



Bringing Home the Word



Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 17, 2016

Never Let Go

By Janel Esker

One of the first things parents of a newborn learn is how incredibly strong their baby's grip is. Our daughter, like most newborns, clenched onto her father's and my fingers immediately after birth—and she wouldn't let go! We called it her death grip. Yes, it's a reflex, but it's one that reaches into your soul. You realize quickly what a hold this person has on you—physically and emotionally.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, Jesus speaks in the Gospel about not letting anyone take his flock out of his hand. His hold on us is even tighter than a

newborn's, but it's certainly not a death grip. Quite the opposite—it's a life grip. No matter how far we scatter or how wide a path we walk, Jesus always has us in his hands. He offers us life abundant here on earth and life eternal in heaven.

Parents of newborns have such an emotional response to their child's grip because they've spent so much time with this child—feeling her movements in utero, seeing his picture in ultrasounds, preparing their lives for this new being. There's an intimate connection.

Sheep respond loyally to their shepherd's voice because they spend so much time together in the fields. The same must be true for our relationship with our Good Shepherd. Unless we're committed to spending significant time with him, we can't expect to benefit from his life grip. He always holds us, but we need to offer him that same devoted attention and intimacy.

Where can we find more time in our week to behold—and be held by—our God? †

Sunday Readings

Acts 13:14, 43–52

"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first.... We now turn to the Gentiles."

Revelation 7:9, 14b–17

"I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue."

John 10:27–30

"My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

A Word From Pope Francis

For the love of Jesus Christ: never tire of being merciful! Please! Have the ability to forgive that the Lord had, who came not to condemn but to forgive! Be greatly merciful! ... I tell you, truly: it grieves me when I come across people who no longer confess because they have been beaten and scolded. They have felt as though the church doors were being closed in their faces! Please, do not do this: mercy, mercy! The Good Shepherd enters through the door, and...if you do not enter into your ministry through the Lord's wounds, you will not be good shepherds."



—Homily, May 11, 2014
(Mass with Priestly Ordinations)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Where and how is God leading me this week?
- How is Christ's resurrection significant and meaningful to my life?

Setting the Tone for Eucharistic Adoration

By Vandy Brennan Nies

As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is present—both human and divine, true God and true man. Because our faith tells us Jesus remains with us in the consecrated host and that he is the Real Presence on this altar, we come to spend time and adore him from the depths of our hearts. Adoration is a time for us to share with Jesus in the most intimate exchange.

Go to the Lord just as you are. Be natural. Turn yourself over to Jesus totally. Drain yourself of everything else that was important to you, regardless of how monumental or how mundane, until you walked into this church.

Now, nothing else matters. He has been waiting patiently for you to choose this time with him. Give it freely and fully! Allow him into the deepest recesses of your heart, even the places that are difficult for you to let him see.

You are invited to fall deeper in love with the Most Holy Sacrament—to leave here totally immersed in who he is—with a resolve to share him with each person you meet as you carry him with you in the tabernacle of your heart.

Accept his bequest graciously and willingly. Allow the Real Presence in this gift to open your eyes so you may see his face, open your ears that you may hear his message, open your heart that you may love him unreservedly, turning over



without hesitation everything you are.

Let this meeting with Jesus be a time of healing in mind, body, spirit, and heart. †

From *In the Silence: Meditations for Eucharistic Adoration*, © 2010 Liguori Publications

Self-knowledge and Sin: A Prayer

By Dennis H. Ference

God, a good deal of my life has been taken up in discovering and rediscovering who I am. I have learned about my family heritage and how that plays into my identity. I have tried to understand my culture and how I am affected by its expressions. I have come to know myself as child, adolescent, and adult, and I have tried to come to terms with the significant realities each stage has introduced. I have worked to discover my strengths, gifts, and talents so that I could accept them

and use them in spreading your love. I have made an effort to face my faults and weaknesses, my fears and defenses, and to become aware of how they interfere with my freedom.

As part of all this self-discovery, I have come to recognize that I am your blessed and loved child while at the same time a lost sheep and a sinner.

I suppose I'd rather not think of myself as a sinner, but I've seen enough of life and known enough people to understand that we're all sinners. I am comforted by Scripture's assurances that admitting my sinfulness helps open my heart to your compassion and healing touch.

God, I know that I often try to hide from the truth, but I acknowledge to myself and to you this day, without excuses or my usual hedging, that I am a sinner. Have mercy on me, God, and forgive me. Heal me and make me whole. Amen.

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your resurrection gives me hope and the promise of new life. Open my heart to embrace and share your vision of love and peace with all people.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 18–23

Mon. Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:1–18 / John 10:1–10

Tue. Easter Weekday:
Acts 11:19–26 / John 10:22–30

Wed. Easter Weekday:
Acts 12:24–13:5a / John 12:44–50

Thu. Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:13–25 / John 13:16–20

Fri. Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:26–33 / John 14:1–6

Sat. Easter Weekday:
Acts 13:44–52 / John 14:7–14