



Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 1, 2016

Living With God

By Janel Esker

Some experiences you can have only when living with someone. You have a regular dinner companion, someone to share household responsibilities with, someone to share your day's experiences with. No matter what the relationship, it can be fantastic.

But sometimes it's not. Your parent snores loudly enough to wake the neighbors. Your roommate prefers the floor for clothes storage as opposed to a closet. Your spouse can't write "laundry detergent" or "olive oil" on the well-displayed grocery list (not that my husband is guilty of any of these...).

Sunday Readings

Acts 15:1–2, 22–29

"We have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you."

Revelation 21:10–14, 22–23

"Its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb."

John 14:23–29

"Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him."

That's why I did a double take when reading today's Gospel. Jesus, in his farewell discourse from John, declares that he and the Father will "make our dwelling" with those who keep God's word. The Greek word for "dwelling" is *moné*. It indicates that this is not temporary—it's not an overnight camping trip or a two-week can-I-crash-on-your-couch situation. *Moné* intends a permanent home for God with us—not over us or next to us or down the street. With us, within our very selves.

But hasn't God learned about roommates? Doesn't God know about the snoring? About our sins and our brokenness? Our unworthiness and our doubts?

I certainly can't explain God's choices. I can only rejoice that God has decided to dwell with us in spite of our many flaws, foibles, quirks, and outright sin.

It's the best experience of "living with someone" I can imagine. †

A Word From Pope Francis

Faith becomes a light capable of illumining all our relationships in society. As an experience of the mercy of God the Father, it sets us on the path of brotherhood....As salvation history progresses, it becomes evident that God wants to make everyone share as brothers and sisters in that one blessing, which attains its fullness in Jesus, so that all may be one. The boundless love of our Father also comes to us, in Jesus, through our brothers and sisters. Faith teaches us to see that every man and woman represents a blessing for me."



—*Lumen Fidei*, 54

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Which relationships do I treat as valuable and permanent? As transitory?
- How can I make my dwelling place(s) more inviting to God?

MARY: Queen, Servant

By Matthew Allman, CSSR

May and June present us with rich opportunities for connection with Our Mother of Perpetual Help. We might not see as many May processions and crownings today as we did decades ago, but the Church still considers May a month particularly dedicated to Mary, and every June 27, the Redemptorists celebrate the feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.*

Much of the imagery we use during these celebrations emphasizes Mary's role as a queen. Our hymns and prayers refer to Mary as "The Queen of May," "The Queen of Heaven," or "The Queen of the Angels," and in many of our copies of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, we see Mary wearing a golden crown, a mark of royal dignity. Perhaps it is the stress on Mary's unique status as the Mother of Christ that has led people over the years to emphasize her queenly nature, or maybe it has been a desire to emphasize her power as an intercessor. If people imagine heaven as a royal court, then it makes sense to glorify the queen and keep her on one's side.

Yet Mary's title for herself stands in direct contrast to the queenly titles we so often give her. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her of the Son whom she was to bear, Mary's response was to call herself "the handmaid of the Lord," a servant, or a slave. Mary embraced her status as one wholly dependent on the God of love. It was



actually by her so thoroughly becoming God's servant that she eventually became so thoroughly our queen.

This Marian season we can ask for the grace to embrace our own servanthood. In our baptism we were anointed and named members of the kingly, royal family of Christ. But the only way for us to enter the fullness of our heritage is, as Mary did, to embrace our status first and foremost as servants of one another and of the God who loves us.

* *This year, Redemptorists worldwide are celebrating the 150th anniversary of Pope Pius IX entrusting the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help to them. Events, missions, retreats, celebrations, and more are occurring across the globe. See more at IconOfLove.org, the official site of the jubilee.*

Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- January 1: Mary, Holy Mother of God (holy day of obligation)
- March 25: Annunciation of the Lord
- May 31: Visitation
- June 4: Immaculate Heart of Mary (Day after Most Sacred Heart of Jesus)

- August 15: Assumption (holy day of obligation)
- August 22: Queenship
- September 8: Nativity
- November 21: Presentation
- December 8: Immaculate Conception (holy day of obligation)

Marian Apparitions

- Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11)
- Our Lady of Fatima (May 13)
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16)
- Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15)
- Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12)

Other Marian Titles*

- Ark of the Covenant
- Cause of Our Joy
- Ever Virgin
- Full of Grace
- The Madonna
- Mother of Good Counsel
- Mother of Mercy
- The New Eve

* *For more, see the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Litany of Loreto), approved by Pope Sixtus V in 1587. †*

PRA^YER

Risen Lord, your death and resurrection brought peace to the world. Help me to be an instrument of your peace to others.


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

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 2–May 7

- | | |
|------|---|
| Mon. | St. Athanasius:
Acts 16:11–15 / John 15:26—16:4a |
| Tue. | Sts. Philip and James:
1 Corinthians 15:1–8 / John 14:6–14 |
| Wed. | Easter Weekday: Acts 17:15, 22—
18:1 / John 16:12–15 |

- | | |
|------|---|
| Thu. | Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:1–8 / John 16:16–20 |
| Fri. | Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:9–18 / John 16:20–23 |
| Sat. | Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:23–28 / John 16:23b–28 |

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BHW001



Bringing Home the Word

Ascension of the Lord

May 8, 2016

Jesus, I Trust in You

By Janel Esker

Iwouldn't have done well at the ascension. Sure, I'd have followed Jesus and listened intently. But instead of bowing in homage, I would have waved my hand urgently, asking, "What do you mean 'it is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established?' I really need to know when the Spirit will be sent. I have a very busy schedule, so a more specific time would be helpful, Jesus, sir."

I can imagine Jesus simply shaking his head, unsure of what to do with this particularly challenging follower.

Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

"As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight."

Ephesians 1:17–23

"May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call."

Luke 24:46–53

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

For those of us who like to plan and schedule our lives in precise detail, the ascension presents some challenges. He promises the Spirit will come—but he doesn't say when, how, or what that will mean. It's an in-between space, and I'm not a big fan of those.

We often have these in-between moments—waiting for a diagnosis, looking for a new job, seeking healing in a relationship. They don't fit into our calendars, and we can't predict exactly when the hoped-for result will come. But we're asked, as were the disciples, to trust that even if it feels as though he's absent, Jesus is with us—and he does fulfill his promises. He sent the Spirit as promised, and he promises us life in abundance.

Luke's Gospel reports that the disciples returned from the ascension "with great joy" as they awaited the Spirit. Instead of feeling anxious in our own in-between moments, can we learn from the disciples? Can we live with the joy of the Gospel? †

A Word From Pope Francis

Let us not be afraid to turn to [Jesus] to ask forgiveness, to ask for a blessing, to ask for mercy! He always pardons us, he is our Advocate: he always defends us! Don't forget this! The Ascension of Jesus into heaven acquaints us with this deeply consoling reality on our journey: in Christ, true God and true man, our humanity was taken to God. Christ opened the path to us. He is like a roped guide climbing a mountain who, on reaching the summit, pulls us up to him and leads us to God. If we entrust our life to him, if we let ourselves be guided by him, we are certain to be in safe hands, in the hands of our Savior.



—General Audience, April 17, 2013

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

ONE QUESTION REFLECTION

- How can I put full trust in Jesus this week?
- How do faith, hope, and love (charity) enlighten and direct my life?

Looking for Trust

By Jim Auer

Our times are characterized by a crisis of trust. Our times say virtually no one is trustworthy—not your neighbors; not your employer or employees; not your clergy; not your elected representatives or anyone connected with government; not the police, your children’s teachers, your banker, or charities. It’s a grim outlook.

Tragically, too many civic leaders, business leaders, Church leaders, athletes, and entertainers have betrayed the trust placed in them. Their stories may seem to substantiate viewing the world with suspicion. But without trust, we can hardly follow Jesus. Mature, active discipleship is not for the skeptical or cynical. Throughout our lives, we are continually in trust-demanding situations. Trust is always a risk. Sometimes it’s negligible; sometimes it’s huge, and our very lives hang on it. But it’s always there. It’s similar to faith, which can never be proven.

Sometimes we set up stand-ins for trust, even in relationships where trust should be of the essence. For example, some fiancés don’t completely trust each other and desire to sign a prenuptial agreement. This deliberate reservation flies in the face of Christian love and our faith, which is why the Church all but forbids such an agreement in sacramental marriage (Canons 1102–03, *Catechism* 1648).

Automatic suspicion of others is really a broad form of prejudice by which people are presumed devious



and potentially dangerous until proven harmless. Trouble is, these are precisely the kind of people God often sends to enrich the Church. The *Catechism* defines rash judgment as an offense against truth and occurring when one, “even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor...To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor’s thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way” (*CCC* 2477–78).

Stereotyping, guilt by association, and bigotry affront the goodness of God. A suspicious, fearful view of the world is a stumbling block to putting faith into action and to seizing opportunities to minister to the poor and marginalized. Discipleship calls for listening to others in a spirit of charity and service.

Trust is an essential, God-given need built into our human nature. It is an element of love, which is how God is

defined. We long to trust and be trusted because we long for God. Inevitably the risks of trusting will make us uncomfortable and vulnerable, yet we are charged with sharing the faith and living ours out in the world. The rewards of trusting far outweigh the risks. The endless cycle of checking for any trace of treachery or mishap is tormenting.

A friend of mine offers three concrete, practical tips for fostering trust:

1. Learn all you can about the issue, person, or situation.
2. Pray—not a ten-second quickie, but a confident petition for discernment and wisdom—and take time to listen to God.
3. When dealing with others, gently and directly raise the issue of trust and mention the consequences of broken trust. Share your concerns and ask directly, “Can I fully trust you?” In some situations, a positive response can be expected before moving forward. †

Excerpted from *Liguorian*, May-June 2009

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your death, resurrection, and ascension are good news for us. Help me to share this message of hope with all people.


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

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 9–14

Mon. Easter Weekday:
Acts 19:1–8 / John 16:29–33
Tue. Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:17–27 / John 17:1–11a
Wed. Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:28–38 / John 17:11b–19

Thu. Easter Weekday:
Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / John 17:20–26
Fri. Easter Weekday:
Acts 25:13b–21 / John 21:15–19
Sat. St. Matthias:
Acts 1:15–17, 20–26 / John 15:9–17

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Bringing Home the Word



Pentecost

May 15, 2016

Daily "Perks"

By Janel Esker

I'm in the minority when it comes to coffee. It's a foul-tasting, dark-colored water to me, but to most Americans it's the best-tasting stuff on earth. Many depend on their morning cup of joe to start their day: "I'm just not myself until I have my coffee." They can't imagine going a day without it.

The same could—and should—be said of the Holy Spirit. Today on Pentecost we remember and celebrate the first gift of the Spirit to the disciples, but it's also a day to thank God for that incredible, ongoing gift in our daily lives.

Sunday Readings

Acts 2:1–11

"There came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house."

1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13

"We were all given to drink of one Spirit."

John 20:19–23

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

Saint Paul writes, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." True, we can't proclaim Jesus as Lord without the Spirit, but we also can't do much of anything without its grace. We can't love, can't forgive, can't survive hardship, can't heal without the ongoing movement of the Spirit. So we can say about the Spirit what we say about our morning java: "I'm just not myself without it."

Saint Paul writes that we are all given to drink of the same Spirit. It's an intriguing image—how do you "drink" the Spirit?—but a most appropriate one as we understand how energizing, motivating, and life-giving the Holy Spirit is.

Today, let's ask the Spirit to rush into those places in our lives that need to be revived, those areas of our hearts that are weary and worn.

And when sipping your coffee, imagine drinking in the Spirit of God—and thank him for this most amazing gift. †

A Word From Pope Francis

The Church of the Pentecost is a Church that won't submit to being powerless, too "distilled"....She is a Church that doesn't hesitate to go out, meet the people, proclaim the message that's been entrusted to her, even if that message disturbs or unsettles the conscience, even if that message perhaps brings problems and sometimes leads to martyrdom. She is born one and universal, with a distinct identity, but open, a Church that embraces the world but doesn't seize it...:

two arms that open to receive, but that don't close to detain. We Christians are free, and the Church wants us free!



—Regina Caeli, June 8, 2014 (Pentecost)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I let the Holy Spirit guide me during the day?
- What spiritual gifts can I thank God for this week?

Religion: More Relevant Than Ever or Not at All?

By John L. Gresham, PhD

Three aspects of modern culture have rendered religion irrelevant to many. First, many claim religion is a mythological view that has been disproved and displaced by scientific advancements. These philosophical skeptics conclude that in the realm of value and meaning, each person should construct his or her own sense of truth and morality. From that stems the pursuit of a personal spirituality severed from organized religion. A closer look and more careful consideration of these dimensions will reveal that religion, and the Catholic faith in particular, still has immense relevance in the modern world.

Science

In the twentieth century, science portrayed the world as mere matter and energy interacting according to deterministic laws of cause and effect. However, with the quantum revolution in physics and the genetic revolution in biology, science moved from that model. It has discovered patterns of mathematical symmetry and order in nature that are more congruent with religion's description of a universe with a beginning and uniquely fine-tuned characteristics. Scientists may not reject modern accounts of the origin of the universe or the evolution of life, but may still claim that science points toward God as its ultimate source.

Despite its ability to answer questions of "What?" and "How?" science cannot answer ultimate questions of "Why?": Why is there a universe? What is its meaning and purpose? For the answers, we must turn to religion. At the center of the Church's moral teachings and its application to ethical issues raised by scientific advances is a commitment to the dignity and value of each human life. When potential misuses of science threaten human life and dignity, this affirmation assures the continuing relevance of the Catholic religion.

Skepticism

With so many religions and philosophies in practice, it is easy to adopt a philosophy of relativism. Religion is irrelevant, skeptics assert, because it can't satisfy everyone. We must not impose our values on others, they insist, but let everyone formulate his or her own philosophy.

Despite its initial appeal, skepticism cannot satisfy. No matter how much we espouse relativism, a universal morality will constantly reassert itself. When we judge behaviors, insist on justice or complain about injustices, or condemn evils, we reveal these standards. When we violate them ourselves, we may argue and justify our actions. We may try to blame them on our upbringing or dismiss them as "Catholic guilt." Yet if we pay attention, we realize that our conscience appeals to an external standard of right and wrong, to which all are accountable.

Although religion has been used for evil, it provides an eternal witness to the commandments, values, and virtues of the moral life. With its teachings on the natural moral law, the Catholic faith appeals not just to believers but to all people of goodwill, as rational and free

persons, to follow the precepts we share by our common human nature.

Spirituality

Despite having given up on organized religion, many admit a spiritual hunger within themselves. They seek to construct their own spirituality, but their quest confirms what religion teaches. The *Catechism* proclaims, "The desire for God is written in the human heart" (CCC 27). And it says that only in God will we find complete truth and happiness. The seeker ought not to ignore the accumulated wisdom of many throughout history who have pursued the same quest. Otherwise, he or she may be condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Nor should the seeker pursue the quest alone, neglecting the supportive companionship that religion provides. Catholics believe Christ is present in a unique and special way in the Church—in its people, places, and practices. The One we seek has been seeking us always. Those who take time with Christ may discover just how relevant he is. †



PRAYER

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

May 16–21

Mon. Weekday (7th week in Ordinary Time):
James 3:13–18 / Mark 9:14–29

Tue. Weekday:
James 4:1–10 / Mark 9:30–37

Wed. Weekday:
James 4:13–17 / Mark 9:38–40

Thu. Weekday:
James 5:1–6 / Mark 9:41–50

Fri. Weekday:
James 5:9–12 / Mark 10:1–12

Sat. Weekday:
James 5:13–20 / Mark 10:13–16



Bringing Home the Word

Most Holy Trinity

May 22, 2016

The Gift of the Holy Trinity

By Janel Esker

My neighbor shared that she got a porch swing for Mother's Day one year. "Oh," I said, "that's a great gift. Your husband really knows how to shop for you." She replied, "Only because I told him exactly what I wanted. I picked it out; he picked it up." Is anyone else envious of her? Sure, it loses the element of surprise, but it's quite nice to receive exactly what you asked for.

We can spend Most Holy Trinity Sunday meditating on the mystery of the

Trinitarian nature of God, but today's readings also remind us to reflect on the incredible gift of the Trinity. It's exactly what we asked for—even though we wouldn't have known to ask for such a gift.

We experience the creative power of the Father in the Proverbs reading. All the universe's beauty, all the details of nature, all artistic inspirations find their source in the Father. What a most desired gift!

We experience the redeeming power of the Son, who took on our human nature as his own. He knows our struggles and joys, and he calls us to leave behind our sins and follow his example. His love to the end redeems our brokenness and has given us hope which, as St. Paul declares, "does not disappoint."

We experience the sanctifying power of the Spirit, who sustains us daily with the love of the Father and Son. We can choose rightly, live justly, and act lovingly because of the Spirit's guidance in every moment.

What a gift indeed. What a God we have. We are, among all people, so richly blessed. †

Sunday Readings

Proverbs 8:22–31

"When the LORD established the heavens I was there...beside him as his craftsman."

Romans 5:1–5

"Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts."

John 16:12–15

"Everything that the Father has is mine; ...[the Spirit] will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

A Word From Pope Francis

In some sense we are still in a "womb," which is the family. A womb made up of various interrelated persons: the family is "where we learn to live with others despite our differences" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 66). Notwithstanding the differences of gender and age between them, family members accept one another because there is a bond between them....It is this bond which is at the root of language. It is in the family that we learn to speak our "mother tongue," the language of those who have gone before us (see 2 Macc 7:25, 27). In the family we realize that others have preceded us, they made it possible for us to exist and in our turn to generate life and to do something good and beautiful. We can give because we have received."



—2015 World Communications Day message

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What have I asked God for? What do I hope the Trinity offers?
- How do I reflect and manifest the loving unity of the Trinity?

Let God Out of the Box

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

“God can be no greater than the imagination of the believer.” That line comes from Toni Morrison’s 2008 novel, *A Mercy*. She goes on to explain that shallow people believe in a shallow God, and timid people believe in a vengeful God. I must admit, I was shouting “Amen!” as I read those lines. It’s a marvelous way to phrase the familiar concept of putting God in a box.

Tradition tells us God is beyond our understanding, God is infinite and eternal, God stands outside the bounds of space and time. God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient. Our all-loving God fills us with wonder and mystery. God is, as one of my favorite Gospel songs says, “awesome.”

And yet, we often squeeze our infinite God into tiny boxes. I guess it’s inevitable. It’s pretty tough to visualize something that’s beyond our understanding, hard to get a handle on the infinite. And there’s nothing wrong with contemplating God in bite-sized portions—it’s just that we rarely avoid the pitfall of denying everything that doesn’t fit into our little box.

Some insist God is male and deny



any other possible reality. Others see Christian artwork portraying God as anything other than a white European as false or even heretical. Still others attempt to restrict God’s mercy by placing it in a box. The only way to make sense of all the laws and precepts, all the sacrifice and hardship, is to limit who can receive mercy and redemption: “I had to go to Mass every Sunday; surely God will punish those who don’t.” Perhaps we can’t imagine certain individuals being allowed into paradise for one reason or another. We build a box out of justice (our definition) and seal it with self-righteousness, imagining it will hinder the flow of God’s endless mercy to those we deem unworthy.

On one hand, Toni Morrison’s statement seems preposterous. How can

I limit God? If I don’t believe God loves me, it doesn’t stop God from loving me. But it can greatly limit the effect God’s love has on my life. If I deny its existence, then eventually I may not be able to sense it at all. If I deny God’s love, it cannot help define who I am. It cannot change my views or behaviors. It cannot save me from myself.

Yes, we can fall victim to the limits of our imagination, to our inability to immerse ourselves in the awesomeness of our great God. When we cut others off from the God we don’t believe they understand, in our misguided attempts to imagine that God acts and reasons the same way we do, we fail to see the love and mercy that surround us.

Open yourself to the wonder and mystery that is God, and let God out of the box. †

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

May 23–28

Mon. Weekday (8th week in Ordinary Time):
1 Peter 1:3–9 / Mark 10:17–27


Tue. Weekday:
1 Peter 1:10–16 / Mark 10:28–31

Wed. Weekday:
1 Peter 1:18–25 / Mark 10:32–45

Thu. St. Philip Neri:
1 Peter 2:2–5, 9–12 / Mark 10:46–52

Fri. Weekday:
1 Peter 4:7–13 / Mark 11:11–26

Sat. Weekday:
Jude 17, 20b–25 / Mark 11:27–33

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May 22, 2016

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Bringing Home the Word

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ May 29, 2016

Meal Blessings

By Janel Esker

When my twin nephews were three years old, they were heavily into dinosaurs. Once they revealed knowledge of dinosaur religious practices: “No! The tyrannosaurus can’t eat the triceratops until he says the blessing!” Their mother commented, “I guess some things are sinking in after all.”

Today’s readings are full of blessing words as we focus on the Body and Blood of Christ. Melchizedek blesses God and

Abram in Genesis; we hear St. Paul recall the Last Supper blessing and institution of the Eucharist; and in the Gospel, Jesus blesses the five loaves and two fish that miraculously become more than enough food for the people gathered.

We know we ought to follow the dinosaurs’ lead and pray a blessing before our daily meals, but how many of us remember? We’re often rushed to get food down before our next task or activity, and we take our meals for granted.

Might the same be said of our focus at Mass? Sure, we’re physically present as the blessing is prayed over the bread and wine, but are we actively participating in that prayer?

In the Gospel, the blessed food was distributed by the apostles to all who were hungry. The blessing, in a sense, was multiplied because Jesus’ followers carried it out.

We’re called to have that same multiplying effect in the world when we receive the Eucharist. As we let the Body and Blood “sink in” more deeply, our actions and attitudes can truly transform the world. †

Sunday Readings

Genesis 14:18–20

“Being a priest of God Most High, [Melchizedek] blessed Abram with these words...”

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

“Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said...”

Luke 9:11b–17

“Taking the five loaves and the two fish..., [Jesus] said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples...”

A Word From Pope Francis

We can meet [Jesus] in our time when we listen to his word and when we are uniquely close to him in the Eucharist....May Holy Mass never slip into a superficial routine for us! May we draw increasingly from its depths! It is Mass itself which integrates us into Christ’s immense work of salvation, which hones our spiritual vision so that we can perceive his love: his “prophecy in action.” With this he initiated in the Upper Room the gift of himself on the Cross, his definitive victory over sin and death, which we proudly and joyfully proclaim.



— Message at the National Eucharistic Congress of Germany, May 30, 2013

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do we share a family meal? How often do we attend Mass and receive the Eucharist?
- How do I educate and evangelize those around me in the faith?

Taking Your Family to Mass and Liking It

By Steve and Sue Givens

Besides the importance (and obligation) of Mass and the sanctity of Sunday, one of your key responsibilities as a Catholic parent is to educate and form your children in the Church. Children learn first by example, and God wants to help your children come to know and love him through you. Teaching your children about the gifts of salvation and life everlasting offers them hope and strength to persevere in spite of life's challenges.

While it's difficult to make a nine-month-old understand your expectations about their behavior, you can ensure your own. Commit to weekly attendance, to keeping your cool, and to prayerful participation. Prepare for Mass by looking inward. Ask God to give you strength, a joyful disposition, and the ability to cope with disruptions and fussy children. Patience is not only a virtue; it's a skill that takes conscious effort.

Toddlers and preschoolers

Mass is a time to learn about our faith, respect, and listening. They can begin to understand that something special is happening.

- Teach them to appreciate silence and stillness. Outside of church, practice being quiet and still. Say, "This is how we are in church."

- Arrive early and point out the objects, items, and decorations. Explain their purpose and symbolism.
- Sit where they can see what's going on.
- Have them emulate worship by genuflecting, standing, sitting, and kneeling. As they become older, you can teach them the reasons behind the things they do in church.
- Bring religious books and soft toys to keep them content. (Cars, balls, and keys roll, bounce, and make noise.)
- Emphasize the importance of your participation. Say, "I have to pray right now" or, "Father is talking."
- Introduce them to their faith and Church through art, music, and common prayers. Purchase books and recordings and use them outside of Mass.

These items are just as important in the "cry room," which is not a play area. Children old enough to sit, stand, kneel, and pay attention should do so just as if they were in the main church.

Grades 1–5

As children near their first Communion, Mass attendance needs to move beyond good behavior to active participation. They need to know what the Mass is and why it's important.

- Remind them that Mass is a weekly obligation. (They can remind you.)
- Help them follow along in the missalette. Teach them the "flow" of Mass. For younger ones, try purchasing an illustrated book about Mass.
- Quiz them after Mass to see what they remember. Make it fun—not a punishment—and praise them for good behavior and responses.

- Read the readings together before Mass, or discuss them and the homily afterward.
- Get them involved through participation in a children's liturgy, children's choir, and altar servers.

Grades 6–8

Adolescents develop opinions and identities. If they see Mass is important to you, they will at least be curious.

- Help them prepare for Mass by previewing the readings, doing an examination of conscience, going to reconciliation, and fasting.
- Continue the quizzes to reinforce the messages and themes. Let older siblings come up with questions for young ones.
- Discuss ideas of how to apply the readings to daily life. Encourage them to give examples of how Christian values are (and are not) present around them. †

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

May 30–June 4

Mon: Weekday (9th week in Ordinary Time):
2 Peter 1:2–7 / Mark 12:1–12
Tue: Visitation of Blessed Virgin Mary:
Zephaniah 3:14–18a / Luke 1:39–56
Wed: St. Justin: 2 Timothy 1:1–3, 6–12 /
Mark 12:18–27

Thu: Weekday:
2 Timothy 2:8–15 / Mark 12:28–34
Fri: Most Sacred Heart of Jesus:
Ezekiel 34:11–16 / Romans 5:5b–11 /
Luke 15:3–7
Sat: Immaculate Heart of Blessed Virgin:
2 Timothy 4:1–8 / Luke 2:41–51

Bringing Home
the Word 
May 29, 2016

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