



Bringing Home the Word

The Transfiguration of the Lord (A)

August 6, 2023

Resurrection Eyes

Paige Byrne Shortal

Who really changed? Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the One who was at the beginning of time and who will be at the end? Or was the change in Peter, James, and John?

I can imagine Jesus walking along the dusty roads of Palestine, shining like the sun, maybe conversing with a long-dead prophet or two. Folks didn't notice. He looked ordinary, just the carpenter's son.

I figure what could have happened up on that mountain is that the eyes of

the disciples were opened to the way Jesus was all the time. They were given a glimpse of a deeper reality. For just a moment they were given Resurrection Eyes.

I think it could have happened like that, because...well, it's happened to me. Sometimes it's when my choir sings. We ordinary, lumpy people begin to glow; our eyes full of light, our faces bright with the joy of harmony.

I've watched people process to holy Communion and they become softer and vulnerable. And the faces of those who come forward to venerate the cross on Good Friday...those faces could break your heart.

Transfiguration is what happens when a baby is brought into the room. It's like falling in love; the arguing couple who kiss and make up; or feuding neighbors who forgive each other; or enemies who finally shake hands in peace.

We need Resurrection Eyes. We need to see others and ourselves as God sees us—shining like the sun and full of light. Perhaps it will happen if we heed the voice from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son...listen to him." †



Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 7:9–10, 13–14

Know, then, that the LORD, your God, is God: the faithful God who keeps covenant mercy to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments.

2 Peter 1:16–19

We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain.

Matthew 17:1–9

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

A Word from Pope Francis

Prayer in Christ and in the Holy Spirit transforms the person from the inside and can illuminate others and the surrounding world. How often have we found people who illuminate, who exude light from their eyes, who have that luminous gaze! They pray, and prayer does this: *it makes us luminous with the light of the Holy Spirit.*

ANGELUS, ROME, MARCH 17, 2019



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Can you imagine seeing yourself and other people as God sees?
- What looks different?

Would I Have Known Him?

Daniel P. Horan, OFM

I have been surprised to encounter a number of people over the years who share that they've stopped going to Mass or participating in the sacramental life of the Church because they felt unworthy to do so. For some reason they came to believe that the sacraments were only for the righteous, the sinless in the eyes of God, the saints. Whether by their own accord or on account of what another person said to them, these individuals announced with no sense of false humility that they were not worthy for the Lord to enter into their lives, so they would save Christ the trouble of rejecting them by, in practice if not by intention, rejecting him first.

No one is worthy to receive the gifts God has given to us...yet the generosity of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness exceeds our imagining. The barrier we face in inviting Jesus into our lives isn't that he would never come, it's that we are too often afraid or ashamed to ask.



I wonder whether I would have really recognized Jesus for who he was if I were around during his earthly ministry. Likewise, even as a Franciscan friar today, I have my doubts about whether I would have joined St. Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century or whether I would have—like many of his peers—simply thought he was crazy and kept my distance from him.

I find these thoughts both comforting and unsettling. They're comforting in that I know there were many people at both times who had this experience of doubt or outright lacked the ability to recognize how God was at work before them. We see that implied in Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke's Gospel. Their eyes are blessed because they are seeing what has long been expected, that for which so many people longed to see. And still they so often didn't get it. Even the disciples deny, betray, and abandon him. They sometimes mistake Jesus for a civil or military leader. They seek positions of influence or power. They exclude others from drawing near.

These thoughts are also unsettling because we know so much more than those early followers....We should know better. I should know better. And I should follow Jesus without reservations. How slow I can be to trust God. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Daniel P. Horan, OFM, © 2017 Liguori Publications (827303).

A Revelation:

From a Commemorative Marker in Louisville, Kentucky

"In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers....

There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun."

From Thomas Merton's *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*



*For the grace of open eyes,
that we may see the face of God
in each person we meet this day
and God's will in each task set
before us. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 7-13

Monday, Weekday:

Nm 11:4b-15 / Mt 14:13-21

Tuesday, St. Dominic: Nm 12:1-13 /

Mt 14:22-36 or 15:1-2, 10-14

Wednesday, Weekday: Nm 13:1-2,

25-14:1, 26-29a, 34-35 / Mt 15:21-28

Thursday, St. Lawrence:


2 Cor 9:6-10 / Jn 12:24-26

Friday, St. Clare:

Dt 4:32-40 / Mt 16:24-28

Saturday, Weekday:

Dt 6:4-13 / Mt 17:14-20

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

August 6, 2023

© 2023 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2023 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.

Obstacles to Faith

Daniel P. Horan, OFM

One of my greatest weaknesses is a lack of patience. I struggle to be patient with others and myself, and that struggle sometimes carries over into my relationship with God. My prayer can feel rushed or demanding, my thoughts unwilling to focus on God, who is my dialogue partner, and my ears unwilling to open and hear the Spirit. During these experiences of impatience in the spiritual life, it can feel as though my heart is anything but firm because it is so restless.

Pope Francis once delivered a homily during a weekday Mass in which he talked about the hidden obstacles to conversion. Although there are people who resist being open to conversion, blocking the change that comes with embracing the will of God, Pope Francis invites us to reflect on those ways most of us unthinkingly prevent the Spirit's action in our hearts and lives.

He calls the first kind of obstacle



“empty words.” These are the ways we talk the talk of Christianity but fail to walk the walk. Jesus regularly warned his followers that it isn't enough to simply proclaim affiliation with him without also living one's faith in action. Pope Francis reminds us that we close ourselves off to genuine conversion when we offer empty words but do not care for the least among us (Matthew 25).

“Words that justify” form the second kind of hidden obstacle. This is a kind of mindset or attitude that makes excuses and self-satisfying reasons for why further investment in the life of Christian discipleship isn't needed in my case. I convince myself that all is fine and foreclose the possibility that God may be inviting me to a deeper commitment.

The third hidden obstacle is that of “accusatory words.” This is when we blame others in order to justify the status quo or accuse others of sinfulness, wrongdoing, or ill will so we don't have to look at ourselves and truly examine our consciences. Pope Francis points to the famous Gospel episode of the Pharisee and the tax collector to illustrate this. How often do we find ourselves in the Pharisee's shoes? What can we do to shift our attention toward those obstacles we would rather not see but still need to overcome?” †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Daniel P. Horan, OFM, © 2017 Liguori Publications (827303).

We're in the midst of the sea, in a boat that seems fragile, and there are howling winds and enormous waves that threaten to capsize us. This is the life of every person at some point. Jesus is there to help us negotiate the trials and as long as we keep our eyes on him, we can walk on water; that is, we can do the impossible. When we focus on the strength of the winds and the depth of the waves and how wet and cold we are, then we panic and grasp and clutch and sink.

Paige Byrne Shortal

From a Liguori Publications bulletin, August 7, 2005



For those hoping for what seems impossible: healing, reconciliation, justice, peace among the nations and within communities and families. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 14–19

Monday, St. Maximilian Kolbe:
Dt 10:12–22 / Mt 17:22–27


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

Wednesday, Weekday:
Dt 34:1–12 / Mt 18:15–20

Thursday, Weekday: Jos 3:7–10a, 11, 13–17 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Friday, Weekday: Jos 24:1–13 / Mt 19:3–12

Saturday, Weekday: Jos 24:14–29 / Mt 19:13–15

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

August 13, 2023

© 2023 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2023 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.



Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
August 20, 2023

Insider Versus Outsider

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Our need to belong often creates community. As nurturing and supportive as communities can be, they can also be exclusive, concerned only with the insiders and marginalizing the outsiders. Today’s readings depict something remarkable. We read that foreigners, or outsiders, enjoy hospitality and privilege that one would expect only insiders to receive.

The prophet Isaiah states that even foreigners will worship in the temple. This is not a story after conversion to the religion of Israel, but of Israel taking a step toward universality: “My house shall be called / a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7).

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

Them I will bring to my holy mountain / and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

Matthew 15:21–28

[Jesus said to the Canaanite Woman...],
“O woman, great is your faith!
Let it be done for you as you wish.”

The Gospel story recounts a discussion between Jesus and a Canaanite woman. She was doubly marginalized—as an inferior woman and as a despised Canaanite. Yet, her love for her daughter compelled her to approach Jesus, pleading for help—something a “proper” Jewish woman would never do to a man, nor a Canaanite to a Jew. Many in Israel certainly had a sense of exclusivity, and a disdain for the Canaanites. Those may be evident in Jesus’ reply, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). But we can be sure that Jesus—God’s love in the flesh—didn’t share his countrymen’s disdain for anyone. The woman, having heard that Jesus was a healer, remains undaunted. She crosses restrictive gender and ethnic lines in her search for help. Jesus finally praises her, not for her love, but for the faith that her love engendered. And she was a Canaanite! †

We can be sure that Jesus—God’s love in the flesh—didn’t share his countrymen’s disdain for anyone.

A Word from Pope Francis

Let each one of us think of his or her own story. There are always ugly things in a story, always. Let us go to Jesus, knock on Jesus’ heart and say to Him: “Lord, if You will it, you can heal me!” We can do this if we always have the face of Jesus before us.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 16, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What groups are marginalized by our society?
- What is difficult about welcoming people who are new to your groups?

I Belong to God!

Daniel P. Horan, OFM

Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, the archbishop emeritus of Washington, DC, tells a story that takes place when he was at a large family reunion. He didn't recognize all of the many members of his extended family, particularly the great-nephews and -nieces, second cousins, and the like.

While waiting in line for some food, he struck up a conversation with a young boy who was also waiting in the food line but whom the cardinal didn't recognize. So Cardinal McCarrick asked the child, "Who do you belong to?" meaning that he was interested in learning who the boy's parents are and how he might be related to them. Without missing a beat, the boy said in response: "God! I belong to God!"

Cardinal McCarrick recounts that story with great humility and awe at the wisdom of such a young person. He didn't expect that response, which is partly why the story is so compelling.



Most adults would not immediately identify God as the one to whom they belong. Nationality, religious tradition, ethnic heritage, language group, racial identity, among so many other categories and characteristics might come to mind. But at the core of our faith tradition, we Christians profess that we belong to God, which makes us all sisters and brothers.

The lyrics of John Lennon's song "Imagine" come to mind. It serves as

a secular prayer for yet another gift of the Holy Spirit, one not counted among the usual seven. This is the gift of imagination, a virtue and skill necessary to live out the gospel call of Christ. Lennon invited his hearers to imagine the possibility that things that divide us—nationalism, greed, possessiveness, and even at times religion—were nonexistent. Could we imagine giving up our excuses for exclusion, our reasons for retaliation?"

The Church is, in many ways, like an incredibly capacious family reunion. It comprises sisters and brothers in Christ, the sons and daughters of God, united in our shared baptism and faith. But so often we let other identity markers and differences—real and perceived—get in the way of reunion, of our communion. May we work to be more mindful of the relationships we have as children of God and sisters and brothers to one another. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Daniel P. Horan, OFM, © 2017 Liguori Publications (827303).

The biblical word for "peace," *Shalom*, refers to well-being in all matters that relate to the good of the human person, human society, and indeed, the whole world. We are peacemakers when we work actively to bridge differences, heal wounds, eliminate injustice, and bring people together. In doing so, we participate in God's work of establishing peace between nations, in communities, and indeed, in the human heart.

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor,
Blessed Are the Peacemakers, Liguorian, January 2013

PRAYER

God of all nations, hear the prayers of your people this day and unite our prayers to those of believers everywhere. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 21–26

Monday, St. Pius X:

Jgs 2:11–19 / Mt 19:16–22

Tuesday, The Queenship of the Blessed

Virgin Mary: Jgs 6:11–24a / Mt 19:23–30

Wednesday, Weekday:


Jgs 9:6–15 / Mt 20:1–16

Thursday, St. Bartholomew:

Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

Friday, Weekday: Ru 1:1, 3–6, 14b–16, 22 / Mt 22:34–40

Saturday, Weekday: Ru 2:1–3, 8–11; 4:13–17 / Mt 23:1–12

Bringing Home
the Word 

August 20, 2023

© 2023 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2023 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
August 27, 2023

Who's in Charge?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

There are lots of reasons one could be in charge. You might be the only one left to do the job. Or, in the case of babysitting, you might simply be older. You could be in charge because you are a bully with the biggest fists, sticks, or guns. Or you might be in charge because you are the best qualified for the job. Today's readings offer us two stories about being chosen for leadership.

In the Old Testament reading, Shebna, an official in King Hezekiah's court, overreached his position of authority. He was demoted and replaced by Eliakim. Carrying the key symbolizes authority

over the entire household. Placing it on the shoulder suggests an investiture ceremony. In the Gospel, entrusting Peter with the keys to the kingdom of heaven suggests similar authority, though in a significantly different household.

In both instances the position of authority is meant to be exercised for the benefit of the members of the respective household. It was precisely because of his failure in this matter that Shebna was demoted and Eliakim placed in charge. What about Peter? The Gospel tells us that the choice of Peter followed his remarkable statement of faith: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

These stories tell us that God chooses very ordinary people for positions of leadership. Why them? Are they the only ones left? Are they the oldest? Were they the best qualified? It was not because they were bullies. Obviously God thought they could do the job. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 22:19-23

What he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, no one will open.

Romans 11:33-36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever.

Matthew 16:13-20

[Jesus said,] "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

The position of authority is meant to be exercised for the benefit of the members of the household.

A Word from Pope Francis

Charity is always the high road of the journey of faith....But it is necessary that...works of charity...not divert us from contact with the Lord Jesus. Christian charity is not simple philanthropy...it is looking at others through the very eyes of Jesus and...it is seeing Jesus in the face of the poor.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 23, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you pray for leaders, even those you wouldn't have chosen?
- Have you ever thought of volunteering to serve on a church committee?

Put On the Clothes of Christ

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Years ago, while browsing through a used bookstore, I came across a novel by Alfred Alcorn titled *Vestments*. The premise is intriguing. A spoiled, self-centered, yuppie-type man stands to inherit a fortune from his pious Catholic aunt who is dying in a nursing home. But there's a hitch: in her confusion, she thinks her nephew is a priest. To ensure his inheritance he begins wearing a Roman collar when he visits her.

Our man not only enjoys how people treat him as he dresses as a priest (“*Can I check your oil, Father?*” “*Would you like more coffee, Father?*”), but he also begins to enjoy how he treats others. He finds that he is more beneficent, kinder, more helpful, understanding, compassionate. He is even patient! And there are other changes as well. He drinks less, stops “fooling around,” thinks about the purpose of his life, begins to believe maybe there is a God



and that Christianity is more than foolish superstition. What starts as simple fakery begins to change him.

An ancient baptismal acclamation sings, “You have put on Christ; in Him you have been baptized. Alleluia!” It is not the collar or the chasuble or the habit that we put on to be imitators of Christ. It is the robes of the baptized—the white garment. As we grow into the life of

***We will live a better life
if we make a habit of
imitating our Lord.***

the baptized, some of us may don other special clothes—the vestments of a priest, the habit of a vowed religious, the collar of a deacon who promises to serve the poor. These are garments we most readily recognize as belonging to those trying to lead a holy life. But all are called to put on Christ. All are called to holiness.

In today's Gospel, Peter could be our inspiration. He, too, had to grow in the life of faith. The cowardly fisherman put on Christ and became a courageous disciple. The doubtful Peter and the other disciples proclaimed Jesus to be truly the Son of God. The rest is history. †

From a Liguori Publications bulletin
April 25, 2004

In almost all the great religions of the world we find special groups of men and women who separate themselves from the ordinary life of society, take upon themselves particular and difficult obligations, and devote themselves to one task above all: to deepening their understanding and practice of their own religion in its most basic implications.

Thomas Merton,
In My Own Words

PRAYER

*For the Church: for the courage
to preach the Gospel, to give
voice to the voiceless, to stand
with those treated unjustly, and to
minister to those in need. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 28—September 2

Monday, St. Augustine:
1 Thes 1:1–5, 8b–10 / Mt 23:13–22


Tuesday, Passion of Saint John the Baptist: 1
Thes 2:1–8 / Mk 6:17–29

Wednesday, Weekday:
1 Thes 2:9–13 / Mt 23:27–32

Thursday, Weekday:
1 Thes 3:7–13 / Mt 24:42–51

Friday, Weekday:
1 Thes 4:1–8 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, Weekday:
1 Thes 4:9–11 / Mt 25:14–30

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

August 27, 2023

© 2023 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2023 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.