



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Easter (C)

May 1, 2022

His Love Casts Out Fear

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

When we receive the power of the resurrection and experience its effects, then we become transformed Christians. Somehow we like to hold on to our fears and failures. They are what we know, and in some way they can make us feel strangely secure. Yet Jesus wants to free us from old fears and set us on a mission motivated by love.

All of the apostles, after encountering the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit, show new courage in proclaiming his name. Whether before politicians, church leaders, or before their fellow Jews, they had no fear of the consequences of

preaching the Way. Why? Because Jesus showed them death wasn't something to fear. He had received the fullness of evil's wrath and, by rising victorious, proved love is stronger. The apostles had seen him tortured and dead, and then they saw him alive. Jesus had promised that same power to his followers. It is with this confidence and trust that they travel throughout Judea and all of the Roman Empire. Perfected love casts out all fear.

Although the apostles had failed Jesus and denied his friendship, each had experienced his mercy and forgiveness. Jesus didn't blame them for their sin. He reassured them of his confidence in them. Once we have experienced love, there is no stopping us. We have seen it in a small way when we have fallen in love with someone or set our hearts and minds passionately on a goal. Once our hearts have been captured and we believe, everything else is absorbed into that gravitational pull. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41

So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

Revelation 5:11-14

And [the angels] cried out in a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

John 21:1-19 or John 21:1-14

So [Jesus] said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something."

Jesus wants to free us from old fears and set us on a mission motivated by love.

A Word from Pope Francis

Mutual forgiveness is the fruit of an interior resolve that comes to maturity in prayer.... It is a gift born of the grace poured out by Christ upon married couples whenever they turn to him and allow him to act. Christ...is always waiting for you to open your hearts to him, so that he can sustain you....

Letter to married couples for the "Amoris Laetitia family" year, December 26, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I need to forgive someone? What stops me?
- Is there someone whose forgiveness I need to seek? What is stopping me?

The Freedom of Forgiveness

By Joy McCuen

It was 1980. Since the fall of South Vietnam to the Communists, many refugees had arrived in the United States. Commonly called “boat people” because many fled Vietnam by boat, the refugees escaped to camps in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. They then were relocated to various countries.

Some boat people came to Philadelphia and were temporarily housed in a condemned seven-story apartment building in the city’s Logan section. They had no jobs, spoke no English, and mostly had just the clothes on their backs as their only possessions.

Supported by our church, my husband and I left our home and moved into the seventh floor of this building. We had a toddler and I was pregnant. The elevator was broken, so we climbed the stairs to get to our apartment. Some called us crazy, but God immediately gave us an incredible love for these refugees who had come so far and had suffered so much.

With interpreters, drawings, and charades, we began to learn the stories of the people we came to help. One woman said her sister’s hand got chopped off because the soldiers wanted the jade bracelet she had worn since she was small. Other survivors told of dangerous journeys on overcrowded, unsafe boats. While escaping, they faced constant danger from storms and pirates. Some described treacherous treks through



dense jungles. Torture, rape, and devastating losses were also common. Almost everyone had witnessed loved ones killed by the Communist regime. Most survivors we talked with had spent many months in stark, dangerous conditions in refugee camps. Each individual tragedy felt overwhelming.

In the relative safety of north Philadelphia, we began to help our new friends learn English and navigate the city. We shared our Christian faith, telling of Jesus’ love for them and that through him they could find peace. We also discussed a central tenet of Christianity—forgiveness, a difficult concept in this circumstance.

How do you forgive a man who cut off your hand? How do you forgive

a mob of soldiers who gang-raped you? How do you forgive officers who murdered your parents before your eyes? How do you forgive a government that took all you owned? How could we ask people to forgive those who committed unthinkable wrongs against them?

Forgiveness never lets the wrongdoer off the hook. Forgiveness frees the forgiver. Forgiveness releases us from the bitterness and anger that come from gripping the hurt and anger. Jesus showed us we must forgive those who have hurt us. While dying on Calvary, he forgave those who falsely accused him, beat him, and nailed him to that cross.

As this truth became clear to our Southeast Asian friends, they slowly began entering a place where they could forgive. It wasn’t easy. Days were filled with weeping and unimaginable pain. But gradually we began seeing once-hardened faces soften through God’s healing miracle of forgiveness. We felt blessed to witness firsthand the power of forgiveness under horrific circumstances. +

PRAYER

*Risen Lord, you share with me
God’s gifts of peace and
forgiveness. Open my heart
to share your peace and
forgiveness with all people.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 2–7

Monday, St. Athanasius:
Acts 6:8–15 / Jn 6:22–29

Tuesday, Sts. Philip and James,
Apostles: 1 Cor 15:1–8 / Jn 14:6–14

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 8:1b–8 / Jn 6:35–40

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 8:26–40 / Jn 6:44–51

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 9:1–20 / Jn 6:52–59

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 9:31–42 / Jn 6:60–69

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