



Bringing Home the Word

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
November 23, 2014

Christ the General Manager

By Janel Esker

My brothers and I have long teased our mother about her asking-for-the-manager skills when she has an issue with customer service. When she has a valid complaint, she keeps asking for the next supervisor up until she reaches someone who deals fairly with her. She is bold and unafraid!

When she received extremely unprofessional service at her automotive dealer, she kept asking for help until the

general manager was involved. He gave her his cell phone number and came to the service floor to supervise the work on her car. My mother sensed a very different aura among the staff once the general manager was involved.

Perhaps today's first reading should be titled "Christ the General Manager." Ezekiel's prophecy reveals that God is personally involved in the care of his children. We hear, "I myself will search for my sheep and examine them...I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest." There's no middle manager here—Christ is the one doing the work of seeking and healing, personally involved in our interactions with those in need. In fact, Christ is identified with the most vulnerable and poor. This is no distant God-king, but one who is deeply engaged with humanity.

There's both comfort and challenge here. Comfort in knowing how close Christ is to us and how tenderly he cares for us, challenge in realizing Christ calls to us through the poor outside our doors who need assistance. As we conclude one liturgical year and look toward the next, we can celebrate with joy our "general manager" God who leaves the corporate office—the heavenly throne—to live so intimately among us. †

SUNDAY READINGS

Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17

The Lord is a shepherd who pastures his sheep. He rescues the lost, heals the sick and injured, and cares for all, giving them food, drink, and rest.

I Corinthians 15:20–26, 28

As sin and death came through man, so must salvation and life. Though fully human to fulfill his, and effect our, resurrection, Jesus was also fully divine, with authority and power above everything always.

Matthew 25:31–46

The evangelist describes the final judgment as a great assembly in which all people are divided between those who humbly serve the needs of others and those who don't.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I humbly submit to authority and obey those charged with caring for me?
- What prevents me from seeing the face of God in others?



Lord, I am grateful
that you are
my gentle shepherd.
Show me how to
care for your people
with the same love
and compassion
you show me.

From *Grateful Meditations
for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
by Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

Plain Talk: Let God Out of the Box

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

God can be no greater than the imagination of the believer.” That line comes from Toni Morrison’s 2008 novel, *A Mercy*. She goes on to explain that shallow people believe in a shallow God, and timid people believe in a vengeful God. I must admit, I was shouting “Amen!” as I read those lines. It’s a marvelous way to phrase the familiar concept of putting God in a box.

Tradition tells us God is beyond our understanding, God is infinite and eternal, God stands outside the bounds of space and time. God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient. Our all-loving God fills us with wonder and mystery. God is, as one of my favorite Gospel songs says, “awesome.”

And yet, we often squeeze our infinite God into tiny boxes. I guess it’s inevitable. It’s pretty tough to visualize something that’s beyond our understanding, hard to get a handle on the infinite. And there’s nothing wrong with contemplating God in bite-sized portions—it’s just that we rarely avoid the pitfall of denying everything that doesn’t fit into our little box.

On one hand, Toni Morrison’s statement seems preposterous. How can I limit God? If I don’t believe God loves me, it certainly doesn’t stop God from actually loving me. True. But it *can* greatly limit the effect God’s love has on my life. If I deny its existence, then for



all intents and purposes it doesn’t exist in my universe.

Imagine yourself drowning in the ocean. You’ve gone under twice; it’s dark, and you’re scared. Someone throws you a life preserver, but it lands behind you and you neither see nor hear it. To you, it doesn’t exist. So even though it’s only a few feet away, it cannot save your life, and you drown.

Yes, we can fall victim to the limits of our imagination, to our inability to immerse ourselves in the awesomeness of our great God. When we cut others off from the God we don’t believe *they* understand, we manage to hurt only ourselves. In our misguided attempts to understand God by imagining that God acts and reasons the same way we do, we fail to see the love and mercy that surround us.†

The Redeemer, Mary, and You

By Fr. Matthew Allman, CSsR

Whether they’re creating a Madonna and Child or a Pietá, many painters and sculptors depict Mary and Jesus alone, as though the singular intimacy of the relationship is what fascinates the artists. They invite us to gaze at and enter into the intimate communion between this mother and child. Yet even as the love and tenderness shown in these images can touch, inspire, and warm our hearts, often the love encountered here remains simply that of Jesus and Mary’s—and not our own.

Private-moment depictions of Mary and Jesus can easily lead to a private sort of prayer or a private sort of devotion. This is not bad in itself, but if seeing Mary depicted alone with Jesus so often leads us to a “me and Jesus” kind of spirituality, we need the Gospels to remind us that not even Christ’s Mother gets into the kingdom of God by dealing with her Son alone.

The kingdom of God is home to the entire communion of saints, and God always invites us to enter it with others. We’re not saved alone, so any communion with Christ must always be united with his body—the Church and its members.

Her icon, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, invites us to participate in this communion. Mary offers us her Son and so draws us into the circle of his love and hers, a love that embraces all those who seek to do the will of the Father.†

WEEKDAY READINGS November 24–29

Mon.	<i>St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc and Companions:</i> Revelation 14:1–5 / Luke 21:1–4	Thu.	<i>Thanksgiving Day:</i> Revelation 18:1–2, 21–23; 19:1–3, 9 / Luke 21:20–28
Tue.	<i>St. Catherine of Alexandria:</i> Revelation 14:14–19 / Luke 21:5–11	Fri.	Revelation 20:1–4, 11—21:2 / Luke 21:29–33
Wed.	Revelation 15:1–4 / Luke 21:12–19	Sat.	Revelation 22:1–7 / Luke 21:34–36

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