



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent (C)

April 7, 2019

Learning from Our Best Teacher

By Mary Katharine Deeley

At the climax of *The Miracle Worker*, the play about deaf and blind Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, Annie spells W-A-T-E-R into Helen's hand while water pours over Helen's other hand. Helen's face changes as she suddenly makes the connection between the signs Annie is making and the reality of the water. Helen starts touching things wildly while Annie signs the letters in her hand at an ever-faster rate. Finally, Helen points to

Annie, who spells T-E-A-C-H-E-R in her hand. The best teacher is not the one who can speak the loudest or the most, but the one who patiently does the same thing over and over until the student makes the connection and finally learns.

Jesus is our teacher, and in the Gospel story today he demonstrates it not with a wordy lecture but by drawing in the dust and inviting his reluctant students to think about what they are doing. We don't know what he wrote, and it isn't important. He neither engaged in the debate nor shamed the woman brought before him. He made the scribes and Pharisees look and wait. Then he asked them to judge themselves first. It's a good lesson for us all. Before we condemn anyone else, we should look at the ways in which we have sinned. The lesson continues for the woman as she is told to go and sin no more.

As Helen was attentive to Annie, let us be attentive to what Jesus spells out for us. His lessons lead us to new life and the knowledge of God. +

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Sunday Readings

Isaiah 43:16–21

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new!

Philippians 3:8–14

Forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling.

John 8:1–11

[Jesus asked,] "Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you."

A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus...taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart...When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery, and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword, Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence.

—World Day of Peace, January 1, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Learning often requires persistence. Am I persistent in practicing the life lessons Jesus teaches me?
- When was the last time I put my sins behind me by participating in the sacrament of reconciliation?