



Come and See!

June 24, 2018

The Word...

O LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and when I stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.

My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar.
Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb.
I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works.

My soul also you knew full well nor was my frame unknown to you
When I was made in secret, when I was fashioned in the depths of the earth.
(from Ps 139)

Pondering the Word...

Hardly a day goes by without hearing something in the news about threats to our privacy. What does Facebook know about me (lots)? How much of my personal life is floating around in the Google cloud (who knows)? What kind of information does my own government keep on me (I filed taxes late in 1980—on to what list did that put me)? Some would say that if I have nothing to hide, I have nothing to worry about, but images of “Big Brother” from Orwell’s book, *1984*, keep coming to mind.

The psalmist has no problem with God’s intimate knowledge of his life and his very being. In fact, you hear comfort and reassurance in these words, a faith that the God who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves would care for us so much and know us so well.

The image of God looking deep into our souls can be unsettling. We know how flawed, how weak we really are. We feel ashamed that God sees the rawness of our thoughts, the vindictiveness in our hearts. We would like to be like Adam and Eve: to hide from God, an impossible task. But I am reminded of another line from Genesis: “God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.”

God looks at you as a unique child, fearfully and wonderfully made. And God finds you very good!

Living the Word...

Today’s readings are about prophets being formed in the womb to carry God’s message. We are all called to be prophets in a world that would just as soon leave God behind. Yes, we have heard about things on social media that appall us, but it seems it’s not going away anytime soon. So how do we use it for good?

Technology provides an opportunity to be a voice of reason, of hope and of comfort. It also allows us a way to teach our kids about discernment, about the false prophets we’ll talk about later this week. Think about ways you use technology. Do you use it to spread peace and to support social justice causes? Do you take time to discern fake news from the truth? Or do you find yourself sucked in by the negativity and bullying?

The Old Testament prophets proclaimed from the mountaintops and highways; John the Baptist prophesied standing in the River Jordan. We have the chance today to be “a light to the nations,” to bring “salvation to the ends of the earth” by caringly and carefully using the information highway to spread the Good News. How will you be a prophet today?

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jun 25: *"You have rocked the country and split it open; repair the cracks in it, for it is tottering...you have given us stupefying wine...Give us aid against the foe, for worthless is the help of men."* (Ps 60)

The image of a country being split open is painfully real, but it is not God who has set it on edge. It is us, and the cracks are wider than before. Who is this foe we are fighting? It would be easy to point to the leaders or movements that seek to divide us, but as Aleksandr Solzhenitsin wrote: *"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us...But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."* In this time of turmoil, I find the need for prayer even greater, both to calm my anger and for the courage to stand up peacefully against what I believe is evil. Let's not allow the stupefying wine of media weaken our resolve to remain civil when civility is essential, to be those prophets we talked about yesterday. Join me today in prayer that God will help us begin to repair the cracks that divide us so we may work for peace for all peoples and for Mother Earth.

Jun 26: *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces."* (Mt 7:6, 12-14)

In Jesus' time, dogs and swine were slurs used to describe Gentiles. Given Matthew's primary audience (Jewish Christians), they would have understood it to mean just that. This admonition does not appear in Mark or Luke, so what are we to make of it? Scholars suggest Jesus is tempering his previous comments about not judging others. When Jesus tells us not to judge, he is not saying we shouldn't make good judgments for ourselves. This is an important distinction, particularly for young people or those who think by their own holiness, they can change others. As sinners, we recognize our sinfulness before we begin passing judgment on others, while at the same time, we are aware of and avoid involvement with false prophets and those who would lead us astray. Jesus calls us to be discerning, lest the pearl of great price that is our faith be trampled upon and used against us.

Jun 27: *"Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes, that I may exactly observe them. Give me discernment, that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart."* (Ps 119)

The psalmist is really serious here: 'Instruct me that I may *exactly* observe your laws.' I guess I am more realistic: "Instruct me so that I am at least aware of when I mess up!" And here's that word "discern" again--the wisdom, understanding, and patience to figure out the truth, the spirit of your law--i.e., the fulfillment of your law in Christ--rather than just the letter of the law. I am reminded of one of my favorite prayers by Thomas Merton: *"My Lord God I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me...and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I do..."* (<https://onbeing.org/blog/thomas-mertons-prayer-that-anyone-can-pray/>) Pray this prayer whenever you feel unsure of God's will for you.

Jun 28: *"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?" Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, evildoers.'"* (Mt 7:21-29)

This gospel, and Jesus' words in yesterday's gospel—"By their fruits, you will know them"—are essential to discern false from true prophets, God's will versus distortions based on evil ends. I invite you to reflect and pray on these powerful words and images at a time when scripture is being used to justify immoral acts.

Jun 29: *"But who do you say that I am?"* (Mt 16:13-19)

This is an ideal passage for imaginative prayer. Put yourself in the scene and imagine Jesus asking you this question. Don't be afraid to express to Jesus how you truly feel and think—what you struggle with, what brings you peace. Then ask Jesus the same question: "Who, Jesus, do you say I am?" Don't let the negative voices take over. Clear your mind and heart and let Jesus answer for himself.

Jun 30: *"Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully."* (Mt 3:5-17)

In Matthew's version of this story, the centurion tells Jesus the nature of his servant's illness. The next time you pray, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof," let Jesus know what is ailing you. Perhaps you are unable to move forward from some loss or rejection. Be specific about what Jesus can heal for you.