April 2020

Living Faith
Daily Catholic Devotions

“\textit{I am with you ALWAYS...}”
Matthew 28:20
WANT TO FEEL CLOSER TO GOD?

The God Minute

PRAYER MADE EASY

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Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

— Luke 2:19

DEAR READERS:

As we begin this issue, Lent is winding down, Holy Week is just a few days away, and Easter is on the horizon. We will celebrate the risen Christ, our savior who sacrificed all for us. Let us not celebrate for just one day. Easter is a season, and we are an Easter people!

_Living Faith_ can help remind us of this each day as we focus on God’s ways instead of the ways of the world. But sometimes, the weight of the world seems to be upon us. May the Scripture and the prayerful affirmations on the following pages help us to reflect on the eternal truth that, no matter the trials we go through, no matter our losses, Jesus has secured victory for us. May we go forth with this Easter joy in our hearts!

I hope and pray that this issue deepens your relationship with God and one another.

In Christ,

Terence Hegarty, editor
Living Faith provides daily reflections based on a Scripture passage from the daily Mass. With readings for daily Mass listed at the bottom of each devotion, this booklet helps Catholics pray and meditate in spirit with the seasons of the Church Year. Citations are from the Mass Lectionary, which is based on the New American Bible.

IMPRIMATUR
Bishop Mark S. Rivituso, Auxiliary Bishop • Archdiocese of St. Louis
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The Babylonian army had invaded Israel and taken a number of Jewish men captive. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, set up a statue of a Babylonian god and demanded that everyone kneel in worship of the god. But three Jewish men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, refused to kneel before the false god. So Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be cast into a white-hot furnace to be burned alive. When he went to see what had become of the men, he found them walking around in the midst of the flames, completely unharmed! The king was convinced that they were protected by their God and ordered them to be set free.

Biblical stories like these have inspired both Jewish and Christian believers to defy evil orders and to suffer torture and even death for their beliefs. They are an inspiration for all of us.

Fr. Martin Pable, O.F.M. Cap.

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95 • Daniel 3:52-56
John 8:31-42
Great and Small

When Abram prostrated himself, God spoke to him.

Genesis 17:3

Last September, I witnessed the ordination of the new bishop of our diocese. Part of the service included his lying face down before the altar while the congregation and the gathered clergy sang the Litany of the Saints. What must it have been like for him to hear over 1,600 voices in the church imploring the holy ones to listen to our prayers for him? Our bishop undoubtedly experienced both his littleness and his greatness, as Abram probably did when God announced, “I am making you the father of a host of nations” (verse 5). Bishop Joensen was offered strength and encouragement coming forth from the sung prayers. Unlike Abram, who was alone when he reclined face down in his humble, listening posture, our bishop received the gift of the extended Church community. How valuable our prayerful presence can be to another who faces a daunting task. Let us count on this spiritual strength to uplift others when we pray for them.

Sr. Joyce Rupp, O.S.M.

Genesis 17:3-9 • Psalm 105:4-9
John 8:51-59
My youngest son and I recently headed to the Badlands of South Dakota. I had seen photographs of the layered, varicolored, almost lunar landscape, but the reality of what I encountered surprised me. I had assumed the formations we’d be walking among were solid rock—but they’re not! They’re sediment. Essentially huge piles of crumbly, dried mud. No wonder I’d not been able to find any rock-climbing activities for my son. You’d tumble right down if you tried. And no wonder this park, unlike any other national park, permits open, off-trail hiking. It’s all going to erode anyway, and fairly soon in geological time.

From a distance, so solid, but in truth, in the process of disintegration—like all of what I see around me, including my own earthly life. But in faith and hope, I place my foothold on the place that will never wash away, that will hold me secure forever: God’s love—sure, strong and lasting.

Lord, be my strength in all things today.

Amy Welborn
Caiaphas plots the death of Jesus, for the sake of “the people.” Of course, that was the plan all along, ever since Eden, the united will of the Holy Trinity. But this proud high priest has to have his moment in the sun, the last gasp of a corrupted line of prophets, serving only to underscore the irony that John’s Gospel relishes, a lie telling the truth. We are just hours away from Palm Sunday, to start the only week when every day is “Good,” as the world turns upside down. Our salvation is at hand; Caiaphas’ conspiracy will only guarantee Christ’s enthronement on the cross and our rebirth as children of God.

Miguel Dulick

**PRAY** Father, you gave us your only son, that we might be reconciled to you. As we participate in these holiest of days ahead, may our prayers, reflection and participation in the sacraments lead us to a greater appreciation of your great love for us.

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Ezekiel 37:21-28 • Jeremiah 31:10-13
John 11:45-56
Awakening

Morning after morning
he opens my ear that I may hear. Isaiah 50:4

As we stand at the beginning of this week we call holy, we pray for ears that are awakened, ears that hear as disciples do. And how do disciples hear? Attentively, noticing the sometimes subtle ways in which the Holy One is at work in our lives and in our world. As we listen today to the account of the Agony in the Garden, we see Jesus’ companions seemingly lacking these awakened ears, missing his plea for the comfort of their presence in his hour of anguish. Perhaps at times, we may recognize this spiritual deafness in our own lives. Today, let us pray for deep listening as we accompany Jesus in his Passion through Holy Week and beyond.

Sr. Chris Koellhoffer, I.H.M.
Life presents us with endless opportunities to practice waiting. How we wait for small inconveniences like a stoplight to change or our turn in the checkout line reveals something about ourselves. When I am able to go through the day with a sense of trust, I stop trying to control the things I cannot change. The circumstances don’t change, but my attitude does, and that makes all the difference.

Of course, in this Holy Week, the passion of Jesus vividly reminds us that waiting sometimes stretches us to the limits of our faith, hope and love. Whether it is a trying personal situation or angst over the state of the world, we often come up against situations over which we have no power. In those moments, the image of Jesus on the cross is a powerful reminder that no matter how bleak things may appear, new life can come out of what looks like a hopeless situation.

Terri Mifek

Isaiah 42:1-7 • Psalm 27:1-3, 13-14
John 12:1-11
Love, Despite the Failings

So Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he meant. John 13:24

The gospels remind us again and again that Jesus was surrounded by flesh-and-blood humans with all of their foibles and failings. In other words, people just like us. Jesus announces that he will be betrayed, but, once again, the apostles seem clueless. So Peter, like the big brother of the group, prompts the disciple “whom Jesus loved” to find out what he meant. Even then, the disciples don’t understand.

As if to underscore the point, Jesus informs Peter that, far from laying down his life for the master, Peter will soon deny him. How fortunate we are that Jesus did not summon the most successful and the brightest. We are fortunate because our God is a God of forgiveness and mercy. Salvation is not for the already perfect. Instead, we are all like Peter, trying to understand, professing our love and faithfulness even when we fall into sin again and again.

Lord, may I, like Peter, never stop loving you, no matter my failings.

Greg Erlandson
April 8 Wednesday of Holy Week

Beautiful Answers

Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Psalm 69:14 (responsorial)

What a raw day it was—not my idea of springtime. Driving in traffic only added to my gray mood. As I edged up to an intersection, the light turned red. I noticed a school across the street. On its lawn was a sign as big as a billboard. In huge lowercase letters were the words, “you are beautiful.” I felt my face flush. Was that message meant for me? It couldn’t be…could it?

A few weeks later, I noticed you are beautiful stenciled under a viaduct. Little stickers of you are beautiful started popping up in unlikely places—elevators, telephone poles and even dumpsters. And so it continues. Each time I discover one, I want to high-five the heavens. God does speak in such surprising ways. This message captivates me because you are beautiful—we all are!

Gail Goleas

Gail Goleas is a pastoral associate in the Archdiocese of Chicago and serves as a field delegate for its marriage tribunal. She is a federal prison volunteer for Prisoner Visitation & Support, a national organization.

Isaiah 50:4-9 • Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34
Matthew 26:14-25
Gift, Grace and Blessing

I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:15

Today is the glorious feast of Holy Thursday. It is a day of Eucharist, of gratitude for all ministries and of foot washing. Most of us will hear a homily on following Jesus’ model of self-giving, which is never easy, especially when we offer a service devoid of judgment and negative evaluations.

But we can’t simply stop at foot washing. Jesus gave us other models as well. Hearing of his friend Lazarus’ death, Jesus wept compassionately. He blessed children when he was tired, loved his enemies, turned the other cheek and witnessed to forgiveness in everyday life. He asked us to do the same.

May we, on this first of the holy days, examine our lives from the standpoint of Jesus’ challenges to us, humbly asking us to become a living Eucharist so as to be like him, making of our lives a gift, grace and blessing.

Sr. Bridget Haase, O.S.U.
Why Is This Day Called “Good”? 

Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth. Isaiah 53:7

Why do we call this day Good? After all, this was the day Jesus was brutally tortured and executed as a criminal. Despite this reality, Christians have called this day Good Friday for centuries. There are several theories. Some believe Good Friday was originally called God’s Friday, which simply meant it was a very sacred day. Others maintain that it is called Good because Jesus’ terrible death led to the resurrection and the salvation of the world. What is “more good” than that? One Scripture professor said, “When we look at Jesus hanging on the cross, we should say not only, ‘Look how much he suffered,’ but, more importantly, ‘Look how much he loved.’”

Good Friday, then, is good because it attests to Jesus’ incredible sacrificial love. The question for each of us today is this: How can I make this day—and every day—good by my Christ-like love for others?

Jesus, help me to love as you love.

Sr. Melannie Svoboda, S.N.D.

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Isaiah 52:13—53:12 • Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 • John 18:1—19:42
Then the angel said to the women in reply, “Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified.”

Matthew 28:5

The followers of Jesus certainly were afraid following his crucifixion. They had lost their friend and leader. They feared for their own lives and wondered what could possibly be coming next. And, yet, still they sought him, for he had promised something that sounded impossible—his own resurrection from the dead and eternal life for them and a new generation of believers.

We are not much different today. We live in fear of unknown, imagined and very real evil. We fear the negative influences in our lives, forgetting all the time that we have the risen Christ as a living antidote to this fear. He is “hiding in plain sight,” standing nearby and always waiting for us to seek him out and find him, to turn our heads and discover him right next to us, bringing peace.

Jesus, be the ever-present bearer of love and courage in my life.

Steve Givens
Goodness Triumphs!

...he saw and believed. John 20:8

When I call my mother, I typically start the conversation with, “What are you doing, Mom?” She often responds in a droll tone, “Watching the bad news on TV.”

Indeed, we are daily saturated with news of wars, riots, famines and natural disasters, not to mention dire predictions about the environment and the rising number of terrorist attacks. Death, destruction and evil seem to have the upper hand.

But because of today, Easter Sunday, we know otherwise. Jesus is risen. He has smashed the forces of evil and Satan forever. Suffering, evil and death will not have the last word, either in our world or in our own lives.

Whatever suffering or trial may be afflicting you, know that it is not the final word. Jesus is risen! This is the real news, and it is Good News!

Msgr. Stephen J. Rossetti

Msgr. Stephen Rossetti is a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse, NY and is an associate professor at The Catholic University of America. He has also been a visiting professor at the Gregorian University in Rome.
But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. Acts 2:24

Of all the displays of divine power, none is more compelling than this—that Jesus of Nazareth broke the chains of death! It is a stunning reversal of all that we are accustomed to seeing in the created order. All things tend toward decay. Flowers wilt; fires smolder and die. Even the stars collapse in on themselves.

Yet the victory of Christ breaks forth in a glory that cannot be contained. This Pentecost moment, and the inspired preaching of St. Peter, is the grand consequence of the empty tomb. It is the fulfillment of God’s plan for all people, the redemption of the entire cosmos. May this Easter season rekindle our zeal to proclaim the Good News—that because Christ is risen, death is not the end!

Steve Pable

Steve Pable is a practicing husband and father of four, serving in pastoral ministry and discipleship formation at St. Gabriel Parish in Neenah, WI. He earned his MA in Theology from the University of Notre Dame.

Acts 2:14, 22-33 • Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11
Matthew 28:8-15
The Mercy of the Lord

He loves justice and right;
Of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full. Psalm 33:5

Pope Francis, following his election in 2013, has become internationally known as a dedicated apostle of mercy and kindness. I appreciate the pope for his theology of compassion and forgiveness. He teaches genuine mercy.

No one ever walked the earth that was more merciful than Jesus. The practice of mercy is a foundational virtue taught by Scripture and tradition. The question is often asked, How can God be all just and all merciful at the same time? God is all just, but because we are a weak and struggling humanity, his justice need not be applied most severely. In God’s mercy, we can always be reconciled with him in this life. I rejoice that the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord.

Fr. James McKarns

Acts 2:36-41 • Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
John 20:11-18
Always Different

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. Luke 24:27

For 20 years, every time I attended a wedding, I remembered what it felt like to be the bride. Now that my own children are getting older, however, I find myself at weddings imagining how the couple’s parents must feel instead. Our life circumstances are always changing. So are our perspectives.

Even when we return to the same events, we are not the same people that we were before. That’s why it’s important to keep reading (and rereading) Scripture. The word of God is a mystery that is always unfolding anew to us. Each time we interact with it, we are different, ready for new and deeper insights. Just as Jesus, on the way to Emmaus, helped the disciples glean fresh meaning from the Scriptures, so will he continue to reveal himself to us if we open our minds and hearts to him.

Word of God, speak to me!

Karla Manternach

Acts 3:1-10 • Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9
Startled. Terrified. Joyous. Incredulous. These are the words used to describe the disciples when the risen Christ joins them. And yet, should they have been surprised? Jesus had explained to his disciples that he had come to fulfill the prophecies. And, they had witnessed everything that had happened during those three years of public ministry. Maybe they hadn’t stopped to think about what all of that actually meant—to Jesus and to them.

We see evidence of the Lord every day in our own lives. His wonders are present all around us but are especially evident in a baby’s laugh, a sunrise’s beauty and the taste of fresh strawberries. We are witnesses of these things. And as witnesses, we are called to share that evidence with those who struggle to believe or have given up hope.

*Lord, use my lips and arms to open the eyes of others.*

Melanie Rigney


Acts 3:11-26 • Psalm 8:2, 5-9
Luke 24:35-48
Jesus Only

There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved. Acts 4:12

Jesus is the Savior. Not your parish priest, your favorite author, dynamic speaker or retreat master. For that matter, not your favorite saint or mystic. Not you. Only Jesus saves. This is God’s design. All these spiritual people, including you, are small lanterns illuminating the way to Jesus, whose life is the template for our lives.

Sometimes we get distracted by the lanterns themselves. So we time our Mass and confession to get our favorite priest. We hold certain speakers and authors up on pedestals and follow them like groupies. We get so taken up with our favorite saint that we unduly press others to join in our devotion. In the fire of our religious zeal, we make other people’s souls our project, thinking we are responsible for their salvation.

Only Jesus saves. Go to him and ask how to repair your lantern.

Jennifer Christ

Jennifer Christ is a spiritual director in Milwaukee, WI.
Speaking as a Companion

Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiv- ing them to be uneducated, ordinary men, the leaders, elders, and scribes were amazed, and they recognized them as the companions of Jesus. Acts 4:13

Have I ever been as bold as Peter and John? More often, I’m sorry to say, I have been silenced in the face of much less adversity.

What is it that keeps us silent? Or, at least, less-than-bold? Ridicule? Rejection? The fear of losing a friend? Perhaps even physical harm? All are legitimate concerns. But today’s first reading should embolden us since we are told that Peter and John were “uneducated, ordinary men.” Yet their example today is extraordinary. It should help us to be courageous, considering that their boldness came only days after they had essentially denied Jesus and scurried away in fear.

Our task isn’t necessarily to amaze people. What we are asked to do, what we should be inspired to strive for, is to be recognized as “companions of Jesus.”

Dear Jesus, may I never forget that I am your companion.

Terence Hegarty

Acts 4:13-21 • Psalm 118:1, 14-21
Mark 16:9-15
The disciples were hiding in a locked room when Jesus approached them, bearing the wounds of his crucifixion and offering his greeting of peace. He then sent them to be forces of reconciliation in the world. He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, so that whose sins they forgive are forgiven.

What does it mean to me, as a disciple of Jesus, that he would come to me in the midst of my anxiety and fear, breathing peace? He says to go out from the locked room—wherever I hide from problems and discord—and make peace.

Peacemaking is a dance of relationship. It is conversation leading toward understanding. It is both an offering and a receiving of Jesus’ peace. Not everyone wants to be moved in this way. Sometimes I become impatient with it too.

Jesus, breathe with me in this movement of reconciliation.

Elizabeth Duffy

Acts 2:42-47 • Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 • 1 Peter 1:3-9 • John 20:19-31
Blowin’ in the Wind

The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. John 3:8

The Greek word *pneuma* means both wind and spirit. Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about the wind of the Spirit bringing new life.

I keep remembering when a major hurricane hit central Florida where all my children and their families live. I was actually kept in touch with all three households on a cell phone texting chain linking one phone from each of our houses. Each posted where they were taking shelter. One of my sons described pounding sounds in the wind. His brother responded: “That’s part of your roof coming off!” Three phones sent: “Let’s pray together NOW!” We all prayed with the Spirit. The wind of the storm damaged homes, but the wind of the Spirit held us lovingly together!

*Holy Spirit, when the winds of trouble threaten our lives, you are right there with us (even through texting!).*

Patricia Livingston

Acts 4:23-31 • Psalm 2:1-9

John 3:1-8
Desire for Salvation

...so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. John 3:14-15

Does God love us so deeply and so passionately that we are destined to live in God’s embrace forever? The gift of eternal life flows from an incredible divine desire for us, a desire that we can never fully understand. God longs for us to respond to this love. When we do, God’s love and our love join together as one. Those who accept this have no room in their hearts for violence or selfishness. This seems to me to be the deepest meaning of salvation. Salvation doesn’t just take place in our resurrected life. It is meant to start now.

Today could be a good time to remember how God has touched us with divine love. Our understanding of this love grows when we silently reflect on it. Then we become more aware of the divine presence that flows within us, bringing us peace, both now and forever.

Fr. Kenneth E. Grabner, C.S.C.

Fr. Ken Grabner is a Holy Cross priest and chaplain at Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame. He is the author of books and meditations on the spiritual life.
Standing in the Light

But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God. John 3:21

When St. Francis of Assisi was ordered in court to return money he’d taken from his father, he not only did that, but stripped off his clothes and returned them to his father as well. Many saw his nakedness as shameful, and it’s reported that the bishop in judgment covered Francis with his own cloak. But Francis was called to the light strongly enough to be willing to stand naked before the bishop, his father, all in attendance and before God.

In truth, we’re all naked all the time before God. Mostly, it’s a comfort to me that I am intimately known. But there are times when, like Adam and Eve in the garden, I want to hide myself. Ultimately, though, I realize that I do have to expose my flaws and admit my failures and limitations if I want to grow toward Christ. It can be painful and embarrassing, but it is the path to the light. I pray for the courage to stand, as St. Francis did, bravely in the full light of truth.

Aileen O’Donoghue

Acts 5:17-26 • Psalm 34:2-9
John 3:16-21
Waiting for Rescue

When the just cry out, the Lord hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them. Psalm 34:18

Is there anything more comforting than knowing that the Father of the Universe hears our prayers and rescues us? Our suffering never goes unnoticed. Our tears are never inconsequential. Our insomnia and restlessness matter. Our pleas are known before they ever leave our quivering lips.

Sometimes our relief is immediate and palpable. Sometimes an answered prayer comes in a rush and is obvious. Other times, it’s so subtle and personal that only we know the intimacy of his tender response. Sometimes we have to wait for our answer.

We cry out to God, and with belief and expectancy, we wait for rescue. What can we do while we wait? We can work to remove the resistance we have, meaning our lack of acceptance, our lack of trust and the tendency we have to try and fix and control. The wisest way to wait is to focus on God rather than on the problem, because the problem and the solution are not on the same level.

Kristin Armstrong
There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many? John 6:9

One young boy out of the multitude of Jesus’ followers offers his basket of bread and fish to help feed the hungry crowd. The disciples are doubtful. The crowd followed Jesus not because they wanted something to eat, but because they heard he could cure the sick. Certainly, some in the crowd may have been ill and in need of healing, but all of them undoubtedly needed spiritual nourishment. The miracle of feeding five thousand people resonates for us as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. When we leave the eucharistic table, we bring Christ into the world in all we do.

More often than not, we may feel like our meager gifts couldn’t possibly make much of a difference in this troubled world. Still, we offer them to Jesus who will multiply what we bring and inspire us with the grace to nourish others with God’s love.

Deborah A. Meister
Best Day Ever!

Happy the people who know the joyful shout; in the light of your countenance, O Lord, they walk.

Psalm 89:16-17

Last week I heard a woman describing how her granddaughter reacts every time that the young girl visits her: “Grandma, this was the best day of my life!” I felt the biggest smile spread through me when I thought of the child’s enthusiasm, how she allowed herself to be enthralled with what she had experienced.

When the days go well for us adults, we turn quite readily toward what this granddaughter expressed. But if our plans and expectations fall apart, at the end of the day, we consider it nothing but a complete disaster. Let us heed the psalmist: “Happy the people who know the joyful shout.” That joy may be stuck underneath some verbal rubble, hiding out in a niche of disappointment or nestled in a brief respite from physical pain. If we bid joy to come close to us, we may well find that the simplest of gifts within the day can bring a smile and can lessen a sorrow.

Sr. Joyce Rupp, O.S.M.
At the Table

...while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him...

Luke 24:30-31

I have always been puzzled (and inspired) by this story of the two disciples who met and talked with the risen Lord on the road but did not recognize him. I am puzzled for obvious reasons. They talked about serious, important things, including his crucifixion and death. He explained Scripture to them. He was right there, and yet they could not see him. How blind could they be?

But I have been inspired, too, because I am just like them. Even when I pray, even when I spend time in Scripture, even when I think I am “walking the walk,” I so often miss what is right before me. How blind can I be? Then the bread is broken and the wine poured. I stretch out my hand and there he is.

Jesus, may I always find you at your table.

Steve Givens

Acts 2:14, 22-33 • Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11
Belief Versus Assumption

So they said to him, “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.”

John 6:28-29

My wallet was old and bulkier than I needed. It was also patterned in a hideous pinkish paisley. But it had been a gift from my son, who, as he proudly told me on that Christmas morning years ago, had picked it out all by himself.

So, not wanting to hurt his feelings, I kept it. I recently mentioned the situation in passing and that same son said, “Well, why don’t you just get a new one?” When I explained my assumptions, he gave me a blank stare. He had no recollection of even ever giving me the thing. Zero. I was free! How many assumptions do I carry with me about what I’m called to do and be? When is the last time I actually bothered to check with the Lord? When is the last time that I believed in him enough, asked him directly—and listened to what he had to tell me?

Jesus, help me move past assumptions and listen to you.

Amy Welborn

John 6:22-29
Stiff-Necked People

You stiff-necked people… You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it. Acts 7:51, 53

I had a friend, the only person I knew who used the term “stiff-necked” to describe people who refuse to do what is the right thing to do. When I saw it in this passage from Acts, it reminded me of him. We all probably have had a stiff-neck day or two. I know I have. We forget or ignore our obligations and responsibilities to loved ones, to our community. We know the “law,” but for some reason, we don’t comply. Sometimes it is small things: not showing up, not being kind or considerate. Sometimes it is more serious: we aren’t truthful, we judge rashly, we ignore our commitment to the poor, we act without mercy or compassion. With God’s strengthening grace, we need to observe the law “as transmitted by the angels” and avoid those stiff-necked ways that lead us astray.

Paul Pennick

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Not Rejected

I will not reject anyone who comes to me… John 6:37

What runs more deeply in the human heart than the fear of rejection? This fear haunts us in nearly all that we do, showing up in different ways at different times. It may make it hard for us to be in a group or hard to be alone with someone. If we’re not aware of it, it may mar our relationships with family or friends or our coworkers.

Yet one thing runs deeper still in us. As a sunflower to the sun, so our hearts know to turn to the ever-shining love that God has for us. Our minds may resist. We may find it hard to believe and pull away. But our inner lights respond to the Light. Nothing can take away this inner knowing. Jesus touches it today when he tells us he is as near to us as our hunger and thirst, becoming bread for us. He will not reject us!

Jesus, help me to come to you no matter what.

Mary Marrocco

Mary Marrocco is a theologian, author and psychotherapist. She is co-founder of St. Macrina Counselling Services and is a lecturer at St. Augustine’s Seminary, Toronto, Canada.

Acts 8:1-8 • Psalm 66:1-7
John 6:35-40
With Eyes of Faith

I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. John 6:51

We know the rest of the story—how it led to quarrels among the Jews and even among his disciples. Indeed, these words of Jesus are difficult to understand. And they were especially so for his contemporaries. How can I possibly believe what Jesus has said here? I have always loved this gospel passage because it challenges me to reflect on the incredibly vulnerable and magnificent gift of faith.

What a happy day it will be when a mystery becomes something we embrace with eyes of faith instead of trying to understand it! Look at the crucifix with eyes of faith and you can hardly miss the truth that Jesus gave his flesh for the life of this world.

What would happen in those moments of doubt if we would simply turn to God? “It is written in the prophets: ‘They shall all be taught by God’” (verse 45).

Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B.
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