



Bringing Home the Word

The Presentation of the Lord
February 2, 2025

We Belong to God

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Everyone wants to belong to someone or something. In fact, we do not merely *want* to belong; we *need* to belong. However, sometimes we forget to whom we really belong. This feast reminds us to whom Jesus belonged. The reading from Hebrews underscores the fact that Jesus was one of us. He also was a descendant of Abraham; thus, we are his brothers and sisters. But he really belonged to God.

The ritual of presentation, a ritual that was and continues to be common in religious Israel, was meant to remind

everyone to whom we belong. True, only male infants were so presented. This reflects the custom of tracing lineage in the family, tribe, or clan through the male line, with women participating through the agency of men. This cultural gender bias need not prevent us from understanding the profound meaning of the presentation: though one of us, Jesus belonged to God.

The gospel story tells of a man and a woman who recognized that this child would be the One through whom God saves all people. It also describes two important religious insights. First, it acknowledges that the child we cherish as one of us really belongs to God. Second, it illustrates how each child has a mission to the world to somehow make it a better place. So even with its gender and cultural bias, this feast is about us as well as Jesus. We all belong to God, and we all have a mission to the world. †

Sunday Readings

Malachi 3:1-4

And the LORD whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple; / The messenger of the covenant whom you desire.

Hebrews 2:14-18

Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22-32

[Simeon said,] "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation."



Sometimes we forget to whom we really belong.

A Word from Pope Francis

[God's] loving plan...embraces and connects the generations.... For the young, this means being ready to break free from the fleeting present in which virtual reality can entrap us, preventing us from doing something productive. For the elderly, it means not dwelling on the loss of physical strength and thinking with regret about missed opportunities. Let us all look ahead!

MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND ELDERLY, ROME, JULY 23, 2023



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I value the energy of the young and the wisdom of the old?
- What can I do to make connections among the generations?

What an Impact One Family Can Have!

Letter to Families from Pope Francis



The evangelist Luke tells us that the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph, in keeping with the Law of Moses, took the Baby Jesus to the Temple to offer him to the Lord, and that an elderly man and woman, Simeon and Anna, moved by the Holy Spirit, went to meet them and acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. (See Luke 2:22–38) Simeon took him in his arms and thanked God that he had finally “seen” salvation. Anna, despite her advanced age, found new vigor and began to speak to everyone about the Baby Jesus. It is a beautiful image: two young parents and two elderly people, brought together by Jesus. He is the

one who brings together and unites generations! He is the inexhaustible font of that love which overcomes every occasion of self-absorption, solitude, and sadness. In your journey as a family, you share so many beautiful moments: meals, rest, housework, leisure, prayer, trips and pilgrimages, and times of mutual support.... Nevertheless, if there is no love then there is no joy, and authentic love comes to us from Jesus. †

From *Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Pope Francis* by John Cleary (826467). To order, visit Liguori.org or call 800-325-9521.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From “Preparing for Our Final Journey: Life is Changed, Not Ended”

The Catholic funeral is one of the Church’s greatest gifts. It celebrates the belief in resurrection and forgiveness. A funeral is an opportunity for those left behind to say goodbye. It can also be a way in which the deceased says goodbye to their loved ones. Talking about your funeral and making preparations may be a comfort for those who will mourn your passing. Everything you do to prepare for your death—the legal matters, the bequests you make, the provision for your survivors, and your funeral—all of these should be done with one concern in mind: building up the community of those left behind. Help them love each other after you are gone. This will be your greatest gift. Think about it: have you kept in mind the well-being of your loved ones after you die? Do your plans reflect your love for them? Try this exercise: write your own eulogy. Include all those virtues for which you would like to be remembered. Then, live it. Live your own eulogy.

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Faithful God, bless parents who are trying to raise children to know you, and inspire leaders to find ways to assist families who are struggling. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 3–8

Monday, Weekday:

Heb 11:32–40 / Mk 5:1–20

Tuesday, Weekday:

Heb 12:1–4 / Mk 5:21–43

Wednesday, St. Agatha:

Heb 12:4–7, 11–15 / Mk 6:1–6

Thursday, St. Paul Miki and Companions:


Heb 12:18–19, 21–24 / Mk 6:7–13

Friday, Weekday:

Heb 13:1–8 / Mk 6:14–29

Saturday, Weekday:

Heb 13:15–17, 20–21 / Mk 6:30–34

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February 2, 2025

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Servant of God Thea Bowman

Maurice J. Nutt, CSsR

Born Bertha Bowman in 1937, Thea was the only child of Theon and Mary Esther Bowman. Undoubtedly, Thea's call to service and ministry was ignited by the example of her parents. Her father had a promising future as a physician in New York, but an aunt told him that doctors were needed in the African American community in Mississippi because many were being denied medical care in the segregated South. Thea's mother was a teacher who instilled in Thea a love of learning and an appreciation for culture and the arts.

While prejudiced attitudes and actions were commonplace, her mother admonished her, "Returning insults makes you small like they are." Thea would later realize that she was called to be a bridge of understanding and a peacemaker among the various cultures.

When the Franciscan Sisters of



Perpetual Adoration established a Catholic school for African Americans in Canton, Mississippi, the Bowmans enrolled Thea in the school. At age nine, Thea decided to become a Catholic. She admitted that it was not the theology or doctrine that drew her to the Catholic Church, but the example of how Catholics seemed to love and care for one another, most especially the poor and needy.

In 1953, at the age of fifteen, she told her family and friends she wanted to join the Franciscan sisters. The year 1984 brought many challenges for Thea Bowman. Both her parents died, and she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Thea did not let her wheelchair or the deterioration of her body keep her from one notable and unprecedented event—an opportunity to address the US Catholic bishops at their annual June meeting held in 1989 at Seton Hall University in East Orange, New Jersey. Thea spoke to the bishops as a sister having a "heart-to-heart" conversation with her brothers. When she was through, she urged the bishops to move together, cross arms, and sing with her "We Shall Overcome." She seemingly touched the hearts of the bishops, as evidenced by their thunderous applause and flowing tears. †

From the introduction to *Thea Bowman: In My Own Words*, compiled and edited by Maurice J. Nutt, CSsR, Liguori Publications (826238). Visit Liguori.org for other books in the series.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Black, Catholic, and Holy: On the Path to Sainthood"

Imagine you are a young child at Mass in church, listening to the liturgy, the gospel, the homily, and the songs. At the same time, you gaze around and observe the statues and stained-glass windows—images of holy people you are being called to imitate. And you notice that not one of the people in these works—not a single one—looks like you. Such is the case for many Catholic children of color. Happily, six Americans—black, Catholic, and holy—all are on the path to being canonized: Augustus Tolton, Julia Greeley, Thea Bowman, Pierre Toussaint, Henriette Delille, and Mary Elizabeth Lange.

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Loving God, help us to quiet ourselves and listen for your voice amidst all the voices in our world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 17–22

Monday, Weekday:

Gn 4:1–15, 25 / Mk 8:11–13

Tuesday, Weekday:

Gn 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10 / Mk 8:14–21

Wednesday, Weekday:

Gn 8:6–13, 20–22 / Mk 8:22–26

Thursday, Weekday:


Gn 9:1–13 / Mk 8:27–33

Friday, Weekday:

Gn 11:1–9 / Mk 8:34–9:1

Saturday, Chair of St. Peter the Apostle:

1 Pt 5:1–4 / Mt 16:13–19

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February 16, 2025

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Bringing Home the Word

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
February 23, 2025

Love Your Enemies

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Perhaps one of the most difficult mandates that Jesus demanded of his followers is love of enemies. He was not talking about people we do not particularly like or who do not belong to our families, ethnicities, or political groups. He was very clear about this. Jesus was talking about those who actually hate us, cause us physical harm, or take from us what we need to live. This kind of love is not only difficult but seems contrary to a specific kind of justice. This justice is called *retributive justice*, and it maintains that evil deeds should be punished. This kind of justice

is often accomplished by requiring time in jail or issuing a fine.

However, another kind of justice is called *restorative justice*. It maintains that a violation of someone's rights not only harms the victim, but it also fractures society. Therefore, it is not enough for the perpetrator to be punished; society must be restored as well. This might require restoring the victim's sense of personal value or security. At times, some form of community service is required of the perpetrator.

It has been said that the best way to get rid of enemies is to make them friends. That seems to be what Jesus is advocating in today's gospel. If someone has hurt you, overwhelm that person with your kindness, just as God has overwhelmed you with kindness and mercy. †

Sunday Readings

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

The LORD repays everyone's righteousness and faithfulness.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

Luke 6:27-38

[Jesus said,] "Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back."



The best way to get rid of enemies is to make them friends.

A Word from Pope Francis

There is nothing greater and more fruitful than love: it bestows all dignity to the person, while...hatred and vengeance decrease it, marring the beauty of the creature made in God's image. This command, to respond to insult and wrongdoing with love, has created a new culture in the world: "a culture of mercy."

ANGELUS, ROME,
FEBRUARY 24, 2019



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- Who has forgiven me?
- Am I withholding forgiveness from anyone? Why?

Forgiveness Is Possible!

Father Eamon Tobin

When I listen to very painful hurts and injustices that some people have had to endure, I do understand why they would have absolutely no desire to forgive and let go of hurts and wrongs done to them. I even understand why some people may conclude that it would be wrong to forgive some hurts and grave injustices. Some people find it repulsive to even think about forgiving certain hurts. Unfortunately, the consequence of such a stance is that people are trapped in a sea of bitterness and continue to be controlled emotionally by those who have inflicted terrible hurts or injustice upon them. When we choose not to forgive, we knowingly or unknowingly choose to cheat ourselves of the joy of living. When we live life with resentment in our hearts, our resentment becomes the lens



through which we see reality and people. We see them not as they are but as how our resentment wants us to see them.

Others who have been grievously hurt feel that forgiveness is way beyond their reach. On a human level, forgiveness is beyond many people's reach. That is why we often hear the saying "To err is human, but to forgive is divine." With the

grace of God, all things are possible—even forgiving what seems like an unforgivable sin or crime.

[For example,] Father Jenco, one of the Beirut hostages, forgave those who had starved, degraded, and brutalized him. He said that only when he was able to forgive his kidnappers was he able to enjoy his freedom. Fortunately, for the vast majority of us, we never have to forgive wrongs or crimes like these. Most of the issues we deal with are relational hurts between family members, friends, neighbors, fellow parishioners, or coworkers. I realize that some such hurts can be very big, but many are not, and yet we choose to hold on to grudges about some hurts for years. Sadly, many people take their hurts to the grave. †

From *How to Forgive Yourself and Others: Steps to Reconciliation* by Father Eamon Tobin, Liguori Publications (815324). Available at Liguori.org.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Blessed John Paul I: A Smile on the Face of Christianity" by Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

For thirty-four days in 1978, Pope John Paul I led the Church in one of the shortest papacies in history. In this brief period, he had no time to write encyclicals, change policy, canonize saints, or implement the primary goals of his pontificate, which included a revision of canon law—a task his successor carried out in 1983. Yet, in spite of his few official actions, the humanity and holiness of John Paul I left an indelible imprint on the hearts of the faithful and helped lead to his beatification (officially, September 4, 2022).

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PRAYER

Merciful God, teach us to forgive, even those who have hurt us or harmed those we love, so that we may be witnesses to your forgiveness. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 24–March 1

Monday, Weekday:

Sir 1:1–10 / Mk 9:14–29

Tuesday, Weekday:

Sir 2:1–11 / Mk 9:30–37

Wednesday, Weekday:

Sir 4:11–19 / Mk 9:38–40

Thursday, Weekday:


Sir 5:1–8 / Mk 9:41–50

Friday, Weekday:

Sir 6:5–17 / Mk 10:1–12

Saturday, Weekday:

Sir 17:1–15 / Mk 10:13–16

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