



# Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
July 12, 2020

## The Eye of God

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The Book of Romans meditates on a truth we sometimes neglect but that has inspired many artists. Creation longs to share in the freedom of God's kingdom. Sin has affected nature, so salvation will also set it free from corruption. What would a glorified planet look like? Charles Burchfield, a nature painter, tried to imagine just that.

He painted thousands of scenes from his bedroom in Salem, OH. He became obsessed with dramatizing landscapes and was known to sketch as he walked to and from school. His love and meditations didn't keep him

from entering the army, but given his gifts, he was assigned to the camouflage unit, using his skills to paint tanks and drapery. Some of his designs are still used today.

What Burchfield discovered was that a pristine nature scene was a divine image. The forms, the colors, the patterns were all created by God and guided by his providence. By painting these scenes, one was truly touching the hand of God and entering into his mind. His painting *Eye of God in the Woods* illustrates the eye of God in a sun that pierces through the trees of a snowy forest with a rolling brook.

God speaks in nature motifs. Scripture is full of them. Jesus also used nature as a model for his teachings: seeds sown in different soils, clouds predicting rain, a sparrow, a catch of fish.

Nature is a glorious soil from which inspiration can sprout. This week, meditate and marvel at the beauty of creation and, like Jesus, take lessons from it for your spiritual life. +

***Jesus used nature  
for teaching: seeds sown  
in different soils,  
clouds predicting rain,  
a catch of fish.***

## A Word from Pope Francis

Every worker...should have the right to decent remuneration, to social security, and to a pension. Among you here are... workers in grassroots jobs who are excluded from labor rights, who are denied the possibility of unionizing, whose income is neither adequate nor stable. Today I...join my voice to yours and support you in your struggle.

—World meeting of popular movements, October 28, 2014



## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 55:10-11

So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me.

### Romans 8:18-23

Hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

### Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

[Jesus said,] "Whoever has ears ought to hear."

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I spend time outdoors enjoying nature?
- What messages from God can I find in the natural world today?

# Finding Meaning in Our Pain

By Richard Rohr, OFM

All religion is about transforming pain and what to do with that pain—the absurd, tragic, unjust experiences that make up our lives. The hurts, disappointments, and betrayals; the burdens of sinfulness and brokenness pile up throughout life. We must find a way to make our pain into sacred wounds. We must find a way to give meaning to our hurts and find God in that suffering. Our faith is a gift that helps us deal with life's tragedies.

Throughout history, literature has idealized people at the top: presidents and leaders who hold power and control the system. But biblical revelation turns history upside down with empathy for victims. It idealizes the bottom. It says that true power is not focused at the top. Then Jesus comes to epitomize that message by becoming poor, naked, and expelled—the one who teaches us that the way down is really the way up.

Our lesson is that we need to stop looking for meaning at the top and, instead, go to the edges and the bottom where we find those excluded and expelled. By his life and teaching, Jesus reminds us that we have to be rejected. We have to experience being on the outside before we have something to say.

This is the gift of biblical revelation. It's why we're the only religion that worships the victim, the one considered the problem by religious authorities.

## God of Surprises

When Christians call Jesus the Lord of history—this bleeding, naked, crucified man—we are turning history around! We may not realize how scandalous and silly this seems to others. But when you think about it, the crucified Jesus is an unlikely candidate for God.

But this is the very Jesus who, through his teaching and life, reminds us to be careful where we look for God. Expect to find God in unexpected places, he tells us. And so it is in all of history: It has been the excluded ones and people at the bottom who have the privileged viewpoint. Why? Because it is from that position that we meet God, that we understand the illusion and lies of a system built on power, prestige, possessions. But until all that is taken from us, we don't know that. Until then we are simply playing the game, enjoying the fruits of the system.

Recall how Jesus sends his disciples to preach from a position of vulnerability. "Go out, take nothing for your journey,"



he tells them. Why? Because he knows they're going to fail and look like fools. They have to or they won't have a message to deliver.

## Hard Truths

It's an initiation of sorts: Jesus sends his disciples into situations where people are going to laugh at them and consider them nobodies. Only when you are a nobody will you understand what it means to be somebody. That is when you will find your life on new ground. We call it the reign of God.

The Bible begins with a fall for a reason. The story of Adam and Eve is a microcosm of what will happen in every life. You and I will fall. Somewhere we will experience our own absurdity, our utter brokenness. This reality isn't something to hold off; it's a necessary, tragic, and beautiful part of the journey.

The answer to our pain is the Jesus who was rejected, betrayed, and abandoned; then hanged on a cross, bleeding and naked. The answer to our pain is the risen Christ, who reminds us that through pain we have new life. +



*Lord, you completed God's work on earth. Help me know and accomplish God's will.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

July 13–18

**Monday, Weekday:**

Is 1:10–17 / Mt 10:34–11:1

**Tuesday, St. Kateri Tekakwitha:**

Is 7:1–9 / Mt 11:20–24

**Wednesday, St. Bonaventure:**

Is 10:5–7, 13b–16 / Mt 11:25–27

**Thursday, Weekday:**

Is 26:7–9, 12, 16–19 / Mt 11:28–30

**Friday, Weekday:**

Is 38:1–6, 21–22, 7–8 / Mt 12:1–8

**Saturday, Weekday:**

Mi 2:1–5 / Mt 12:14–21

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