

Provisions as We Become A New Creation

Brief reflections on the week's Scripture readings

Seventh Week of Easter, The Ascension, 2021



Sunday, May 16: *...he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father..." (Acts 1:1-11) "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature." (Mk 16:15-20)*

What is the "promise of the Father?" What is the good news, the glad tidings we are to proclaim to every creature?

It is the Holy Spirit, Lady Wisdom in the Old Testament, who has been with God since creation! (Prv 8:27) It is her constant and everlasting presence within and around us that is the promise of the Father, the Good News of the Messiah. It is she who animates us and gives us hope.

Today's Provision: Look for the Holy Spirit every day. Pentecost is next Sunday, but what if we were to pray for every day to be "mini-Pentecost," the granting of the Spirit of Wisdom and Love? What if we would awake each day with a simple prayer to the Spirit for her guidance and wisdom? What if we were to pause just a moment before speaking or acting and ask the Spirit to direct us? *"So now children, listen to me; instruction and wisdom do not reject! ...Happy the one watching daily at my gates...for the one who finds me, finds life..." (Prv 8:32-35)*

Monday, May 17: *"The father of orphans and the defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God gives a home to the forsaken..." (Ps 68)*

The burning issues surrounding immigration and refugees and asylees seeking refuge are not going away. They are only going to get hotter as the world gets hotter and global warming pushes people north for their very survival. There are no definitive numbers about the percentage of migrants who are widows and orphans, but some statistics say upwards of 70% of those seeking to save their lives are women and children. Folks, this is not a political issue even though there are those who want to make it so. This is a human issue. We cannot turn our backs and hide in our enclaves. What will you do in God's name to give a home to the forsaken?

(Sources: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-and-asylees-united-states> and <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>)

Today's provision: Have compassion. There is no doubt countries need sound immigration policies. There are good reasons to ensure those coming to our countries are people of goodwill. And it is a complex problem not easily solved, but it demands action now. I remember Pope Francis saying a few years ago that if every faith community in the world would take responsibility for just one family that we could make a huge difference. He pointed to the gracious welcome given to migrants by Bangladeshis, a people all too familiar with the plight of being refugees. Think about starting an effort in your faith community to look for ways to sponsor or support a family. Educate yourself on this issue to make sure you understand the complexity, and think creatively how you might work on solutions in your own community.

Tuesday, May 18: *"God is a saving God for us." (Ps 68)*

God is a saving God. Not a vengeful God that keeps score. Not a puppeteer God that pulls the strings of humanity. Not a distant, uncaring God separated from creation. God is saving God for me, for you.

Today's Provision: Look at your image of God. Many see God as Michelangelo's God or the God of Ezekiel or Revelations. Christians see God in the person of Jesus. But we are not talking about physical attributes. What does it mean for you to imagine God as a saving God? What other adjectives best describe who or what God is to and for you? If you struggle with an unhealthy image of God, seek the direction of a spiritual guide. Look for a retreat that can help you reimage God. Consider what gives you peace and tranquility and reimagine God to be the source of those graces.

(Next week, we transition back to ordinary time, so back to "Come and See" until Advent! With the Spirit's help, I will continue to add a provision each day and a prompt for reflection. Blessings!)

Wednesday, May 19: *"And now I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his that can build you up... 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"* (Acts 20:28-38)

We all know people who live according to this last phrase, people who give unceasingly of themselves. But a lot of these people find themselves burned out. Why? Perhaps it's because they forget the importance of the first part of the passage: they don't take the time to commend -- that is, to entrust -- themselves to God and God's gracious word. *"Tis more blessed to give than to receive,"* IF we are giving what we have received from God.

Today's Provision: Allow yourself to receive. *"You cannot give what you do not have."* (Carroll Wise) If we are to be true and authentic in giving from our hearts then we strive to give from our joy, from the wellspring of grace. Now, some will point to St. Teresa of Calcutta and the stories of her "dark nights." She may have not felt God's consolation, but she also knew she couldn't feel God's absence unless she had once known God's presence. It was her faith and memory of the great consolation of her call that kept her going.

If you are a giver who finds you have nothing left to give, take a break and reassess your call. Perhaps what you are doing doesn't spring from your true being or "your deep gladness." If you are assured of your call, then let God and God's Word build you back up. Go on retreat. If you are a person who doesn't like receiving, consider this: you do give when you receive graciously...you allow the giver the opportunity to feel the joy of giving, too!

Thursday, May 20: *"My brothers, I am a Pharisee; I am on trial for hope in the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, a great uproar occurred.* (Acts 23:6-11)

Paul causes a debate among the elders due to their differing beliefs about resurrection of the dead. Just as well for Paul -- he gets to leave while they continue their infighting! It reminds me of a few instances in Jesus' life when he walked unscathed through the crowds riled up over their own biases.

It happens today. We get all hot and bothered about our side of the story or our political or religious views and fail to see the crux of the matter right before our eyes. The Jewish elders might have been united in their objections to Paul, but they were so caught up in their own issues, they missed the opportunity to learn something new.

Today's Provision: Be willing to listen and learn. Consider this the next time you find yourself riled up about some issue. Step back, settle down, and listen. You just might learn something new. (This is an important message for Christians today as politics seem to define us more than faith.)

Friday, May 21: *Paul appealed that he be held in custody for the Emperor's decision.* (Acts 25:13b-21)

Paul has been called by the Lord to "bear witness in Rome." The Jewish elders have brought charges against him, but as a Roman citizen, he can plead his case directly in Rome. He sees this as an opportunity to evangelize. I find it amusing that he asks to be held in custody (we find out tomorrow he is allowed to live under house arrest!) I imagine Paul chose this option just to rest and regroup, to plan his approach to spreading the Good News in Rome away from the meddling chief priests. Sometimes when we are involved in ministry or in doing good, we can get distracted by the politics. It's a good idea every now and then to pull away, to rest, regroup, and remind ourselves of our true mission.

Today's Provision: Be a witness. I found this amusing quote attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola: *"When people come to you to pass the time, talk to them of death, judgment, and other such grave matters. Thus, their attention will be captured, even though they try to be deaf, and you will benefit both yourself and them. Either they will go away the better or they will abstain from wasting your time in the future!"* 😊 I'd advise not talking about death, but let's not squander opportunities to witness in unlikely situations. You never know how a small seed planted will grow!

Saturday, May 22: *There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.* (Jn 21:20-25)

What a great teaser for a sequel! Some say John's Letters and Revelations could be considered the sequels, but there are all sorts of debate, even from early Church times, whether it was the same "John the Apostle" who wrote the gospel, the letters (John the Elder) and Revelations (John the Divine). That's not the point here.

We do know "John" did not write any more about Christ's life. Perhaps he understood that those who followed would be the ones to share their stories. We are the present-day evangelists, the ones called to document, by our words and actions, the many things Jesus has done and continues to do in our lives.

Today's Provision: Write down your "Jesus stories." Do you keep a journal of your "Jesus stories?" I think John is right -- if we were to write down all the things Jesus does for all the people in the world, we could scarcely contain the joy. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try!

We talked on Wednesday about the importance of going back to times of consolation when we are burned out. It can be hard to recall times of grace, joy, and gratitude when we are down; hence, the value of a journal! It doesn't need to be formal or in complete sentences. It can be a word or drawing that reminds you of happy times. If you've been "meaning to" journal, don't wait. Find an old notebook and begin today!