

PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

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Whistling in the Dark

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We're into the seventh month with no end in sight. It's hard to believe we've been living with this virus for six months. But those are the facts. We wonder when it's going to end. Liturgically we are at that mid-point between the events of the Great Paschal Mystery and Advent. It's the time of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and right alongside, several feasts of Mary, the Mother of God: her birthday on September 8; her name's day on the 12th, her sorrows on the 15th and that ancient feast of Our Lady of Ransom on the 24th. What is this Great Mother we call the Church thinking?

First of all, who on earth wants to exalt the cross, that instrument of torture? And then, what does this humble woman have to do with the cross? I think a lot. Mary is always ourselves – fast forwarded. Yes, she is what we shall be after struggling through the agony and darkness of faith. She is us...come to fullness after hanging on for dear life by our fingernails. She stands there...Star of the Sea, and calls to us to get out of the boat and walk on water. Water in scripture is pure chaos. Many of us are doing just that. Our faith upholds us and we keep walking.



Not only are we walking, we are whistling in the dark. No matter how dark it gets, we have an assurance. We have Someone walking with us...holding us, in fact...and carrying us at times. That faith enables us to walk on water...the chaos of Covid-19. It is, for now, the cross that has us hanging. But while we wait, there is that assurance. So, there is that little secret smile. So, we whistle in the dark.

Are you there?

Do you have hold of us never to let go?

Sometimes it gets so dark we think the Son is never going to come up.

But faith tells us otherwise.

You ran to the cross.

You said you had to 'enter into your glory.'

Was it because the cross revealed your immense love?

Was it because you knew the cross would tell us all was made right?

Was it because you wanted us to know you would be there, when it is dark?

So through our tears there is that knowing smile...

You are our assurance.

Special thanks to S. Ruthanne Reed for these reflections.

September 6 • Ezekiel 33:7-9 • Romans 13:8-10 • Matthew 18:15-20

The prophet Ezekiel has a strong message for those who have heard the word of God and do not speak out to share it with others. Are we responsible for the actions of the wicked? St. Paul invites us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Love does no evil. Consider the familiar and often quoted words of Jesus: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Do I need to ask myself: how do I interact with others and allow my love, care and concern to make a difference even now in this ongoing era of social distancing?

September 13 • Sirach 27:30 • 28:7 • Romans 14:7-9 • Matthew 18:21-35

Yes, we all agree that wrath and anger are hateful things, yet how easy it is to hug them tight. We forget the words of St. Paul that we neither live nor die for ourselves. For this, Christ died and came back to life. When Peter asks Jesus, in the Gospel of Matthew, how often he should forgive another, the response is ample: not seven times but seventy-seven times! The story that Jesus tells about the king who decided to settle accounts with his servants could not have been any clearer. Maybe I need to ask myself: how do I forgive from my heart?

September 20 • Isaiah 55:6-9 • Paul to the Philippians 1:20c-27a • Matthew 20:1-16a

That’s it! Go ahead! Right now check out your connection with our God. Call while God is near! Remember – God’s ways may be different from ours. There seems to be an urgency in today’s readings. Often we are caught between fulfilling the expectations of others even though we sense that God is calling us to another kind of generosity. Perhaps we are amazed that the landowner could be so generous in the way that all of the workers were paid. We are left with the puzzling words of Jesus: “The last will be first and the first will be last.” What place will I occupy?

September 27 • Ezekiel 18:25-28 • Paul to the Philippians 2:1-11 • Matthew 21:28-32

Ezekiel reminds us, as if we needed it, that we are surrounded by the mysteries of life and death, goodness and wickedness, and the ever-present need to choose how we live in this life. For this task we need encouragement and consolation in love. We find it in the letter of Paul to the Philippians. There we see compassion and mercy, joy and love. Are not these the same attitudes as in Christ Jesus? Now more than ever, we are called upon to work to create a world in which these values actually do exist. Jesus tells us about the two sons who were asked to work. One said, “No. I will not.” But he changed his mind and went. The other said, “Yes, I will. But he did not go. Which one am I?

“...how do I interact with others and allow my love, care and concern to make a difference even now in this ongoing era of social distancing?”