



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent (B)

March 21, 2021

The Meaning of the Gardens of Scripture

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Focus on the painting, Sebastiano Conca's *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*, and you will be drawn across the space between the gaze of Jesus and the chalice the angel offers. Sebastiano understands the essence of the agony in the Garden—the loneliness of Jesus before the bitter cup the Father extends to him via the hands of an angel.

Jesus' attitude in receiving this passion is evident in his open arms. Like the posture he will assume when

nailed to the cross, he shows his humble acceptance and abandonment.

Gardens don't appear often in Scripture, but they are important. There is the Garden of Eden, the place of God's creative love and man's original sin. There is the garden in the Song of Songs—a garden of passion, possession, and life-giving union. Where is Jesus' tomb, and where does Mary Magdalene, the transformed lover, find Jesus on Easter morning? In the Scriptures, gardens are a place of new life, sin, and redemption. It's where lovers go; where love is declared and tested.

This is important in understanding the drama of our Lord's agony in the Garden. It is the drama inside of love. It is the drama of acceptance and abandonment, trust and generosity, life and death.

Jesus knows this and goes into the Garden to do what Adam failed to do in the first Garden. He goes to pay the price of love. He engenders new life by giving his own. He looks at the chalice, the price of our salvation, and with a heart full of generous, uncomplicated love, accepts the Father's invitation. "Not my will but yours be done." +

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A Word from Pope Francis

By visiting the tombs of our loved ones we remember that we have a multitude of saints who before God intercede for our needs. Let us not forget, however, that so many deceased also await our spiritual support. Let us remember them in our prayers...asking that they be welcomed into the ranks of the elect in heaven.

—General Audience, October 31, 2018



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 21:31–34

Everyone...shall know me—oracle of the LORD—for I will forgive their iniquity and no longer remember their sin.

Hebrews 5:7–9

[Christ Jesus] offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears.

John 12:20–33

[Jesus said,] "Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How can I receive Jesus' self-giving love for me more deeply?
- How should I imitate Jesus' self-giving love in my relationships?

"You Visited Me"

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

My neighbor's son, Joe, didn't last one week. He was only out of prison for a few days when he knowingly broke his probation so he could go back. He couldn't find anything to hold onto on the outside. Joe felt the life waiting for him after prison was devoid of meaning. The unfortunate reality is, many find it difficult to reenter the "world" after spending time in prison. Critics are quick to say it's because prison is too comfortable. The inmates are treated too well. Many end up back in prison, not because they miss their cell or their high-school-equivalency classes or the predictability of it all, but because they miss their friends. They have no social network on the "outside." Though not the sole cause, loneliness and isolation contribute greatly to recidivism.

Pope Francis, during a visit to Philadelphia's Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility said:

This time in your life can only have one purpose: to give you a hand in getting back on the right road, to give you a hand to help you rejoin society. All of us are part of that effort, all of us are invited to encourage, help and enable your rehabilitation. A rehabilitation, which everyone seeks and desires: inmates and their families, correctional authorities, social and educational programs. A rehabilitation, which benefits and elevates the morale of the entire community.



I was Sally's neighbor. I knew she had a son in prison. She shared his letters with me. She worried about what would happen when he got out. I tried to comfort and assure her that everything would be all right. I was Sally's pastor. It never occurred to me that I could be her son's pastor, too. If I had visited Joe, met him in prison, offered him the ministry and friendship of our parish while he was doing time, maybe he would have had something to come home to: a church, friends, the prospect of a new life.

In the inner-city parish where I was the pastor for six years, almost 50 percent of the parishioners knew someone in prison: a brother, mother, son, former classmate, or a neighbor. No one ever

spoke about it. No one ever asked the priest to visit. No one ever had a Mass said on behalf of the imprisoned. Fear and shame made us think that we couldn't make a difference. What if our friendship and love could have made all the difference in the life of an ex-offender?

If you know someone in prison, if you know someone who knows someone in prison, write a letter, call, and visit. "I was in prison and you visited me" and gave me something to look forward to after prison: a new life (Matthew 25:36). +

We can make a difference in the life of someone in prison.



Lord, your love is written on my heart. May your love inspire and empower me to love people from all walks of life.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 22–27

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30,
33–62 or 13:41c–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, The Annunciation of the Lord:
Is 7:10–14, 8:10 / Heb 10:4–10 / Lk 1:26–38

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

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 37:21–28 / Jn 11:45–5

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