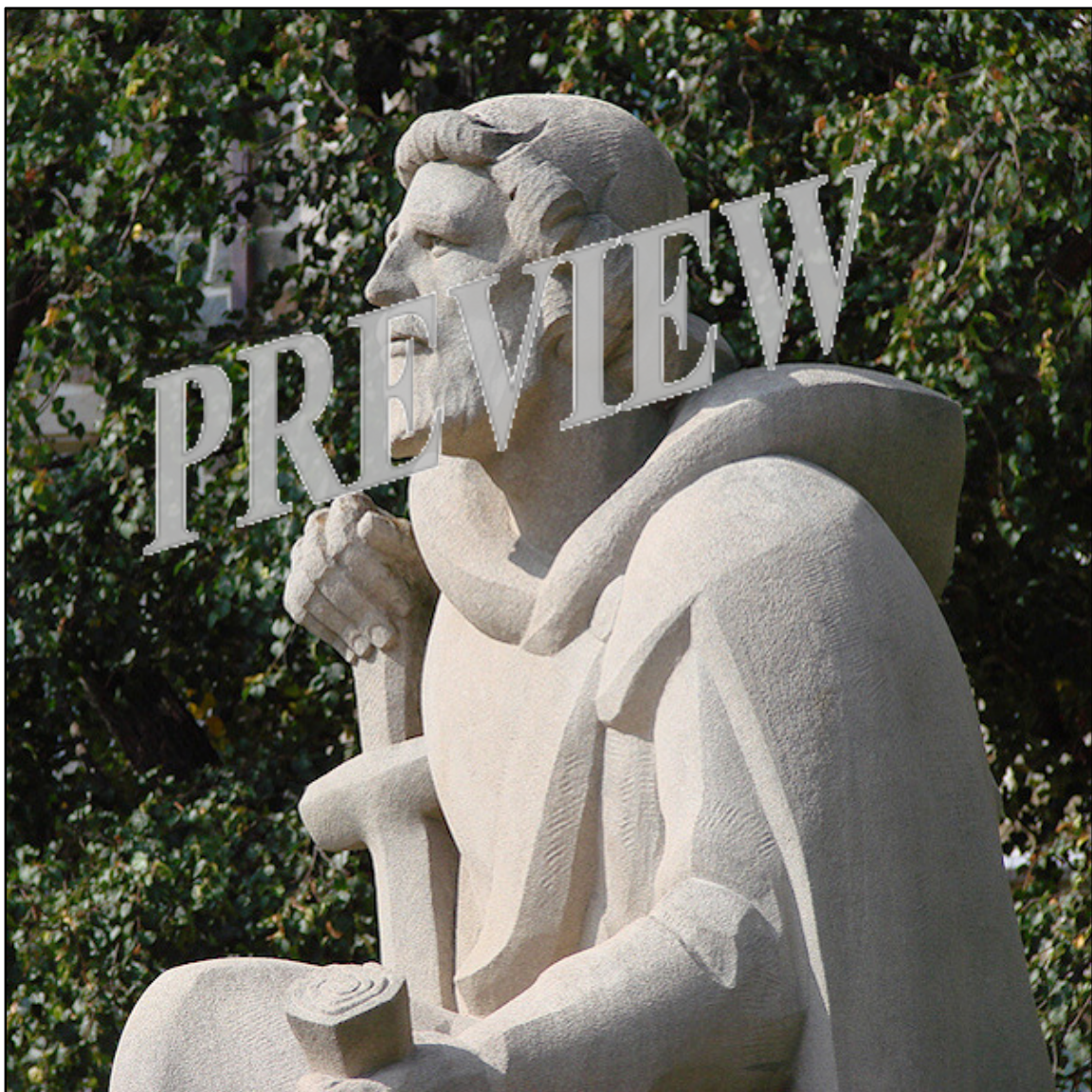




Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of February, 2012

by Terry A . Modica



5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 5, 2012

Read:

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Ps 147:1-6

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Mark 1:29-39

Reflect:

Today's reading from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians describes my own ministry of writing these Good News Reflections of inspiration for daily life:

If I preach the Good News, this is no reason for me to boast, because I have an obligation to do this, and woe to me if I do not do it! If I do so willingly, I'm rewarded for it, but if unwillingly, I'm merely fulfilling my responsibility of stewardship. What then is my reward? That when I share the Good News, I am able to offer it free of charge so that all may benefit.

Saint Paul was not saying it's wrong to charge a fee. In fact, Jesus said that the worker deserves his wages (Luke 10:7). But Paul knew that what matters most is being a good steward of the gifts that God has given us.

Father Henri Nouwen said, "Fund-raising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission." We have all been entrusted with an obligation to continue the ministry of Christ on earth for the modern world. A Christian who does not follow Christ in ministry has a lazy faith, an unlively faith.

Using your gifts, talents, wisdom, knowledge, compassion, etc., generously for the benefit of the faith of others is an alive faith. The immediate reward is a joyful awareness of being in partnership with Christ.

The Gospel reading shows us the generosity of Peter's mother-in-law in sharing her talent of hospitality.

And it shows us the determination of Jesus to preach the gospel widely and tirelessly.

Both are examples of good stewardship. All gifts and talents and financial earnings are blessings from God that are meant to be shared.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What have you received from God?

† How much of it is being shared with others?

† What seems too inadequate to give away?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† How can you become a better steward of God's gifts?

† Name any service that you provide: How important is it to you that you keep doing it no matter what?

† How important to Jesus do you think it is? Why?

Comments/Prayer Requests:



6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 12, 2012

Read:

Leviticus 13:1-2,44-46

Ps 32:7,1-2, 5,11

1 Corinthians 10:31--11:1

Mark 1:40-45



Reflect:

This Sunday's second reading gives us a great motto that we should post on our bedroom mirrors so that it's the first thing we see as our sleepy eyes awaken each morning: "Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God."

Everything! Brush your teeth for the glory of God. Kiss your family "Good morning!" for the glory of God. Go to Mass for the glory of God (in other words, *not* for what *you* can get out of it). Do your work for the glory of God. Drive politely for the glory of God. Shop and eat and greet others for the glory of God. Say yes to the needs of the Church for the glory of God.

And receive all that he wants to give you (the compliments, the money you earn, the answered prayers, the good times and rewards) all for the glory of God.

Make this part of your daily prayer every morning: "Holy Spirit, help me to do everything today for the glory of God. Amen!"

The daily habit of starting the day this way will integrate it into your character. When we remember to see our activities through the lens of "whatever you do, do it for the glory of God", we become stronger in avoiding all kinds of sins. It sanctifies each moment of every day.

Usually, we see religious activities as separate from our normal activities. We take "time out" from our schedules to go to church. We stop what we're doing when we want to pray. We think that only Clergy and Religious can be religious all of the time and that a layperson who is like that is a "fanatic". But why?

Why should we limit "for the glory of God" to only what is "holy" – Mass attendance, religious rituals, prayers, the works of ministry, etc.? We can sanctify every moment by remembering that whatever we do, we want to please God with it.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † What have you done already today that glorifies God?
- † What is planned for later today and how can that be offered to God?
- † What will you do to remind yourself daily to do everything for the glory of God?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † Describe ways that we can glorify God in normal, everyday activities.
- † How do you turn mundane tasks into a gift for God?
- † When is it most difficult to glorify him?
- † How can even our lapses into sin become blessings that glorify God?

Comments/Prayer Requests:

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 19, 2012

Read:

Isaiah 43:18-19,21-22,24b-25

Ps 41:2-5,13-14

2 Corinthians 1:18-22

Mark 2:1-12

Reflect:

This Sunday's Gospel reading, we hear the story of the paralytic who was taken to Jesus through a hole in the roof. He received healing because of his friends.

God never intended any of us to move through the difficulties of life by ourselves. In fact, he answers our prayers through the fellowship of Christian friends in faith-filled community. We experience Christ through the Body of Christ that's here on earth: through the Eucharist that is given to us by priests and other ministers of communion, and through the communion of fellowship, i.e., the community of the local church, and the community of far-away friends who are as near as a phone call or text message.

He embraces us through the hugs that others give us. He speaks to us through the vocal chords of people he inspires. He gives us his comforting shoulder to cry on when we lean on friends who care.

We progress in the faith more quickly, we heal more deeply, and we learn more about trusting God when we seek him and find him in the love of Christian companions. To do this, we have to put aside our pride in self-sufficiency. We have to accept what others offer to give.

Do you have at least four friends who will carry you closer to Jesus – one for each corner of your mat, so to speak? To find them, we have to get involved in the community life of the Church. Your parish has a variety of opportunities, from ministries that can use our talents to social events that gather people for fun.

It makes no sense to think that we can be in a good relationship with God without being in community with other faith-filled believers.



Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What makes you lame? What's paralyzing you from trusting God more? What has caused you to sit down on the roadside of your personal growth?

† Name four friends who carry you closer to Jesus. If you cannot, what will you do to build more friendships?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Where have you found good Christian friends?

† How do you nurture these friendships?

† How has it helped you on your journey through life?

Comments/Prayer Requests:

1st Sunday in Lent

February , 2012

Read:

Genesis 9:8-15

Ps 25:4-9

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:12-15



Reflect:

Today's Gospel reading shows us the first thing that Jesus did after his baptismal anointing in the Jordan River: He wrestled with temptation.

His baptism had marked the moment of his complete surrender to the Father's will. As he arose from the water, he began a new life of ministry.

The Father responded by telling him that he was very pleased, and the Holy Spirit filled his humanity. Jesus as God already had the Holy Spirit (he and the Spirit were the same God), but Jesus the fully human Son, now came fully alive in the Spirit. We can imagine how this experience in the Jordan River gave him the feeling of an elated spiritual high. And the next thing that happens is an attack of the devil.

The same pattern repeats itself in our lives. As soon as we experience new growth in our faith, or a new calling to do the Father's will, we run smack into a situation that tests the strength and sincerity of our faith. However, if this didn't happen, how would we find out that we've spiritually matured? How would we know that we are ready to make a significant difference working for the kingdom of God?

Sometimes without consciously thinking it, we decide that if we're going to be tested and we might lose, wouldn't it be better not to start something new?

Well, there's another temptation!

Lent is the perfect time to examine the temptations that we face every day and turn them into new growth that will strengthen our faith.

Every time we face a sin and seek God's forgiveness, we become stronger. And if we take it a step farther by walking into the confessional with it, we also receive powerful graces directly from Jesus, through the priest, that will render temptations much more powerless.

And this makes us more useful to God in the mission of conquering evil in the world and helping his kingdom spread into the lives of the people around us.

Think of temptations as blessings in disguise: Use them as opportunities to become more like Jesus and grow powerful in the faith.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† How well do you recognize temptation?

† How quickly do you rely on the faith that God has given you to say no to the devil's tricks?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Describe a time when you experienced a spiritual high and then faced a strong temptation.

† How did you handle it?

† What role did (or will) Jesus play in overcoming this temptation?

Comments/Prayer Requests: