

Friday (Jean Vanier)

By becoming flesh, the Word makes all things new: he brings a new vision of humanity, a new way of being. God is no longer revealed just in the heavens, but God is more particularly present in the earth, hidden in the earth of pain and poverty, and hidden in the earth of our own being. Mary lived this radical change at the moment of the Incarnation, when the Word became flesh. For her, God was not just in the Temple of Jerusalem and in the prophets' words, but she found a new presence of God in the body of her child. This is a radically new path.

Scripture (Psalm 98:1-6)

Sing a new song to the Lord, for he has performed wonders, his saving power in his right hand and holy arm. The Lord has made known his saving power, revealed his salvation for the nations to see, mindful of his faithful love and constancy to the House of Israel. The whole world has seen the saving power of our God. Acclaim the Lord, all the earth, burst into shouts of joy! Play to the Lord on the harp, to the sound of instruments; to the sound of trumpet and horn, acclaim the presence of the king.

Prayer said at SVP meetings:

Grant us the grace to persevere when disappointed or distressed, and never to claim that our work springs from ourselves alone, so that, united in prayer and action, we may be a visible sign of Christ, and bear witness to his boundless love which reaches out to all and draws them to love one another in him.

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5th week of Easter

God's glory working in us, if we let it.

When I think of God's glory, I think of 'Glory to God in the highest', sung by 'great throngs of the hosts of heaven filling the sky above the shepherds' or of his infinite nature, (Glory be to the Father...as it was in the beginning, is now and forever), or perhaps the terrifying displays of power on mountain tops, (Moses, Elijah).

So when Jesus refers to being glorified, 'and in him God has been glorified,' it's confusing that he isn't talking about the Transfiguration or one of his spectacular miracles, but about being betrayed by Judas who has just left the Last Supper, (John 13:31-35). No angels, no heavenly lights: how is God's glory revealed when his friend hands him over into the power of his enemies, which will mean execution.

John's language explains how this is a crucial stage. Satan had entered Judas, (13:27); it was night, (v30), i.e the powers which separated us from God ruled. But this was precisely how God's glory was revealed: Jesus is in full control, (although Judas and those he colludes with think they are), but on the cross, Jesus was not defeated: these powers were broken. This is why, on the cross, Jesus didn't say 'It is finished', but it is accomplished': his glory is not one that shines remotely from above, but one which enters into the darkness and the mess of humanity to bring it into light, that is, into the love that the Father has, the love that is revealed on the cross and in the Resurrection.

When Jesus says he won't be with them much longer, it is because he is going to the Father. He goes on to say that he will return, 'so that you will be with me where I am', (14:3), which isn't talking about whisking them away to heaven or to somewhere where all is well because he tells them to love one another as he has loved them, and through this, others will know they are his disciples – i.e. they will still be living amongst people who have yet to hear the Good News.

Paul and Barnabas' return leg of their missionary trip, (Acts14:21-27), shows how this love built up the early Church. At the beginning of chapter 14, they meet with success, (pagans want to treat them as gods) and with rejection to the point where Paul is stoned, dragged outside of the city and left for dead. When he gets up, he goes back into the city, loving as Jesus had when he rose from the dead and continued to work amongst the people who had rejected or abandoned him. As the two revisit the places they had been to on the outward journey, (and had often been thrown out of), they 'put fresh heart into the disciples' and encourage them to persevere in their faith. Obviously, the young churches were taking root and flourishing, but it wasn't easy.

When they arrive back at Antioch, where they were first commissioned and set out filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas don't give a report of their successes; they report on what God had done with them., very like Jesus' 'it is accomplished', a statement of belief that God's will had triumphed.

Kingdom has never been without hardship, because we humans are always trying to do things our way. I can have a nice quiet religious life if I keep it to the pew and private prayer, but this is not Christianity: it is not loving the world (the people in it) as Christ loved. The obvious question is 'how do I love as Christ did?', because I don't think I can. Perhaps the first step is to recognise that God's glory is his presence in the world as it is, working in me. To make that claim sounds arrogant, but it is what Jesus did, then Peter, then Paul and the early Christians. Now it's our turn

Martin Bennett

Monday (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

The bearers of Jesus' word receive a final word of promise for their work. They are now Christ's fellow workers and will be like him in all things. They are to meet those to whom they are sent as if they were Christ himself. When they are welcomed into a house, Christ enters with them. They are bearers of his presence. They bring with them the most precious gift in the world, the gift of Jesus Christ. And with him, they bring God the Father, and that means indeed forgiveness and salvation, life and bliss.

Scripture (John 14:15-20)

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever, the spirit of truth whom the world can never accept since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. I shall not leave you orphans; I shall come to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see that I live and you also will live. On that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you.

Tuesday (Cardinal Basil Hume)

The baptised share Christ's role as prophet. It means that Christians never shed responsibility for proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, in season and out of season, to those who hear and heed the Word and to those who reject it. It means as well that Christians have to interpret sensitively all human experience in the light of the Gospel so that through them, ordinary men and women can discover for themselves its deeper significance, bringing to the whole of society the truth that sets us free.

Scripture (Acts 14:21-27)

Having preached the Good News in that town and made a considerable number of disciples, they went back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. They put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith, saying, 'We must all experience many hardships before we enter the Kingdom of God.' They passed through Pisidia and Pamphylia. Then after proclaiming the word at Perga they went to Attalia, and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the gentiles.

Wednesday (A New Catechism)

In Israel and on behalf of all mankind, our creator linked himself with our human destiny. This process was a very gradual one and did not proceed without reference to human development and circumstances. As Renckens says, "Attaching himself freely and almost imperceptibly to mankind on its pilgrimage, the divine travelling companion enters into the conversation as he finds it. He intervenes to give it a new direction. Then there is a new beginning whose effects are gradually but inexorably felt."

Scripture (Ephesians 2:18-22)

Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the Father. So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you, too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Thursday (Thomas a Kempis)

The Disciple to Christ: The prophets can preach the word, but they cannot bestow the Spirit. They speak most eloquently, but if You are silent, they cannot fire the heart. They instruct in the letter, but You open the understanding. They set forth the mysteries, but You reveal the meaning of all secrets. They teach your commandments, but You help us to observe them. They point the way. But You grant us strength to follow it. You instruct and enlighten the heart. They water the seed; You make it fruitful. They proclaim the words, but You impart understanding to the mind.

Scripture (1 Cor.2: 12-15)

Now, the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the world but God's own Spirit, so that we may understand the lavish gifts God has given us. And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learned from human philosophy, but in terms learned from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things. The person who lives by human nature alone has no room for the gifts of God's Spirit; he cannot recognise them, because their can only be assessed in the Spirit. For: 'who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been his adviser?' But we are those who have the mind of Christ.