



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Easter | May 7, 2017

We May Safely Graze

By Mary Katharine Deeley

On a trip to Ireland years ago, our family was enchanted by the confident, stoic, long-haired Irish sheep. When I was still mastering the art of driving on the left side of the road, we rounded a narrow corner and came face to face with one of the sheep, who looked at us as if to say, “And you are...?” Clearly the sheep owned the road, whereas we were mere interlopers. I pulled to the side and waited for the sheep to cross or move,

which it did eventually, giving us the eye all the while.

When we think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, I think we have a different picture of sheep—docile, helpless, and eager to follow anyone who feeds them. I prefer to think of us as Irish sheep who go where they want and look with suspicion at anything out of the ordinary. These sheep don’t follow any stranger’s voice; they just stare him or her down and go on their way.

On familiar ground with the one who cares for them, they gather into pastures abundant with grass. When they finish grazing in one place, a gate opens to bring them to another, and to another after that.

“I am the gate,” Jesus says. He is the one who leads us further into his life.

In Celtic spirituality, the open gate is an invitation to the spiritual life. Let us be good Irish sheep who are not afraid to wander far and wide, knowing our shepherd will come to take us home.

Let us follow our shepherd with confidence. He is not just the gatekeeper but the gate itself, promising far more than we can ever find in this world. †

*“I am the gate,”
Jesus says.*

Sunday Readings

Acts 2:14a, 36–41

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

1 Peter 2:20b–25

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.”

John 10:1–10

“Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.”

A Word From Pope Francis

We need salvation, but at the same time we are afraid of it...When the Lord comes to save us, we must give everything...he commands; and we fear this. [Men want] to be in control...to be their own masters. [In this way] salvation does not come, the consolation of the Spirit does not reach us. [Hypocrisy is] not allowing the Spirit to change our hearts with his salvation. The freedom that the Spirit gives us is also a sort of slavery, a slavery to the Lord that makes us free. It is another kind of liberty.

—Homily,
June 10, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do you follow your shepherd with confidence? In what situations do you hesitate?
- What are the gates in your life Jesus has opened for you? Are you confident enough to go through them?



How Are We Called?

By Kathleen M. Basi

Pope Francis energizes us and at the same time challenges us to

actively participate in our faith. Most of us would rather practice our faith within the safety of a little box, where the Christian call is as clear-cut as the rosary, lighting a candle, and attending Sunday Mass. Pope Francis asks us to move beyond the walls of the Church and be a true witness to Christ in the world.

Like many faithful people, I always thought most issues had simple answers; however, after having a child with a

disability, I realized that when the Christian call intersects with the real world, things become more complex—life isn't that simple.

Consider the prolife cause, perhaps the most clear-cut issue imaginable. It's not enough to believe that children with disabilities have a right to be born. Their needs impose a heavy financial burden on their families: therapies, surgeries, orthotics, and so on. We have a moral obligation to support life at all stages, even when it requires societal intervention that runs counter to ideals about self-sufficiency.

Pope Francis has called us to confront complex questions and seek thorough

answers. Using this thorough process, how can we address some of the questions we face?

As followers of Christ, we will always find ourselves being called upon to respond to situations that may not be as clear-cut as they appear. Although the path may be demanding, we have the support of the Church and Christ as an example of how to do the hard work. Pope Francis has called us to labor together. Faith grows only when it is stretched. A call of faith is not a static request; to follow Christ means to get up, pick up your cross, and act. True discipleship—though difficult—is worthwhile, because it draws us closer to the heart of Christ, the source of our calling. †

Source: *Liguorian*,
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An Invitation to Stillness

By Michelle Francl-Donnay

When it comes to my prayer life, it sometimes feels as if I live in a Broadway musical. *God*, I want to cry, *are you here? Can you hear me? I'm having a hard time hearing you over all the noise.* But to be still, to know God deeply and intimately in the depths of silence, is not just for the saints and mystics—it's for everyone.

Here are three simple ways to practice being still with God.

Steal time. Contemplation is sometimes called the art of stealing time. How much time can you steal from your ordinary routine without missing it? Find


three to five minutes a day, gather a bit of silence around you and remind yourself that God is present. Ask God for the grace to know him in the depths of your heart. When your time is up, express your gratitude.

Sneak out. Follow Jesus' example and sneak out of the house before dawn to pray. Be aware of God's overarching presence, of his immensity and intimate love. The entire universe cannot contain him, yet he knows each of us by name. Don't strain to hear—wait. Stretch into God's creation for five minutes. Then give thanks to God for the works of his hands and go back inside.

Breathe. Christian tradition has long drawn connections between breathing and prayer. Just as the physical act of breathing puts flesh on our bones, so God takes flesh in us in prayer. Take a

well-known prayer like the Our Father and, with each breath, mentally say one word or short phrase of the prayer. Let each word sink in, consider its meaning, and breathe until you're ready to move on. †

Source: *Catholic Update*,
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Holy Spirit, fall afresh on me so I may listen to the voice of the true Shepherd. Thank you for giving us the Holy Father as Jesus' vicar on earth, the Church's shepherd to lead us toward you. Help me listen to you through Jesus. Amen.

— Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 8–13

Mon. Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:1–18 / Jn 10:11–18

Tue. Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:19–26 / Jn 10:22–30

Wed. Easter Weekday:
Acts 12:24–13:5a / Jn 12:44–50

Thu. Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:13–25 / Jn 13:16–20

Fri. Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:26–33 / Jn 14:1–6

Sat. Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:44–52 / Jn 14:7–14



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Easter | May 14, 2017

God Shows Us

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When the planes flew into New York's twin towers on that fateful Tuesday in September 2001, I had just arrived early to set up for a meeting of campus ministers. I had caught the first account on the car radio. "Are you listening to this?" I asked a colleague. She hadn't heard the news, but my boss came down from his apartment upstairs and said quietly, "I have it on TV." I couldn't think of anything to say except, "Show it to me; can I see it?"

Sunday Readings

Acts 6:1-7

"Select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task."

1 Peter 2:4-9

"You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own.'"

John 14:1-12

"I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be."

We went upstairs and watched as long as we could before our colleagues arrived, and we talked and listened and then went into Mass to pray for the lives lost and for the future of our world.

"Show me," we say, when things seem impossible to imagine. "Show me," we say when a child comes in wide-eyed wonder with a treasure she has just found. "Show me," Philip said, because he couldn't imagine the God-Father that Jesus was speaking about. He expected some grand sign—an earthquake, a thunderstorm, or any of the ways the presence of God was depicted in the Old Testament.

What Philip did not expect was that Jesus, who was standing right in front of him, was God himself: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

We often miss the evidence that God is with us. It may be something as simple as the beauty of creation or the outpouring of love and support the world gave to the people of New York on that long-ago day.

Let us pray that we see his presence in our midst this week—and always. †

*Signs of God
are everywhere.*

A Word From Pope Francis

Just as the Father gave us the Son out of love, and the Son gave himself to us out of the same love, so we too can love others as God has loved us, giving our lives for one another. Faith in God becomes goodness, faith in the crucified Christ becomes the strength to love to the end, even our enemies. The proof of authentic faith in Christ is self-giving and the spreading of love for our neighbors, especially for those who do not merit it, for the suffering and for the marginalized.

—Twenty-second
World Day of the Sick,
December 6, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Reflect on a time you asked God to "show me." What was God's response?
- How do you answer God's command to "show" him to others in your life?



Sharpening Our Vision

By Paige Byrne Shortal

In the Gospel passage about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus appears to

Cleopas and an unnamed disciple.

The audience knows it's Jesus, but the disciples are "prevented from recognizing him."

The disciples tell Jesus about his own death. They talk about their dashed hopes and disappointments. They talk about the women who claim they saw a vision of angels announcing he is alive. Only after they sit down for supper,

when Jesus blesses the bread and shares it with them, do they know who he is. The disciples didn't recognize their good friend and teacher, just as we often fail to recognize that divine spark in those we love the most.

An incident that brought this home occurred one evening when our pastor came over for dinner. Our sons were teenagers then. Remembering the state of their room, I cringed as they gave the priest a tour of the house. When our pastor came back downstairs, he went on and on about their "cool room."

Later that evening I climbed the stairs

to the "lair" to try and see what our pastor saw. There it was—every inch of space on the walls and sloped ceilings was covered with original drawings, hand-calligraphed quotes, poetry, origami animals, and photographs. It *was* a cool room. All *I* had ever seen were the unmade beds and laundry on the floor.

Maybe we all need to take a seven-mile hike together, or at least sit down for a meal and offer up a little prayer for better eyesight—eyes that see Jesus dwelling in each other. †

Source: Liguorian,
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Who We Are Tells Us What We Do

By Greg Friedman, OFM

In his book *Catholicism*, contemporary Catholic theologian Fr. Richard McBrien identifies the mission of the Church with that of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus but warns that the Church itself is by no means the fully realized kingdom. He goes on to describe three models of Church: the *institutional*, the *community*, and the *servant*.

The *institutional* Church calls us to the values we hold in common. There are different functions, offices, and gifts within the one body. As a priest, I look to laypersons to exercise their baptismal role. So, for example, in the


area of politics I may be less able to take an active role in office-seeking, where other members of the body of Christ can. I know very little about science or medical ethics. I rely on a brother or sister Christian in the field to apply the Church's teachings that deal with the sanctity of life.

Community has always been an important value to us as a Church. Today we have strengthened the role of community in the Church by emphasizing it in more explicit ways. We have made community more visible in our worship through an emphasis on greater participation in prayer and song.

And finally, the role of the Church as *servant*. What is particularly noteworthy about our contemporary efforts to serve is a wider consciousness and greater involvement than ever before. Our image of Church now includes American lay

missioners working in the Third World, a grass-roots interest in efforts on behalf of peace and human rights, solidarity with the poor, and a heartfelt response to the desperate needs of our brothers and sisters starving in Africa. †

Source: *Catholic Update*,
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Heavenly Father, you are constantly working out your plan for your Church, with me as a living member of it. Help me to find and maintain my place for your glory and the building up of your Church. Amen.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 15–20

Mon. Easter Weekday:
Acts 14:5–18 / Jn 14:21–26


Tue. Easter Weekday:
Acts 14:19–28 / Jn 14:27–31a

Wed. Easter Weekday:
Acts 15:1–6 / Jn 15:1–8

Thu. Easter Weekday:
Acts 15:7–21 / Jn 15:9–11

Fri. Easter Weekday:
Acts 15:22–31 / Jn 15:12–17

Sat. Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:1–10 / Jn 15:18–21

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May 14, 2017

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Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter | May 21, 2017

Powered by the Spirit

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Taken by the story of the saint and the old movie (not so old then) *The Song of Bernadette*, I took Bernadette as my confirmation name. The sister who taught us in fifth grade had talked about saints as people we wanted to be like—our heroes who were constantly before God in heaven and looking out for us on earth. She also talked about the Holy Spirit and the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, which we had to memorize.

I confess I was far more interested in getting the new name and curious about the light slap on the cheek from the bishop that would herald the arrival of the aforementioned Holy Spirit.

We're a couple of weeks from the celebration of Pentecost, and today's readings begin to tell us how the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus' followers to do miraculous things and helped them witness to their faith in Christ.

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Advocate, which is a legal term, but it can also mean spokesperson, comforter, or intercessor.

One thing is certain: The Spirit witnesses to the truth of Christ, who lives in us and with us. The Holy Spirit guides and teaches the Church, which is the body of Christ. In confirmation, the grace of the Spirit becomes fully manifested in us, enabling us to tell the world that we follow Jesus and have become new people in Christ.

The saints who were our heroes and our namesakes allowed the Spirit of God to change their lives so they were more like Jesus. No wonder we were invited to be like them.

Maybe it's time to work on that again. †

Christ lives in us.

A Word From Pope Francis

The new things which God gives to our lives are lasting, not only in the future, when we will be with him, but today as well. God is even now making all things new; the Holy Spirit is truly transforming us, and through us he also wants to transform the world in which we live. Let us open the doors to the Spirit, let ourselves be guided by him, and allow God's constant help to make us new men and women, inspired by the love of God which the Holy Spirit bestows on us!

—Homily, Mass and conferral of the sacrament of confirmation, April 28, 2013



Sunday Readings

Acts 8:5–8, 14–17

"With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing."

1 Peter 3:15–18

"For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God."

John 14:15–21

"But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What saints do you look to as role models for living your life?
- How do you let the Holy Spirit move, and live, and grow through you?



An Adequate Response

By Fr. Donald Willard, CSsR

The Holy Spirit is often described as the bond of love that exists between

the Father and the Son. The mutual self-donational and self-communicative intimate bond between the Father and the Son is so perfect that perfect love exists between the two. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son. This divine mystery occurs because the goodness of God must be communicated and shared.

But the Most Holy Trinity must

communicate its goodness. This explains the existence of the whole of creation. It affords a place for the Most Holy Trinity to communicate its goodness and share God's divine life. We are then called into existence out of pure love. Humanity has the capacity to receive and enter into a relationship with divine love. We also have the capacity to communicate, share, and love the Most Holy Trinity.

This is the call to holiness and wholeness in the life of every person, the call to respond to the love of God poured into our hearts. There is only one proper response to a God who would give

himself up to us and even die for us—the gift of self. We give ourselves in loving service to the one who gave himself in loving service to us.

Holiness is setting oneself aside for the purposes of God. We realize our lives are not our own. We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. And so we are bound to God and offer ourselves in service to our sisters and brothers, who are also the children of God. This service in love brings us wholeness at both a personal and communal level. †

Source: *Liguorian*,
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Responding to the Presence of Spirit

By John Gresham

The Catechism of the Catholic Church lists several ways in which we come to know the Holy Spirit within the Church (CCC 688). First on the list is sacred Scripture, which the Spirit inspires. We grow in our relationship to the Spirit by hearing and responding to the voice of the Spirit speaking through the biblical writings.

After Scripture, the *Catechism* lists Tradition and the magisterium as places we encounter the Holy Spirit. Reading the writings of the early Church fathers and studying the first Church councils, I was struck by the beauty and wisdom in their writings. I began to recognize

Tradition as the Holy Spirit leading us into a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ.


After Scripture, Tradition, and the magisterium, the *Catechism* mentions the sacramental liturgy as a place we come to know the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit prepares us for the liturgy. In silence and prayer before Mass, we can receive this work of the Spirit, who will inspire faith and desire in our hearts.

Next, the Spirit recalls the events and meaning of Christ's coming. Through the readings, homily, and prayers of the Mass, Christ is manifested to us by the Holy Spirit as we recall what he has done for us. The Spirit makes that event present. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

As we receive Christ in holy

Communion, that same Spirit transforms us into members of the body of Christ. Responding to the energy of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy, we are transformed to become more like Christ in his love for God and others. †

Source: *Liguorian*, © May 2014, Liguori Publications



Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and the Son given to me at my baptism and confirmation, help me to activate the gifts and life given to me by hearing your voice more attentively, embracing it more lovingly and persevering in it more generously. Amen.

— Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 22–27

Mon. Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:11–15 / Jn 15:26–16:4a

Tue. Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:22–34 / Jn 16:5–11

Wed. Easter Weekday:
Acts 17:15, 22–18:1 / Jn 16:12–15

Thu. Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:1–8 / Jn 16:16–20

Fri. St. Philip Neri:
Acts 18:9–18 / Jn 16:20–23

Sat. Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:23–28 / Jn 16:23b–28



Bringing Home the Word

Seventh Sunday of Easter / Ascension of the Lord
May 28, 2017

Empty, Holy Shoes

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My favorite banner for the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord shows a pair of running shoes, laces askew, empty of the feet that had worn them, as though their owner had suddenly realized he had somewhere else to be.

I don't think Jesus' ascension happened exactly that way, but there was something poignant about the empty shoes. They reminded me of makeshift memorials for those who die suddenly or tragically in public areas. Think of the gathering of

items that adorned the rubble of the twin towers after 9/11 or the flowers, medals, and other items that are left in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The disciples might have been tempted to leave such items in the place where Jesus left them. They stared into the sky until someone told them Jesus would come back. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

We leave memorials because we don't know what else to do. It's a way of doing *something* in the face of tragic and senseless death. By contrast, the disciples and all who follow Christ were given very clear instructions: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit."

The memorial to the death and resurrection of Christ is not a pair of shoes—it is our action. It is the preaching of the good news by word and deed. It is witnessing to faith in someone who lives, not in someone who has died.

The tennis shoes on that banner were not mourning one who left. They were waiting for someone to put them on and keep going. †

Now, make disciples.

Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

"It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority."

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."

Matthew 28:16–20

"And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

A Word From Pope Francis

The creed...contains a christological confession: it takes us through all the mysteries of Christ's life up to his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven before his final return in glory. It tells us that this God of communion...is capable of embracing all of human history and drawing it into the dynamic unity of the Godhead...The believer who professes his or her faith is taken up...into the truth being professed. He or she cannot truthfully recite the words of the creed without being changed...making it part of a great fellowship...the Church.

—Lumen Fidei
(The Light of Faith),
June 29, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

ONE? TWO? REFLECTION

- Where in life do you need to put on Christ and keep going?
- When you think of Christ's ascension, what images come to mind?



Matthew's New Moses

By Virginia Smith

A likely locale for Matthew's Gospel is Antioch, Syria, around AD 80.

Using the audience's Hebrew background, Matthew explains Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

Jesus emerges as the new Moses. With Jesus' birth, Matthew draws parallels between the Messiah and Moses. Only Matthew tells how Herod's jealousy forced Joseph and his family into Egyptian exile. Just as Pharaoh feared the Hebrews in Moses' time, so Herod feared Jesus and his family. Herod's phobia led to the slaughter of innocent young boys

(Matthew 2:16–18), just as male Hebrew infants were doomed under Pharaoh (Exodus 1:15–22).

Matthew's comparisons to Moses continue in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, his most famous discourse. Placing the stamp of divinity on Jesus, Matthew situates him above Moses, having Jesus quote from the Law Moses brought from the mountain and expand on its meaning by his own authority from a mountain site of his own.

Matthew's is a thoughtful Gospel, spotlighting a reflective Jesus. Organized into components, Matthew's Gospel is referred to as a catechism. The Church has frequently used it in its teaching ministry.

Here we meet Jesus the teacher, the rabbi.

In five principal areas, Matthew assembles much of what Jesus said on given topics and makes single discourses of each one. Each is preceded by a narrative section that focuses on the same theme and is concluded by some variation on the phrase, "When Jesus finished these words" (Matthew 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1). The fifth and final discourse ends slightly differently: "When Jesus finished all these words" (Matthew 26:1).

In this Gospel, Jesus is frequently addressed as "Teacher," even by his opponents. Jesus instructs the entire community as Moses did before him, but he doesn't go to the mountain to receive authority; he preaches from the mountain by his own authority. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, © May 2013, Liguori Publications

Jesus Will Come "When the Time Is Fulfilled"

By Leonard Foley, OFM

Our salvation story is not completed at the ascension or on Pentecost. "When the time is fulfilled," Jesus will come again. The Bible often portrays the Day of the Lord as a day of wrath, when God will finally vindicate his people and when those who have dominated and killed and stolen and hated will suffer the eternal permanence of their choice. When Jesus comes again, this work will finally be finished.


It is human to ask, "Well, what will happen to *me*?" The best answer is simply to say that I will be eternally amazed at

the wonder of God's plan: how, in order to have creatures united to him in real friendship he let human freedom make its own choices, for good or ill; how, without forcing anyone, he gave everyone enough reason to trust him, often in the dark; how Jesus was the amazing presence of God, sharing every human thing except sin; how, through seeming weakness, God "lost" on the cross; how, by lifting up the human Jesus who had made the perfect human act of love in giving his own blood—life—God lifted up all who would choose to be joined to Jesus.

This is perhaps not very satisfying to a me-oriented culture such as we live in. Heaven will not be boring, as a sensation-stimulated society imagines it. But the focus will not be on me. And the more I can enter into a God-oriented, Jesus-

oriented frame of mind right now, the better I will be able to prepare—or rather, be prepared by God—for a God-centered eternity. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, © September 1985, Liguori Publications



○ God, whose Son ascended today to heaven, as the apostles looked on, grant that we may work to make his kingdom come on earth, so that we can enjoy his kingdom in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 29—June 3

Mon. Easter Weekday:
Acts 19:1–8 / Jn 16:29–33


Tue. Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a

Wed. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
Zep 3:13–18a
or Rom 12:9–16 / Lk 1:39–56

Thu. St. Justin:
Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / Jn 17:20–26

Fri. Easter Weekday:
Acts 25:13b–21 / Jn 21:15–19

Sat. St. Charles Lwanga and Companions:
Acts 28:16–20, 30–31 / Jn 21:20–25

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