



Come and See!

Week of June 23, 2024

The Word...

“He indeed died for all,
so that those who live might no longer live for themselves
but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ...
So, whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come”
(2 Cor 5:14-17).

Pondering the Word ...

What does “living for Christ” look like in your life?

I just co-hosted a prospective volunteer information session for the Ignatian Volunteer Corps in Baltimore, Maryland, a community I’ve been privileged to be a part of for 11 years. Volunteers in our group, aged 50 or better (and I like to say most of us are a lot better!), serve one or two days a week, ten months a year, at various non-profits in the region that serve the poor and oppressed. The community of volunteers meets monthly to share our experiences in the light of the Spirit. Our service focuses primarily on “accompaniment,” helping to lead individuals and families to a better life. Nora, the regional director, emphasizes the importance that each prospective volunteer takes time to discern how and where and why they want to serve. Said another way, to reflect on what “living for Christ” means in their life.

Some may interpret Paul’s words as calling us to constant worship, but as I’ve gotten to know Jesus better, I doubt that is what this means. Living for Christ means being aware and involved in his living presence in our world, not only seeing Christ in others, but also *being* Christ for others, modeling our day-to-day lives after his.

Living for Christ makes us a new creation, discarding the old and welcoming new things, new ways of being that challenge us to shed what is no longer life-giving for the world. “Behold, new things have come!”

Living the Word ...

Take time this week to consider Jesus’ life in ministry. He interacted with others daily, listening to them, seeing their needs, their pain, their doubts. Did he see God’s Spirit in each one of them? Yes, of course, but that did not blind him to seeing people as individuals. Was he willing to learn new things and challenge old ways of thinking? Absolutely! It’s what got him in trouble. How willing are you to stir up what the late John Lewis called “good trouble?” He prayed every day, for himself and for others. He hung out with people who society viewed as ignorant or bad or a threat. He welcomed everyone, but also didn’t expect that all would accept him or his words. Yes, he cured in ways that we cannot, but he also healed in ways that we, too, can heal.

Reflect: how does the way I am living now demonstrate I am “living for Christ?” Are there old ways of doing and thinking and praying that hinder my efforts to make Christ’s living and welcoming presence active in the world? Where am I being called to something new?

Personal Reflections and Ideas ... _____

Mon, Jun 24: *“God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance ... to us this word of salvation has been sent”* (Acts 13:22-26). This reading is about the difference between John’s role and Jesus’ role: John preached repentance, the transformation of our hearts. Jesus preached salvation by his very presence on earth. Without getting caught in the “how are we justified” debate, I can put too much emphasis on John’s message, i.e., it’s what I do and don’t do, and not enough on the mercy of God manifest in the Incarnation. We discussed “living for Christ” impels us to good works in his name, but as we live, to also hold deeply in our hearts the gift of salvation. **Provision:** Reflect today: does the desire (and the failure) to change your heart get in the way of you joyfully accepting the salvation of the Word made flesh?

Tue, Jun 25: *“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you”* (Mt 7: 6, 12-14). How many times have we been tripped up by misguided interpretations of the Golden Rule, thinking that what everyone wants is the same as what we want? There’s a branch of counseling focused on helping spouses understand that how one wants to be treated can be quite different from what their spouse wants. We are frustrated in our charitable outreach when those we serve don’t seem to want to better themselves—based on our definition of “better.” Our basic human need is to be accepted and loved in our God-given uniqueness. If you desire others to respect you for who you are, you then must do the same for them. THAT is the Golden Rule.

Wed, Jun 26: *“Give me discernment, that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart”* (Ps 119). *“By their fruits you will know them”* (Mt 7:15-20). Among the many powerful quotes and lessons we learn from Jesus, this one, for me, ranks very high. How do we follow this advice in a world of fake news and AI when fruits that have barely even blossomed get tossed aside or consumed immediately? The answer is discernment, stepping back to be aware, not only of what is presented to us, but the implications it has as well. For several years, I gave presentations to parents of college freshman about letting go. One resource I relied on, *The Freshman Survival Guide*, (2011, by the editors of *Busted Halo*) has a chapter entitled, “Be generous with your friendship, but stingy with your trust.” Good advice for all of us. **Provision:** The next time you find yourself encouraged to consume fruit that has not ripened, think of this. Step back and take time to discern.

Thu, Jun 27: *“Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? ...drive out demons ...do mighty deeds?’ I will declare to them ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers’”* (Mt 7:21-29). I never realized what a good follow-up this passage is to the preceding one. How does this square with what Jesus says to John in Lk 9:49-50 when John sees someone not in their company driving out demons in Jesus’ name? Jesus tells him to let him do it. That begs the question: “How come the people today were able to do wonderful things if they were evil doers?” Aah! Perhaps they were doing works of God, but their will was their own self-promotion, not the will of God! This is why discernment is so important, that we look beyond what appears on the surface—especially things that look good and holy—to what is going on behind the scenes. Again, good advice and fruit for reflection.

Fri, Jun 28: *Jesus came down from the mountain; great crowds followed him* (Mt 8:1-4). Overheard, coming down the mountain: *“Gosh, this guy from Nazareth is amazing. His words are so gracious and life-giving. He’s not like our scribes who just parrot the words of the law. I’m going to follo...whoa, wait a minute. I hear the bell of a leper. Yikes, there’s a leper walking up to Jesus. I’m outta here!”* What happened to the great crowds? Jesus instructs the leper to tell no one about his healing, so we assume no one witnessed it. **Provision:** Consider your life. We love what he has to say. Are we willing to live it, to stay and be a witness as he heals the most broken among us?

Sat, Jun 29: *“When you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted, but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go”* (Jn 21:15-19). The next verse explains Jesus’ words to Peter are to signify his martyrdom, but as I age, I hope I will take these words to heart. We can choose to suffer losing our independence and be miserable, or we can accept it, not as martyrdom, but to praise God, to show our willingness to accept God’s will. **Provision:** I have been lucky enough to know people who were accepting and even joyful in the face of their diminishment. They serve as a wonderful model of faith! For those of you who are facing this now, consider praying to St. Peter to help you. For those of us for whom this is on the horizon (and that would be everyone!), live your life joyfully so that you can be accepting and joyful to the end. It is a great gift to leave our children and grandchildren!