



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent | April 2, 2017

Newly Alive

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I was a child, I saw a picture of Lazarus at the tomb, his face completely bound by a cloth. It scared me badly—the figures looking toward Lazarus were pulling away in fear or disgust. Unable to see his face, they lost any sense of his humanity. Without eyes, nose, and mouth, Lazarus had become the stuff of nightmares.

Much later in life, I reflected on that picture and realized that death—both spiritual and physical—is like that. It robs us of our humanity. We become faceless, unknown to all but those who loved us.

If we've committed grave sin, we might even lose those human relationships. But a second look at the picture revealed the steady figure of Jesus holding the raised Lazarus in his gaze. He didn't turn away in fear. Rather, he continued to look at him with love, as a friend.

Jesus, the face of love, is the only one who can confront the two things that make us faceless, that take our humanity from us: sin and death. Sin kills the soul and has the capacity to make us unrecognizable to others. Death kills the body and can take us from our loved ones.

Jesus calls us forth from each of these. From sin, he calls us to conversion; from death, he calls us to eternal life. If we listen carefully, we can hear him call us by name to "come out." And then, with infinite love, he will ask those who love us to untie us and let us go. †

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 37:12–14

"I am going to open your graves; I will...bring you back to the land of Israel."

Romans 8:8–11

"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness."

John 11:1–45

"So Jesus said to them, 'Untie him and let him go.'"

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make us faceless:
sin and death.*

A Word From Pope Francis

Whoever experiences [the joy of the Resurrection] becomes a witness of the Resurrection, for in a certain sense he himself has risen, she herself has risen. He or she is then capable of carrying a "ray" of light of the Risen One into various situations: to those that are happy, making them more beautiful by preserving them from egoism; to those that are painful, bringing serenity and hope.

—Regina Caeli,
St. Peter's Square,
Easter Monday,
April 21, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

ONE QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

- Has sin ever made you unrecognizable to your loved ones, even for a moment?
- Have you ever struggled to look beyond another's sin and minister to his or her humanity?



The Agony in the Garden

By Ron Rolheiser, OMI

We tend to misunderstand “the passion of Jesus.” Spontaneously we think of it as the pain of the physical sufferings he endured on the road to his death. Partly that misses the point. Jesus’ passion should be understood as *passio*, passivity, a certain submissive helplessness he had to undergo in counterdistinction to his power and

activity. His passion begins in the Garden of Gethsemane immediately after he has celebrated the Last Supper. The Scriptures tell us that he went out into the Garden with his disciples to pray for the strength he needed to face the ordeal that was now imminent.

It’s significant that this agony take place in a garden. In archetypal literature

(Scripture, among other things, is this kind of literature), a garden is not a place to pick cucumbers and onions. It is the place of delight, the place of love, the place to drink wine, the place where lovers meet in the moonlight, the place of intimacy. It’s Jesus, the lover, the one who calls us to intimacy and delight with him who sweats blood in the Garden.

Jesus’ agony is that of the lover who’s been misunderstood and rejected in a way that is mortal and humiliating. It’s his entry into the darkest black hole of human existence, the black hole of bitter rejection, aloneness, humiliation, and helplessness. †

Source: *Daybreaks*, © 2004, Liguori Publications

Space for God

By Edward Sri, PhD

In the Bible, people fast when expressing repentance (Psalm 69:15), making a petition to God (Ezra 8:23), or seeking God’s will (Acts 13:1–2). We also fast to grow in self-control, training the will to deny ourselves little things so we can make bigger sacrifices when necessary. When we abstain from the enjoyments of this world, we come more in touch with a deeper hunger nothing in this world can satisfy.

Saint John of the Cross teaches us the soul has deep caverns that only the infinite God can fill. Yet when we feed our stomach whenever it’s hungry, busy ourselves with constant activity, and amuse ourselves on screens, we become distracted from our heart’s deepest

longing—God. No matter how much savory food we eat, how much money we make, how many “likes” we receive, or how much fun we have, we are constantly longing for something more.

Stepping back and abstaining from certain enjoyments in life helps free us from being enslaved to them and gives God room to draw out our deeper desire for him. It reminds us of the profound truth St. Augustine expressed in his famous prayer to God: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You, O God.” But fasting does not just apply to food. In the Catholic tradition, a similar pursuit of moderation has been applied to other things in life that aren’t necessary, such as conversation, rest, media, and entertainment.

Faced with constant noise and visual distraction—incessant beeps, vibrations, images, and updates—it’s hard for us to

truly encounter God and the people God has placed in our lives. Pope Francis and other recent popes have encouraged us to limit not just our intake of food and drink but also our use of the internet, television, and social media. Fasting from various forms of media can help cultivate more silence in our lives so we can hear God and see the people right around us. †

Source: *Liguorian*, © February 2016, Liguori Publications

PRAYER

I will pray for a spirit of hope;
I will fast from apathy; I will be
more hopeful, loving, and
compassionate to the
people around me.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 3–8

Monday

Lenten Weekday: Dn 13:1–9,
15–17, 19–30, 33–62 / Jn 8:1–11

Tuesday

Lenten Weekday:
Nm 21:4–9 / Jn 8:21–30

Wednesday

Lenten Weekday: Dn 3:14–20,
91–92, 95 / Jn 8:31–42

Thursday

Lenten Weekday:
Gn 17:3–9 / Jn 8:51–59

Friday

Lenten Weekday:
Jer 20:10–13 / Jn 10:31–42

Saturday

Lenten Weekday:
Ez 37:21–28 / Jn 11:45–56

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