



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Easter (C)
May 12, 2019

Our Life-giving Water

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I love the sound water makes when it is moving in a fast-flowing stream or curling up to the shore in waves. I am mesmerized particularly by waterfalls, small or large. My husband, who enjoys photography as a hobby, has taken pictures of many of the falls we have visited, and they decorate my office as a constant reminder of the power and beauty of God seen through all creation. I even have a crucifix that was designed to show the living water flowing from Christ—a waterfall tumbling down and over the foot of the cross. It is, for

me anyway, one of the most powerful images of God that I can imagine.

Throughout the Easter season, the Scriptures present us with stories of resurrection and life. The preaching of the apostles, the abundance of fish caught in a net, the stirring of hearts in those who see and hear Jesus—they all show what it is like to live in “risen time,” in full knowledge and endless presence of the Lord. Today Jesus talks about God’s closeness, power, and promise. The Father has given the sheep to Jesus and no one can take them away.

But in the reading from Revelation we have a clearer picture of our life with God: “The Lamb...will...lead them to springs of life-giving water.” In Jesus’ desert environment, this was a powerful image. In our world today it remains compelling. Jesus is the Living Water that brings life to our souls. Whether it flows as a gentle stream, restless wave, or waterfall from the throne of God, it is his gift to us. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 13:14, 43–52

When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.

Revelation 7:9, 14b–17

I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue.

John 10:27–30

[Jesus said,] “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

*Flowing water is
one of the most powerful
images of God that
I can imagine.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The Gentiles, observing the early Christians, said: How they love each other, how they wish one another well! They do not hate, they do not speak against one another. This is the charity, the love of God, that the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts....Our smallest gesture of love benefits everyone!

—General audience, November 6, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Can I picture Jesus as Living Water, as refreshment for my thirsty soul?
- Am I a good steward to the earth that God has entrusted to me—to the water, land, and air?

Mental Illness: A Christian Response

By Fr. Jim Van Vurst, OFM

Early in life, we become aware that humanity is wounded. We learn this from Scripture, observation, and experiences of our own weakened wills and darkened minds. How are we as Christians to look upon mental illness and those who suffer from it?

Just because the United States is a First World nation whose citizens enjoy freedom and material benefits doesn't mean its people are exempt from mental illness. In fact, many contend that vast freedom becomes license and lawlessness, and ends up causing anxiety, depression, and addictions.

News reports speak of economic difficulties, the growing gulf between the "haves" and "have nots," job losses, and the health insurance and student loan crises. Many people are experiencing great stress and worry resulting in increased emotional trauma.

The National Institute of Mental Health's website (nimh.nih.gov) lists statistics for mental illness in the United States. An estimated one in five American adults (44.7 million) lived with mental illness in 2016. This is a statistic of great suffering—not just for the victims, but also for those who care for, live with, and love them.

The Faith Perspective

What is the Christian response to mental illness? We believe that everyone is a



creation of a loving God. Neither mental nor physical illness is a punishment from God, though in times of suffering, it's common to ask, "What did I do to deserve this?" It's a question that has been asked for as long as there has been suffering.

Jesus entered a world of suffering and sickness. In fact, the Gospels reveal a Savior who never shied away from the sick and suffering. He went out to meet them. The Gospels record many miracles, most concerning healing and bringing people back to health. If people couldn't find him, Jesus sought them out. In fact, he seemed most comfortable with outcasts and sinners.

Jesus was quick to share the good news with everybody, reminding them of two things: 1) God loves them regardless of their life circumstances and 2) he, Jesus, will show them God's compassion and heal those who seek his help. Many healings were not just of physical illness, but also of emotional and mental sickness.

Overcoming the Stigma

There is an unfortunate stigma attached to anyone with mental illness. Those who don't understand may say, often in frustration, "Just shape up and pull yourself together." But they don't realize that serious depression is emotionally paralyzing. They can't see that people with deep phobias and anxieties experience such a lack

of control over their emotions that all they can do is hide and hang on for dear life. It's an unfair stigma, to be sure, and such accusations come from individuals who are either frightened of mental illness or just don't know what to say. They may misjudge such persons as weak characters, lacking gumption or self-esteem or people who are just looking for ways to make others take care of them. Nothing is further from the truth.

We should not overlook the burden on individuals and families who love someone who is mentally ill. No one knows what families go through in trying to help their loved ones recover. It hurts terribly to see a loved one suffer mentally and emotionally. Fears, frustrations, and a sense of helplessness tear at their hearts, straining relationships and resources.

What about us? Our attitude toward the physically and mentally ill should be Christlike: respect and compassion. Pray for the ill and their caregivers. The image that comes to mind is that of a person caring for another with Jesus kneeling beside them. Such caregivers are not alone. +

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your resurrection gives me hope and the promise of new life. Open my heart to embrace and share your vision of love and peace with all people.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 13-18

Monday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 11:1–18 / Jn 10:1–10

Tuesday, St. Matthias:

Acts 1:15–17, 20–26 / Jn 15:9–17

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 12:24–13:5a / Jn 12:44–50

Thursday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:13–25 / Jn 13:16–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:26–33 / Jn 14:1–6

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:44–52 / Jn 14:7–14