



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

Acts 8:5–8, 14–17
1 Peter 3:15–18
John 14:15–21

MONDAY

John 15:26–16:4A
"When the Advocate comes . . . he will testify on my behalf."

TUESDAY*

Luke 1:39–56
" . . . blessed is she who believed . . ."

WEDNESDAY

John 16:12–15
" . . . he will guide you into all the truth."

THURSDAY**

Matthew 28:16–20
" . . . I am with you always . . ."

FRIDAY

John 16:20–23
" . . . your pain will turn into joy."

SATURDAY

John 16:23B–28
"Ask and you will receive . . ."

Always Ready to Give an Account

In the Gospel reading we heard today, Jesus tells us that he is not going to leave us alone. He tells that he will send an "Advocate to be with [us] for ever." He reminds us that when we observe his commandments we are showing, to others, our love for him.

Pope Paul VI wrote in the encyclical letter *Evangelii Nutiandi*, the Church exists to evangelize, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to the world like in today's first reading. Saint Philip proclaimed the Good News to the Samaritans and they believed in Jesus Christ. The Samaritans' new faith was confirmed when Saints Peter and John laid hands on them and prayed that they receive the Holy Spirit.

This gesture became the physical representation of the calling down of the Holy Spirit. It is an integral part of all of the Sacraments of the Church. The calling down of the Holy Spirit by the priest over the offering of bread and wine during

the Eucharistic Prayer, is what makes the offering the Body and Blood of Christ.

Saint Peter in the second reading takes it a step further. It isn't enough for us simply to proclaim with words that Christ has died and was resurrected. We must also be ready to explain why it is that we believe, to make a "defense" for our belief—and to do so with "gentleness and reverence."

To make a defense in this sense is to explain by way of reason. To do that requires us to understand and to be willing to share our faith in Jesus Christ with others. We are exhorted to know what we believe and why we believe it. It is our calling to profess what we believe and believe what we profess.



The Faith of the Church

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are given an increase and deepening of the grace given to us in Baptism. This grace strengthens our relationship with God, unites us more firmly with Christ, increases the power of the gifts of the Holy Spirit within us, and empowers us to spread the faith and defend it, through word and action, so that we may give true witness to Christ, without shame (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1303).



Questions of the Week

We are encouraged by First Peter to keep our "conscience clear," when people make fun of what we believe or of our religious practices. We are not to get angry or frustrated, but to always be a good witness to Christ.

Adults

What is one thing that I can do this week to show others the joy that my faith gives me?

Children

What might help me stand firm when others make fun of how I live my faith?

* Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 ** Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Responding to God's Word . . .

Saint Francis of Assisi is reported to have said that "We are to proclaim the Gospel at all times; use words when needed."

Whether Saint Francis ever said or wrote these words is unimportant. What is important is the message they send: As Catholic Christians we are called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus at all times, through our words and through our actions.

This is the message of the reading from Peter: everything we do or say should call others to see Christ in us. That's what it means to "sanctify Christ as Lord" in our hearts. If we

truly believe that Jesus is Lord, then our belief in him will change the way we think and act.

The acknowledgement that we should "always be ready" to defend our faith with "gentleness and reverence" offers good advice on how people will be drawn to Christ. In the early Church, people would say of Christians: "See how they love one another." Today, people will be drawn to Christ when we live the faith courageously and lovingly, and when we are joyous and passionate in our belief and practice. That's how we defend the faith today.

SUGGESTIONS

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

In the home. Look for ways to demonstrate your faith publicly. This could be as simple as hanging religious symbols around the house or on your car.

In the workplace or in school. Pray publicly. Begin each day by blessing yourself and asking God to guide your efforts. Do the same before meetings and meals.

In the community. There are always people in need of food or clothing, shelter or comfort. Do something this week to assist people in need. Let others see that your actions are motivated by faith.



Meditation Moment

An old legend tells about an angel walking down the street, carrying a torch in one hand and a pail of water in the other. "What are you going to do with those?" someone asked. The angel replied, "With the torch I'm going to burn down the mansions of heaven and with the pail of water, I'm going to put out the fires of hell. Then we shall see who really loves God." The angel's point is that many people keep the commandments more out of fear of punishment or hope of reward than out of love for God.

For reflection . . .

What is the biggest reason I keep the commandments: fear of punishment, hope of reward, or love of God?

THE HAND WILL NOT REACH OUT FOR
WHAT THE HEART DOES NOT LONG FOR.
GERMAN PROVERB

FROM *VISION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Lord, Send out Your Spirit

When I am feeling
unloved and unwanted.
Lord, send out your spirit.
When others make fun of
my beliefs.
Lord, send out your spirit.
When I need the courage to do
what's right.
Lord, send out your spirit.
When others need me
to proclaim the Good News.
Lord, send out your spirit.
When I forget that I am yours.
Lord, send out your spirit.
Amen.

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

If it were illegal to be a Christian, would there be enough evidence against me to bring an indictment and a conviction?

(Unknown)

Profile in Faith

Saint Charles Lwanga

Saint Charles (1860–1885) was a Ugandan catechist. When King Mwanga began killing Christians because of their faith, Charles refused to back down and even baptized new Christians against the king's command. Charles and 11 other Catholics were burned to death because they were Christians. Their feast day is June 3.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Msgr. Robert M. Coerver, Censor Librorum
IMPRIMATUR
† Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, DD, Bishop of Dallas
January 26, 2011

The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that the material reviewed is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those granting the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

Author: Daniel S. Mulhall
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Front: iStockphoto

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright 1989, 1993, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 2011 RCL Publishing LLC. All rights reserved.
The Faith Connection® is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and is published weekly by RCL Benziger, 206 E. Bethany Dr., Allen, TX 75002.

877-275-4725
Contact us at RCLBenziger.com

