

# Provisions for the Journey

Brief reflections on the week's Scripture readings  
Seventh Week of Easter, 2023



**Sunday, May 21:** *The disciples went to Galilee...When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. ..."Go and make disciples of all nations...And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age"*(Mt 28:16-20).

There's a lot packed into this short passage. The disciples doubt. What is it they doubt? In the sentence context, it appears their doubt is about Jesus even as they worship him. But I wonder: Could it also be about themselves? "*Go and make disciples.*" In Greek, disciples means "learners." Not converts, learners. Does Jesus subtly remind them, that in their doubt, they are still learners as well? And finally, Jesus gives them great assurance: "*Behold, I am with you always.*" Jesus does not say, "remember I am with you." He says, "behold," *idou* in Greek. Look. See. Perceive. As you go about your life learning and guiding others to learn despite doubt, are the eyes of your heart enlightened to see Jesus right there with you?

**Today's Provision: Consciously look for Jesus.** "So where do I look?" you ask. First, look within and consciously access the Spirit to guide you. Then, look without, without judgment. What is called for by the situation in which you find yourself? Objectively, what is needed? It is so important we respond to the real need, rather than react, using discernment to guide us. It could be a tense situation at work or school, a crying child, an absolutely glorious day or event that calls you to be grateful and give praise. What can I learn? What can I teach by my actions? See if you can be aware of Jesus' presence as you go about learning and making disciples.

**Monday, May 22:** *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit"*(Acts 19:1-8).

Have you heard of the Holy Spirit? I imagine anyone reading this has heard of the Spirit. Have you received the Spirit? "Well sure," most will say, "at baptism and confirmation." But what impact does the Holy Spirit have in your daily life? During my early Christian formation, God was way too scary and I was responsible for killing Jesus, but I found great comfort in the Holy Spirit (who, BTW, was always a "she" for me—I got in trouble for that). Imagine my delight when, as an adult, I was introduced to Proverbs and the Book of Wisdom where *Hagia Sophia*—Lady Wisdom—is a central figure in all of creation!

**Today's Provision: Become a believer. Receive the Holy Spirit.** I'm making an executive decision that as we enter this long stretch of "ordinary time" (after the Feast of Empowerment—Pentecost—that we celebrate next Sunday), I will do my best to follow the Spirit's guidance in bringing her extraordinary presence front and center through these reflections. Frankly, she doesn't get enough airtime. I invite you today to pray with the image of the Trinity, focusing specifically on the "person" of the Holy Spirit. If it helps, think of the Spirit as Lady Wisdom. Spend time reading Wisdom, Chapters 7-11, Proverbs, Chapters 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9. (These books are found in Catholic Bibles, and in the Apocrypha of most Protestant Bibles.) The Spirit calls it the way she sees it, but is always inviting us to get to know her better and receive her guidance in our lives.

**Tuesday, May 23:** *"But now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. What will happen to me there I do not know, except that in one city after another the Holy Spirit has been warning me that imprisonment and hardships await me"*(Acts 20:17-27).

"Hey, wait a minute. We just talked about wanting to receive the Holy Spirit. Listen to what she is telling Paul!" (I did mention yesterday that she calls it the way she sees it!) I don't think it is malice, sinfulness, or laziness that keeps so many people from getting to know the Spirit and diving more deeply into faith. I think it is fear. "I don't want to learn more or grow in discipleship. I am comfortable and content right where I am, checking the boxes and following the rules." "Like the first disciples, I have my doubts about God and about myself. I don't want to have to confront these." "Everything I read in Scripture is about suffering for Christ, and frankly, I don't want to suffer." What keeps you from deepening your faith in the Spirit?

**Today's Provision: Trust the Spirit.** We spoken in the past about the difference between believing "in" God, Jesus, the Spirit, as is said in the creed, and really believing, trusting their words and God's promise. Most of us don't have to fear the imprisonment and hardships the early disciples faced, but diving deeper may just call into question some things about the way we are living. Trust the Spirit. Ask for guidance and discernment, and then turn your life over to God's promise. Will there be suffering? Perhaps. For most of us, that suffering involves putting our ego and pride aside to fulfill our own mission to bear witness to the Good News. The Spirit will lead you on the right path.

**Wednesday, May 24:** *"Keep watch over yourselves ... remember that for three years I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears. Now I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his that can build you up"*(Acts 20:28-38).

Three years. That's a relatively long time for Paul to have stayed in Ephesus. He took some side trips to other communities, but Ephesus was home base for quite a while; an eternity if we judge it by today's standards! All the while, he had been preaching of the imminent return of Christ. I wonder if he ever got impatient with God (as he clearly did with his fellow disciples and community members!)? Did the community grow impatient with him?

**Today's Provision: Commend all to God.** Paul offers good advice: keep watch over yourself and commend all to God and God's gracious Word that can help us grow in patience and love. It's all too easy to be jaded and skeptical, especially in light of the centuries of sins that have been (and still are) committed in God's name. I try to keep watch over myself, focusing on my faith that God is Love, and if I abide in Love, I will abide in God. Look closely today for instances when the Kingdom of heaven makes an appearance here on earth, however small. See these as signs of hope. Be patient and trust God's promise.

**Thursday, May 25:** *Aware that some were Sadducees and some Pharisees, [Paul] called out, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees; I am on trial for hope in the resurrection of the dead"*(Acts 22:30, 23:6-11).

One thing we learn about Paul here: he is very shrewd. He could have stood up and proclaimed: "I am on trial for the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, risen from the dead! That is what the Sanhedrin have charged him with. Instead, he focuses on the issue of serious debate between the factions of his audience: the belief in the resurrection of the dead. He puts the whole place in an uproar. You can imagine yelling and even physical altercations, like one sees occasionally in political realms. So he stands in the midst of this ruckus and looks up at the Roman commander (who is already uncomfortable, having just learned Paul is a Roman citizen). The commander jumps in, gets Paul out of the fray, and he lives to preach another day! I bet Paul gets high-fives all around for this strategy!

**Today's Provision: "Be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."** (Mt 10:16) Jesus also says: *"For the sons of this world are more shrewd than the sons of light"*(Lk 16:8). What does Jesus mean when he tells us to be shrewd? It's not that we should be manipulative, but that we follow this Marketing 101 advice: "Know thy audience." (We heard Paul doing this last week with the Athenians.) Our motives must be innocent, based in love, but that doesn't mean we don't think about our goal in any given interaction. Paul knows he is not finished with his mission, so he presents himself, not in a deceptive way, but in a way that enables him to move forward. Consider this as you go about engaging the world. Are your motives innocent and loving? How can you most effectively achieve those motives?

**Friday, May 26:** *"Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go"... signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God* (Jn 21:2-23).

We know Jesus is foretelling Peter's martyrdom, but I can't help thinking how this is not too different from the way some might feel as their faculties begin to falter. As I age and can't do things I used to, I am conscious of trying to prepare myself for the time when, if I am blessed with a long life, others will dress me and perhaps lead me to the place where I will finally die. This is not a morbid outlook, but one that helps me let go of things not needed for the next journey I am to take. All I will take with me is faith, hope, and love, so why not focus on these today!

**Today's Provision: What is essential for you?** St. Ignatius of Loyola suggests that as we face choices in our lives, we actually imagine doing an examen of consciousness on our deathbed. Remember, this is not an examination of conscious as we do when we seek repentance, but rather an inventory of sorts, reflecting and giving thanks to God for the blessings and good works and the sufferings and sorrows we have experienced. We ask ourselves what we have learned that will help us to move forward. It's a powerful prayer exercise to consider when you have enough time to devote to it. *"Since life may summon us at every age, be ready, my heart, for parting, a new endeavor; be ready, bravely and without remorse, to find new light that old ties cannot give"*(Herman Hesse, "Stages of Life.")

**Saturday, May 27:** *"The LORD probes the righteous and wicked, and the lover of havoc He utterly hates"*(Ps 11, Hebrew translation).

We typically read, *"the lover of violence he hates."* The Hebrew is more to the point and enlightening. While those who love violence create havoc—even if it is just in their own lives—not all who create havoc are violent. And yet, the havoc they cause can inspire terrible violence and destroy a society, a country, a world. We are all too familiar with this as lies, slander, and wreaking havoc are rampant in social and public media. Consider things that create havoc in your community. Are there things you need to avoid? Are there things you can correct by speaking the truth and fostering peace?

**Today's Provision: Be a truth-teller.** There is so much nuance out there, with half-truths and interpretations of moral and civil laws that are diametrically opposed. It boggles my mind. Most of us try to avoid confrontation, but our silence in the face of blatant lies is tacit support for those lies and the status quo. Take a risk today. Speak the truth.