



Bringing Home the Word

Seventh Sunday of Easter / Ascension of the Lord | May 13, 2018

Living a New Reality

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Part of my ministry involves sitting with families as they plan a funeral service for a loved one. There are often long pauses as thoughts flood their minds and memories fill their hearts. They share stories and grief. With great care, we select readings and songs and talk about prayers.

Inevitably, we talk about what will happen after the funeral. I tell them grief is a process, that everyone does it differently, and that it would be good to be gentle with each other. In my

experience, it takes about six weeks just for the reality to begin setting in and to begin adjusting to this new situation. Things don't get better. They get different, and we go on.

I can only imagine how the disciples felt when Jesus, whom they loved, was crucified in front of them. They had only just begun their grieving. I can only imagine the joy they felt when he appeared after his resurrection, eating with and teaching them again, giving them everything they needed for what was to come.

I can't help but wonder how they felt when he left them again, ascending into heaven—not dead, but so very clearly not with them in the same way.

We celebrate Jesus' ascension just past the six-week mark from Easter. I like to think the reality of the death and resurrection has just started to sink in and that we're learning to move on in this new situation.

It's no accident that Jesus' last command to us is to live that new reality and tell the world about him. +

***After a funeral,
things don't get better.
They get different.***

Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

Ephesians 1:17–23 or

Ephesians 4:1–13 or 4:1–7, 11–13

And he gave some as apostles... to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry.

Mark 16:15–20

[Jesus said,] "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."

A Word From Pope Francis

[God] asks us to be missionary disciples, men and women who radiate the truth, beauty and life-changing power of the Gospel; men and women who are channels of God's grace, who enable his mercy, kindness, and truth to become the building blocks of a house that stands firm.

—Homily, November 26, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I live as if I am Christ's presence on earth, aware that I am his missionary?
- If Jesus were in my family, social, and professional situations, what would he do?



The Private Pain of Infertility

By Julie Irwin Zimmerman

The year after our wedding, I sat in church on Mother's Day and daydreamed about how joyful the holiday would be the following spring. My husband and I decided to have a baby, and I imagined we'd have our newborn the next Mother's Day. But the following May and the one after that we went to church with empty arms. To our dismay, we'd been diagnosed as among the 25 percent of married, childless couples in the U.S. who have trouble conceiving or carrying a baby to term.

It wasn't only Mother's Day that was hard to bear. Baptisms and baby showers were difficult. Sometimes, merely seeing a pregnant woman or a couple with a baby sent me into despair.

The months developed an unwelcome rhythm, beginning with hope, then anxiety, and ending in tears. My prayer life had taken on the same rhythm: first, optimistic appeals for pregnancy; then, frantic pleas for help getting through the month; and finally, silent anguish when I felt my prayers had been ignored. I wondered: *What have we done to deserve this? Why hasn't our simple wish for a child been granted?*

Although infertility is common, it can be isolating to sufferers. Often friends and family don't know what to say, make awkward jokes, or avoid the topic altogether. There are moral, ethical, and financial mine fields to navigate, and it's

easy for spouses to disagree about what to do.

Couples facing infertility have three options: seek medical treatment, pursue adoption, or live without children. While it's understandable to want to end the ordeal of infertility as quickly as possible, these decisions are important ones deserving prayer and discernment.

Catholic teaching on infertility treatment is often misunderstood. While the Catholic Church encourages couples to welcome children, not all medical options for infertility are considered acceptable. Surgeries and treatments that restore or enhance a couple's ability to conceive naturally or which assist the conjugal act are encouraged. Procedures that involve a third party, replacing natural conception, or the conjugal act—artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and donor eggs or sperm—are considered unacceptable.

A document by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology*, reiterates the long-standing position of the Church. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of physicians using NaPro Technology, which treats infertility in harmony with Church teaching. The Pope Paul VI Institute is a leader in the field, and an internet search can help couples find local providers.

Adoption is also a path to parenthood that's filled with many blessings. Seeking out adoptive parents and hearing their stories can affirm for infertile couples

the role God played in bringing them together.

And, of course, even in the midst of infertility, couples should take time to nurture their relationships and acknowledge that they're already a family. A weekend away, a walk in the woods, even setting aside dinner hours free from infertility talk helped my husband and me remind ourselves of our love and how satisfying our marriage was.

The experience of infertility helped me understand what Jesus did when he willingly accepted his cross. Before encountering infertility, I still believed if I worked hard enough at something, I could achieve it. Those years taught me a difficult, invaluable lesson about giving up control over my future and trusting God to reveal a future that was beyond my hopes and fears.

To learn more about Catholic teaching on reproductive technologies, visit usccb.org/LifeGivingLove. +



Risen Lord, your death, resurrection, and ascension are good news for us. Help me to share this message of hope with all people.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 14–19, 2018

Monday, St. Matthias:
Acts 1:15–17, 20–26 / Jn 15:9–17
Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a
Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:28–38 / Jn 17:11b–19

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / Jn 17:20–26
Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 25:13b–21 / Jn 21:15–19
Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 28:16–20, 30–31 / Jn 21:20–25