

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

MAY 10, 2020

MASS READINGS

MONDAY: ACTS 14:5-18, PS 115, JN 14:21-26

TUESDAY: ACTS 14:19-28, PS 145, JN 14:27-31A

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 15:1-6, PS 122, JN 15:1-8

THURSDAY: ACTS 15:7-21, PS 96, JN 15:9-11

FRIDAY: ACTS 15:22-31, PS 57, JN 15:12-17

SATURDAY: ACTS 16:1-10, PS 100, JN 15:18-21

NEXT SUNDAY: SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER-RDGS: ACTS 8:5-8, 14-17, PS 66, 1 PT 3:15-18, JN 14:15-21

MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS

TUESDAY; RAYMOND BROWN

WEDNESDAY; FERRITER FAMILY

THURSDAY: SI MIKE ROBERTS FAMILY

FRIDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS

SATURDAY: RAYMOND BROWN

SUNDAY: FOR THE PARISH

MEMORIAL FLOWERS

Judy Buckles. Joe & Kathleen Duffy. Ray Kincaid. Marie Brown. Donn Miles. Dick Nagel. Dorothy Nelson. Schubach, Polley & Hunter families. Peter Albrecht. Ronnie Vaughn. Charles Connor

GOSPEL REFLECTION:

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

Jesus presents us with an interesting possibility. On the one hand we may not look upon the face of God and live and yet when we see Jesus we are seeing the Father and he has already told us that he has come to bring us abundant life (John 10:10). If we consider Jesus as the "Word" we may find it easier to grasp when we remember that often we may not readily grasp the meaning of a word until we find a word we do recognize and make the connection. As students, we try to expand our vocabulary not simply to impress people but to gain a greater advantage when it comes to explaining what we are trying to say in short, it helps us make sense. The Incarnation presents us with a similar situation. God as God is too transcendent, too mysterious, too totally other, so says Paul, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...", in this light Jesus becomes for us an "understandable God". His "word" has brought us to a greater appreciation of the Father since, as Son we see the reflection of the Father in him. For Paul writes again, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." (Col 1:15). The Son has made it easier for us to finally grasp and, more importantly to reflect the glory of God that is ours by way of creation and, with the gift of the Son we can more fully find in one another a sure sign of God's presence in the world. Here our own sacramental theology comes into play. We must next examine what it means to "see the Son". Paul writes that faith comes through hearing (Rom. 10:17) but he also refers to the eyes, hence sight, when he writes: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened" (Eph 1:18). In the mystery of the Incarnation and our faith directed toward it we begin to hear and see what is necessary for our reconciliation with the Father. In his words and his acts (word and sacrament) we become more aware of what the Father is doing and hence come to recognize his saving work in and through His Son. Now we can understand what Jesus means when he says whoever has seen me as seen the Father. And in this sight, which we define as the interior life, we begin to live in such a way as to reflect the glory of God dwelling in us as the Son identified as "lights to the world" (Matt 5:14). Back to our "word analogy". Our lives begin to "make sense" in that they reflect the meaning of why and for what we were created, again as Paul writes: the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:4-6)

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HE WHO SEES ME SEES THE FATHER

1. The Revelation of Mercy

It is "God, who is rich in mercy" ¹ whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father: it is His very Son who, in Himself, has manifested Him and made Him known to us.² Memorable in this regard is the moment when Philip, one of the twelve Apostles, turned to Christ and said: "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied"; and Jesus replied: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me...? He who has seen me has seen the Father."³ These words were spoken during the farewell discourse at the end of the paschal supper, which was followed by the events of those holy days during which confirmation was to be given once and for all of the fact that "God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."⁴

Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and paying close attention to the special needs of our times, I devoted the encyclical *Redemptor hominis* to the truth about man, a truth that is revealed to us in its fullness and depth in Christ. A no less important need in these critical and difficult times impels me to draw attention once again in Christ to the countenance of the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort."⁵ We read in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*: "Christ the new Adam...fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his lofty calling," and does it "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love."⁶ The words that I have quoted are clear testimony to the fact that man cannot be manifested in the full dignity of his nature without reference - not only on the level of concepts but also in an integrally existential way - to God. Man and man's lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love.

For this reason it is now fitting to reflect on this mystery. It is called for by the varied experiences of the Church and of contemporary man. It is also demanded by the pleas of many human hearts, their sufferings and hopes, their anxieties and expectations. While it is true that every individual human being is, as I said in my encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, the way for the Church, at the same time the Gospel and the whole of Tradition constantly show us that we must travel this day with every individual just as Christ traced it out by revealing in Himself the Father and His love.⁷ In Jesus Christ, every path to man, as it has been assigned once and for all to the Church in the changing context of the times, is simultaneously an approach to the Father and His love. The Second Vatican Council has confirmed this truth for our time.

The more the Church's mission is centered upon man-the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric-the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father. While the various currents of human thought both in the past and at the present have tended and still tend to separate theocentrism and anthropocentrism, and even to set them in opposition to each other, the Church, following Christ, seeks to link them up in human history, in a deep and organic way. And this is also one of the basic principles, perhaps the most important one, of the teaching of the last Council. Since, therefore, in the present phase of the Church's history we put before ourselves as our primary task the implementation of the doctrine of the great Council, we must act upon this principle with faith, with an open mind and with all our heart. In the encyclical already referred to, I have tried to show that the deepening and the many-faceted enrichment of the Church's consciousness resulting from the Council must open our minds and our hearts more widely to Christ. Today I wish to say that openness to Christ, who as the Redeemer of the world fully reveals man himself," can only be achieved through an ever more mature reference to the Father and His love.

The Incarnation of Mercy

Although God "dwells in unapproachable light,"⁸ He speaks to man he means of the whole of the universe: "ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made."⁹ This indirect and imperfect knowledge, achieved by the intellect seeking God by means of creatures through the visible world, falls short of "vision of the Father." "No one has ever seen God," writes St. John, in order to stress the truth that "the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known."¹⁰ This "making known" reveals God in the most profound mystery of His being, one and three, surrounded by "unapproachable light."¹¹ Nevertheless, through this "making known" by Christ we know God above all in His relationship of love for man: in His "philanthropy."¹² It is precisely here that "His invisible nature" becomes in a special way "visible," incomparably more visible than through all the other "things that have been made": it becomes visible in Christ and through Christ, through His actions and His words, and finally through His death on the cross and His resurrection.

In this way, in Christ and through Christ, God also becomes especially visible in His mercy; that is to say, there is emphasized that attribute of the divinity which the Old Testament, using various concepts and terms, already defined as "mercy." Christ confers on the whole of the Old Testament tradition about God's mercy a definitive meaning. Not only does He speak of it and explain it by the use of comparisons and parables,

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but above all He Himself makes it incarnate and personifies it. He Himself, in a certain sense, is mercy. To the person who sees it in Him - and finds it in Him - God becomes "visible" in a particular way as the Father who is rich in mercy."¹³

The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of "mercy" seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it.¹⁴ This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one - sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy. However, in this regard we can profitably refer to the picture of "man's situation in the world today" as described at the beginning of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*. Here we read the following sentences: "In the light of the foregoing factors there appears the dichotomy of a world that is at once powerful and weak, capable of doing what is noble and what is base, disposed to freedom and slavery, progress and decline, brotherhood and hatred. Man is growing conscious that the forces he has unleashed are in his own hands and that it is up to him to control them or be enslaved by them."¹⁵

The situation of the world today not only displays transformations that give grounds for hope in a better future for man on earth, but also reveals a multitude of threats, far surpassing those known up till now. Without ceasing to point out these threats on various occasions (as in addresses at UNO, to UNESCO, to FAO and elsewhere), the Church must at the same time examine them in the light of the truth received from God.

The truth, revealed in Christ, about God the "Father of mercies,"¹⁶ enables us to "see" Him as particularly close to man especially when man is suffering, when he is under threat at the very heart of his existence and dignity. And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God. They are certainly being moved to do this by Christ Himself, who through His Spirit works within human hearts. For the mystery of God the "Father of mercies" revealed by Christ becomes, in the context of today's threats to man, as it were a unique appeal addressed to the Church.



In the present encyclical wish to accept this appeal; I wish to draw from the eternal and at the same time-for its simplicity and depth- incomparable language of revelation and faith, in order through this same language to express once more before God and before humanity the major anxieties of our time.

In fact, revelation and faith teach us not only to meditate in the abstract upon the mystery of God as "Father of mercies," but also to have recourse to that mercy in the name of Christ and in union with Him. Did not Christ say that our Father, who "sees in secret,"¹⁷ is always waiting for us to have recourse to Him in every need and always waiting for us to study His mystery: the mystery of the Father and His love?¹⁸

I therefore wish these considerations to bring this mystery closer to everyone. At the same time I wish them to be a heartfelt appeal by the Church to mercy, which humanity and the modern world need so much. And they need mercy even though they often do not realize it.

When Christ Began To Do and To Teach

Before His own townspeople, in Nazareth, Christ refers to the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."¹⁹ These phrases, according to Luke, are His first messianic declaration. They are followed by the actions and words known through the Gospel. By these actions and words Christ makes the Father present among men. It is very significant that the people in question are especially the poor, those without means of subsistence, those deprived of their freedom, the blind who cannot see the beauty of creation, those living with broken hearts, or suffering from social injustice, and finally sinners. It is especially for these last that the Messiah becomes a particularly clear sign of God who is love, a sign of the Father. In this visible sign the people of our own time, just like the people then, can see the Father.

It is significant that, when the messengers sent by John the Baptist came to Jesus to ask Him: "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?"²⁰ He answered by referring to the same testimony with which He had begun His teaching at Nazareth: "Go and tell John what it is that you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them." He then ended with the words: "And blessed is he who takes no offense at me".²¹

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Especially through His lifestyle and through His actions, Jesus revealed that love is present in the world in which we live - an effective love, a love that addresses itself to man and embraces everything that makes up his humanity. This love makes itself particularly noticed in contact with suffering, injustice and poverty - in contact with the whole historical "human condition," which in various ways manifests man's limitation and frailty, both physical and moral. It is precisely the mode and sphere in which love manifests itself that in biblical language is called "mercy."

Christ, then, reveals God who is Father, who is "love," as St. John will express it in his first letter²²; Christ reveals God as "rich in mercy," as we read in St. Paul.²³ This truth is not just the subject of a teaching; it is a reality made present to us by Christ. Making the Father present as love and mercy is, in Christ's own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of His mission as the Messiah; this is confirmed by the words that He uttered first in the synagogue at Nazareth and later in the presence of His disciples and of John the Baptist's messengers.

On the basis of this way of manifesting the presence of God who is Father, love and mercy, Jesus makes mercy one of the principal themes of His preaching. As is His custom, He first teaches "in parables," since these express better the very essence of things. It is sufficient to recall the parable of the prodigal son,²⁴ or the parable of the Good Samaritan,²⁵ but also - by contrast - the parable of the merciless servant.²⁶ There are many passages in the teaching of Christ that manifest love-mercy under some ever-fresh aspect. We need only consider the Good Shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep, ²⁷ or the woman who sweeps the house in search of the lost coin.²⁸ The Gospel writer who particularly treats of these themes in Christ's teaching is Luke, whose Gospel has earned the title of "the Gospel of mercy."

When one speaks of preaching, one encounters a problem of major importance with reference to the meaning of terms and the content of concepts, especially the content of the concept of "mercy" (in relationship to the concept of "love"). A grasp of the content of these concepts is the key to understanding the very reality of mercy. And this is what is most important for us. However, before devoting a further part of our considerations to this subject, that is to say, to establishing the meaning of the vocabulary and the content proper to the concept of mercy," we must note that Christ, in revealing the love - mercy of God, at the same time demanded from people that they also should be guided in their lives by love and mercy. This requirement forms part of the very essence of the messianic message, and constitutes the heart of the Gospel ethos.

The Teacher expresses this both through the medium of the commandment which He describes as "the greatest,"²⁹ and also in the form of a blessing, when in the Sermon on the Mount He proclaims: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."³⁰

In this way, the messianic message about mercy preserves a particular divine-human dimension. Christ - the very fulfillment of the messianic prophecy - by becoming the incarnation of the love that is manifested with particular force with regard to the suffering, the unfortunate and sinners, makes present and thus more fully reveals the Father, who is God "rich in mercy." At the same time, by becoming for people a model of merciful love for others, Christ proclaims by His actions even more than by His words that call to mercy which is one of the essential elements of the Gospel ethos. In this instance it is not just a case of fulfilling a commandment or an obligation of an ethical nature; it is also a case of satisfying a condition of major importance for God to reveal Himself in His mercy to man: "The merciful...shall obtain mercy."

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

DIVES IN MISERICORDIA

READ MORE AT: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html



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How God Opens the Eyes of the Heart

How does someone who is blind to the glory of God come to see him for who he really is?

To be sure, the natural eyes and ears and brains are part of the process. Without them we cannot even see or hear or construe the natural things that reveal God's glory: creation, incarnation, gospel, Scripture. But this natural seeing is not decisive in seeing the glory of God. "Seeing they do not see," Jesus said (Matthew 13:13). Something more than the use of the natural eyes and ears and brains must happen.

The way the apostle Paul puts it is that you must have "the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know" (Ephesians 1:18). This too is strange — the heart has eyes! But perhaps not beyond comprehension.

Most people are at home speaking of "the heart" as something more than the blood-pumping organ in our chest. Such language is not foreign to us. This "heart" is the real us. Intuitively we know that there is more to us than flesh and bones. We know we are not mere chemicals in a sack of skin. We would not talk the way we do about things like justice and love if we didn't believe that.

Eyes of the Heart

Is it so strange, then, to add to this immaterial personhood the idea of immaterial eyes — "the eyes of the heart"? This inner person, who is the real us, sees and knows things that are not identical with what the eyes of the body can see. Pascal said, "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things" (*Pensées*). There is a spiritual seeing through and beyond natural seeing. There is a spiritual hearing through and beyond natural hearing. There is spiritual discerning through and beyond natural reasoning.

How, then, may we conceive of what happens when the heart sees the glory of God? I found a clue in the way Paul speaks of our knowledge of the glory of God in nature. On the one hand, Paul says that we all "know God."

"Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him" (Romans 1:21). That is astonishing. Everyone knows God! But in other places, Paul emphatically says that by nature people do *not* know God. For example, "In the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The "Gentiles do not know God" (1 Thessalonians 4:5). Formerly "you did not know God" (Galatians 4:8; see 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 John 4:8).

Who Knows God?

So, what does Paul mean in Romans 1:21 when he says that all human beings "know God"? To answer this, we might simply quote Romans 1:19–20, "What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made."

But is that all Paul means when he says, "They knew God"? I think there is more. In Romans 2:14–15, Paul says that people who have never heard of the law of God sometimes do what the law requires. Their consciences witness to God's will. He puts it like this: "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts."

So, here is my suggestion: "Knowing God" in Romans 1:21 includes this deeper heart experience of Romans 2:15. The analogy that I find helpful is to conceive of the innate knowledge of God and his will as a kind of template or mold in the human heart. This template is designed by God in every human heart with a shape, or a form, that corresponds to the glory of God. In other words, if the glory of God were seen with the eyes of the heart, it would fit the template so perfectly that we would know the glory is real. We would know we were made for this.

When Paul says that all humans "know God," or that all humans have the work of the law "written on their hearts," he means that there is a glory-shaped template in every heart waiting to receive the glory of God. We all "know God" in the sense that we have this witness in our hearts that we were made for this glory. There is a latent expectancy and longing, and the shape of it is buried deep in our souls.

Hearts Packed Hard

The reason we do not see the glory of God is not that the template is faulty or that God's glory is not shining. The reason is "hardness of heart" (Ephesians 4:18). This hardness is a deep aversion to God, and a corresponding love for self-exaltation.

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Our problem is not that we lack the light, but that we love the dark. This is the hardness of our hearts.

So, in my analogy of the temple, this means that the hollowed-out shapes of the mold, which are perfectly shaped for the all-satisfying glory of God, are instead packed hard with the love of other things. So, when the glory of God shines into the heart — from creation or incarnation or Jesus or the gospel — it finds no place. It is not felt or perceived as fitting.

To the natural mind — the mind whose glory-shaped mold is packed hard with idols — the glory of God is foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14). It doesn't fit. As Jesus said to those whose hardness pushed them to the point of murder, "You seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you" (John 8:37). Of course, they could construe his words, and remember his words. But they could not see them as glorious or compellingly beautiful.

They heard the words, but they did not love them. They loved the darkness that filled the template that was designed for the brightness of the glory of God.

Supernatural Excavation

If we are on the right track, the only hope for seeing the glory of God in Scripture is that God might cut away the diamond-hard, idolatrous substitutes for the glory of God that are packed into the template of our heart.

The Bible speaks of this supernatural act in many ways. For example, it describes this supernatural inbreaking as a shining into our hearts of divine glory (2 Corinthians 4:6), and as a granting of truth and repentance (2 Timothy 2:25), and as the giving of faith (Philippians 1:29), and as raising us from the dead (Ephesians 2:5–6), and as new birth by the word (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18), and as the special revelation of the Father (Matthew 16:17) and the Son (Matthew 11:27), and as the enlightening of the eyes of the heart (Ephesians 1:18), and as being given the secret of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:10).

When this miracle happens to us, the glory of God cuts and burns and melts and removes from the template the suicidal cement of alien loves and takes its rightful place. We were made for this. And the witness of this glory to the authenticity of the Scriptures is overwhelming. Where we saw only foolishness before, we now see the all-satisfying beauty of God. God has done this — supernaturally.

No one merely decides to experience the Christian Scriptures as the all-compelling, all-satisfying truth of one's life. Seeing is a gift. And so, the free embrace of God's word is a gift. God's Spirit opens the eyes of our heart, and what was once boring, or absurd, or foolish, or mythical is now self-evidently real.

John Piper is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of more than 50 books, including *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* and most recently *Coronavirus and Christ*.



Let's Pray...

Dear Lord,

Open the eyes of my heart

So I may see Your great love.

Forgive me for being too blind to see

Your *Abundant* lovingkindness.