

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
Easter Season 2020—A Cycle Readings
Session 6—“Let nothing disturb you . . . God alone suffices.”



[St. Teresa of Avila](#)
[Peter Paul Rubens](#) (1615)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

Opening Prayer

Is shelter-in-place driving you crazy? The "[Our Catholic Prayers](#)" website recommends the following prayer said daily by St. Teresa of Avila. The celebrated Carmelite nun, mystic and Doctor of the Church wrote this prayer in the 16th century. It's called "St. Teresa's Bookmark" because, according to tradition this great saint carried it around in her prayer book, where it was found after her death in 1582. This prayer offers much needed perspective on things, especially at a time of anxiety and restriction like ours.

Pause and reflect after each line of this brief declaration of faith in Divine Providence.

Let nothing disturb you,

Let nothing frighten you,

All things are passing;

God only is changeless.

Patience gains all things.

Who has God wants nothing.

God alone suffices.

"Nada Te Turbe"
Performed by Taeze Community
<https://youtu.be/go1-BoDD7CI?t=28>
composed by [Jacques Berthier](#)

6th Sunday of Easter Themes

At first glance, the readings of this Sixth Sunday of Eastertime have no unifying theme. Deacon Philip goes off to evangelize Samaria (Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17). Peter calls for Christians to keep their consciences clear (I Peter 3: 15-18). John relates Jesus' discourse on the meaning of love (14: 15-21).

In the midst of all this, the psalmist looks at the state of society and says, "Let's make music and sing" (66: 1-3, 4-7, 16, 20). Maybe the psalmist has it right, as we apply this to our lives today. So, let's kick back and go for the ride through this week's Scriptures with a song of praise in our hearts.

This week's readings, often refer to God using a masculine pronoun (ten times in Psalm 66 alone). The world of the 20th and 21st centuries has rightly seen the rise of equality of the sexes. Many of us prefer non-gender-specific pronouns, when speaking of God. In preparing this reflection sheet, we attempted to follow that pattern but gave up. Doing so required awkward alterations to the Scriptural text. Therefore, most of the time, we leave transpositions to the reader.

While there is no obvious *unifying theme*, as you pray with these Scriptures, see if you can find one.

First Reading: From the Acts of the Apostles (8: 5-8, 14-17)

"At the same time, those who were scattered went about, preaching the word. Philip went down to a town of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. All the people paid close attention to what Philip said as they listened to him and saw the miraculous signs that he did. For, in cases of possession, the unclean spirits came out shrieking loudly. Many people, who were paralyzed or crippled, were healed. So there was great joy in that town

"Now, when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. They went down* and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for he had not as yet come down upon any of them, since they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So Peter and John laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

** Among Jews, the holy city of Jerusalem held the preeminent place in the entire world. The city and the Temple were always the highest pinnacle for them. They always spoke of "going up" to Jerusalem. Everything else was "down" from there, regardless of geography.*

Personal Reflection

— *Why didn't Philip himself—an ordained deacon—"lay hands" on the new converts, so they too could "receive the Holy Spirit" (thereby "confirming" them)?*

The Apostles, through the Holy Spirit, established the order of deacons specifically as a ministry of hands-on charitable service (Acts 6). Their stated mission? See to equal distribution of food and shelter to believing widows.

— *How do I answer this question the following question? What is Deacon Philip doing evangelizing the heretic Jews in Samaria and performing miracles and exorcisms?*

Antiphonal Psalm (66: 1-7, 16, 20)

A people's thanksgiving for God's blessings

Ant.: Let the earth cry out to God with joy.

Shout with joy to God, all you on earth;
sing to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.

Ant.: Let the earth cry out to God with joy.

Say to God, "How great are your deeds!
How formidable your power,
that makes your enemies cower!
All the earth bows down to you,
making music, in praise of you,
singing in honor of your name."

Ant.: Let the earth cry out to God with joy.

Come, and see God's wonders;
his deeds, awesome for humans.
He has turned the sea into dry land,
and the river was crossed on foot.
Let us, therefore, rejoice in him.
He rules by his might forever;
his eyes keeping watch on the peoples;
his arm, holding the rebels in check

Ant.: Let the earth cry out to God with joy.

All you, who fear God, come, and listen;
let me tell you what he has done.
May God be blessed!
He has not rejected my prayer;
nor withheld his love from me.

Personal Reflection

“Shout with joy to God, all you on earth; sing to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise.”

— *During these pandemic-driven days and weeks, how hard is it for me to “shout with joy” . . . sing “glory” . . . and “praise” God? What am I doing to resist my own creeping anxiety, especially if I am a mother or father, with children elders in my care or furloughed or laid-off worker?*

“All you, who fear God, come, and listen; let me tell you what he has done,” says the psalmist. Clearly, he accepts the “cheerleader” and “reminder” role from God, employing prayerful verses, music, and dance to keep the people from sinking into doubt and despair.

— *During these unsettling times, what am I doing to be a “cheerleader/reminder” for myself and those of my household?*

— *Are my words sincere? Do they match my true thoughts and actions? Or, do my words sometimes betray my inability to find positive outcomes from my current life circumstances?*

Second Reading: From the First Letter of St. Peter (3: 15-18)

“Bless the Lord Christ in your hearts. Always have an answer ready, when you are called upon to account for your hope but give it simply and with respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your upright Christian living. Better to suffer for doing good, if it is God’s will, than for doing wrong. Remember how Christ died, once, and for all, for our sins. He, the just one, died for the unjust, in order to lead us to God. In the body, he was put to death, in the spirit, he was raised to life.”

Personal Reflection

“Always have an answer ready, when you are called upon to account for your hope, but give it simply and with respect.”

— *What do I (or would I) say when members of my own household challenge my positive, hopeful attitude about the current—and real—hardships of our present restrictions? Or, when friends and neighbors object to my optimism, while they bemoan their restrictions?*

Q: Do I have a hopeful attitude at all??

Peter admits life is hard—even dangerous—for many early Christian converts. Yet, the lead Apostle offers this advice: “Remember how Christ died, once, and for all, for our sins.” He doesn’t offer this as a solution for our problems, certainly, but as inspiration to persevere.

— *Am I able to look at my current difficult circumstances and remember that, during his life on this planet, Jesus suffered far more than I am right now? What other spiritual / psychological practices help me to cope with my present reality? (Don’t forget to include popular media like Netflix, Prime TV, and others. What else . . . ?)*

Proclamation from the Gospel of St. John (14: 15-21)

(Jesus said to his disciples)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments; and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he is with you and will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you. A little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me, because I live and you will also live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever keeps my commandments is the one who loves me. If he loves me, he will also be loved by my Father; I too shall love him and show myself clearly to him.”

Personal Reflection

“*If you love me*, you will”

These words can be taken both as *negative* and *positive*. It depends on what we mean when we use Jesus’ words “love me.” If we mean a kind of fanatic servitude rendered to gain or avoid some outcome, e.g., “I love you, Lord, because I don’t want

to spend eternity in hell,” that’s a negative reason for fidelity to Christ. The Greek text in this Gospel uses the verb *agapate* (to love). Let’s explore the kind of love defined as *agape* and how it is unique.

A [Wikipedia](#) article defines *agape* as "the highest form of love . . . charity," the love of God for humans and of humans for God. *Agape* is not to be confused with four other Greek words for the different forms of love.

- *storge* (familial love)
- *philia* (brotherly love)
- *philautia* (self-love)
- *eros* (passionate/sexual attraction or love).

Agape is different. It means universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists *regardless of circumstance*. It *goes beyond* just our emotions to the extent of seeking first what is best for the other(s).

— *Thinking of people I love [name some of them, one by one], which of the above meaning(s) (storge, philia, philautia, eros, agape) comes closest to my experience of loving my spouse, partner, children, grandchildren, living parents, intimate friends, acquaintances . . . strangers I encounter? (Be honest.)*

— *Consider other loves in my life, such as neighbors, bridge partners, fellow club members . . . parish clergy and staff, parishioners, and more . . . even my love of self. Who falls into my personal philia, philautia, maybe even eros groups?*

— *Which word best defines my love for God (Father/Jesus the Christ/Holy Spirit)? (Again, be honest.)*

Note: Be sure to watch the video on the “Four Loves,” recommended later in these notes!

Journaling Prompts

Take some time to write about the insights gained from reflecting on the 6th Sunday of Easter readings.

— *What is the first thought that comes to mind?*

We can’t just be “takers” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *How do I respond to what I’ve discovered in today’s Scriptures? What difference will my insights make in how I think and live—and give back—during the week ahead?*

Questions

Feel free to send any questions or comments you might have to ctkAlive@ctkph.org

Preview of Next Session Ascension Sunday (May 24)

Acts 1: 1-11 “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going.”

Psalm 47 “God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.”

Ephesians 1: 17-23 “May you know how great is the inheritance, the glory, God sets apart for his saints.”

John 14:15-21 “I shall not call you servants anymore, because servants do not know what their master is about. Instead, I have called you friends”

Recommended Reading

Personal recommendation—AJG

The Passion and the Cross by Ronald Rolheiser, OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate)
(One of the greatest Christian spiritual writers of our age turns his gaze toward the mystery of suffering and the meaning of the cross.)

Currently, on Amazon—ebook \$0.99, paperback \$11.99

For Your Viewing/Listening

“[The Four Loves](#)” by C.S. Lewis, narrated by C.S. Lewis, doodling by [C.S. Lewis Doodle](#)

(NOT TO BE MISSED!!—AJG)

See also the whole 4-part doodle series on the Four Loves and [much more](#) of C.S. Lewis’ writings/readings. A treasure trove of voice-and-doodle!

[Make Me a Channel of Your Peace](#), composed by [Sebastian Temple](#), performed by [Susan Boyle](#), wonderful images by [Giulia Zarantonello](#)

Closing Prayer

Source: “Our Catholic Prayers”—Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi
<https://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/the-prayer-of-st-francis.html>

See also: “[Prayer of St. Francis](#)” in Wikipedia.

Note: The “Prayer of St. Francis” is one of the best-known and most beloved prayers in the world today. It is not well known but proven true that Francis himself (1181-1226) neither composed nor prayed the prayer attributed to him! Its actual origins are much more recent (early 20th c.). Nonetheless, it beautifully reflects Francis’ devotion to God!

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

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(follow the link above to the novel *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*)