



Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (A)

June 7, 2020

Salvation's Cost

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

In Ludovico Carracci's painting *The Trinity with the Dead Christ*, we see a meditation on the Trinity in a hidden moment. Rather than paint the moment when Mary takes her Son into her arms, Carracci painted the scene when the heavenly Father receives the spoils of his Son's battle for the salvation of humanity.

The dark colors communicate the pathos and drama. The Father's head turns away in grief even as he offers the Son. He reverently holds him, yet almost fears to touch his pierced hands.

Sunday Readings

Exodus 34:4b–6, 8–9

[Moses said,] "Pardon our wickedness and sins, and claim us as your own."

2 Corinthians 13:11–13

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.

John 3:16–18

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

Consider how much love God showed in allowing the Son to go to the cross, in sacrificing one beloved child to gain life for all his others.

Theology struggles to balance the truth of a loving, caring God the Father with the appreciation that he is unable to suffer as we do. Yet Carracci focuses on that popular intuition that the Father and the Spirit suffered the death of the Son. We should reflect on what our salvation cost the Trinity and how much love they showed in sending the Son to die. God suffers when we suffer and wishes to console and protect us, even if the good Father doesn't remove the suffering.

Faith teaches us that God willed his only begotten Son to suffer and die to save humanity. This divine decision manifests justice and mercy. It shows not only that God actually required satisfaction for our sins but also that no one but a God-man could offer a suitable sacrifice. Because he was God, Christ could offer an infinite satisfaction for our infinite offenses. Because he was man, he could offer a man's satisfaction for humanity's sin. +

*God suffers when we suffer
and wishes to console
and protect us.*

A Word from Pope Francis

With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity....His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously....The signs he works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy.

—*Misericordiae Vultus*, April 11, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Which person of the Trinity do I most easily relate to—the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit?
- Do I remember to direct my prayers to all three persons of the Trinity?

The Gift of John's Gospel

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

One of the treasures of the Church is the Gospel of John. In this work we are given a unique insight into the life of Jesus. Moreover, we are invited to enter into intimate union with Christ at a personal level and as members of a community.

In John's Gospel we learn the concept of "blessedness," what it means to live a Christian life. To the extent that we respond to our fourfold baptismal call, we will experience the blessedness John articulates.

Through the other evangelists—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—we see Jesus as someone who is earthly but also the very presence of God in history. The Gospel of John, on the other hand, presents Jesus as the preexistent one. In becoming human, Jesus reveals the inner workings of divine life. That life is offered to us, and salvation consists precisely in our participation in it. To the extent that we accept Jesus into our lives, we enter into the mystery of salvation.

Through our baptism into the life of Jesus, we are called to maturity, holiness, community, and service. John's Gospel articulate those calls and provides insights into living them. Responding to the call is the way to a blessed, happy life.



Four Calls

The call to maturity.

The mature disciple is a person of faith. Faith is the opening of our lives to God revealed in Jesus. Everything depends on faith, on our submission to Jesus and his word. Maturity is a lifelong process; faith demands ongoing development.

The reading and rereading

of the Gospel of John helps us grow into the full stature of Christ.

The call to holiness. Within Catholic tradition, holiness is the perfection of love. John speaks eloquently of the grace of love. In the Last Supper discourse, Jesus speaks profoundly of the values of friendship, intimacy, and love. This love points to union with God and unity among us. The tenderness and force of God's love is overwhelming. And the test? To lay down one's life for others.

It is in John's Gospel that Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine and the branches. This image captures the essence of holiness. To the degree that we are united to Jesus, the Vine, then we, the branches, can bear fruit that will last forever. Holiness is that union, that oneness that sustains us on our journey.

The call to community. One characteristic of early Christians was the insistence on Jesus' command that

its members love one another. Another feature was dedication of the community to the person of Jesus. His vision and values were their compass. They came together because of an outside enemy, the "world," which stood for all that was not good.

The call to service. John depicts Jesus as someone for others. In the Cana miracle of water turned to wine, in the healing of the royal official's son, in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, in the washing of the feet at the Last Supper, in the resurrection accounts—Jesus is serving the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of the people.

Simple Treasure

The Gospel of John is a great treasure. Though complex in many ways, there is an underlying simplicity: Jesus, the preexistent Word of God, is for and with us. We are invited into a life of deep friendship and called to share the gift of light, love, and life with others. Thus, we live the words of Jesus: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me" (14:1). +



Lord, you live in communion with God and the Holy Spirit. Help me to live in communion 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

June 8–13

Monday, Weekday:
1 Kgs 17:1–6 / Mt 5:1–12


Tuesday, Weekday:
1 Kgs 17:7–16 / Mt 5:13–16

Wednesday, Weekday:
1 Kgs 18:20–39 / Mt 5:17–19

Thursday, St. Barnabas:
Acts 11:21b–26; 13:1–3 / Mt 5:20–26

Friday, Weekday:
1 Kgs 19:9a, 11–16 / Mt 5:27–32

Saturday, St. Anthony of Padua:
1 Kgs 19:19–21 / Mt 5:33–37

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Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (A)

June 14, 2020

A Deeper Hunger

By Fr. Mark Haydu

The Book of Deuteronomy is written to the Israelites now safely in the Promised Land. After the pains of the desert, they enjoy prosperity and blessing. In the desert they were given a food they had never known before. Manna was a new discovery and a gift for their survival. Now that they could enjoy fruit and meat, Moses commands them to remember when they totally depended on God. In their abundance, they run the risk of forgetting all God has done. They are asked to recall, to remember, to memorize.

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a

He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

We, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

John 6:51-58

[Jesus said,] "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you."

Cultivating our memory and recalling the acts of God's fidelity and providence are important to nurturing our faith. If we don't, our mind will glorify the forbidden fruits, or, like the Hebrews remembering the onions of Egypt, we will desire the food of our slavery.

We also experience a deeper hunger, more persistent than the physical. We hunger for love, freedom, peace, and communion. Jesus satisfies the deepest desires of the human heart. He gives up everything to win us back, even his own Body and Blood. We find freedom in submitting ourselves to the one who lifts us up. Peace and communion come from sharing the cup of his love. Jesus truly satisfies our hunger and thirst.

When we look around, foods are available that claim to be more satisfying. Some, in the absolute, can be venom: wealth, power, pleasure. Other realities, even the most pure, are beautiful but only partially nourish us, leaving us unsatisfied. The only truly filling food is that which the Lord gives. +

Jesus satisfies the deepest desires of the human heart.

A Word from Pope Francis

Eucharistic worship also teaches us the right balance of values: not to put earthly realities in first place but heavenly goods; to hunger not only for material food, but also for "food that endures for eternal life" (John 6:27).

—Address to the Dioceses of Cesena and Bologna, April 21, 2018



- Where do I go to eat? Who or what nourishes me?
- Am I tempted, enslaved, or weakened by less-filling foods?

Seven Works of Art of God in Our Church

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

One thing you can say about Catholics: we aren't afraid of things. In fact, it's the opposite. We know that creation is good and that created things can serve as a window through which we see something of God. For us, things are not an obstacle to grace but a means of grace. This is true in those celebrations we call sacraments.



Humans are body, mind, and spirit, and we Catholics come to God with our whole being—not with words alone. We do not simply say, “Jesus is my Savior.” We Catholics do more.

We go into the baptismal tomb where we die with Christ, then plunge into the waters of birth in him. We come up from the Church's womb with rebirth and new life to be oiled and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and fed on the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist. Catholicism is an incarnated religion. It uses the ordinary stuff of this world to touch the world beyond.

An artist is always somehow embodied in his or her work. We can look at a painting and say, “That is a Picasso.” We hear a piece of music and say, “That's clearly Beethoven.”

In a similar way, we can look at the sacraments and say, “That's God!” We see the artist revealed in the work of art. That's what the sacraments are—seven

great artworks revealing the Creator.

Portraits of God

Baptism reveals God as the womb and source of all life. When I see a newly baptized infant in his or her parents' arms, I get a glimpse of parental God embracing us—loving us, not because of what we have done, but because we

are God's children. *Confirmation* reveals our destiny; we are to live to make visible in outward signs the “personality” of our Creator God. We are to be signs of wisdom, judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and awe.

The *Eucharist*, which we commemorate today, says it all: We become present to the Lord who died that we might live—who feeds us with his Body and Blood so that we become one body filled with his Spirit.

Reconciliation reveals a God ever ready to forgive and embrace us. *Anointing* shows us a God who heals, longing for the end of sickness, pain, and disease and calling us—along with all creation—to wholeness. *Holy orders* provides a glimpse of a God who shepherds the flock, leading and sanctifying all into the kingdom.

And what a powerful sign we have in *marriage*! In the faithful, total, through-thick-and-thin, for-better-or-worse love the couple promises each other in the

rite of marriage, all who witness the sacrament can glimpse how God loves us: faithfully, totally, through thick and thin, for better or worse. At their wedding, the bride and groom receive many wonderful gifts. But the gifts they receive are not as wonderful as the gift the couple gives us. They give us a sacrament, a sign of who God is.

Seeing More

As Americans, we value efficiency and production. We like getting to the point and getting the job done. Sometimes this can blind us to the symbolic function of things and events.

Sacraments “produce” through symbols. Sacraments help us see more. They help us see God in a baby's smile or in the touch of a loved one; they help us to find God in the “I'm sorry” of someone who has hurt us. The sacraments, and all of creation, reveal the divine Creator artist. +



Lord, through your Body and Blood you offer me the gift of eternal life. Help me to make sacrifices and share what I have with the poor.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 15–20

Monday, Weekday:

1 Kgs 21:1–16 / Mt 5:38–42

Tuesday, Weekday:

1 Kgs 21:17–29 / Mt 5:43–48

Wednesday, Weekday:

2 Kgs 2:1, 6–14 / Mt 6:1–6, 16–18

Thursday, Weekday:

Sir 48:1–14 / Mt 6:7–15

Friday, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus:

Dt 7:6–11 / 1 Jn 4:7–16 / Mt 11:25–30

Saturday, Immaculate Heart of the Blessed

Virgin Mary: 2 Chr 24:17–25 / Lk 2:41–51

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Bringing Home the Word

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

June 21, 2020

Struggle and Rest

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Vincent van Gogh is one of the most famous painters in history. His dramatic style of eternally swirling motion and his palette of deep blue, green, and brown captivates us. His life was just as topsy-turvy as his style. He started off as an aspiring minister and missionary yet ended up committing himself to painting. He fought with mental illness most his life and, sadly, died poor and amidst mysterious circumstances.

His painting *Pietà* is one of his most spiritual and religious works. Carried

out in the months before his untimely death, it shows the maturation of his style. Rather than approach the painting with a wide horizontal composition, he keeps it quite vertical, which suggests a connection between heaven and earth. Jesus is falling forward slightly and is not quite resting in Mary's arms. He seems to be somewhat on his own as Mary reacts in grief, offering more than an accepting embrace.

Suffering has both the moment of struggle and of rest. In Van Gogh's *Pietà*, as in life, the unrequited desire to rest prevails. The struggle to accept and embrace suffering was a big part of Van Gogh's life, as seen in his letters to his brother. Van Gogh, like us, sought serenity in a faith that claims in today's readings "he has rescued the life of the poor" and that "all the hairs of your head are counted" and not a sparrow "falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge." We are precious to God, as was his Son. The power of God's love embraces our suffering and offers to bring it to resurrection. +

***We are precious to God,
as was his Son.***

***The power of God's love
embraces our suffering.***

A Word from Pope Francis

There is a tendency to justify transgressing all boundaries when experimentation is carried out on living human embryos. We forget that the inalienable worth of a human being transcends his or her degree of development. In the same way, when technology disregards the great ethical principles, it ends up considering any practice whatsoever as licit.

—*Laudato Si'*, May 24, 2015



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- What am I struggling with and need to give over to Christ?
- How can I increase my trust in God this week?

Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 20:10-13

The LORD is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not prevail.

Romans 5:12-15

If by that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God...overflow.

Matthew 10:26-33

[Jesus said,] "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Unmarried and Unashamed: Grace and the Single Life

By Christopher Heffron

It's the same scenario every holiday. Aunt Karen finishes assembling her plate of food and makes a beeline for the chair next to mine. My spine stiffens. I know it's coming.

Between bites, she asks about work, home, and—of course—the question dreaded by singles everywhere: “So, think you’ll ever get married?” Karen follows this with pity for my parents: “They’d love more grandchildren.” All I can do is weather this storm. I love my aunt, but the guilt she’s pouring on is thicker than the gravy.

I want to say, “I’m content with my life. If marriage is in my future, that’s great. If I’m destined to remain single, that’s OK, too. Eat your peas.”

I’m not the only single in my circle of friends, though each person’s outlook on the subject varies. Some are content with singlehood. Others are frustrated by it and deeply desire marriage and a family. Regardless, we’ve all answered or dodged that question. We take pains to lessen the confusion and suspicions of our married friends and family. But it’s never easy.

We Walk Among You

I’m not unique. According to a 2017 report from the US Census Bureau, there are 110.6 million unmarried



Americans over age eighteen, representing 45.2 percent of the adult population. Despite these numbers, there’s a stigma with being unmarried, particularly in the Catholic world where marriage is an institution dear to the Church—and rightly so. But singlehood is an institution, too, with

an army of faith-filled soldiers. After all, aren’t we all called by God to live holy lives? Our potential as God’s followers isn’t governed by our marital status but by the purity of our hearts.

Saint Paul writes, “Each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. Now to the unmarried and to widows, I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do” (1 Corinthians 7:7–8). Paul and I would have gotten along.

I’m not troubled by my single status, and I admire strong marriages. Mainly I marvel at the teamwork of my married friends. From family functions to soccer practices, from school plays to Boy Scouts, they are busy, functioning units that anybody would admire. They are many, but they work as one.

I am but one, but I work as many. Example: laundry is my least-favorite household chore. But without a partner to pitch in, either I perform this task or I’m stuck wearing dirty clothes. Either I

clean my dishes or I eat out of my shoe.

Undoubtedly, there’s a sense of pride singles feel in being the sole breadwinner, cook, gardener, housekeeper, bookkeeper, and maintenance crew.

Love Is Singularly Important

The Catholic Church teaches that single life is every bit the vocation that married, religious, and ordained life are. They are different paths—one no better than another. As I am not anchored by parenthood or marriage, I have perhaps greater mobility and more free time to focus my energies on bettering my community, my parish, myself.

To receive love and give it back—that is the beating heart of every vocation. As two parents bathe their baby for the first time, swaddling him in a towel, they’re creating an environment of love. As a dedicated religious sister overcomes tired feet and an aching back to work in a soup kitchen, she is creating an environment of love. Singles do the same.

Being unmarried doesn’t mean I withhold myself from others. I share my talents during the workday with colleagues, my guidance with my beloved nieces, my laughter with family and friends. I lead a full and happy life. I am unattached and unembarrassed. +



Lord, your gift of unselfish love redeems the world. Remove the selfishness from my heart so I can love and care for others.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 22–27

Monday, Weekday:

2 Kgs 17:5–8, 13–15a, 18 / Mt 7:1–5

Tuesday, Weekday: 2 Kgs 19:9b–11, 14–21, 31–35a, 36 / Mt 7:6, 12–14

Wednesday, Nativity of St. John the Baptist: Is 49:1–6 / Acts 13:22–26 / Lk 1:57–66, 80

Thursday, Weekday:

2 Kgs 24:8–17 / Mt 7:21–29

Friday, Weekday:

2 Kgs 25:1–12 / Mt 8:1–4

Saturday, Weekday:

Lam 2:2, 10–14, 18–19 / Mt 8:5–17

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Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

June 28, 2020

To Live with Christ

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

A priest friend of mine visited a family with several sons thinking about the priestly vocation. During his visit he celebrated Mass for them at the local parish. The Gospel reading was the same as today: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me....” My friend thought twice before reading it, afraid that the father who wasn’t open to his sons’ vocations would think he picked this passage on purpose. He read it anyway and, yes, got the reaction he suspected he’d get.

Most words in the Gospels are challenging. Jesus calls us to love him above all things. This means he has to come first, and sometimes other loves, as good as they are, cannot be the ultimate criteria. He tells us to “lose our life” to find it, and sometimes that loss is real and painful.

He demands this because he himself experienced its truth. In his public ministry, he put his mission and love of souls ahead of spending more time with family and friends. When religious leaders, government officials, and others criticized and persecuted him, he didn’t back down, even if it affected his loved ones. He was faithful in charity. He didn’t look for problems, but he didn’t run from them, either. He avoided unnecessary conflict when he could, but he completely obeyed God’s will and embraced the hardships of loving until the end.

This kind of sacrifice brings great joy if endured with acceptance. As Romans tells us, “If, then, we have died with Christ, ...we shall also live with him.” +

*Jesus calls us
to love him
above all things.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The word of Christ wants to reach all people....Every parish and every ecclesial reality may become a sanctuary for the one who seeks God and a welcoming home for the poor, the elderly, and those who find themselves in need.... Go, welcome! Go, seek! Go, bring love, mercy, and tenderness.

—Eucharistic concelebration,
Naples, March 21, 2015



Sunday Readings

2 Kings 4:8–11, 14–16a

Elisha promised, “This time next year you will be cradling a baby son.”

Romans 6:3–4, 8–11

If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

Matthew 10:37–42

[Jesus said,] “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can I live my life as though nothing is more important than Jesus?
- Do I regularly witness to my love for Jesus?

Why We Need the Church

By Thomas H. Groome

Ever wonder why Catholics emphasize going to church as a way of keeping the Sabbath holy? Of course Protestant Christians are committed to Sunday worship, but we add a note of obligation. For us, participating in Sunday Mass is a privilege but also a serious responsibility.



We may not miss Sunday Mass—except for some good reason. And, far more than attending as spectators, we are expected to function as active members in a community.

The sense of Sunday obligation is only one instance of the communal emphasis that is core to Catholicism. Catholic Christian faith is essentially communal; we are disciples in community and a community of disciples. We're convinced that God reaches out to us as community and that we most effectively reach out to God together. So, we may not simply watch Mass on TV or go to a mountaintop for our own religious experience.

It is through Christian community that we access the Scriptures and traditions that forge our identity in faith, to the sacraments that sustain us, to the models of holiness in the saints, to people to pray with us on our journey home to God. Indeed, Catholic spirituality calls us to a personal relationship with God,

but through Christian community.

In Our Nature

The Bible highlights the communal nature of faith. Indeed, it seems that God designed our human nature as relational. When God differentiated the lonely Adam into male and female, he made them “companions” to each

other. Then, beginning with God's call of Abraham and Sarah to parent a people, Hebrew faith is lived as community.

Likewise, early Christians favored communal metaphors to describe their shared discipleship to Jesus. Paul's image of the Church as the body of Christ was the most compelling. Within this body, the hand and foot, the eye and ear, and all individual parts are vitally important; yet all the organs must function together as one (see 1 Corinthians 12:26). By baptism, we are bonded together as one with Christ and each other; “we though many, are one body in Christ (Romans 12:5). And all members must contribute their gifts for “building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

Rooted in History

During the Reformation, Protestant leaders rebelled against the exaggerated power of the Church, charging it with replacing rather than representing God. As a consequence, they de-emphasized

the communal nature of Christian faith. When the Catholic Church regrouped at the Council of Trent, it agreed that people must have their own personal relationship with God but that our faith must be realized through Christian community.

Catholicism is so intent on the communal nature of faith as to propose that even death doesn't break the bond of baptism. So, we can ask those in the eternal presence of God to pray for us—with Mary holding pride of place among this communion of saints. Likewise, we can intercede for departed loved ones who may need “purgation” in order to enter the eternal presence of God. In death, “life is changed, not ended” (preface, “Mass of Resurrection”) and certainly not the bond of baptism.

This communal emphasis of Catholicism requires that we be active in a local parish. If we don't like our assigned one, the Code of Canon Law gives us permission to “shop around” a bit. It is imperative that we find a local Catholic community to call home and share our time, talents, and treasure to sustain its mission. For Catholics at least, we're all in this together. +



Lord, your death on the cross brought life to the world. Help me follow your example of selfless love.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 29–July 4

Monday, Sts. Peter and Paul:
Acts 12:1–11 / 2 Tm 4:6–8, 17–18 /
Mt 16:13–19

Tuesday, Weekday:
Am 3:1–8; 4:11–12 / Mt 8:23–27

Wednesday, Weekday:
Am 5:14–15, 21–24 / Mt 8:28–34

Thursday, Weekday:
Am 7:10–17 / Mt 9:1–8

Friday, St. Thomas:
Eph 2:19–22 / Jn 20:24–29

Saturday, Weekday:
Am 9:11–15 / Mt 9:14–17

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June 28, 2020

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