

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] Matthew 25:21

[2] Fr. Francis Fernandez; In Conversation with God; Vol. 1; 25.3

[3] Galatians 4:4-7

[4] Luke 15:19

[5] Matthew 27:54

[6] John 12:14

[7] Luke 1:38

[8] Act of Contrition

[9] John 16:7-9

[10] 1 John 4:18-19

[11] The Penny Catechism; A Catechism of Christian Doctrine; Section 338

Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Matthew 3:13-17 — Pg. 1

What is the Church saying Past and Present? Pages 1-3

What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

Gospel Reading – Matthew 3:13-17 – Roman Missal – Cycle A

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings

From a Sermon by Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, bishop

Christ is bathed in light; let us also be bathed in light. Christ is baptized; let us also go down with him, and rise with him. John is baptizing when Jesus draws near. Perhaps he comes to sanctify his baptizer; certainly he comes to bury sinful humanity in the waters. He comes to sanctify the Jordan for our sake and in readiness for us; he who is spirit and flesh comes to begin a new creation through the Spirit and water. The Baptist protests; Jesus insists. Then John says: I ought to be baptized by you. He is the lamp in the presence of the sun, the voice in the presence of the Word, the friend in the presence of the Bridegroom, the greatest of all born of woman in the presence of the firstborn of all creation, the one who leapt in his mother’s womb in the presence of him who was adored in the womb, the forerunner and future forerunner in the presence of him who has already come and is to come again. I ought to be baptized by you; we should also add: and for you, for John is to be baptized in blood, washed clean like Peter, not only by the washing of his feet. Jesus rises from the waters; the world rises with him. The heavens like Paradise with its flaming sword, closed by Adam for himself and his descendants, are rent open. The Spirit descends in bodily form like the dove that so long ago announced the ending of the flood and so gives honor to the body that is one with God. Today let us do honor to Christ’s baptism and celebrate this feast in holiness. Be cleansed entirely and continue to be cleansed. Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men, for whom his every word and every revelation exist. He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of him who is the light of heaven. You are to enjoy more and more the pure and dazzling light of the Trinity, as now you have received – through not in fullness – a ray of its splendor, proceeding from the one

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God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Pleasing God - Lesson and Discussion

“...with whom I am well pleased”

In the Gospel reading, the word “son” and the word “pleased” are important. God wants to be pleased by us and wants to be pleased with us. We should want to please Him.

Why would we want to please God? Some might please God so they do not get in trouble, so they don't get on God's bad side. Some might please God so they can get something, a reward from the One that has everything. Some might want to please God for the sole reason of pleasing the one they love.

Why do we please others? Many times we please others to get something, or so the person does not get mad at us. If we really think about it, it is rare that we would do something for someone just to please them, and to expect nothing in return. To please solely for love's sake is difficult, because we seem to always ask the question, “What is in it for me?” It is amazing that God desires to be pleased by us. God has everything, yet what truly brings Him pleasure is when we think of Him, speak to Him and desire to give Him pleasure. Our vocation, our calling, to bring pleasure to God is seen at the beginning and end of our life. When we are baptized, our heavenly Father says to us, the same words He said to Jesus, “this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”. If we are faithful children, God will say to us at the end of our lives, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.”[1] The parable of the talents in Matthew's Gospel compares the faithful to servants and God to a master. Like Mary we are a slave, a handmaid of the Lord. “The slave, one can say, did not have a will of his own, nor could he have any desire independent of his master's. Our Lady agrees with the greatest joy and with all her heart to have no other wish than that of her Master and Lord. She gives herself to him unreservedly, without condition.”[2] We can be both slave and son. We have the dignity of a son, yet the humility of a slave. “So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then and heir.”[3]

Why can it be helpful to view ourselves as slaves or servants sometimes? As a son or daughter? We can look to the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son becomes complacent and takes for granted his sonship while in his father's house. He goes so far as to ask for his inheritance and separates himself from his father. He cares nothing about the relationship he has with his father but instead wants only what the father can give him materially. It is only when he loses all, when he humbles himself and longs for his father's presence that he finally comes to the realization that, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.”[4] When the son returns home remorseful and fully ready to be a servant, it is the father that refuses to let him be a servant but instead treats him as a son.

Jesus emptied himself as a slave, a servant on the Cross and it was the Roman centurion that recognized not a slave hanging on the Cross but instead recognized a Son as he professed, “Truly this was the Son of God!”[5] Mary, is the humble handmaid of the Lord, but is “blessed among all women” and exalted by the Father as the Queen of Heaven. We must imitate Jesus and Our Lady by humbling our self and although we are seen always in the eyes of God as a precious son and daughter, we remember that we are not worthy of this honor. We remember Jesus's words, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.”[6] We remember Our Lady's words, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”[7] We are sons and daughters of God and therefore we are God's children. A child is motivated to obey or please a parent primarily for two reasons. The child fears a punishment of not obeying and or desires a reward for obeying. The child fears disappointing the parent and or desires to please the parent. Our relationship with Our Heavenly Father is the same. “O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.”[8] We say in the Act of Contrition that we detest our sins.

Why do we detest sin? Yes we hate sin because it brings us punishment and suffering, but ultimately it is the goal of each Christian to have a relationship with God. This relationship should be such that, we don't want to offend the one we are in relationship with and we know that the one we love deserves all our love. If we do not detest sin we must ask the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin, for we cannot detest sin if we do not believe in sin or know what is wrong and what is right. “I will send him [Holy Spirit] to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment; of sin, because they do not believe in me.”[9] If we do not detest or hate our sin, we will continue to sin.

Give examples of when you have done the right thing only because you feared punishment. Give examples of when you have done the right thing out of love for another. We are motivated to do good out of fear or out of love and sometimes a mixture of the two. Our primary motivation should be out of love. We are told by Saint John, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts our fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us.”[10] It is the love of God that leads us to love and away from fear.

What will the love of God lead us to do? The love of God will lead us to think how good God is; often to speak to Him in our hearts; and always to seek to please Him.[11] When people are “in love” they tend to think, speak and want to please the one they love. God is in love with us and He thinks and speaks to us constantly and it is His desire to please us. **Why is it sometimes easy for us to concentrate on thinking, speaking and pleasing others, but not God?**