

**Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 14, 2021**

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him..

— John 3:17

GOD'S MERCY

Today's reading from the second book of Chronicles contains a sort of "mini-history" of Israel. It highlights God's mercies in choosing Cyrus the Persian to be an instrument of deliverance when the people were in captivity in Babylon. Despite their sinfulness and the deserved punishment they were undergoing, God's mercy was lavished on the people in the form of a miraculous act of liberation.

The Letter to the Ephesians, in much more theological terms, gives a similar account of a God "who brought us to life with Christ—by grace you have been saved." The author stresses that it was when we were "dead in our transgressions" that God saved us, an act of pure grace. He emphasizes that it is not our own efforts that freed us from sin ("this is not from you"); rather, "it is the gift of God." This, of course, is the heart of the entire Pauline corpus, that salvation comes to us by faith in God's mercy, revealed in the death of Jesus.

—J. S. Paluch Co.

FEAST OF FAITH

Lent, a Season of the Word

Each year on the First Sunday of Lent we hear one of the Gospel accounts of the temptation of Jesus. In Luke's account, the devil cites the scriptures repeatedly, urging Jesus to interpret them in a false, self-serving way—if God sends angels to protect those whom God loves (as it says in Psalm 91), then prove it! But Jesus resists this insidious temptation by turning to scripture passages that tell of right relationship with God—living by God's word, trusting in God, and worshipping God alone.

Jesus himself listened to the inspired word of God and let it shape and form him. Through the liturgy, we do the same. The readings we hear at Mass can teach us, but that is not their primary function. Rather, the scriptures are meant to reveal the Lord to us, to let us experience his presence, and to form us in our Christian identity. Christ's presence is realized by his spoken word, "since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 7). In the readings proclaimed at Mass, we hear the voice of Christ himself.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Is 65:17-21; Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13b; Jn 4:43-54
 Tuesday: Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; Jn 5:1-16
 Wednesday: Is 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18; Jn 5:17-30
 Thursday: Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-23; Jn 5:31-47
 Friday: 2 Sm 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29; Rm 4:13-16-18, 22; Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Lk 2:41-51a
 Saturday: Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-12; Jn 7:40-53
 Sunday: Jer 31:31-34; Ps 51:3-4, 12-15; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33

GOD UPHOLDS ME

I take for my sureties: The power of God to guide me, the might of God to uphold me, the wisdom of God to teach me, the eye of God to watch over me, the ear of God to hear me, the word of God to give me speech, the hand of God to protect me, the way of God to go before me, the shield of God to shelter me. --St. Patrick



WEEKLY



OFFERING

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Finance Corner: Your generosity is greatly needed and appreciated! For the month of **March** offerings:

PLEASE mail to St. Philip/St. Teresa Parish, P. O. Box 339, Occidental CA 95465. Or donate at our website www.stphilipstteresa.org via Paypal or card. Include your offering envelope # with your donation.

3/14: CATH RELIEF SER/CAMP HUMAN DEV. 3/21: Capital Expenditures.

Mark your Calendar for Future Events & Meetings:

Parish Council [PC]: TBA Zoom

Finance Council [FC]: TBA Zoom

Liturgy Committee: TBA Zoom

St. Teresa Ladies Guild: Contact Diane, 823-6044

St. Philip Ladies Guild: Contact Penny, 559-367-7403

Centering Prayer ZOOM: Tues. noon/Fri. 930am - info www.stphilipstteresa.org

✠ ♥ ✠ Mass Intentions ✠ ♥ ✠ Schedule

Email or voicemail the office to request a future Wed/Thurs/Sun Mass Intention. (\$10 offering is mailed to PO Box 339, Occidental CA 95465.)

3/14 Sun. 8am Mass for Diana Laczowski

3/14 Sun. 9:30am Mass ✠ Brendan Smith

3/21 Sun. 8am Mass for the People

3/21 Sun. 9:30am Mass ✠ Brendan Smith

Prayer Requests: Leave a message at 707-408-2650.

Teresa K., Pat K., Thomas T., Susan B., Lorri McC., Sarah, Clifford J., Terri A., Fred P., Theresa S., Sara, Mary Anne P., Barbara, Dave C., Jim P., William, Parson P., Dave, Mary O., Bill Z., Daniel, Sally T., Michael D., Richard M., Kathleen, Peter, Rosa S., Susan B., Joyce D., Anita C., George H., Mimi H, Steve, Barry, Lorrin K., Hugh P., Robert S., Britney N., Jacque W., Rebecca A., April K., Jacinta G., Leo A., Ed C. family, Kathy R., Donna W., Jim K., Sherry S., Papke family., Gail F., Marie N., Christine, James, Lynn, Gary S., Peter R., Gerry N., Diane K., Diana Laczowski, Robin A.

SAINTS AND SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Sun: 4th Sunday of Lent; 2nd Scrutiny; Daylight Saving Time begins
 Wed: St. Patrick
 Thurs: St. Cyril of Jerusalem
 Fri: St. Joseph; Abstinence
 Sat: Spring begins

Pastor's Memo...

1. "Way of the Cross" is one of the most important devotions in Lent. While all our parishioners are exhorted to do this devotion at home individually or as a family, you may make use of this [link](#) on our parish website for the recorded one last Lent. Since we have Mass at 9AM every Wednesday inside St Philip's, we will have this devotion after that Mass, around 9:20AM, during the remaining part of this Lent.

2. Email philip.teresa@yahoo.com or voicemail (707-408-2650) the office to request a future Wed/Thurs/Sun Mass Intention. (Then mail the customary \$10 offering to St. Philip/St. Teresa Parish, PO Box 339, Occidental CA 95465.)

3. March 19, 2021: Solemnity of St. Joseph: Mass at 9 am in St. Philip the Apostle Church

SUNDAY MASSES:

Times & Zoom information can be found at our parish website ---- www.stphilipstteresa.org

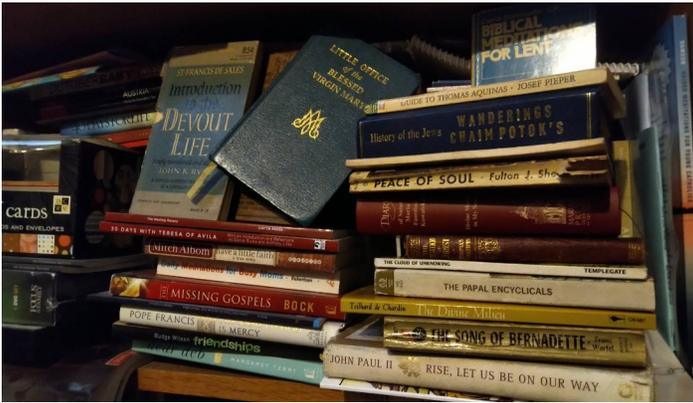


Photo credit: Salt + Light Media/Pedro Guevara-Mann

Deacon-structing Spiritual Reading: Part 2

by [Deacon Pedro](#)

The Spiritual Tool Bag (according to my mother)

[Three weeks ago](#), we deacon-structed spiritual reading because I am growing more and more convinced that if we want to grow in faith and closer to Christ, we have to grow closer to the Church. We must read, study, and pray with Scripture, but we must also learn what the Church teaches – and that's not just learning our catechism. At the beginning of this year, I was engaged in several debates with various people about this or that teaching of the Church, and it occurred to me that there wouldn't be so much confusion if people actually were connected to the Church. For most of us, our connection is limited to Sunday Mass and the odd devotion. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, that is just the bare minimum.

How, then, do we connect with the Church?

I truly believe that we connect with the Church by reading, studying, and praying with the Church's Teachings and Tradition. Part of that Tradition is the writings of all the holy men and women, as I explained three weeks ago. To prove my point I have a short anecdote. My mother was a very devout woman. You may remember that [I wrote about her](#) after her death in 2017. Of course, growing up, I didn't have any appreciation for this. All I knew was a woman who tried very hard to participate in the life of the Church, in the midst of her very, very busy life as a mother, wife, dancer, teacher, and administrator. She tried to have us pray the Rosary as a family. We were lucky to do it once or twice a year. She tried doing daily Advent devotions; we didn't do too badly with that. She tried daily Mass; not as easy. She did as much as she could. I think that for my mother, as for many people at the time when she lived (she was born in 1934), there was a different approach to the Church. It was a time for more Tradition and less Scripture. A time when people went to Mass on solemnities and observed holy days of obligation. They fasted on Fridays and paid attention to what the pope said. Those were the days of the Baltimore Catechism. People learned it and followed it. No questions.

At least that's what I deduced from some of my mother's stories.

I think it was also a time when people who wanted to stay connected to the Church engaged more in spiritual reading. I began to think this after my mom's death, when I went through the many books in her library. I was amazed and quickly filled a whole suitcase with them (being very careful because many of them had been rebound):

Spiritual Reading:

A Diary of a Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux
Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales
Guide to Thomas Aquinas by Josef Pieper
The Song of Bernadette (maybe not quite a spiritual classic, but it is the story of a saint)
The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis (this one keeps popping up!)
The Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska

Devotionals:

The Daily Missal
The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary (which shows that she was trying to pray the Office of the Church – I have an amazing story about this one if you care to read it at the bottom of my post.*)
Daily Readings from *The Cloud of Unknowing*
Biblical Meditations for Lent

History:

Bible History (with a Compendium of Church History)
Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews
The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context

"Contemporary" Spiritual Reading:

The Divine Milieu by Teilhard de Chardin
Peace of Soul by Fulton Sheen
The Mary Book
Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way by John Paul II

You can tell from this list that other than reading spiritual classics and writings from the saints themselves, my mom was also reading about the Church and reading Church documents. She was also reading contemporary authors (there are many more on this list – too many to name). You can also see that she had various devotionals that were part of her spiritual tool bag.

What's in your spiritual tool bag?

There is nothing wrong with reading or listening to Scott and Kimberly Hahn, Peter Kreeft, Jen Fulweiler, Ron Rolheiser, Brant Pitre, Leah Darrow, John Shea, Katie Prejean, Edward Sri, Matt and Cameron Fradd, Tommy Tighe, Danielle Bean, Christopher West, Bishop Robert Barron, or Fr. Mike Schmitz – I promote a lot of these contemporary authors, and we've had them as guests on the [SLHour](#) – but it's not enough. If you want to really be connected to the Church, don't read or listen to what others have to say about it, go straight to the source. They may be a good place to start, but don't stop there: go deeper.

I don't really know if things were easier in the 1940s and 50s. Maybe. What's true is that today there are so many more distractions and so many more options. At the same time, if you are not an avid reader, you can still access all these spiritual classics through audio books or podcasts – something my mom would not have had access to. So, what are you going to read? What are you going to listen to? Which saint will you take with you on your Lenten journey?

Let me know. I am curious to hear what experiences you've had with spiritual reading. And let me know what you are reading or what you are planning to read. We have three more weeks of Lent; lots of time to read a good book!

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**When I was preparing to embark on the World Youth Day Panama adventure, as I struggled with many things related to that experience, I met with my spiritual director. Since the theme for that WYD was a Marian one ("Be it done unto me according to your word" from Luke 1:38), it was suggested that I enlist the help of Mary with this. My director then suggested that since I enjoy Morning and Evening Prayer greatly, I should pray the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He said that I could buy a little book that just had all the prayers from the Office and the Commons of Our Lady. I thought, "Yeah, that sounds like a good idea, but I will not likely be able to get that book before I travel next." I didn't totally forget about it, but I didn't run off to the bookstore either. A few weeks later, I was in Panama for one of my stays down there as we prepared WYD and found myself going through my mom's books. She was still alive but mostly bed-ridden. Suddenly, there, amidst all the big and fat books, was a little book that had been re-bound so there was no title on the spine. It looked like a little journal. Thinking that's what it was, I pulled it out and read the title: "Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary". I opened it and found all the prayers from the Office and Common of Our Lady for morning and evening prayer for each day of the week. Needless to say, I brought that book home with me and it became a close companion with me during those years of preparation, especially when travelling.*



Every week, Deacon Pedro takes a particular topic apart, not so much to explore or explain the subject to its fullness, but rather to provide insights that will deepen our understanding of the subject. And don't worry, at the end of the day he always puts the pieces back together.

RURAL FOOD PROGRAM UPDATE for Mar 2021

On Tuesday, March 9, fifty families received nutritional support during our drive through distribution at the St Philip's Parking lot. Rural Food volunteers braved cold, rainy weather to participate in setting up for and distributing a wide variety of food to support those who attended. This month marks one year since we dramatically changed our operations to become a drive-through distribution due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

This program is funded through the Rural Food Collection each month, private donations and the dedicated, awesome volunteers. **Thank you for your generous donations as we strive to meet the nutritional needs of all attendees at our food distributions.**

RURAL FOOD VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES in the Parish Hall and parking area Saturday, April 10 , 9-10:00 am repackaging; **Monday, April 12, 9:00 - 11:00am** set up and **Tuesday, April 13, 7:30 - 11:00** to distribute food to clients.

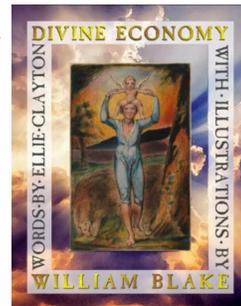
BLOSSOMS AND FRUIT

Unless a tree has borne blossoms in spring,
you will vainly look for fruit on it in autumn.

—Walter Scott

[I give you the end of a golden string . .](#)

We often use the metaphor of a thread as in "I was able to follow his thread of thought." I mean, often a lecturer will meander his way through a presentation; it's like working your way through a maze, a labyrinth; you get lost. But amid the congestion there may be a theme, which, if you catch hold of it, can unravel the whole thing and leave you enlightened after all. You've caught his train of thought.



The metaphor of thread is found often in literature. There is the old Greek legend of Theseus, King of Athens, who, in order to rescue young captives from the meandering cave of a devouring monster, uses a ball of thread to work his way into the cave, kill the monster, release the captives and then by winding the thread back into a ball, finding his way out again. Then there is Mark Twain's story of Tom Sawyer and his friend Becky lost in a Missouri cave and his leaving Becky to seek an outlet – unraveling his kite line until he found daylight and then rewinding the line back to Becky and her rescue.

Often the experts who put together our lectionary readings work a thread into the selections. At first sight the three readings seem randomly chosen – a clip from the Old Testament, a fragment from an Epistle, a Gospel isolated from its original context – a seeming hodgepodge of verbiage. Often it makes it tough on a preacher to sort it out. But if you look closely at the texts you may see the end of a filament peeping out which, if you yank it a bit, can turn the liturgical readings inside out.

For instance the thread that runs through this third Sunday of Lent's readings has to do with striking water in an otherwise arid environment and thereby quenching one's thirst for understanding what life is all about. In the first reading Moses, using his magic wand, strikes a rock in a desert and out flows fresh water to keep Israel's hopes alive. Then there follows a selection from Psalm 95 where the hardness isn't that of a rock but of the hearts of God's people – and instead of a magic wand it is the very voice of God that gets things flowing again.

Then comes St. Paul's *Letter to the Romans* with that key passage where he speaks of the access we have to the grace in which we stand, which grace he identifies with *the love of God [which] has been poured into our hearts* – as none other than *the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*. And finally we hear the Gospel about the meeting at Jacob's stagnant well. Jesus teases the Samaritan woman to fetch him some water. She vacillates, let's say: she stonewalls him. Then he offers her a spring of water that will never go dry, emanating from within her very being as graced by God.

Can you follow the thread? It's more than a thread. The readings are more like the magic wand of Moses: they are designed to help you *experience* rather than just read about how graced you are by your Creator.

And so by way of these remarks, as William Blake once wrote, *I give you the end of a golden string. Only wind it into a ball: it will lead you in at Heavens gate, Built in Jerusalem's wall.*

—Geoff Wood, 3/7/21