

ctkAlive! Scripture Study **26th Sunday in Ordinary Time** **2021—B Cycle**



Source: Catholicreadings.org

Opening Prayer

(edited for use here)

The Creed of the Pilgrim God

I believe in a pilgrim God,
who crosses frontiers, boundaries, and barriers,
who leaves personal greatness behind
to meet me on the way
with arms wide open.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who,
born homeless, walked on earth,
who found no place to lay his head,
wandering, journeying—even as a child pursued.
He revealed justice, brought people peace,
and played out his life, even to death itself.

I believe in the Spirit,
who shapes and polishes me
with blasts of cool wind and blazing sand,
who gives me courage to witness
to the boundless grace of God.

'I am the Lord, your God. I care for you. I am coming with you.'

By Margarita Ouwerkerk, Argentina—source: World Council of Churches

Scripture Readings

Numbers 11: 25-29 “The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses.”

Psalms 19: 8, 10, 12-14 “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.”

James 5: 1-6 “Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending mysteries.”

Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48 “We saw someone driving out demons in your name. . . . He does not follow us.”

A Reading from the Book of Numbers (11: 25-29)

“Yahweh came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Yahweh took some of the spirit that was upon Moses and put it on the seventy elders. Now when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But this they did not do again.



“Two men had remained in the camp. The name of one was Eldad, the name of the other Medad. However, the spirit came on them for they were among those who were registered though they had not gone out to the Tent.

“As they prophesied inside the camp, a young man ran and told Moses, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’

“Joshua, the son of Nun, who ministered to Moses from his youth said, ‘My lord Moses, stop them!’

“But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all of Yahweh’s people were prophets and that Yahweh would send his spirit upon them!’”

Moses with the Tables of the Law by [Guido Reni](#) (1624)

Personal Reflection

The first awareness that the Israelites had of the Spirit of God came through the prophets’ words and deeds. Prophets knew something of God’s secrets. And God shared some divine wisdom with them. Through the prophets’ words and actions, the Israelites came to understand that God communicated his spirit like a violent and sudden wind (in Hebrew “*ruah*” means both ‘spirit’ and ‘wind’).

This story in the Book of Numbers teaches us that the Spirit acts in various ways and by the Spirit’s own rules. The episode of Eldad and Medad shows that God does not always give his Spirit through official channels. Though the list of prophets included Eldad and Medad, for some reason they had not gone with Moses and the others. *Moral: It should not surprise us that the Spirit may also speak through people we do not recognize as “official” bearers of the word.*

“But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all Yahweh’s people were prophets and that Yahweh would send his spirit upon them!’”

— *When did I have the experience of being in conversation with someone who made a comment that caused me to come away saying, “Wow! That was God speaking to me”?*

— *When did someone tell me something like, “You know, when you said, ‘_____,’ I knew it was God speaking to me in that moment?” Do I remember what I said that touched the person’s heart?*

Responsorial Psalm 19 (8, 10, 12-14)

In praise of God, creator and lawgiver

The precepts of the Lord give joy to my heart.

The law of Yahweh is perfect:
it gives life to the soul.
The word of Yahweh is trustworthy:
it gives wisdom to the simple.
The precepts of the Lord give joy to my heart.

The fear of Yahweh is pure,
it endures forever;
the judgments of Yahweh are true,
all of them just and right.
The precepts of the Lord give joy to my heart.

They are a light to your servant,
in keeping them, they win a great reward.
But who can discern one's own errors?
Forgive the failings of which I am unaware.
The precepts of the Lord give joy to my heart.

Preserve me from willful sin;
do not let it get the better of your servant.
Then shall I walk blameless
and innocent of serious sin.
The precepts of the Lord give joy to my heart.

Personal Reflection

The "word of God" is a common theme in Psalms and other Scripture passages. Israelites found in the Law passed down through Moses the message of Yahweh's specific will. God also uses Nature to send messages about God's beauty and love for us. The splendor of heaven gives a glimpse of God's glory. When nature seemed harsh and the Law constricted the Israelites' behavior, faith carried them through those hard times. So, too, love must work in and through us. We are also aware of God's presence, when we meditate on God's deeds and commandments, which provide light and joy for our soul.

"Who can discern one's own errors? (Yahweh) forgive the failings of which I am unaware."

— *How good am I at discerning my own mistakes, errors, and missteps in life? Even more important, how good am I at correcting mistakes I make along the way? Or do I fall back on, "Well, that's just the way I am," meaning, "Don't expect me to change."*

A Reading from the Letter of Saint James (5: 1-6)

“Now, for what concerns the rich. Cry and weep for the misfortunes coming upon you. Your riches are rotting and your clothes eaten up by the moths. Your silver and gold have ‘rusted,’ and they grow into a witness against you.

“It will consume your flesh like fire, for having piled up riches in these, the last days. You deceived the workers who harvested your fields, but now their wages cry out to the heavens. The reapers’ complaints have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You lived in luxury and pleasure in this world, thus, fattening yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have easily condemned and killed the innocent since they offered no resistance.”

Personal Reflection

The message here? “Rich” people who gain their wealth unjustly will lose all they have. Why? For gaining their wealth on the backs of underpaid workers and condemning those who speak out for justice. The last days are those just prior to the coming of Christ. James, like many first century Christians, believed in the imminent end of the world and the return of the Lord. Then, Christ *alone* would rightly judge the rich based on how they used or abused their wealth.

What took place among the poorer classes during James’ lifetime still happens today. The prosperity of a quarter of the world depends on a system that leaves the vast majority of people in poverty. In wealthier countries, money can destroy hope among the those left behind, who desire, if not riches, at least a better life through just wages and access to education and advancement.

Those currently enjoying the “good life” often fail to accept their responsibility to improve the quality of life among those who have less—at times *much* less. Far removed from our personal comfort, misfortune flows like molten lava causing perpetual poverty, disease, and early death through famine, oppression, and war.

— *Where am I on the scale of “material wealth” within my own society?*

There’s a saying, “Give till it hurts.” Maybe it’s better to say, “Give till it *feels good*.”

— *Where do I stand considering the economic status of the worldwide population? How generous am I in helping those who have less, whether in person or through gifts to those in need here in the U.S. and abroad? How might I do more with my time and treasure?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (9: 38-43, 45, 47-48)

“John said to him, ‘Master, we saw someone who drove out demons by calling upon your name, and we tried to forbid him, because he does not belong to our group.’

“Jesus answered, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon after speak evil of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you a drink of water because you belong to Christ and bear his name, truly, I say to you, he will not go without reward.

“If anyone should cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble and sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a great millstone around

his neck. If your hand makes you fall into sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter life without a hand, than with two hands to go to hell, to the fire that never goes out. And if your foot makes you fall into sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter life without a foot, than with both feet to be thrown into hell.

“And if your eye makes you fall into sin, tear it out! It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, keeping both eyes and being cast into hell, where the worms that eat them never die, and the fire never goes out.”

Personal Reflection

It seems that, while Jesus prepared his apostles to lead and guide his faith community, others went about independently preaching his Gospel and expelling demons. Today, throughout the world, diverse Christian denominations perform courageous and generous apostolic works. This evangelization outside the Catholic Church challenges us to rethink our biases and fears. If others evangelize, perhaps it's because our Church (meaning you and me) cannot or does not reach the majority of needy people in the world.

Undaunted, God finds ways to evangelize those we neglect or simply do not or cannot reach. Perhaps our own massive ecclesiastical structures (both physical and organizational) no longer allow a great majority of people to find in us the fresh life-giving air of the Gospel. Jesus wants us to change this. In the meantime he offers the world Christian denominations and non-Christian religions to pick up the slack.

As the song, “*The Word of the Lord*,” from [Leonard Bernstein's “Mass”](#) goes, “You cannot imprison the word of the Lord.” For an explanation why and how Bernstein, a Jew, wrote “Mass,” follow this link:

<https://www.leonardbernstein.com/works/view/12/mass-a-theatre-piece-for-singers-players-and-dancers> (See what role Jacqueline Kennedy might have played in all this.)

“Jesus answered, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon after speak evil of me. For whoever is not against us is for us.’”

— *What is my attitude toward other Christian denominations and non-Christian faiths? How do I feel about the “other-than Roman Catholic” citations, prayers, and music appearing in these weekly reflections?*

— *To what extent do I see a connection between Jesus’ words and the increasing rapport between our Catholic faith community and the many other communities providing spiritual nourishment to God’s people?*

— *If I have not previously been aware of Bernstein’s “Mass,” what do I think of it based on this one song, “The Word of the Lord.”*

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

A Special Gift

Leonard Bernstein’s “Mass”—a short (5 min.) [introduction](#)

[Full performance](#) of Bernstein's "Mass" (2 hours) – in honor of the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (1981)

Music:

"[Yahweh, I Know You are Near](#)," composed and sung by [The St. Louis Jesuits](#)

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

Based on this weekend's Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and

(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God's love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern? Why do I hesitate?

In light of this weekend's Scriptures, take some time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week's Scriptures

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Genesis 2: 18-24 "It is not good for man to be alone."

Psalm 128: 1-6 "May you see your children's children."

Hebrews 2: 9-11 "(Jesus) is not ashamed to call them 'brothers.'"

Mark 2: 2-12 "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife."

Closing Prayer

(edited for use here)

A Wisdom Prayer

Father, teach me to navigate life with wisdom,
the true wisdom reigning down from Heaven.

Lord, train my soul in gratitude.

Keep my hands busy with your Kingdom-work,
my lips ever ready to give praise,
and may my feet be in a hurry to bring peace.

Let my life be a river of blessing for others.

Source: [Beliefnet](#)

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from [*Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition*](#)

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Coming VERY soon!! *Inspector Javert: at the gates of Hell*

(a novel exploring "what happens next?" after we die)