



Come and See!

October 7, 2018

The Word...

Brothers and sisters:

He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels,"
that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist,
in bringing many children to glory,
should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering.
He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated
all have one origin. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers."
(Heb 2:9-11)

Pondering the Word...

I am reading a book called *The Five Invitations* by Frank Ostaseski. The subtitle is *Discovering What Death Can Teach Us about Living Fully*. The third invitation-- "Bringing Your Whole Self to the Experience" --resonated with me as I read today's passage from Hebrews. That is exactly what God does for us by becoming one of us. God brings God's whole self to our experience.

Over the years, I have struggled to understand Christ's suffering and death, particularly since it can seem like it has made no appreciable difference in our world. Wars and horrible violence continue, children starve, the poor grow poorer, and the haughty prosper. But by the Incarnation, God was born (and continues to be born) so that we might learn how to live and live fully. By his resurrection, Jesus taught us (and continues to teach us) that nothing we encounter on this earth is death-dealing.

Jesus brings his whole self to every experience. He listens to each person he encounters. He never assumes to know what they need but allows them to tell him. He takes time to engage every person he meets and does so on their own terms, even when they choose to walk away. He suffers frustration and loss and pain; he revels in the presence of friends and feels anger at injustice. He asks God for help when his body and spirit are weak.

By his life, Christ consecrates our lives, welcoming us as sisters and brothers, accompanying us as we travel the path he has already laid for us. Let us look to him always to guide our way to abundant life!

Living the Word...

What does "living fully" mean to you? My schedule is full, my cabinets and closets are full, but that sure doesn't mean my life is full! I tend to skim the surface of many things without allowing deep experiences to permeate my day-to-day life. Living fully is accepting everyone and everything we encounter, even if it is unpleasant or painful. It's not resignation, which is giving up. Acceptance is opening up and allowing for the important lessons real life can teach us. Pick a day this week and try to be as aware as you can. Turn off the talking heads on the radio or TV. Look at and smile at the people around you. Notice nature. Pay close attention to whatever task you are doing no matter how mundane. Another book you may want to consider to help incorporate your experiences into your prayer life: *Everything Belongs*, by Richard Rohr.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Oct 8: *“Am I now currying favor with human beings or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.”* (Gal 1:6-12)

I can think of a few politicians to whom I might send this verse. It seems some put pleasing people (and getting reelected) over and above integrity! It is a sad truth that being faithful to Christ’s teachings can put us at odds with family members, friends, co-workers, and society. Maybe it’s sticking up for someone being discriminated against or calling out those who spread rumors in school or the workplace. Perhaps we find ourselves called to speak out about injustice. Or perhaps, like Jesus, we are called to listen patiently and discern wisely, being open to learn something new (think of the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman). As you do your examen each night, ask yourself, “Did I look to please God today?”

Oct 9: *“The one who once was persecuting us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”* (Gal 1:13-24)

I’ve read a few articles recently about members of hate-groups who have seen the light and are trying to make up for past sins. It can be hard to discern at times if someone who has gone through “a conversion” is genuinely changed. They may have been hurtful, even vicious in the past. The best advice is found in Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:16: “By their fruits, you will know them.” Are they truly repentant, willing to admit their past sins and make amends, or do they deny their sins? Have they asked for forgiveness? Has enough time passed that the new fruits of their lives are evident? Have we given them the support they need to sustain the change? We glorify God for his gift of mercy and pray those who have seen the light will continue to follow it.

Oct 10: *James, Cephas, and John gave me their right hands in partnership that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do.* (Gal 2:1-2, 7-14)

There’s a lot to do for the new church, lots of people who need to hear the Good News, so the early disciples divvy up the responsibility: Paul and his crew will travel to the Gentiles, and Peter, et.al, will tend to the Jewish population. It makes sense; charitable outreaches do that same thing today. But it’s important to remember that just because we are focused on one need or one population, we not ignore the poverty right in front of us. In an effort to do well in our chosen ministry, we might forget to do good for those closest to us who might be suffering from spiritual or emotional poverty. Let’s always be mindful of the poor, including those who are well-fed but starving from a lack of the Spirit.

Oct 11: *“Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”* (Lk 11: 5-13)

There’s a *New Yorker* cartoon that pictures God in front of a TV. Responding to a request from an attendant angel, God says: “I can’t deal with any famines, massacres, or epidemics right now—I’ve got to help some guy sink a foul shot.” We don’t like to admit it, but often the things we ask of God are, in the grand scheme of things, quite trivial. And when we don’t get our desired answer in the desired amount of time, we question if God is there for us, or blame God’s unresponsiveness on our own sinfulness, as if we have control over what God does or does not do! Ask God, not for things, but for the grace to accept his will.

Oct 12: *“He will forever be mindful of his covenant.”* (Ps 111)

Though we fail over and over again, God keeps his promise. God is ever mindful of the covenant he made, not just with our ancestors in faith, but with each one of us. Reflect on that fact—it is truly amazing! Then give thanks and praise to the One who is eternally faithful.

Oct 13: *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”* (Gal 3:22-29)

A professor friend of mine works with young people as they discern their future professions. Using St. Ignatius’ rules for discernment, he advises them to “try it on”—to think practically about what life in this or that job might look like. I thought of this when I read “clothe yourself with Christ.” Paul tells us we are already adorned as such by virtue of our baptism, but I know for myself, I don’t always “wear Christ” very well. At times, Christ is hidden under a cloak of selfishness and stubbornness. I don’t always care for my garment through regular prayer and reflection. Sometimes, I question myself: Am I wearing the real thing, or some cheap knock-off I try to pretend is authentic? Think about this verse each morning when you are getting dressed. Be conscious of clothing yourself with Christ and see what difference that can make in your day!