



PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

Facilitated by Racine Dominican Preaching Committee

August 2020

Shining Like the Sun

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August comes, the August of the 2020 Pandemic. Liturgically, wise Mother-Church keeps before us during this month the brilliance of the Paschal promise: as your Lord and Lady have been transformed and shine now as the sun, so shall it be with you. In the Word, fused forever to our humble flesh, we have that pledge.

The feasts of the Transfiguration and Assumption of Mary bring this pledge before our eyes. The brilliance of the transformed Jesus stuns Peter, James, and John. They don't know what to make of it. They only know they don't want it to end. But it does end. There is the agony of the Passion to go through, but they don't understand that either. Nor do we. Yet the pledge is the same. It is an assured hope given us by God, and where the Head went the Body will follow. That's us.

Then, as if to underline the pledge, we watch it happen to one of our own. Mary has no burial place, because there is nothing in the tomb where they placed her. The body that held the Word, the flesh that gave him the ability to suffer and die, shines with the love and faith that filled her in time/space. Perhaps it is that very love and faith, hope, and love that effects our transformation too. If so, then we can do no better than to attend to the word during this month, for it seeks to grow that same love quotient in each of us. Inch by inch, day by day, it transforms us – yes, even in the midst of the August 2020 global pandemic.



We know not what we shall be...
Live the truth in love, you said.
So in your Spirit help us to hang on in faith,
and teach our souls to sing their little song of hope.
Amen.

Special thanks to Steve Gilbert, associate, for these reflections.

August 2: Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21

Today's readings, to me, are about the avoidance of the things of this world and concentrating on being fed by the Lord, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In the Alleluia verse, Jesus is in the desert after fasting for forty days and nights. The devil attempts to get Jesus to rebel against God by turning stones into loaves of bread, proving he is the Son of God. Jesus answers, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). Two more times the devil tempts Jesus and fails. Jesus is victorious, proving his obedience by accepting God's will. In Isaiah, we learn about experiencing God's saving Grace. "All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!..." "Pay attention and come to me; listen, that you may have life..." Listen, be fed by God's saving Word. God has an everlasting love for all of us. All I need to do is try and follow God's will. In today's Gospel, the miracle of five loaves and two fishes feeding five thousand is told, reminding me that even when I am unsure, the Lord meets my every need. All I need to remember is let go and let God!

August 9: Kings 19:9a, 11-13 a; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14: 22-33

Today's readings are about waiting for the Lord, serving the Lord, not being complacent by doing the next right thing, having faith in the Lord's plan. Instead of being filled with fear, be filled with hope. The Alleluia verse: "I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for his word" (Psalm 130:5). Paul says: "I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie..." (Romans 9:1). This tells me to have faith in the Lord's divine plan, instead of ending up anxious in my own grand plans, dreams and schemes. Believe, bear true witness and speak the truth! How much we need this in our times! In today's Gospel, "The Walking on the Water," Jesus tells the disciples to: "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid." Peter walks onto the water, becomes afraid, starts to sink and cries out: "Lord save me!" Jesus does and says: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" How many times in my life have I acted as Peter does? What can I do to strengthen my faith?

August 16: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Romans 11:13-15, 29-32; Matthew 15: 21-28

Today's Alleluia verse: "Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and cured every disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23). In Isaiah, "Observe what is right, do what is just, for my salvation is about to come, my justice, about to be revealed."... "them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." How this speaks to us today or in any time! Is it exciting to me that God's house is a house of prayer for all peoples? Paul speaks of his ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles and Israel's unbelief, "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" "For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." Do I show mercy or do I show contempt to others? Have I been arrogant and conceited? In the Gospel, the tormented daughter of a Canaanite woman is healed because of her Mother's perseverance and great faith. Three times she goes to the Lord without giving up, pleading the last time: "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Jesus replies: "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Do I have even a semblance of this kind of faith and perseverance? Do I believe in the miracle of the Lord's healing and my dependence on God's saving Grace?

August 23: Isaiah 22:19-23; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20

In today's Alleluia verse, Jesus says: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church..." (Matthew 16:18). In the first reading, the Lord has sent Isaiah to eject Shebna from his office as the "master of the palace" because he is a wicked, deceitful, prideful man, who has been caught "hewing a tomb on high," using his office to build a lasting monument to himself, while his land is in peril. Eliakim replaces him and Shebna is told: "I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder; what he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, no one will open." Corresponding this to today's Gospel, Jesus tells Peter: "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." How interesting that these "keys" are given only to Peter, the one given the authority of the Church on earth, all of this because when Jesus asked: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter replied: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." What are some interesting parallels to the current political environment? Do any current politicians remind you of Shebna?

August 30: Jeremiah 20:7-9; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27

Today's Alleluia verse speaks to me that what has been freely given to me, I should freely give to others, "May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call" (Ephesians 1:17-18), or is this verse saying to me, "Enlighten the eyes of our mind" like in my old Jerusalem Bible? Maybe what I am learning is to keep an open mind and heart. Our blessings are being increased through studying the message of the Gospel and the realization of how great the gift of God's Grace is. Paul urges us "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship." How to do this in today's times of "live-streamed" Masses, "Spiritual Communion" and "Zoom" meetings? Do I do these "virtual" things or become withdrawn because I like the way things used to be? What is the Lord trying to teach me? Paul says: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." How can I "not conform" myself but be "transformed" in this age of "social distancing?" In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Is this telling me that I am not the center of the universe? How can I be a true disciple? How can I avoid "thinking not as God does, but as human beings do" and follow God's will for me? How will I lose my life for Jesus' sake?