to live out. Let's unpack the grace behind the vows:

Exclusivity: *I, ___, take you, ___, to be my (wife/husband).* Specific names indicate this is an exclusive commitment between this man and this woman.

Fidelity: *I promise to be true to you.* Fidelity often gets translated as sexual loyalty—neither spouse will commit adultery. But there are nonhuman

“mistresses,” too. Work, hobbies, children, and more can cut into the romance and attention spouses should give each other.

Unconditional love: *In good times and in bad, in sickness and in health....* Loving unconditionally is a promise for the future. It's more a decision to love than merely feeling love. Not knowing what changes the future holds, can I love you if you become old, fat, or senile? That's a lot to say a blind yes to.

Covenant: *I will love you and honor you....* Unlike contracts, a covenant goes beyond a fifty-fifty agreement. Sometimes one spouse must bend 75 percent while the other gives 25 percent. It's not always fair, but a promise is a promise.

Permanence: *All the days of my life....* Traditionally, permanence is understood as not getting divorced. A commitment to permanence means daily attentiveness to the relationship. It may mean a nightly walk to keep communication flowing. It's preventive maintenance.

Prayer: *Amen*, a short prayer, is the couple's way of saying yes to each other and God. +



Risen Lord, your resurrection and ascension give witness to God's power. May my life bear witness to God's love, compassion, forgiveness, and peace.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 3–8

Monday, St. Charles Lwanga and Companions: Acts 19:1–8 / Jn 16:29–33

Tuesday, Easter Weekday: Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a

Wednesday, St. Boniface: 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 (C)
June 9, 2019

Getting to Know God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Our daughter married into a large Italian family whose get-togethers include dozens of people. (More than fifty were there for Christmas dinner, and not everyone could make it.) Ours is a small and often-quiet family, so Katy had to get used to more noise and activity than she had growing up. It was like learning a new language. It's often that way when couples wed. Over time, we come to know the inside jokes, the way the in-laws mark occasions, who we can joke with, and who prefers a more serious interaction. Just as with growing up in our own families, we

become a part of them and they become a part of us.

When the Holy Spirit descended on those gathered in the upper room, it was like a wedding. They had to learn the language of God's family—one that included proclamation, sharing, repentance, and mercy. They had to learn what it meant to be part of one body, using their unique gifts to build on what Christ had already started. With the Holy Spirit as inspiration and source of grace, the disciples and apostles were sent to testify and invite the world to the eternal life that Christ offers.

In any relationship it takes time to get to know the other. God has the advantage in his relationship with us—he already knows us fully and intimately. In getting to know him and learning his language, we may feel awkward or out of place. But he constantly welcomes and invites us to be a part of his life and Church, knowing we might eventually come to live with him forever. +

God has the advantage in his relationship with us—he already knows us fully and intimately.

Sunday Readings

Acts 2:1–11

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.

1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13 or Romans 8:8–17

In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.

John 20:19–23 or John 14:15–16, 23b–26

Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

A Word from Pope Francis

The Holy Spirit is the fire of love burning in the Church and in our hearts, even though we often cover him with the ash of our sins. Let us ask him: Spirit of God, Lord, who dwell in my heart and in the heart of the Church, guiding and shaping her in diversity, come!

—Pentecost Mass, June 4, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- God already knows you well. Are you able to relax and confide your deepest thoughts to him?
- How can you use your unique gifts to invite others to the eternal life that Christ offers?

The Holy Spirit: The Breath of Life

By Michael D. Guinan, OFM

One hears lots of talk lately about spirituality. People are interested in living deeper spiritual lives. For some, the spirit in spirituality is the human spirit reaching for transcendence. But for the Christian, this isn't enough. The spirit is the Holy Spirit of God. In a real sense, our Christian spiritual life can be seen as the art of letting God's Spirit fill us, work in us, guide us.

But what is this Spirit? In Scripture the meaning of "spirit" (whether the Hebrew *ruach*, the Greek *pneuma*, or the Latin *spiritus*) is wind or breath. The spirit of God is God's breath, and breath is a sign of life. When we live, we breathe. God's breath empowers us to do God's work.

Moses was led by God's Spirit in teaching the people; the Spirit rushed on David when he was anointed king; the Servant of the Lord received the Spirit to establish justice for the lands. The Spirit of God is the dynamic breath by which God achieves his divine purposes—revelation, deliverance, and the rule of justice and peace.

All of this comes into focus in Jesus. He is conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, and his ministry begins and continues in the Spirit. He preaches, confronts sin, and brings healing through the Spirit. At his death, John



records in his Gospel, Jesus "handed over the spirit" (19:30). At the Last Supper, Jesus promised his disciples the gift of the Spirit. When Jesus appeared to them on the evening of his resurrection day, "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit'" (John 20:22).

Gifts of the Spirit

The Christian, then, lives in and with the power of the same Breath/Spirit as Jesus. "But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

Over the centuries, for various reasons, many Christians have come to think of the Spirit in very spiritual terms—connected with our souls. The body (and the world of matter) is then spurned, distrusted, even despised as we seek to save our souls.

Body and Soul

Yet nothing could be further from the truth of Scripture. It isn't matter that is opposed to the Spirit, but only sin. When Paul speaks of our whole person under the dominion of sin, weakness, and death, he calls this living "according to the flesh" (Romans 8:5–10).

This use of "flesh" should not be equated with the body. "Living according to the Spirit" means that our whole person is guided by the Spirit of God. We Christians we are whole persons—body and soul, thoughts and feelings, emotions and passions, hopes and fears. We are called to live all of our relationships—to ourselves, to others, to all creation, and to God—in and with the power of the Spirit.

All of us share the same call and challenge. Through baptism and confirmation, we all share in Jesus' gift of the Spirit. The Second Vatican Council stressed that there is only one basic Christian call to holiness, but we are all called (vocation) and sent (mission), each in her or his own way, to continue Christ's presence in our world today, sharing in his work of teaching, healing, and working for life, justice, and peace.

This is a daunting challenge, but we do not face it alone. The Spirit/Breath of God is with us, empowering us to share in God's purposes and work. +



*Lord, you send forth your Spirit.
Teach me to walk your way
of love and compassion
in hope and gratitude.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 10–15

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

Tuesday, St. Barnabas:
Acts 11:21b–26; 13:1–3 / Mt 5:13–16

Wednesday, Weekday:
2 Cor 3:4–11 / Mt 5:17–19

Thursday, St. Anthony of Padua:
2 Cor 3:15—4:1, 3–6 / Mt 5:20–26

Friday, Weekday:
2 Cor 4:7–15 / Mt 5:27–32

Saturday, Weekday:
2 Cor 5:14–21 / Mt 5:33–37



Bringing Home the Word

Most Holy Trinity (C)
June 16, 2019

The Ultimate Guide

By Mary Katharine Deeley

There was a period in my life when I thought I knew everything and that my way was the only way to go. The opinions of my parents and friends were politely (and sometimes not-so-politely) set aside. I blithely followed my own advice and did my own thing until time, maturity, and a few uncomfortable situations helped me to acquire a little humility. Even these days I suffer a relapse from time to time. I'm sure we have all thought: *"Be reasonable: Do it my way."*

We may tend to think quite often that we know what's best for us and for others. We rely on our experience and

intelligence. Sometimes we're right. Often we're wrong. When our self-confidence and power become more important than the truth and common good, we easily stray into arrogance and stubbornness.

Jesus reminds us that the Holy Spirit, whom he calls the Spirit of Truth, is the ultimate guide. In choosing to follow the Spirit and accepting Christ's authority, we admit that we do not know it all and that we are not the greatest.

Our Creed is built on this acceptance. From our first profession of faith, we stand in humble awareness that God alone knows it all and desires what's best for us and the whole world. This "best" includes God, who is an everlasting relationship-in-being: three persons who were at the beginning, are now, and ever shall be. Our celebration of the Trinity should include giving thanks for the wisdom that comes from union with God and his Church. +

Sunday Readings

Proverbs 8:22–31

When he established the heavens, there was I.

Romans 5:1–5

Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.

John 16:12–15

[Jesus said.] "When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth."

***In choosing to accept
Christ's authority,
we admit that
we do not know it all—
that we are not the greatest.***

A Word from Pope Francis

The mystery of the Trinity also speaks to us of ourselves, of our relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In fact, through baptism, the Holy Spirit has placed us in the heart and the very life of God.

—Angelus, May 22, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I humbly give credit and thanks to God for my gifts and successes?
- When has my self-confidence crossed the line to arrogance or stubbornness?

The Virtues of a Father

By Robert P. Lockwood

My Old Man would never think of wasting time on anything as unproductive as sleep on a Sunday morning. When I was a little guy, he would haul me out of bed for the 8 AM Mass. We'd get there early, and he'd plop me down in one of the back pews while he went to the vestibule to serve as an usher.

After Mass, I watched as he and another man bagged up the money from the collection. I asked him why two guys did it, and he said, "Just in case somebody wants to try something." This made me think that, in addition to everything else, my Old Man was a cop for the Church.

Fathers teach their children how to face the world.

One Sunday when I was about seven, I was in my usual spot as the collection began. I reached into my pocket and realized that I had lost the kids' collection envelope. I had a quarter in my pocket that the Old Man had let me keep from his change for coffee. I had no choice. I put the quarter in the basket, saying goodbye to a comic book I had planned to buy with it.

As we were heading home after Mass,



I told the Old Man what happened. He said, "You did a good thing," then reached into his pocket and handed me a quarter. I believed then, and believed for years, that the Old Man had spotted my quarter among the hundreds of quarters in the collection, plucked it out, and substituted another. It seemed

natural that he could perform a little miracle like that. After all, he was my Old Man.

Teaching by Doing

"The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, [namely] 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:9-10).

What St. Paul is talking about here is virtue, the habit of performing actions for good. Virtue defines how we are meant to live our lives. Virtue is what we admire in others and hope to see in ourselves.

It was only after I became a father myself that I realized that 99 percent of what my father did, 99 percent of what he tried to teach me, was the virtues lived.

The Old Man was never much about the

theory behind the practice, the thesis behind the moral choices. He was all about living the faith on the street corner. He was about what you did and what you didn't do and the difference it made in the neighborhood that day. Classically defined, the virtues we acquire through the repetition of good acts are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Every day, the Old Man was working on those with me.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Why are fathers so important? More than anything else, fathers teach their children how to face the world on a daily basis. Fathers are all about the virtues lived. They don't hand out their lessons where the angels dance on the head of a pin. Fathers teach at that point where the rubber meets the road.

That was my Old Man's method, and I did my best to listen. After all, he was a cop for the Church. +



Lord, you willingly gave up your life for the salvation of the world. Give me the courage to love freely and unconditionally.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 17-22

Monday, Weekday:
2 Cor 6:1-10 / Mt 5:38-42

Tuesday, Weekday:
2 Cor 8:1-9 / Mt 5:43-48

Wednesday, Weekday:
2 Cor 9:6-11 / Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, Weekday:
2 Cor 1:1-11 / Mt 6:7-15

Friday, St. Aloysius Gonzaga:
2 Cor 11:18, 21-30 / Mt 6:19-23

Saturday, Weekday:
2 Cor 12:1-10 / Mt 6:24-34



Bringing Home the Word

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (C)

June 23, 2019

A Joyful Encounter

By Mary Katharine Deeley

On a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Spain, my husband and I were privileged to witness a Corpus Christi procession near Barcelona that wound its way from the church through the streets and back to the church. At the head of the procession was a large ornate monstrance with a consecrated host inside held aloft on a platform carried by some of the priests and assisted by others. Following behind was another priest incensing the monstrance and then the various church groups, beginning with the children and including what I imagine were orders

like the Knights of Columbus or the Solidarity of Mary. The mood was not solemn, but celebratory. Flowers marked the path and the participants. In a tradition dating back to the sixteenth century, an egg was dancing on the water spout in the church fountain. We were enchanted.

I remember processions around my church—though never through the town—when I was a child. But they were solemn affairs and did not resemble the celebration we witnessed. What captured my imagination in Spain was the absolute joy on the faces of those processing. I remember the singing and the laughter, and I wondered, “*What better response could we give to the Lord who gives himself to us in the Eucharist?*”

Whether we process or not, whether we are in prayer before the tabernacle or monstrance, or just going about our day, let us project the joy that comes from knowing the Lord and encountering him under the appearances of bread and wine which have become the Body and Blood of Christ. +

What captured my imagination in Spain was the absolute joy of the Corpus Christi procession.

A Word from Pope Francis

The Eucharist demands that we be members of the one body of the Church. Those who approach the Body and Blood of Christ may not wound that same Body by creating scandalous distinctions and divisions among its members....The celebration of the Eucharist thus becomes a constant summons for everyone to examine himself or herself.

—On Love in the Family
(*Amoris Laetitia*),
March 19, 2016



Sunday Readings

Genesis 14:18–20

Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God Most High.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Luke 9:11b–17

[Jesus] said to them, “Give them some food yourselves.” They replied, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I remember to take joy in my faith, and in my relationship with Christ?
- Do I project to others my joy in knowing the Lord? Joy is contagious!

The Challenge and Promise of Change

By Susan K. Rowland

Researchers report that the more we welcome change into our lives, the healthier our brains remain and the younger we feel. That's no surprise. Enthusiasm about new things is a characteristic of the young and the young-at-heart. We're encouraged to try a new hobby, learn a language, take a class, travel—anything to keep those brain cells active. New activities challenge us, keeping us alert and lively.

How do you feel about change? Do you resist, especially when change involves old and dear rituals? Sometimes we love change, sometimes not. But whether it's welcomed and expected or sudden and shocking, change is a reality of life. It's one thing we can count on.

Different reactions to change are natural. Young people are often curious and open to new challenges. It helps for them to be enamored of change, for they're moving through the biggest changes of their lives. But later in life, many people are attracted to stability.

Many of the changes we experience as we age are unwelcome. We think: *Where did those wrinkles come from? Why don't I have the energy I used to have? Why do I have health problems? What is my purpose in life now that my kids are grown and I'm retired?* It's no wonder we'd like to stop the clock.



God and Change

In *Rediscover Catholicism*, Matthew Kelly writes: "Change is one of the laws of the natural universe. Nature teaches us that everything in this world is constantly changing. Everything God created is constantly in the process of either growing or dying!" Still, Kelly writes, certain things never

change: "Truth does not change; the supernatural realities of faith, hope, and love do not change; and God does not change."

Change is essential. Our physical bodies are in a constant state of repair and renewal. Our minds need to be challenged to stay healthy. And our spiritual journeys are characterized by conversion and growth. Change is important, but too much change can result in chaos. We won't grow properly or deepen our commitments if we rush from one thing to another. So God has built into us both a desire for change and a desire for stability and regularity. Thus our lives swing between change and sameness. Nature gives us distinct seasons. Each in its turn feels new and refreshing, yet each season is the same year after year.

In our Church year, we move from Advent to Christmas to Lent to Easter, fast to feast, over and over. Yet each season feels new again every year. The

rhythm of life is God's way of helping us embrace both the necessary changes in our lives and the seasons of sameness.

Conversion: The Most Essential Change

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says the essence of the Christian life is conversion, which is a radical reorientation of our whole lives. The biggest change demanded of us is turning from evil and toward God. "The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart" (CCC 1432).

This radical, interior conversion is necessary for every person. Jesus warns us, "Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it" (Luke 18:17). We must change in order to grow into spiritual maturity. That's the main task of this earthly life. The need for growth and change doesn't diminish, no matter how old we get. We never "arrive" in this life. God insists that we keep moving forward—toward God.+

PRAYER

Lord, you love me and answer all my needs. Help me to be less self-focused in life and more attentive to the needs of others.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 24–29

Monday, Nativity of St. John the Baptist:
Is 49:1–6 / Acts 13:22–26 / Lk 1:57–66, 80

Tuesday, Weekday:
Gn 13:2, 5–18 / Mt 7:6, 12–14

Wednesday, Weekday:
Gn 15:1–12, 17–18 / Mt 7:15–20

Thursday, Weekday: Gn 16:1–12, 15–16 or
Gn 16:6b–12, 15–16 / Mt 7:21–29

Friday, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus:
Ez 34:11–16 / Rom 5:5b–11 / Lk 15:3–7

Saturday, Sts. Peter and Paul:
Acts 12:1–11 / 2 Tm 4:6–8, 17–18 / Mt 16:13–19



Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

June 30, 2019

God's Kingdom Is Ahead

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Sometimes, someone's actions have hurt me so badly that I hardly knew how to react. At those times, I have dealt with sadness, anger, and the desire for revenge. It takes me a long time to let go of hurt. My mind goes on offense. I think about what I wanted to say. I want the person to acknowledge the hurt, apologize, admit I was right, and say she was wrong. There are times I feel I'm caught in a trap of my own making. I want to be free of the hurt, but I don't want to let it go until the other person totally satisfies my needs.

In the Gospel, the apostles wanted to call down fire on the Samaritan village that did not welcome Jesus. They wanted the people of the village to see how wrong they were and how right Jesus was. I imagine they talked about it until Jesus, tired of hearing their complaints, rebuked them.

Why did he do that? At least part of the answer comes in the passage that follows Jesus' rebuke. Would-be followers of Jesus want to attend to something in their past life before they join him. Jesus reminds them of the futility of that by using an example that is immediately apparent to farmers.

To plow a straight line, we have to look ahead and follow the one who leads us. If we turn our heads to look back, our line and our lives will go crooked. Clinging to past hurts makes it hard to look ahead. If we are to be disciples, we must learn to let go and forgive in the same way that we are forgiven. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 19:16b, 19–21

Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please, let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you."

Galatians 5:1, 13–18

For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 9:51–62

Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

***To plow a straight line,
we have to look forward
and follow the one
who leads us.***

A Word from Pope Francis

Mercy is something which is difficult to understand: it doesn't eliminate sin.... Mercy is the manner in which God forgives.

—Morning meditation, April 7, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I spend too much of my life "looking in the rearview mirror"?
- If I am holding a grudge against someone, can I reach out to him or her today and make peace?

Christian Parenting in a Secular World

By Kathy Coffey

Just as we are made in God's image, so do our children model us. If they are to appreciate and then give even a glimmer of God's unconditional love, they must first experience it from their parents. This prompts the questions: What specifically do Christian parents hand on to their children?



Which of our qualities do we most want them to imitate?

The *General Directory for Catechesis* affirms the role of parents: "Parents are the primary educators in the faith (GDC 255). Parents nurture faith by showing their children the richness of lived faith. "In a certain sense, nothing replaces family catechesis, especially for its positive and receptive environment, for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith" (GDC 178).

A child who has been neglected or abused has difficulties trusting others. If Mom or Dad doesn't respond when an infant wails from hunger, that child gradually abandons hope that anyone will meet his or her need. If the cry is answered consistently, the parent lays the foundation for a life of faith, trust, freedom to express oneself, and the joy of being comforted.

A parent's tenderness when feeding a baby or playing with a child speaks

volumes about God's loving concern. Initially, humans can't understand abstractions. We learn from touch, voice, hugs, and gestures. This simple, unspoken language is irreplaceable for the message it delivers: You are valuable, cherished.

Parents who are nervous about conveying Catholic doctrine they

haven't studied since eighth grade can be reassured. A loving, personal relationship with God is best nourished at home. Adults asked about their first memory of faith often say the Christmas crèche or carols, Grandma working in her rose garden near the statue of St. Francis, family prayer before meals or at bedtime, Scripture stories, family traditions during Advent or Lent. Without that early foundation, later religious education has little basis on which to build.

The parish, school, and faith-formation program can excel at sharing the content of our faith. Trained homilists, catechists, and teachers may use the latest strategies and resources, but they admit their job becomes easier when it's reinforced in the home.

Parents may convey more by their attitudes than by words. They also know their child better than anyone else, so they're in a position to communicate clearly. Does a child see parents sacrificing their leisure time to read a

bedtime story and say evening prayers? Do they notice intentional efforts toward kindness and peacemaking in the home? If so, the message is obvious: My parents value me and our faith.

Most parents want their children to succeed academically, socially, or athletically. They invest time and money in education, parties, or sports. Equally important, but often neglected, is a child's inner life. At some time, the child will face disappointment: not making the team, failing a class, losing a friend, or experiencing a death. He or she will then need to tap nourishing resources.

Again, parents can be models: when they face loss, they turn to Jesus, who was certainly not an academic, athletic, or social success. He died an outlaw, a criminal crucified by religious and state authorities. While that's hardly a parent's dream for a child, Jesus gave us another definition for success. From his tragic tomb emerged everlasting life. He taught us to value our union with God more than anything the world can offer. +

**PRAYER**

Lord, your cross and resurrection set us free. Please liberate me from the prison of selfishness. Empower me to lovingly serve my brothers and sisters.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 1–6

Monday, Weekday:
Gn 18:16–33 / Mt 8:18–22

Tuesday, Weekday:
Gn 19:15–29 / Mt 8:23–27

Wednesday, St. Thomas:
Eph 2:19–22 / Jn 20:24–29

Thursday, Weekday:
Gn 22:1b–19 / Mt 9:1–8

Friday, Weekday:
Gn 23:1–4, 19; 24:1–8, 62–67 / Mt 9:9–13

Saturday, Weekday:
Gn 27:1–5, 15–29 / Mt 9:14–17