

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

2. Meditate — 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 — 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 — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

# Quick Connect

**What is the Gospel saying? Mark 16:15-20** — Page 1

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

## **Gospel Reading – Mark 16:15-20 – Roman Missal [Cycle B]**

Jesus said to his disciples: proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, word through accompanying signs.

## **Spiritual Reading - From Saint Augustine**

Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him. Listen to the words of the Apostle: If you have risen with Christ, set your hearts on the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For just as he remained with us even after his ascension, so we too are already in heaven with him, even though what is promised us has not yet been fulfilled in our bodies. Christ is now exalted above the heavens, but he still suffers on earth all the pain that we, the members of his body, have to bear. He showed this when he cried out from above: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? and when he said: I was hungry and you gave me food. Why do we on earth not strive to find rest with him in heaven even now, through the faith, hope and love that unites us to him? While in heaven he is also with us; and we while on earth are with him. He is here with us by his divinity, his power and his love. We cannot be in heaven, as he is on earth, by divinity, but in him, we can be there by love. He did not leave heaven when he came down to us; nor did he withdraw from us when he went up again into heaven. The fact that he was in heaven even while he was on earth is borne out by his own statement: No one has ever ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. These words are explained by our oneness with Christ, for he is our head and we are his body. No one ascended into heaven except Christ because we also are Christ: he is the Son of Man by his union with us, and we by our union with him are the sons of God. So the Apostle says: Just as the human body, which has many members, is a unity, because all the different members make one body, so is it also with Christ. He too has many members, but one body. Out

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of compassion for us he descended from heaven, and although he ascended alone, we also ascend, because we are in him by grace. Thus, no one but Christ descended and no one but Christ ascended; not because there is no distinction between the head and the body, but because the body as a unity cannot be separated from the head.

**Send. Preach. Believe. Be Baptized – Lesson and Discussion**

*“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved”*

“Jesus said to his disciples: proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.”[1] **What is then necessary for salvation?** One must believe. One must be baptized. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is the Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!’[2] Saint Paul asks a lot of questions in this letter which helps us understand the order in which a person come to believe and be baptized.

**We believe and therefore we are baptized, but how did we come to believe?** Saint Paul asks, “And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” **How have we heard the Gospel?** We hear the Gospel primarily at Mass and then are instructed at Mass through the homily. We also have a catechism. In the catechism, it teaches us that we on our own should also read the Gospel in the light of Christ’s Church, the Catholic Church.

**And how can they hear without someone to preach?** Who preaches? The Church preaches and she preaches with one voice. There is one Lord and one Gospel, so there is also one teaching. According to their baptism call, all the faithful are called to preach, but they must be preaching the same message, the message of the Gospel. The faithful should preach the same message that the Bishops (apostles) preach as the Bishops (apostles) preach the same message that Christ preaches. This is why we have a universal teaching as contained in the catechism. We hear the Gospel first. After hearing we must pray, believe, and live the Gospel; it is the catechism that assists us in that mission. When we pray, believe and live the Gospel, this enables the Gospel to be spread to every creature so that others might hear and believe, and then believe and be baptized.

Saint Paul asks one final question. **And how can people preach unless they are sent?** It is at the feast of the Ascension that we not only celebrated Christ’s Ascension into heaven, but we remember that the apos-

ties were sent or commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature, to the ends of the earth. It is Christ who does the sending. The disciples were sent then, and we are sent now. We are sent out into the streets, to work, to our families, schools, to every creature. We are sent to preach the Gospel so that people might hear, believe and be baptized. As Blessed Pope John Paul II said in the 8<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado, “Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the squares of cities, towns and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel (Cfr. *Rom* 1,16). It is the time to preach it from the rooftops (Cfr. *Matth* 10,27). Do not be afraid to break out of comfortable and routine modes of living, in order to take up the challenge of making Christ known in the modern “metropolis”. It is you who must “go out into the byroads” (*Matth* 22,9) and invite everyone you meet to the banquet which God has prepared for his people. The Gospel must not be kept hidden because of fear or indifference. It was never meant to be hidden away in private. It has to be put on a stand so that people may see its light and give praise to our heavenly Father.”[3]

**Are people always going to believe right away?** No. It was the disciples who at first did not believe when they were told. Remember on Easter day, Mary Magdalene had told the disciples and also the disciples on the road to Emmaus that Jesus had risen from the dead. They did not believe her when they were told of this. For this incredulity, Jesus rebuked them. “As the eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised.”[5] Jesus commissions those who at first did not believe, to go out to the whole world. If those who knew Jesus personally; walked with Him, saw His deeds, heard His words directly, and then heard of His resurrection but did not believe, we can be sure that many will not believe when first told about the Gospel. Acceptance of the Gospel might take time on the part of those receiving, and patience and charity on the part of those preaching the Gospel.

**How can we help encourage others to believe?** St. Paul tells the Romans, “Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.”[6]

Jesus commissioned the disciples and all the faithful to proclaim the Gospel to every creature. **Will every creature believe the Gospel as soon as it is preached? What impedes people from believing the Gospel in our modern age?**

[1] Mark 16:15-16

[2] Romans 10:9-15

[3] [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/homilies/1993/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19930815\\_gmg-denver\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19930815_gmg-denver_en.html)

[4] Saint Bede; The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers; Vol. 2

[5] Mark 16:14

[6] Romans 12:11-13