

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

isaiah 49:3,5-6
1 Corinthians 1:1-3
John 1:29-34

MONDAY

Mark 2:18-22
"The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them . . ."

TUESDAY

Mark 2:23-28
"The Sabbath was made for humankind . . ."

WEDNESDAY

Mark 3:1-6
"Stretch out your hand."

THURSDAY

Mark 3:7-12
" . . . all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him."

FRIDAY

Mark 3:13-19
" . . . he appointed twelve . . ."

SATURDAY

Mark 3:20-21
"Then he went home . . ."

Testify to the Spirit

The Baptism of Jesus is described in all four Gospels, and all four tell the story of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove. But only the Gospel of John claims to present eyewitness testimony: "And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.'"

According to ancient Church tradition, John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah (See Luke 1:5-25, 36-80). Yet, in this reading, John the Baptist seems not to know Jesus: "I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" John the Baptist ends his testimony with the words "this is the Son of God."

Throughout the four Gospel accounts, very few characters

recognize Jesus as the Son of God. In all cases, they recognized Jesus only because the Father revealed Jesus to them.

And this account is no exception: John recognized Jesus because of divine intervention.

If those who walked with Jesus every day didn't recognize him as God's Son, how are we to do it?

The Church's response to this question is that we recognize Jesus because of faith; God has opened our eyes so that we might see Jesus and believe. But to do that, we must learn to look beyond appearances and see what is real, to hear the message being proclaimed and look for relevant meaning.



The Faith of the Church

Faith is a gift that unites us with God in a loving relationship. This allows us to hear the Word of God and attempt to live it to the fullest. Through this gift, we can experience in advance a taste of what sharing life with God forever might be like. For believers, this taste of heaven is enough to inspire confidence and hope (Cf. *US Catholic Catechism for Adults*, pp 36-41).



Questions of the Week

In the poem "God's Grandeur," the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) reflects on how the world is alive with the magnificence of God even though that grandeur may be hidden by toil and strife, hatred or lack of caring.

Adults

Of the people I know, where do I least expect to find the presence of God? What prevents me from finding God in that person?

Children

What three things can I do this week to celebrate the presence of God in my family and friends?

Responding to God's Word . . .

A few years ago, during rush hour, one of the world's greatest violinists performed for an hour in a Washington, DC subway station. During that hour, thousands of people walked by and heard the beautifully performed music. While a few people paused to put money in his violin case, only six people stopped to listen and appreciate the sounds that they heard.

Like the subway musician, God continually fills our world with beauty, wonder, and awe. But how many of us take even a moment from our busy pace to stop, watch, and listen to that beauty? How often does our focus on

mundane things—such as catching a train—prevent us from recognizing God's revelation that is all around us? It is the gift of faith that helps us to recognize God's revelation in what we see and hear.

While faith allows us to understand this revelation, God doesn't make us stop, watch, and listen; that we must learn to do on our own, primarily through prayer. Taking time to pray daily forces us to stop and pay attention to God's activity in the world.

When was the last time that you stopped and looked for God's revelation in prayer?

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Take time to think about how each person in your family is a revelation of God's grace. Then, let them know what you came up with.

In the workplace or in school. Set an alarm to chime at the same time every day and then take a few minutes to pray.

In the community. Practice acts of kindness to people you meet during the day. Take time to smile at others and pray for everyone you see.



Meditation Moment

John the Baptist touched people's hearts for two reasons: he helped them to see they were sinners who needed a savior; and he helped them to open their hearts to Jesus, who came to save them.

For reflection . . .

This raises two questions for me. To what extent do I see myself as a sinner who needs a savior? And to what extent am I opening my heart to Jesus, who came to save me?

MANY PEOPLE DO NOT RECOGNIZE CHRIST BECAUSE THEY DO NOT RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES AS SINNERS. IF I AM NOT A SINNER, I HAVE NO NEED OF CHRIST. I WON'T CELEBRATE THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST IN JOY IF I DON'T REALIZE IN SORROW THAT I AM A SINNER WHO NEEDS A SAVIOR. THE FOCUS, HOWEVER, IS NOT ON SIN, BUT ON CHRIST WHO SAVES.

KILLIAN McDONNELL (SLIGHTLY ADAPTED)

FROM *VISION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

A Guided Meditation

Meditative prayer is an ancient Christian practice that helps us focus on God. Use this process during the coming week for a minimum of two minutes every day. Choose one element of God's creation, perhaps a flower, a person, or simply the air you breathe. Think about the element. In your mind, see the wonder of God's creation. What do you learn about God from the simplicity and complexity of this element? Now, simply focus on the element and allow thoughts of God to fill your mind. Thank God for the wonders of creation. Close by praying the Lord's Prayer.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

When we pray, we focus on God by emptying ourselves so that we may be filled with God and enter into a deeper relationship with him. In prayer, be attentive to God's presence and seek ways to better serve God and others.

See *US Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p 477

Profile in Faith

Saint André Bessette

Saint André Bessette (1845–1937) was a French-Canadian member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. Frail in health, he spent his life doing menial tasks in the community but essential tasks in the world—visiting the sick and the poor. André was a man of deep prayer and devotion.

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Author: Daniel S. Mulhall

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