

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Job 7:1–4, 6–7

1 Corinthians 9:16–19, 22–23

Mark 1:29–39

MONDAY

Mark 6:53–56

“... and all who touched [him] were healed.”

TUESDAY

Mark 7:1–13

“Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites ...”

WEDNESDAY

Mark 7:14–23

“... there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile ...”

THURSDAY

Mark 7:24–30

“... it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”

FRIDAY

Mark 7:31–37

“Be opened.”

SATURDAY

Mark 8:1–10

“I have compassion for the crowd ...”

An Urgent Message

The Gospel according to Mark shows the “earthiness” of his Jesus. Mark’s primary purpose was to strengthen the Early Church’s faith in Jesus as the Christ, the resurrected Son of God.

Almost from the beginning of his Gospel message, Mark shows a sense of urgency in the text, reflected by his frequent use of the word *immediately*. He quickly moves from one episode in Jesus’ life and ministry to another, and emphasizes more what Jesus *did* than what he *said*.

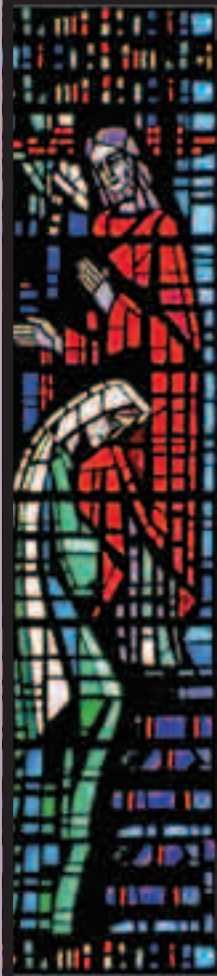
In his writing, Mark does not portray great mythic battles between good and evil. Rather, God’s power is shown in the midst of the events of day-to-day living, in specific places and with real people. For example, in today’s reading, Jesus and his disciples come from worshipping in the synagogue to the home of Simon (Peter) and Andrew, perhaps for

a meal. They find Peter’s mother-in-law in bed with a fever. With a simple touch to her hand, a small gesture that could be interpreted as simply helping the woman get out of bed, Jesus heals her.

After this quick and awesome healing, they all calmly sit and eat together, while being served by the formerly ill woman. Like it was no big deal!

Mark then moves from the individual healing of Peter’s mother-in-law to the healing of many, as the whole town gathers at the door.

It is significant to note that Jesus did not stay very long in the villages after he performed miracles of healing and driving out demons. He clearly points out that he has to go on to other villages to preach, because *it was for this purpose*—sharing an urgent message—that *he had come*.



The Faith of the Church

When Jesus healed, he often touched the sick and asked them to believe. The sick also tried to touch him, possibly because they sensed God’s healing power coming through him. Although Jesus often prayed in solitude, the Word who became flesh included all mankind in his prayers. He sympathized with our weaknesses and today, he continues to “touch” us to heal us (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1504, 2602).



Questions of the Week

Jesus told his disciples that he could not stay in one place because his mission was to preach the Good News to all towns. In preparation for this, he usually sought a deserted place so he could pray alone.

Adults

How can I prepare myself to be more purposeful about sharing the Good News?

Children

How do I share my faith and trust in Jesus with my friends or classmates?

Responding to God's Word . . .

Today's Gospel reading from Mark presents four points of great importance: (1) the simplicity of Peter's faith leads him to bring Jesus home to cure his mother-in-law. Jesus asks us to visit the sick and take care of them. We need to build this action into our daily lives.

(2) We can also learn from the depth of Jesus' prayer. Although the apostles were familiar with the Psalms and the Jewish prayer tradition, Jesus brought a new dimension to prayer. His prayer displayed the full union between himself and Abba, the Father, the Creator God.

(3) The earthly and human behavior of Jesus in this Gospel helps us to know better his humanity. Jesus is real. As a man, he had feelings and showed them. In the Gospel of Mark, we see the best of the human person manifested in Jesus. We should make more of an effort to emulate him.

(4) And finally, we need to follow the commission to go and preach the Good News to other towns because that is what Jesus was sent to do. And that is what he requests of us, "Go in my name. . . ."

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Have someone read Mark 1:29–39 out loud. An adult can offer a simple explanation of it, and then everyone should share what the reading means to them.

In the workplace or in school. Make an effort to connect with someone who has been ill or is suffering from a medical condition. Show God's love to them.

In the community. Encourage your pastor and other parishioners to take a walk through the neighborhood and bless the families as you pass their homes.



Meditation Moment

One day a friend visited Henri Matisse, the French artist. Noticing how filled with stress his friend seemed to be, Matisse said, "Andre, you must find the artichokes in your life." Then he led his friend to a patch of artichokes in his garden and said, "Each morning, after I have worked a while, I come here to be still and meditate. This simple ritual inspires me and gives me a new perspective toward my work."

For reflection . . .

To what extent does quiet meditation relax me and give me a new perspective toward my work?

AT COOL OF DAY, WITH GOD I WALK /
MY GARDEN'S GRATEFUL SHADE; /
I HEAR HIS VOICE AMONG THE TREES /
AND I AM NOT AFRAID.

ANONYMOUS

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Make Us One

God of unity
and forgiveness: Help
us fulfill your desire to see
us become one, as you are one
with Christ and the entire Creation.
You do not want us to be clones of
each other; You made us unique, with
different gifts and flaws. Help us as
we journey toward this unity, which
is the only thing that could make
us happy. One in you; one
with each other; one with
Creation. Amen.

*Carry this thought in your heart as a guide
for your faith journey this week.*

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks
to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he
blesses all the world.

Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) *The Journey with Jesus:*
Poems and Prayers. Selected by Dan Clendenin

Profile in Faith

Saint Joan of Valois
(1464–1505)

Joan was born gifted but physically deformed. She married the Duke of Orleans. But when he became king, he decided to divorce her. The pope declared the marriage void. Joan lived a secluded life of prayer and, in 1501, founded the Sisters of the Annunciation. Her Feast Day is February 4.

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