

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY*

Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17
1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 28
Matthew 25:31–46

MONDAY

Luke 21:1–4
"... she out of her poverty has put in all she had ..."

TUESDAY

Luke 21:5–11
"Nation will rise against nation ..."

WEDNESDAY

Luke 21:12–19
"By your endurance you will gain your souls."

THURSDAY

Luke 21:20–28
"... they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud ..."

FRIDAY

Luke 21:29–33
"... my words will not pass away."

SATURDAY

Luke 21:34–36
"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down ..."

**Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King*

Christ in a Thousand Faces

Today's Gospel of the Last Judgment is not a parable. It is a revelation. This scene is not so much about doing as it is about seeing.

Clearly, we are called to do certain things: to feed the hungry, give drink to those who thirst, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and imprisoned. But what is often overlooked is *why* we are called to do these things. This is why the most important word in this passage is the preposition "to."

Jesus says whatever we do for the least of his brothers or sisters we do it to him. Jesus does not say whatever we do to the least of his brothers or sisters we do it for him. The connection is closer than that. When we do these things, we do them to Jesus.



What this passage reveals is that Jesus is present in those whom we serve. Jesus' presence is certainly in the least among us, but it is not limited to them. Today's Gospel reveals the intimate connection that Jesus has with all people—the young and old, the attractive and the repulsive, those who are successful and those who are destitute.

We tend to limit Christ's presence to those who look Christ-like: those who are good and honest, those who are polite and responsible, those who are hardworking and respectable. But this revelation says that such a view is too narrow. Whenever we encounter *any* person, there is something Christ-like in that person. Jesus can be seen in a thousand faces.



The Faith of the Church

At the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of the world asserted that acts of Christian charity should reach out to absolutely every person and every need. This outreach flows from our faith, which believes that every human being has been created in the image of God and that every act of service and love is directed not only to the person in need but to Christ himself (Cf. *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* 8).



Questions of the Week

Matthew heightens the impact of today's Gospel by ignorance. The just are unaware that in their actions of service, they were serving Christ. In this way Christ's words, "You did it to me," become the central focus of the narrative.

Adults

Do I hold back from helping others because I have a poor opinion of them? How might my attitude change if I were to see Christ in every person?

Children

Who do I find difficult to love? How can I love them anyway?

Responding to God's Word . . .

It is a profound challenge to believe that Christ is present in all people. There are some people who are manipulative and abusive. But even these least among us retain some presence of Christ.

Believing the revelation of the Last Judgment can change us. We can forgive our enemies, if we remember that Christ is in our enemies. Even if we cannot see that Christ-likeness, we can choose to admit that Christ lives in them.

We can become more patient with people who annoy us, if we believe that Jesus remains in those we find

difficult. We can become less critical, less judgmental, less prejudiced, if we realize that we do not need to see Christ's presence in others before we believe it is there.

Each time we accept this revelation, it expands our vision. Of course such vision should lead to action—to feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger. But action is not the first step. The first step is seeing.

If we see where Christ is, action will follow. If we recognize that Christ is present in everyone, we cannot help but serve all our brothers and sisters.



Meditation Moment

Two young people were canoeing in the Canadian wilds and were weary. Suddenly they spotted a trapper's cabin. It was unlocked and clean. In it was an open Bible, with this note: "Your cabin saved my life. I was seriously ill and needed shelter. Your cabin provided it. I can't repay you with money, only with God's blessing. Read Matthew 25:3-46" (today's reading). Later, one of the young people said, "I'd read that passage often, but I never understood it until that day."

For reflection . . .

Since starting this program, what one gospel passage has struck me in a special way?

LAY HOLD OF THE BIBLE UNTIL
THE BIBLE LAYS HOLD OF YOU.

WILLIAM H. HOUGHTON

FROM *VISION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

A Prayer for Vision

Lord Jesus,
some people draw
me in by their wit, their
energy, and their beauty.
Some people put me off by their
criticism, their weakness, and their
self-absorption. Help me to see
that you are present in all people.
When I bask in their virtues, let me
understand that those gifts come
from you. When I shudder at
their faults, let me remember
that your love remains
in the least of my
brothers and sisters.
Amen.

*Carry this thought in your
heart as a guide for your faith
journey this week.*

So God created
humankind in his image,
in the image of God he
created them; male and
female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Identify a family member you have difficulty loving. Pray that Christ will allow you to see his presence in that person.

In the workplace or in school. Recognize which person reveals the presence of Christ to you. Thank him or her for that gift.

In the community. Ask who is considered "the least" in your neighborhood or church. Begin a discussion on how that person's (or group's) needs can be met.

Profile in Faith

The Climax of Creation

The narrative in the first chapter of Genesis does more than assert God's action in creating men and women. The Jewish faith of this passage professes that humans are the climax of God's work and have been formed in the very image of God. In this way, the inherent value and dignity of every person is proclaimed.

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† Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, DD, Bishop of Dallas
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