

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Acts 1:12–14
1 Peter 4:13–16
John 17:1–11A

MONDAY

John 16:29–33
"I have conquered the world!"

TUESDAY

John 17:1–11A
"Father, the hour has come."

WEDNESDAY

John 17:11B–19
"... protect them from the evil one."

THURSDAY

John 17:20–26
"The glory that you have given me I have given them."

FRIDAY

John 21:15–19
"Tend my sheep."

SATURDAY

John 21:20–25
"Follow me!"

The God Within Us

A college student landed a summer job working on the street department in a small rural community where they directed him to paint the yellow line down the center of the highway by hand. After three days of this work his supervisor called him in. "The first day on the job, you painted three miles of the yellow line. The second day you painted two miles. But today you only painted one mile. We can't accept this. You're fired." As the young man left the office, he looked back and he said, "You know, it's not entirely my fault. Each day I got farther away from the paint can."

Sometimes we imagine God as a paint can, as a presence outside of ourselves. We see God as closer or farther away from us, depending on where we stand. We think we are closer to God when we pray or when we do what is good. We limit God's presence to a church or the beauty of nature. We imagine God dwelling in saintly people like Mother Theresa or in church leaders like Pope Benedict. Of course God is present in these people and places. But prior to any of these presences, God is present in us. God is in our hearts.

This truth is powerfully expressed in today's Gospel. Jesus prays to his Father, revealing that even as he returns to the Father, both the Father and Son remain in us. The glory of the Gospel is that we abide in God's very life. God is not like a paint can exterior to ourselves. God lives within us.



The Faith of the Church

The bishops of the Second Vatican Council assert that Christ is at work in human hearts through the energy of his Spirit. He animates, purifies, and strengthens every noble longing of humanity by which men and women strive to make life more human and render the whole earth submissive to God's purpose (Cf. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* 38).



Questions of the Week

Today's gospel is taken from the Farewell Discourse of Jesus which the Fourth Gospel presents at the conclusion of the Last Supper. Jesus' powerful words assure us that we share in the very life of God.

Adults

What simple steps can I take to remind myself that God is always with me and that I can always trust in God's guidance and love?

Children

Do I realize that God knows me better than anyone else and is always here to help me?

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com (click on "Gospel Reflections") and share today's Gospel reading as a family.

Responding to God's Word . . .

When we acknowledge the abiding presence of God within us, we will understand that God is present to us in every situation.

God is with us when we succeed, when we love generously, and when we serve faithfully. God rejoices in our goodness and calls us to love even more deeply, to give more generously. He knows the more giving we are, the happier we will be. God is with us when we sin. He waits for us to see the wastefulness of our selfishness, the destructiveness of our anger, the foolishness of our prejudice. God calls us to change.

He is with us in our suffering—when our world falls apart, when the people we love leave us, when sickness and death surround us. God is with us, affirming us and calling us to patience and to courage.

God is with us forever. He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. It is only when we know and accept this truth that we can be people of hope. Hope flows from believing that there is a power greater than our strength and cleverness. God is the one who is with us, supporting us, guiding us, leading us to life.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. At a family meal or gathering, ask each member to share a time when he or she realized that God was present and how such a presence can bless others.

In the workplace or in school. When facing a difficulty at school or work, pause and ask for help from the God who dwells within you.

In the community. Encourage someone who is coping with sickness, divorce, or any other trouble that God is close at hand.



Meditation Moment

Mark Twain's wit and charm made him popular not only in America but also in Europe. On one European trip, he was invited to dine with a head of state. When Twain's little daughter learned of the invitation, she said, "Daddy, you know every big person there is to know, except God." She was referring to the fact that her daddy was not a religious man, at least in the formal sense.

For reflection . . .

An example of Twain's irreligious wit is this sentence from his Notebook: "If Christ were here now, there is one thing he would not be—a Christian." What is Twain's point and to what extent might it be valid today?

RELIGION IS NOT A WAY OF LOOKING AT CERTAIN THINGS. IT IS A CERTAIN WAY OF LOOKING AT EVERYTHING.

ROBERT E. SEGAL

FROM *VISION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

A Prayer to the God Within Us

God of Love,
there are times when
I feel alone, when those I
love ignore me, when those who
dislike me gloat, when even friends
do not understand, when my usual
burdens become too great to bear.
In these empty moments, remind
me of your faithfulness. In these
times of despair, console me
with your grace. In these deserts
of isolation, support me with
the truth that you are
abiding in my heart.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land.

Deuteronomy 34:10–11

Profile in Faith

Moses

The closeness of Moses to God is unparalleled in the history of Israel. Unlike others who received revelation, Moses spoke to God "face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exodus 33:11). Moses' intimacy with God was an anticipation of the remarkable closeness that God shares with every Christian believer.

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