



Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 9, 2020

Walking in Faith

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Giovanni Lanfranco's painting *Christ Saves Peter from Sinking in the Water* is placed in a rather hidden place in the Vatican—on purpose. When a newly elected pope walks out of the Sistine Chapel, he processes across the Sala Regia (regal room) and into the Loggia della Benedizione (blessing hall) to step out onto the façade of St. Peter's and greet the world as pope for the first time. Along the way he passes this painting of Peter sinking in the water. It speaks to that sinking feeling he probably experiences at that time!

This Gospel passage holds a great lesson for us all, even the pope. When Jesus comes walking on the water, he scares the disciples; they think he is a ghost. Sometimes Jesus scares us by what he asks, by how he wants to bless and shape us if we say yes. Jesus tells us not to be afraid, but Peter says, "Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." That the ghostly figure responds doesn't prove it is Jesus; it just proves whoever it is has heard Peter and answered.

To really know if it is Jesus, Peter has to get out of the boat. He has to walk in and take a risk. Only once he steps out on the water, can he do the impossible? Even then, his faith falters and he notices the waves. Such is our experience. Even when we trust, step out, and Jesus does great things, we are still weak! But not to worry: Jesus loves our effort and will always reach out and grab us. In the end, that is what we want, isn't it? To touch Jesus, to know it is him. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

Elijah...stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah?

Romans 9:1–5

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit.

Matthew 14:22–33

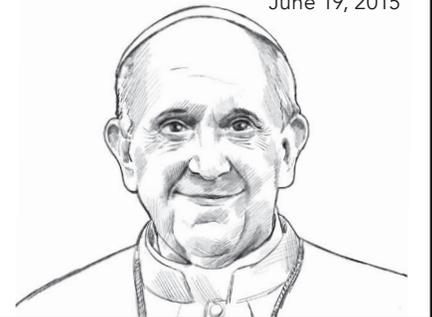
Peter said to [Jesus] in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

*Sometimes Jesus scares us
by what he asks, by how
he wants to bless and
shape us if we say yes.*

A Word from Pope Francis

We must ensure that in the usual activities of every Christian community, in parishes, in associations, and movements, there actually be at heart the personal encounter with Christ who communicates himself to us in his word, because, as St. Jerome teaches us, "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

Address to Catholic Biblical Federation,
June 19, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When have you felt Jesus' presence most strongly in your life?
- Which "winds" distract you from Jesus?

The Private Pain of Infertility

By Julie Irwin Zimmerman

The year after our wedding, I sat in church on Mother's Day and daydreamed about how joyful the holiday would be the following spring. My husband and I decided to have a baby, and I imagined we'd have our newborn the next Mother's Day. But the following May and the one after that we went to church with empty arms. To our dismay, we'd been diagnosed as among the 25 percent of married, childless couples in the United States who have trouble conceiving or carrying a baby to term.

It wasn't only Mother's Day that was hard to bear. Baptisms and baby showers were difficult. Sometimes merely seeing a pregnant woman or a couple with a baby sent me into despair.

The months developed an unwelcome rhythm, beginning with hope, then anxiety, and ending in tears. My prayer life had taken on the same rhythm: first, optimistic appeals for pregnancy; then, frantic pleas for help getting through the month; and finally, silent anguish when I felt my prayers had been ignored. I wondered: What have we done to deserve this? Why hasn't our simple wish for a child been granted?

Although infertility is common, it can be isolating to sufferers. Often friends and family don't know what to say, make awkward jokes, or avoid the



topic altogether. There are moral, ethical, and financial mine fields to navigate, and it's easy for spouses to disagree about what to do.

Couples facing infertility have three options: seek medical treatment, pursue adoption, or live without children. While it's understandable to want

to end the ordeal of infertility as quickly as possible, these decisions are important ones deserving prayer and discernment.

Catholic teaching on infertility treatment is often misunderstood. While the Catholic Church encourages couples to welcome children, not all medical options for infertility are considered acceptable. Surgeries and treatments that restore or enhance a couple's ability to conceive naturally or which assist the conjugal act are encouraged. Procedures that involve a third party, replacing natural conception or the conjugal act—artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and donor eggs or sperm—are considered unacceptable.

A document by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology," reiterates the long-standing position of the Church. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of physicians using NaPro Technology, which treats infertility in harmony with Church

teaching. The Pope Paul VI Institute is a leader in the field, and an internet search can help couples find local providers.

Adoption is also a path to parenthood that's filled with many blessings. Seeking out adoptive parents and hearing their stories can affirm for infertile couples the role God played in bringing them together.

And, of course, even in the midst of infertility, couples should take time to nurture their relationships and acknowledge that they're already a family. A weekend away, a walk in the woods, even setting aside dinner hours free from infertility talk helped my husband and me remind ourselves of our love and how satisfying our marriage was.

The experience of infertility helped me understand what Jesus did when he willingly accepted his cross. Before encountering infertility, I still believed if I worked hard enough at something, I could achieve it. Those years taught me a difficult, invaluable lesson about giving up control over my future and trusting God to reveal a future that was beyond my hopes and fears.

To learn more about Catholic teaching on reproductive technologies, please visit uscbb.org/LifeGivingLove. +



Lord, you taught your disciples to pray. Help me cultivate the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

—From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 10–15

Monday, St. Lawrence:
2 Cor 9:6–10 / Jn 12:24–26

Tuesday, St. Clare:
Ez 2:8–3:4 / Mt 18:1–5, 10, 12–14

Wednesday, Weekday:
Ez 9:1–7; 10:18–22 / Mt 18:15–20

Thursday, Weekday:
Ez 12:1–12 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Friday, St. Maximilian Kolbe:
Ez 16:1–15, 60, 63 or 16:59–63 / Mt 19:3–12

Saturday, Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary:
Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab / 1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56

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