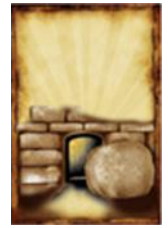


Provisions for the Journey to Jerusalem

Brief reflections on the week's Scripture readings
Easter Week Five, 2025



All the world, not just the global Roman Catholic community, welcome the gentle and peaceful message of Pope Leo XIV and his commitment to continue the great work of our beloved Pope Francis and Vatican II. The world desperately needs his commitment to the poor and immigrants and to peace. We pray the Spirit to grant him courage and discernment and bless him with good health and strength for the journey ahead.

Sunday, May 18: *I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." The One who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."* (Rev 21:1-5).

"God's dwelling is with us, in us, now and forever." I need to repeat this message to myself every day! Add to that the promise that God makes all things new! Oh, I love that! Each day, each experience is an opportunity to see God working with us to wipe away tears, to wipe away the old order with its bigotry, prejudice, and idolatry, with its lust for power and riches. All things new! It's puzzling to me that there are people in the world who want to go backwards. I wonder if it's just fear that drives them.

Provision: What do you fear? *"It's not that we fear the unknown. You cannot fear something that you do not know. ...What you really fear is the loss of the known."* (Anthony de Mello, SJ, from *Awareness*, p.29). I must admit I fear the loss of the known, at least what I have known in my life: freedom, (more than) sufficient material goods, a sense of the common good and civil discourse, the sanity of leadership, regardless of whether I agree with their policies. But I realize this is not the "known" for much of the rest of the world. But I trust the Spirit is working. I trust God is with us. And I commit to work towards a future where **all** people and **all** creation are valued and respected; where fear is replaced with love and peace; the kind of future I truly believe God desires for the world. Spend time considering this concept of fear and how it impacts your life and prayers. How can you banish fear through lovingkindness?

Monday, May 19: *"Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him"* (Jn 14:21-26).

Here's that word "dwelling" again. It's used in these two readings as a noun, a physical place where God resides. It makes the image so real. But let's think for a minute of the word as a verb, a way of being, of living. If we dwell on the word of God—not just reading the words but reflecting on them and making them real in our lives—it can make keeping that word much easier as we encounter experiences and people that challenge us. Think too of the image of God dwelling *on* us, looking at each of us with eyes of love and compassion.

Provision: Dwell on God's dwelling on and in us! I hope these images warm your heart as much as they do mine. There's something so peaceful and comforting about this (the Greek translation I use says, "we will make our home with them," so lovely as well!). Spend part of this day basking in the warmth and comfort of the Divine Spirit looking at us and loving us, dwelling in us forever!

Tuesday, May 20: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid"* (Jn 14:27-31).

"Peace be with you all! Dearest brothers and sisters, this is the first greeting of the risen Christ, the good shepherd who laid down his life for the flock of God. I too would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families, to all people, wherever they may be, to all nations, to the whole earth. Peace be with you! This is the peace of the risen Christ—a disarmed peace and a disarming peace, humble and persevering. It comes from God, God who loves us all, unconditionally. We still keep in our ears that weak, but always courageous voice of Pope Francis, who blessed Rome. The Pope who blessed Rome gave his blessing to the world, to the whole world, that morning of Easter Sunday. Allow me to continue that same blessing. God loves us. God loves you all. And evil will not prevail. We are all in the hands of God. Therefore, without fear, united, hand in hand with God and among ourselves, let us go forward" (Pope Leo XIV, from his first address to the crowds on May 8, 2025).

Provision: Let us go forward. God is making all things new. Let us pray for the Roman Catholic Church that it will continue to right its sins of the past that demand reconciliation and restorative justice. Let us pray Christianity can work to build bridges within its ranks and with ALL people, to be an example to the world of acceptance and tolerance. One need not be Catholic or even Christian to promote Jesus' message of peace we hear from the new Pope. Consider today how you will go forward to support the work of freeing hearts from fear.

Wednesday, May 21: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit"* (Jn 15:1-8).

In Ignatian Spirituality, there is a concept called "the Magis" (MAH-jisz). In Latin, the word means "more," but in the sense of being greater; hence, the motto of the Jesuit order: *"Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam: For the Greater Glory of God."* Jesus says God prunes us so we can bear "more" fruit, but I think there's a caveat to consider: are we so busy producing "much" fruit, we fail to produce sweet fruit? Is it a "quantity over quality" endeavor? Are we checking off boxes rather than giving from our hearts? The key is to make sure we take time for the soil of our souls to be nourished by God's love and mercy. Then the fruit we bear will be from love, not obligation, from our gifts, not from our own need.

Provision: Where might you need some pruning? I think most of us are well-intentioned and give from a generous heart rather than from the desire for a far-off heavenly reward. I am blessed to see the love and generosity of wonderful people every day! But I also know people who burn out, who can't deal with seeing the same needs over and over. Some of this burnout comes from a noble desire to fix wrongs, to change another's life. That, my friends, is the work of the Spirit. It is not our task, so perhaps some "pruning" of expectations might be in order. Others spread themselves too thin, trying to do too much. The Spirit may be leading them to be more discerning, to really look at where they are called to the greater glory of God. "Magis" means better, greater, not more in a numerical sense. Pray for guidance and allow God to do some pruning so that you can bear better, sweeter fruit, not just for others, but for yourself as well.

Thursday, May 22: *"It is my judgment, therefore, that we ought to stop troubling the Gentiles who turn to God but tell them by letter to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood"* (Acts 15:7-21).

Some exegesis: *"The four prohibitions come from Lv 17-18 and are binding on the foreigners who sojourn in the land of Israel." ...Refraining from matters related to pagan idols and being attentive to Jewish dietary laws would help facilitate Jewish and Gentile table fellowship which is an important aspect when engaging in intercultural mission"* (from *The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the 21st Century*, p.1499). The fledgling church is concerned with what is essential.

So, what might be the "pollution from idols" we identify today that keep us from table fellowship? While the Jews saw this as pertaining to pagan gods, there is also the inference of ethnic purity. This too has been an "idol" of fascist governments, past and present. While not as dramatic, any exclusionary rules could devolve into an "idol" as well that impedes the goal of intercultural mission.

Provision: What do you see as essential? This varies, of course, which is why there are over 40,000 Christian denominations in the world, not to mention other faith practices. But I wonder: if we were to get to the essentials that Jesus taught us: Love God, love your neighbor, love yourself, what might that mean for table fellowship in our world?

Friday, May 23: *I will give you thanks among the peoples, O Lord. ... Awake, O my soul; awake, lyre and harp! I will wake the dawn* (Ps 57).

Let me be honest here. Anyone who knows me knows that while I may strive to keep my soul awake, waking the dawn is out of the question, as is doing anything that involves a musical instrument! But let's talk about giving God thanks among the people. How do you feel when you hear a celebrity, athlete, or someone in the public eye give thanks to God for an accomplishment? When I hear a person invoking God's name whose life I judge as less than Godly, I roll my eyes and squirm with discomfort; when certain people do it, I get incensed! But how often do I express my thanks to God in public as I go about my day? Worse, how often do I fail to demonstrate God's benevolence in my life?

Provision: Give thanks to God always! We give thanks to God most fully by living lives that display to everyone the generosity and depth of God's love. Look for opportunities today to publicly demonstrate gratitude to God.

Saturday, May 24: *"If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. ... they will do all these things to you on account of my name because they do not know the one who sent me"* (Jn 15:18-21).

That last phrase sticks with me: "they do not know the one who sent me." The Greek word for "know" used in this case is based on (οἶδα/eidó) which has more to do with perceiving rather than objective knowledge (γνῶσις/gnosis). We, of course, cannot know God in an objective sense: God is unknowable. And yet, if we are aware, we can often perceive God's presence in our daily lives. But it also makes me think about one of the most important aspects of prayer: What is my image of God? How does my God image relate to my knowledge of Jesus? Do I really know the one who sent Jesus?

Provision: What is your image of God? How well do you know the one who sent Jesus? How do you view God? How do you imagine the Trinity? When you pray, do you find you pray to different images of God based on what's on your heart? It's worth doing some nonjudgmental reflection on your image of God and how you pray. It's amazing to me how often I still hear people ascribing bad things that happen in their lives as God's punishment for their sins. If this is the case for you, see if you can keep this verse from 1 John front and center as you pray: *"We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. **God is love**, and all who live in love live in God, and God in them"* (4:16).