



## The Word...

God said: "It is not good for the Man to be alone"  
(Gn 2:18-24).

## Pondering the Word ...

Today's readings are often used to defend marriage as being between a man and a woman. In Roman Catholicism, the gospel is used to support the church's teaching on divorce. This quote from Genesis is sometimes used to challenge the doctrine of priestly celibacy. I instead want to focus on what I believe is a more important message: God knows it is not good for humans to be alone.

There is a loneliness epidemic in the world. Heck, there's a Wikipedia page for it! In August 2023, The Surgeon General of the United States issued a report: *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* (<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>). If you haven't heard about it or read it, I suggest reading it, regardless of whether you are lonely or not. It explains the actual physical effects loneliness has on our health and well-being. *It also makes suggestions about how we can come together to help one another.*

We look in awe at the miracles Jesus performed: curing diseases and paralysis, bringing the dead back to new life, driving out demons. He was able to do this by harnessing the immense power of Love he had within. He also told us we would do even greater things. Those in the medical and mental health professions are trained to help alleviate pain and suffering, but all of us—all of us—can reach out, tapping into the immense source of Love that created us, to help those who suffer loneliness.

What great thing, what miracle will you perform in the name of Love today?

## Living the Word ...

Community life as we knew it in the past has been lost as church attendance and civic involvement has plummeted. (See this article in the NYT for a good explanation of the history of loneliness: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/27/magazine/loneliness-epidemic-cure.html>.) We have become more insular and frankly, more self-centered, overly concerned with preserving ourselves, not realizing that by doing so, we are in fact, hurting ourselves and society. This is particularly prevalent in the US and its obsession with "rugged individualism." Let's challenge ourselves to get out of our comfort zone and reach out, even if it is just a nice smile and hello to a person we might not usually greet. Tap into the immense power of Love within.

## Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

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**Mon, Oct 7:** *“But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the Gospel of Christ”* (Gal 1:6-12). The context of the Letter to the Galatians is primarily about the practice of circumcision. Jewish Christians are preaching that for Gentiles to become Christian, they need to follow Jewish law. Paul sees this as a perversion of Christ’s good news of grace and salvation. **Provision: Beware of others who pervert Christ’s teaching.** The law that comes to mind is “an eye for an eye, which we know Jesus dismissed (Mt 5). There have been several death sentences carried out in the past few weeks; at least one of them over the objections of prosecutors and the victim’s family. I guess we all can be accused of being “cafeteria” Christians—picking and choosing the parts of Jesus’ teachings that fit our own opinions—but I believe there are some teachings for which there are no grey areas. *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world”* (1 Jn 4:1-2). Don’t follow anyone blindly. Use your own conscience.

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**Tue, Oct 8:** *I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before me”* (Gal 1:13-24). Paul’s response to his conversion and healing in Damascus (Acts 9) is quite interesting. He doesn’t go back to Jerusalem to consult with the Apostles, but instead goes off to Arabia for three years. There is no account in Acts or anywhere else of what he did there. Did he preach? Or did he go to Arabia to pray, to get to know Jesus on a more intimate level? It seems he didn’t want anyone else’s interpretation. He wanted to hear Jesus’ call for himself. **Provision: Get to know Jesus.** A good follow-up to yesterday’s reflection that also hearkens back to Job’s words last week: *“I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you”* (42:5). Maybe you already have a good relationship with Jesus. Spend time today seeing what else you can learn. But if you don’t know Jesus well, ask him in prayer to reveal himself to you.

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**Wed, Oct 9:** *“I opposed (Cephas) to his face...For, until some people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he separated himself, because he was afraid of the circumcised”* (Gal 2:1-2, 7-14). I love the backstory here. Not Paul gloating about opposing Peter, but Peter, the Rock, the guy with keys to the Kingdom still being worried about what others think! Now, fear had something to do with it, but it makes me reflect on times when I’ve been more concerned with “appearances” than being true to what I believe. **Provision: Be true to what you believe.** See if you can notice situations today that challenge you to be genuine in front of others.

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**Thu, Oct 10:** *“What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?”* (Lk 11:5-13). Jesus is saying no parent would give their child something evil or harmful (which, given the recent case of the father in Georgia giving his son an AK-15 for Christmas—for Christmas, mind you!!—is not to be assumed!). But what about times when our child asks for a “fish” or an “egg”—i.e., something good they want—and we decide it is not the best thing for them? What about times when we ask God for some good we want, but God gives us something else, something that may bite or sting? **Provision: Accept God’s will.** There’s a book by Mark Twain called, *The Mysterious Stranger*. It’s a bit dark, but it tells of a stranger coming to town who can show the book’s characters the alternative outcomes of sad things that occur, some of which are far worse than what actually happened. Occasionally, we see God’s hand at work in what happens to us, but most of the time, we rely on faith to accept God’s will. (Remember, resignation is giving up. Acceptance is opening up.) How open are you to God’s will?

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**Fri, Oct 11:** *“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters”* (Lk 11:15-26). Last week, in Lk 9, Jesus says, *“whoever is not against you is for you,”* referring to someone doing good deeds in his name. I struggle with that because people can do good deeds but will avoid taking a stand on social justice. Some use today’s quote to say anyone who is not Christian is against Christ. I don’t think that’s what Jesus is saying (See Luke 12:10). Being “with Jesus” is about “gathering,” not scattering or dividing. **Provision: Gather!** *“Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste.”* Do what you can to gather people together today.

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**Sat, Oct 12:** *“Scripture confined all things under the power of sin, that through faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe”* (Gal 3:22-29). I’ll try to explain this in 25 words or less: Abraham: given the promise due to his righteousness; the law: given because of human sinfulness; Jesus: fulfills both the promise and the law! Rejoice! **Provision: Live as an heir to the promise by living in love today!**