

Getting Ready to Pray

Here in the United States we are celebrating our Independence as a nation won in 1776. The war to secure that independence was bloody and a sad way to begin a nation's history. We have consistently struggled to preserve our union and our liberties and assist other parts of the world to gain or retain their identities.

As we prepare to celebrate this week's liturgy, we might pray for personal freedoms from dominating forces within our souls and our bodies. We can pray as well for the sacredness of other dependencies and relationships which assist our God-given identities.

It is not easy to determine which dependencies are sacred and which ones are ill. It is not easy either to know when our in-dependencies are healthy or ill as well. We come to the Eucharist to express our healthy dependence on God's love and receive the challenges to use freely God's many gifts in the service of peace and justice.



“ Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”. 2 Corinthians 3:17

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Getting Ready to Hear

In today's first reading the prophet Zechariah has been relating various words from God; the One and powerful God. In the chapter from which our First Reading is taken, the prophet has been relating threats and promises against the adulterous and unfaithful kings and shepherds of God's people. What we hear is a messianic prophecy about the One Who is to Come and what he will be doing. Riding on a donkey is not a lowly or humble affair. This person will be princely and will be the recipient of God's favor which will be justly deserved.

The Gospel has two sections. In the first, Jesus had been speaking earlier of John the Baptist who is in prison. After speaking to John's disciples about Jesus' own person and mission, Jesus turns to those who consider themselves wise and learned, namely the teachers and the Pharisees.

We hear a prayer or direct address from Jesus to his Father. It has the tone of gratitude for the mysterious ways God has been revealing true wisdom to these simple yet open hearts. They have not relied on logic, signs, or execution of laws, to gain freedom of soul. They have been experiencing Jesus and his ways and the call to the ways of the Kingdom.

The second section is a heart-felt direct address to the followers of Jesus to keep learning his ways. The “yoke” which is the heaviness of the Law and especially the interpretations of the Pharisees, is being replaced by the gentleness and personal relationship offered by Jesus.

This “yoke” of Jesus is personal as well as cultic or institutional. He was calling them and us to community (church) because love labors to bring us together. He calls to our need to be at peace and to let go of our inner-personal war-makings. He is telling us to be as gentle with our personal struggling selves as he himself is with us. He implies that if we learn of his gentleness and way of relating, then we will be more likely to drop our defenses and regain our unity as members of His kingdom.

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2 Corinthians 3:1

Liturgy of the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Entrance Antiphon: Leader

Your merciful love, O God, we have received in the midst of your temple. Your praise, O God, like your name, reaches the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with saving justice.

Cf. Ps 48 (47):10-11

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Sisters and Brothers, God desires to converse with us through his Word. Let us bless him for his goodness. Blessed be God forever. **Response:** Blessed be God forever.

Introduction: Leader

We gather today to celebrate the Lord's Day. One with our sisters and brothers and with the entire Church, we will listen to God's Word and join in prayer. So, as we prepare to hear of God's love poured out through Christ, let us acknowledge that He is the source of pardon and strength.

All: *The Confiteor*

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Leader: In acknowledgement and thanksgiving for God's mercy we offer our praise:

All: *The Gloria*

Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace to men of good will. We praise You. We bless You. We adore you. We glorify You. We give You thanks for Your great glory. Lord God, heavenly King, O God the almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only-begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the

Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Leader: Let us pray

O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

First reading: A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah: 9:9-10

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass. He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. The word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

I will extol you, O my God and King, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works. The LORD lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Second reading:

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans:

8:9, 11-13

Brothers and sisters: You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you. Consequently, brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The word of the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God

Gospel acclamation:

R. Alleluia, alleluia

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

Cf. Mt 11:25

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel proclamation:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

11:25-30

At that time Jesus exclaimed: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

The Gospel of the Lord. **R.** Praise to you, lord Jesus Christ.

Having listened to God's word in these passages from Holy Scripture we now profess our faith in all that He has revealed:

All—Profession of Faith:

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit
was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate, he suffered
death and was buried, and rose

again on the third day in accordance
with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated
at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the
Son,

Who with the Father and the Son is
adored and glorified, who has spoken
through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism
for the forgiveness of sins and I look
forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful—Leader

Introduction: With grateful hearts we offer our prayers to you, Almighty Father, confident in your power to make life and make it new:

Intentions: For the Church universal: that it will not grow complacent but pursue goodness no matter the cost; we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For our nation; that the Lord will bless it and keep us always thankful for the gift of freedom; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

For doctors and researchers: that through their work the pandemic will soon be brought under control and a vaccine and effective medicines discovered; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

For all those giving of themselves so that others may be helped; may they be protected and refreshed knowing they are incarnating our Lord's compassion and care; we pray to the Lord. **R.** Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who feel marginalized: may they find in Christians humbleness of heart, hospitality, and hope; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who labor and are burdened with illness or anxiety: may they respond to our Lord's invitation to come to him and find rest and consolation; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died: may they rise again to new life with and in Christ and live in his eternal presence; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

Prayer: Eternal God, with joy we walk in the light of your face knowing that you alone set us free from our fears; with an abiding love for your Son as we live under his protection we offer our prayers to you through him, Jesus the Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Leader: With the love of Christ, let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Leader: Communion Antiphon: Ps 34 (33):9

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed the man who seeks refuge in him.

All—Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

Leader: Prayer After Communion

Grant, we pray, O Lord, that having been replenished by such great gifts, we may gain the prize of salvation and never cease to praise you. Through Christ our Lord. **Response:** Amen.

Blessing—making the sign of the cross:

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us, and bring us to everlasting life.

Response: Amen.

Leader: Let us go in peace.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Living In The Holy Spirit

I've lived and worked within academic circles for most of my adult life, studying in various universities, teaching within university circles, and having university professors as close friends and colleagues. What's that world like? What kind of folks inhabit academic circles?

Perhaps my experience is atypical because most of the scholars under whom I studied and most of the theologians and other scholars who have been my colleagues became professors and university lecturers in function of ministry, as a vocation, rather than as a career. Thus, instead of struggling with faith and church, they were driven to become academics in function of their faith and church commitments. In some ways, professors in theology schools and schools of ministry aren't typical of academic circles.

But an academic is an academic and graduate and post-graduate studies, whatever the motivation for doing them, have some of the same effect on people. And so I suspect that the circles I have been part of, in the end, are more typical than atypical. And what is typical?

Academics, scholars, and university professors, like any segment of society, are a complex mix: in university circles you will find some of the most humble, gracious, faith-filled, and genuinely good people you will ever meet; just as you will also find some of the most arrogant, self-absorbed, amoral, and cynical people in the world. The academic world looks like the rest of the world.

Given that truth, I have long been haunted by the saying of Jesus that the deep secrets of life, often times, and of faith, are hidden from the learned and the clever and revealed instead to children, to those of a less-complex mind. I don't doubt the truth of this; I wonder why.

Why? Clearly intelligence and learning are good things. Intelligence is the gift from God that sets us apart from animals and access to learning is a precious right given us by God. Indeed, ignorance and lack of education are things every healthy society and every healthy individual strive to overcome. Scripture praises both wisdom and intelligence and the health of any church is partly predicated on having a vigorous intellectual stream within it. Every time in history that the church has let popular piety, however sincere, trump sound theology it has paid a high price. The Reformation arose out of just that and one of the first things that the Council of Trent mandated for Roman Catholics was that its priests be better trained intellectually.

Intelligence and learning are good things. God did not give us intelligence and then ask us not to use it. Naiveté is not a virtue and should never be confused with innocence.

So why is being “intelligent and clever” something that can work against our understanding of the deeper secrets within life and faith?

The fault is not with intelligence and learning, both good things in themselves, but in what they can inadvertently do to us. Intelligence and learning often have the unintended effect of undermining what’s childlike in us, that is, the very strength that they bring into our lives can allow us to unconsciously claim a superiority and have us believe that, given our intelligence, we have both the need and the right to isolate ourselves from others in ways that the natural neediness of children does not permit them to do. Children are not self-sufficient even though they fiercely want to be. They need others and they know it. Consequently they more naturally reach out and take someone’s hand. They don’t have the luxury of self-sufficiency. When we are the “learned and the clever” we can more easily forget that we need others, and consequently don’t as naturally reach for another’s hand as does a child. It’s easier for us to isolate ourselves.

When we are less aware of our contingency we more easily lose sight of the things to which God and life are inviting us. The very strength that intelligence and learning bring into our lives can instill in us a false sense of self-sufficiency that can make us want to separate ourselves in unhealthy ways from others and understand ourselves as superior in some way. And superiority never enters a room alone, but always brings along a number of her children: arrogance, disdain, boredom, cynicism. All of these are occupational hazards for the “learned and the clever” and none of these helps unlock any of life’s deep secrets.

But we must be careful not to misread the lesson. Faith doesn't ask us not to stretch our minds. Neither ignorance nor naiveté serve faith. Faith not only doesn’t fear the hard questions it invites us to ask them. The depths of infinity are never threatened by finite intelligence. And so it’s never a bad thing to become learned and sophisticated; it’s only a bad thing if we remain there. The task is to become post-sophisticated, that is, to remain full of intelligence and learning even as we put on again the mindset of a child.

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