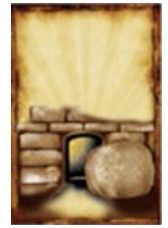


Provisions for the Journey to Jerusalem

Brief reflections on the week's Scripture readings
Easter Week Seven, 2025



Sunday, Jun 1: *"Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven"* (Acts 1:1-11).

"Why are we standing here looking at the sky? Because you just said Jesus will return this way! You better believe we will be looking up at the sky—every day, in fact!" The disciples don't put two and two together. Jesus has just told them they are to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. That's not going to happen overnight, but still, the Apostles, Paul, and the rest of the evangelizers go forward with a sense of urgency, assuming Jesus' return is imminent. I wonder if each day, they looked skyward, wondering if today might be the day. As the months and years go by, I'm sure holding on to this promise of Christ's return gets harder, especially for subsequent generations. Do disciples—including us—ever stop looking up into the heavens? Or do we finally figure out we can see and experience Christ right here on earth?

Provision: "Know the hope that belongs to his call" (Eph 1). Have you ever noticed when you or someone else is frustrated or exasperated, we tend to look skyward? I do it and need to recognize it as a silent prayer that the Spirit will open the eyes of my heart to be patient and compassionate, to have the courage to continue in hope. And that it is precisely when I am losing patience and hope that I need to look around me and see God right here and right now—it is the only way to hold onto the hope of his call to be his witnesses. Some believe Jesus will return in the Rapture when the world is in utter chaos. Looking back into history, we've been in utter chaos numerous times! I like to think Jesus will "return" when we figure out he's been with us all along. Look for Jesus' presence today amid the chaos of your day.

Monday, Jun 2: *"God brings the lonely back to their homes, sets free captives in jubilation"* (Ps 68, Hebrew trans).

How many of you reading this, particularly in the US, have ever been forced from your homeland? Perhaps, like me, it was your ancestors who came here because of religious persecution, famine, or war or were kidnapped and brought here as slaves. Early in the current ongoing debate about immigration, the Dalai Lama caused a ruckus by saying that unchecked immigration is not good, and that people should be able to stay in their homelands. Of course, anti-immigration folks latched on to this without its context in which his Holiness explained that wealthy countries should be doing all they can to make the homelands of these migrants safe and viable by the fair sharing and preservation of material and natural resources. I don't see *that* happening anytime soon (although based on our reflection yesterday, it might hasten Jesus' return! 😊).

I imagine most people desire to stay in the land of their ancestors with their heritage and customs. But poverty, climate change, and violence have made existing—much less making a life—virtually impossible. *"God gives a home to the forsaken."* And God is asking us to be his presence on earth, providing that home to those forsaken.

Provision: Challenge yourself. Neither of these are easy reads: *Home* – a poem by Warsan Shire (<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/home-433/>). And, for Americans, *A People's History of the United States*, by the late Howard Zinn, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_People's_History_of_the_United_States). This book is particularly interesting due to the trend towards revisionist history we see happening today. (It has its shortcomings and valid critics, but it is such a different perspective on US history, it's worth consideration.) In prayer, imagine how it would feel if you were forced to leave the only place you've ever known and move without resources to a strange land, where you didn't know the language or customs. If this is hard for you to imagine, be with the Holy Family on their harried escape to Egypt due to the threat of violence directed at their child. Would you welcome them? Would you shelter their child?

Tuesday, Jun 3: *"You know how I lived among you...I served the Lord with all humility and with tears and trials ...But now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. ...I know that none of you will ever see my face again. And so, I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you"* (Acts 20:17-27).

Oh, Paul can be sooo dramatic! But I'm sure he's being quite honest about how he has demonstrated to the Ephesians the way to live and serve God. And, although I do not doubt his love and commitment to the community, he is clear: he is letting go and telling them it is up to them, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to take it from here.

Provision: Be an example of faith. I wonder if I do enough to set an example of faith for others. As opposed to Paul's time, being a Christian in most places is not a cause for "tears and trials" anymore (although I am finding Christian nationalism to be a cause for great concern). And I'm not always good at letting go and letting the Spirit take over. I want to make sure those for whom I have some responsibility "get it right"—like I have it right in the first place! In my world these days, being an example of faith means demonstrating hope and confidence that God's got this. How are you an example of faith to those around you? Do you trust the Spirit enough to let go and to "take it from here?"

Wednesday, Jun 4: *"Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I send them into the world"* (Jn 17:11-19).

Do you ever feel like Pilate when he asks Jesus, "What is truth?" It's even harder than ever to uncover the "truth" in this age of deepfakes, the fire hose of "alternative facts" and bold-faced lies. It is exhausting, but unlike Pilate, we cannot wash our hands of responsibility. We need to continue to seek the truth in every situation we encounter.

Provision: Stay true to truth. Have you ever taken time to articulate your truth? I'm not talking about a creed per se, but things about humanity, the world, and the cosmos that you believe to be true? I was talking the other day with someone dealing with doubts about her belief in the basic goodness of human beings. It's a tough task that most of us don't take time to consider and reflect upon.

Jesus has sent us out into the world. That's why it's imperative we pray every day for God to consecrate us in the truth. It's easy to lose our way. Is it a truth for you to know we are the face of Christ to all we encounter, and that they are Christ to us as well? A good prayer to pray several times a day: "Holy Spirit of Christ, consecrate me in truth."

Thursday, Jun 5: *"I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word...I made known to them your name and I will make it known"* (Jn 17:20-26).

People usually come to faith through the faith of their parents and ancestors. As Christians, we came to believe through the words and actions of others. But somewhere along the way, a time comes for many people when we need Jesus to make himself known to us, not from others or from what we read, but from personal experience. Jesus says, "I *will* make your name known." "I *will* continue to make it known, not just to those who have experienced me in the flesh, but to all those who seek you. And I will strive to have them know, not just your holy name, but YOU as well."

Provision: Seek a personal relationship with God. This can be intimidating which is why the Incarnation happened in the first place. As Christians, to know Jesus is to know God, so if you don't yet have a personal relationship with Jesus, that might be a good and easier way to start. If you are a regular daily pray-er, but don't feel a closeness to Jesus, you might want to consider praying the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. There is an option called the Exercises in Everyday Life (AKA, the Nineteenth annotation) you can learn about at <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/>. Or, go to <https://www.loyola.edu/departments/mission-integration/spiritual-exercises.html> to find out about the Exercises offered worldwide starting in September through Loyola University in Maryland.

Friday, Jun 6: *"Do you love me?" and [Peter] said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." ...And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me"* (Jn 21:15-19).

A familiar Scripture story, one of the most beautiful in all the gospels. And illustrative of our reflection on Thursday about having a personal relationship with Jesus. It's easy for me to say to Jesus, "I love you" ...not so easy, though, to follow him to where that love may lead. Not always so easy to know what "feed my sheep" means in any given situation. We assume this whole exchange with Peter and the three questions about his love are to absolve Peter of his denials, but it also may be a way for Jesus to make Peter reflect on what his declarations of love really mean.

Provision: What does it mean for you to love Jesus? Imagine you are in this scene and Jesus asks you if you love him. How easy is it for you to answer him truthfully? What does loving Jesus mean to you? Is the love you feel real and active? How is your love demonstrated as you go about your day-to-day? Has your love of Jesus ever brought you to a place of challenge or trial? How did that work out? How are you called today to "feed his sheep?"

Saturday, Jun 7: *"[The Lord's] eyes behold, his look probes the sons of man. The Lord probes the righteous and the wicked and the lover of havoc he utterly hates"* (Ps 11, Hebrew translation).

"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers" (Prv 6:16-19).

I have used this translation of this psalm for the past two years, and I will continue to use it until the "lovers of havoc" and those "who sow discord" in countries around the world have been defeated and deposed. Folks, this is not about your party label; it's not about "conservative" or "liberal;" this is not about your faith practice or religion, race, ethnicity, or economic preferences. It is about the common good and what the Divine desires for the cosmos and for all nations around the world: harmony, unity, compassion, justice. Bridges, not walls. It is time for all people of goodwill to wake up.

Provision: Wake up! Anyone, any government that promotes division, the building of walls, "us versus them," prejudice, and hatred is not of God. We can find common sense, common ground, common good. Let's each of us wake up and work together. What will you do today to wake up and start building peace?