



Bringing Home the Word

The Ascension of the Lord (C)

June 2, 2019

Putting Prayer First

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In Luke’s ascension account from Acts, Jesus admonishes his apostles to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit because they are witnesses of his mission and message. When the time for his ascension comes, Jesus blesses them, then “was lifted up” (1:9). We don’t hear the great commission to go out to, preach to, and baptize all nations as we do in Matthew’s Gospel (28:19–20). Instead, Luke’s account leaves us with an image of the apostles joyfully returning to Jerusalem: “They were continually in the temple praising God” (24:53).

Returning to Acts, I love that the early disciples’ first order of business—even before Pentecost—was to gather to pray (1:14). Paul often admonished the early Christians to pray constantly. He knew that prayer grounds us in the Lord and strengthens us to lay down our lives and carry our crosses. Prayer focuses our attention on God’s call and our response to it. The apostles’ prayer opened them to receive the promised gift of the Spirit and strengthened them for their mission—to let the world know that Jesus is Lord, that the kingdom of God has come, and that we have been restored through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Thus should our week begin: in praise and worship before God, in gathered prayer. Like the disciples in Jerusalem, the Lord will open our minds “to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45). We, too, will be filled with the Spirit and be sent out as joyful witnesses to God’s presence and saving work. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days.

Ephesians 1:17–23 or Hebrews 9:24–28; 10:19–23

And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

Luke 24:46–53

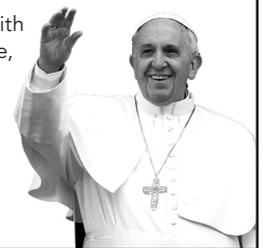
As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven.

The early disciples’ first order of business—even before Pentecost—was to gather to pray.

A Word from Pope Francis

Do I speak with Jesus or am I frightened of silence?
Do I allow the Holy Spirit to speak in my heart?
Do I ask Jesus: what do you want me to do, what do you want from my life?...
Speak continually with Jesus, in the good times and in the bad, when you do right, and when you do wrong. Do not fear him! This is prayer.

—Prayer vigil with young people, July 27, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I make prayer a priority or is it low on my to-do list?
- When I pray, do I focus my attention on God’s call or do I allow my attention to wander?

Is “‘Til Death Do Us Part” Realistic?

By Jim and Susan Vogt

In addition to leading marriage preparation and enrichment programs, we've been responsible for divorce ministries in two dioceses. It's humbling to hear experiences of those who expected lasting marriages but instead saw their hopes and lives crumble. Here are some of the lessons we've learned.

The three most important things for a healthy marriage are commitment, commitment, and commitment. With divorce rates around 50 percent, commitment seems unfashionable. Has human nature changed so much? Perhaps human nature hasn't changed, but our culture has. We live in a throwaway society; if something breaks, our impulse is to get a new one rather than fix the old.

Modern society also has more temptations than ever. With men and women working as colleagues, spouses spend more time with members of the opposite sex who share common interests and are on their best behavior. (Workplace morals aren't necessarily higher, but at least colleagues don't have spit-up on their clothes or wear raggedy T-shirts.) Your spouse may have been alluring during courtship, but coworkers sharing career goals can be tempting. This makes commitment harder than ever.

In some ways, marriage is getting



better. Once it was enough for husbands to be providers and for wives to care for the home and children. Now we expect couples to share dreams and be friends and life partners.

We expect couples to practice commitment skills—especially communication. Spouses unwilling to speak

honestly and listen respectfully have hollow commitments. Shared values also support commitment. If one spouse values a simple lifestyle and another wants to accumulate wealth, there will be tension. If faith and morals are important to one but not the other, key decisions become reasons to argue.

Church Wisdom

What does the Church say about marriage, besides the conventional wisdom of commit, communicate, and seek common values? The Church says, of course, what Jesus said: “Love one another as I love you” (John 15:12). Wedding vows take a lifetime to live out. Let's unpack the grace behind the vows:

Exclusivity: *I, ___, take you, ___, to be my (wife/husband).* Specific names indicate this is an exclusive commitment between this man and this woman.

Fidelity: *I promise to be true to you.* Fidelity often gets translated as sexual loyalty—neither spouse will commit adultery. But there are nonhuman

“mistresses,” too. Work, hobbies, children, and more can cut into the romance and attention spouses should give each other.

Unconditional love: *In good times and in bad, in sickness and in health....* Loving unconditionally is a promise for the future. It's more a decision to love than merely feeling love. Not knowing what changes the future holds, can I love you if you become old, fat, or senile? That's a lot to say a blind yes to.

Covenant: *I will love you and honor you....* Unlike contracts, a covenant goes beyond a fifty-fifty agreement. Sometimes one spouse must bend 75 percent while the other gives 25 percent. It's not always fair, but a promise is a promise.

Permanence: *All the days of my life....* Traditionally, permanence is understood as not getting divorced. A commitment to permanence means daily attentiveness to the relationship. It may mean a nightly walk to keep communication flowing. It's preventive maintenance.

Prayer: *Amen*, a short prayer, is the couple's way of saying yes to each other and God. +

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your resurrection and ascension give witness to God's power. May my life bear witness to God's love, compassion, forgiveness, and peace.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 3–8

Monday, St. Charles Lwanga and Companions: Acts 19:1–8 / Jn 16:29–33

Tuesday, Easter Weekday: Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a

Wednesday, St. Boniface: Acts 20:28–38 / Jn 17:11b–19

Thursday, Easter Weekday: Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / Jn 17:20–26

Friday, Easter Weekday: Acts 25:13b–21 / Jn 21:15–19

Saturday, Easter Weekday: Acts 28:16–20, 30–31 / Jn 21:20–25

Bringing Home
the Word 

June 2, 2019

© 2019 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2019 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.