



# Bringing Home the Word

The Transfiguration of the Lord | August 6, 2017

## Climbing the Mountain

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**F**rom the top of Mount Tabor in Israel, the supposed site of Jesus' transfiguration, visitors can see clearly across the valley to the distant Golan Heights some forty-five miles away. The view takes your breath away. When I was in the valley, I could only see the immediate area, but at the top I was mesmerized by both the distance and the beauty of the land.

Maybe that's why mountains have always been places of prayer, divine unveiling, and why Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to the top of a

mountain to experience this vision of his glory. He wanted them to see more than their daily life and work. He wanted them to see further than they ever thought they could. He wanted them to see the depths of who he was in a new and profound way. It was important that they do this. The transfiguration happens in the midst of Jesus' predictions of his passion and death, before he begins his deliberate journey to Jerusalem. Without an image of the glorified Christ, the apostles might not have had the courage to continue following him.

Like the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, we also hear this transfiguration account during Lent. Jesus takes the Church and each one of us up the mountain and dares us to see further, better, more deeply than ever before. He challenges us to leave what we know, listen to him, and follow in his footsteps. May we have the courage to accept that challenge. †

*Without an image of the glorified Christ, the apostles might not have had the courage to continue following him.*

## A Word From Pope Francis

By [Jesus'] Transfiguration he invites us to gaze at him. And looking at Jesus purifies our eyes and prepares them for eternal life, for the vision of heaven. Perhaps our eyes are a little sick because we see so many things that are not of Jesus, things that are even against Jesus: worldly things, things that do not benefit the light of the soul. And in this way, this light is slowly extinguished, and without knowing it, we end up in interior darkness, in spiritual darkness, in a darkened faith.

—Homily, second Sunday of Lent, March 16, 2014



## Sunday Readings

### Deuteronomy 7:9–10, 13–14

[The LORD] will love and bless and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the produce of your soil.

### 2 Peter 1:16–19

"This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

### Matthew 17:1–9

And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you spend enough time in prayer to face your daily activities with serenity?
- Are there days when you would rather stay in prayer than face your earthly commitments?



# The Love That Transfigures

By Denis McBride, CSsR

**I**n the story of the transfiguration, we see Jesus become radiant and glow. As he is identified and affirmed by God as “my beloved Son,” something shows through him that was not evident previously. Jesus has had little success in being recognized by others. The neighbors think they know: “This is Joseph’s son, surely.” Others think he is Elijah or one of the ancient prophets returned, while others believe he is the devil’s agent. Peter says he is the Christ. Nobody gets to the real heart of who Jesus is. Soon after he hears all the proposed names he goes up the mountain to pray. With him he takes the inner circle of the apostolic group, Peter, James, and John.

In the experience of prayer it is clear that Jesus is not Elijah. Neither is he Moses, the greatest of the ancient prophets. They appear on the scene to direct our attention to a journey Jesus must make to Jerusalem. Peter makes a suggestion that echoes down through history: If in doubt, build something. But the focus is not on architectural posterity but on who Jesus is: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

Is it any wonder Jesus is radiant and aglow? He has an answer to his prayer. There is someone who gets his name right, and that someone is his Father. The deepest part of Jesus is called forth. The Father doesn’t just identify Jesus but affirms him in love as his chosen

one, and that transfigures Jesus. That recognition is allied to what Jesus must do: Being who he is means he must take the road to Jerusalem.

The transfiguration enables Jesus to make the most difficult journey of his life—to take the road that goes from Galilee to Golgotha. The Gospel passage tells us that Jesus did not face the knowledge of his forthcoming violent death alone. That lonely knowledge could paralyze anyone. The transfiguration enables Jesus to make that journey to

Jerusalem in the declared love of the Father. The direction that Jesus has to follow will cost him his life: Matthew shows us that Jesus is not just the one who is to suffer but that he is the beloved Son of God. These two go together.

In our own journeys, we can face tough decisions more surely in the knowledge that we are loved and supported. When we hear our name called in love we can face our own road to Jerusalem. The power of that love allows us to face the future, just as its absence makes the future a loveless landscape. It is that love that we celebrate; it helps us to travel hopefully; it enables us to keep on striving until we can rest at last in the love that best knows our name. †

## Believing Without Seeing

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

**T**he transfiguration would not be the last time that Jesus provided evidence of his divinity to his followers. One of the best-loved resurrection stories is that of Jesus appearing to the disciples when Thomas was absent. When told of the Lord’s visitation, Thomas doubted in a big way and boldly asserted that his belief would be contingent upon touching the risen Lord. The day came and, after an initial exchange, Thomas responded: “My Lord and my God.” Then Jesus gave us a glimpse of spiritual blessedness: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29).

The people of Missouri (and far beyond) express a dominant trait of our culture: “Show me.” Doubt and suspicion are not unique to our times or culture.

We all seek evidence and find faith to be problematic. Yet at the core of our following Jesus is that radical conviction that God is with, for, and in us.

This is faith: welcoming God into our hearts, trusting in grace, saying yes to God’s will, giving our assent to God’s word. Faith assures us that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist and that God truly speaks to us in the Bible. †



Lord, you lead and guide me along the way. Increase my faith and trust in you. Amen.

*From Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 7–12

Mon. Weekday:  
Nm 11:4b–15 / Mt 14:13–21  
Tues. St. Dominic: Nm 12:1–13 /  
Mt 14:22–36 or 15:1–2, 10–14  
Wed. Weekday:  
Nm 13:1–2, 25–14:1, 26–29a,  
34–35 / Mt 15:21–28

Thu. St. Lawrence:  
2 Cor 9:6–10 / Jn 12:24–26  
Fri. St. Clare:  
Dt 4:32–40 / Mt 16:24–28  
Sat. Weekday:  
Dt 6:4–13 / Mt 17:14–20



# Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 13, 2017

## God Calls to Our Hearts

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**W**e've been fortunate to make several trips to Hawaii. On one trip, we saw lava flowing from a vent on a volcano. I'll never forget it or the offerings of pineapples, leis, and other things native Hawaiians make to Pele, the volcano goddess. The volcano erupts when Pele is angry. When it is quiet, Pele has gone underground.

Great displays of power and destruction are often connected with divine activity, so it seems strange that the Lord doesn't appear to Elijah in

manifestations of wind, earthquake, or fire. Rather, God speaks out of silence, and his first words to Elijah are, "Why are you here?"

That's a wonderful question for us today. Why are we here celebrating the Eucharist? Is it obligation only, or is there something more?

I'd like to think we come to Mass to hear God calling to our hearts. Here we can meet God face to face in the word, in the priest, in each other and, most intimately, in the bread and wine that is his Body and Blood. We take him into ourselves so we won't be like Peter, who walked into the middle of a storm and began thinking the storm would destroy him like an angry god.

We gather at Mass so we can fix our minds and hearts on Christ, whose power is so great that it needn't manifest itself in destruction but who, with a word, can calm every storm and take us safely into his care. †

## A Word From Pope Francis

We all know that when water stands still it stagnates. There's a saying in Spanish that says: "Standing water is the first to go bad." Do not stand still. We all have to walk, to take a step every day, with the Lord's help. God is Father, he is mercy, he always loves us....He welcomes us and forgives us....He never tires of forgiving....He makes us rise and fully restores our dignity. God has a memory, He is not forgetful. God does not forget us, He always remembers.

—Address to detainees in a penitentiary in Isernia, Italy, July 5, 2014



## Sunday Readings

### 1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by.

### Romans 9:1–5

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit in bearing me witness.

### Matthew 14:22–33

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

*Why do we celebrate the Eucharist? Is it obligation only, or is there something more?*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When have you felt Jesus' presence most strongly in your life? Did it coincide with a difficult task or time of trouble?
- Which winds distract you from Jesus?



# Our God Speaks to Us

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

**W**e Catholics believe in a God who speaks. Our God is not a silent,

distant God but a God who wants us to know who he is and who we are and what life is all about. We believe in a God who freely chooses to reveal his mysterious plan to create us, love us, and take us to himself. We believe in the God who spoke to Abraham, who spoke to the patriarchs and prophets, and who spoke his definitive word in Jesus Christ.

And just what did God say? God didn't waste a lot of time talking about incidentals: "The earth is round." Or, "Today is Wednesday." God got right to the point and said, "I love you!" And we hear God's most emphatic "I love you" in the birth, life, preaching, healing, passion, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

This kind of revelation demands more than a yes of agreement to a proposed fact: "Yes, the earth *is* round." "Yes, today *is* Wednesday." The word of love that God speaks in the Bible demands more of us than "yes, that's true."

It calls for a total yes—a yes of commitment—the kind of yes that couples exchange in their wedding vows. "Margaret, do you take Joseph to be your husband?" "Yes, I do." Saying "yes, I do" to the proposal of love that God offers us in Jesus Christ is what being Catholic is all about.

That is why the Bible is essential to

Catholicism. How can we say yes to Jesus, how can we be a disciple of Jesus unless we know Jesus? And to know Jesus we must know the Scriptures, for as St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." The Scriptures are not a list of propositions to be believed. They are an encounter with a person to be loved.

## From Generation to Generation

God has not appeared to me as he did to Elijah. I was not there by the Sea of Galilee with Peter and Andrew, James and John, when Jesus walked by and said, "Follow me." I wasn't knocked to the ground in a blaze of light like St. Paul. I received the faith quietly, gradually. My parents (and teachers, neighbors, and friends) handed on the tradition they had received from their parents, spouses, teachers, and friends. And the members of that former generation handed on what they had received from the generation before them, all the way back to the apostles. Even St. Paul says that he handed on what he had received.

Those who knew Jesus and witnessed his death and resurrection were commissioned to preach and make disciples. Some disciples handed on the message orally and some, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote down their faith experience. Catholics treasure God's self revelation in both its written and oral forms. Catholics cherish Scripture and Tradition. Both reveal the same divine

mystery. Both bring us into contact with the living God. And the word of the living God is a living word. When the Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, we believe that Christ is present. It is Christ himself who speaks to us.

## Ongoing Conversation

I keep a file of my Sunday homilies in the hope that, three years from now when the same readings are used, I will be able to use the same homily over again. But it never works out that way. Each time the passages are proclaimed, God says something new. When I hear Jesus tell Peter and Andrew, "Come after me," the words imply something different—something more—for me now than they did when I was fifteen, or when I was twenty-five, or even when I was fifty.

God speaks to the Scriptures and in the Tradition handed down to us from the apostles. And if we respond to God's word with lives filled with God's Spirit and lived in imitation of Jesus, the definitive Word of the Father, we can be confident that the message will continue to be passed on—generation after generation—until all the ends of the earth hear God's great "I love you." †

## PRAYER

Lord, you taught your disciples how to pray. Help me to cultivate the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Amen.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 14–19

Mon. St. Maximilian Kolbe:  
Dt 10:12–22 / Mt 17:22–27


Tue. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary:  
Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab /  
1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56

Wed. Weekday:  
Dt 34:1–12 / Mt 18:15–20

Thu. Weekday:  
Jos 3:7–10a, 11, 13–17 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Fri. Weekday:  
Jos 24:1–13 / Mt 19:3–12

Sat. Weekday:  
Jos 24:14–29 / Mt 19:13–15

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August 13, 2017

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# Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 20, 2017

## Celebrating God's Love for All

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**I** watched a friend tell a group of children the story of the good shepherd. On the floor in front of him were wooden sheep, a shepherd figurine, and a fenced-in area. He had placed one of the wooden sheep a little bit away from the scene.

Before he got halfway through the story, one child raised her hand and asked why the sheep was by itself. He explained that the sheep was lost and asked what she would do about it. She looked for a minute, then picked up the little figure and returned it to the fenced area with the other sheep. He used that as the basis for his story, pointing out that

Jesus cares for us the same way and will not leave us out of the flock.

In today's readings, we celebrate God's love for all people—including all who raise their voices in claim to the love of God, those who are not like us, and those who are strange, disenfranchised, and annoying.

The woman in the Gospel was not Jewish, and the disciples tried to keep her away. But in her faith, she cried to Jesus—and he heard her.

Matthew says that after her, many Gentiles (non-Jews) came to Jesus. He welcomed and healed them. He also fed them as easily as he fed the 5,000 Jews, whose story we've often heard.

We might see these strangers as unloving and unlovable, but God isn't bound by what we see. Their faith, too, is a conduit for God's grace and compassion.

The little girl who saw a sheep by itself was moved with compassion.

So is God for all who seek him. †

*We celebrate God's love for all people—including all who raise their voices in claim to the love of God.*

## Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 56:1, 6–7**

...For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

**Romans 11:13–15, 29–32**

For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.

**Matthew 15:21–28**

"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

## A Word From Pope Francis

Mutual understanding of our [Catholic and Jewish] spiritual heritage, appreciation for what we have in common and respect in matters on which we disagree: all these can help to guide us to a closer relationship....Together, we can make a great contribution to the cause of peace; together, we can bear witness...to the perennial importance of the divine plan of creation; together, we can firmly oppose every form of anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination.

—Address to the two chief rabbis in Israel at Heichal Shlomo Center, Jerusalem, May 26, 2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can you become more united with your ancestors in faith?
- How can you strengthen your bond with your brothers and sisters in Christ in your parish and public communities?



# Love: Our Truest Vocation

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

**B**eing Catholic is not something that happens to us overnight. It takes

work and practice—a lot more than just an hour a week in church. It’s really the task of a lifetime.

What makes one a Catholic? In one sense, one becomes Catholic by receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist—just as a person becomes married by celebrating the sacrament of matrimony. But as any married person will tell you, the wedding itself doesn’t make a marriage. To really become what one promised in the wedding vows takes time and hard work.

Similarly, one doesn’t take on Catholic identity merely by receiving the sacraments. Like marriage, Catholic identity requires time and effort. Catholic identity, like marriage, is about love. And love is an art.

Years ago, when I was in music school, I would spend hour after hour at the piano learning two pieces required for the end-of-semester recital. After weeks of practice I could play those pieces rather well. But just because I could play two songs didn’t mean I was an artist. A real artist isn’t limited to a couple of pieces. Artists can play *all* the pieces.

Similarly, to be good at the art of Catholic loving you have to be able to love all the pieces. You have to love everyone—even as God loves everyone and invites people of every race, language, and way of life to the great nuptial banquet of the kingdom.

## What It’s All About?

Love everybody? While this may seem impossible, it is at the heart of Catholic identity. Our Catholic vocation is essentially a call to be lovers, just as Jesus was. Following Jesus doesn’t mean we have to become carpenters, fishermen, or preachers. Following Jesus means that we have to become great lovers.

Jesus was an artist at loving. He could play all the pieces. He loved rich and poor people, saints and sinners. As a sign of that universal love, he opened his arms on the cross and shed his covenant blood “for you and for all.”

Clearly we don’t arrive at this Catholic, all-embracing level of artistry overnight. When learning to play the piano, one starts with easy pieces and gradually works up to the harder ones. The same is true with the art of loving: We start with the easier pieces (loving our parents, children, friends, neighbors) and slowly

work up to the harder pieces—the people who are not like us.


## From Feelings to Action

And this loving goes deeper than surface niceties. The loving that lies at the core of Catholic identity leads to concrete acts: embracing the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the prisoner. It requires working for peace. It involves concern for the earth. It demands justice for the poor.

And because the objects of our loving are human, limited, and sinful, our loving will most certainly entail forgiveness—both forgiving and being forgiven. We who follow Jesus are called to announce the kingdom of God by being ambassadors of reconciliation and instruments of peace.

The Eucharist is the marvelous sign of Catholic identity. The Eucharist takes us into the body of Christ. It fills us with the spirit of Christ so we can truly become Catholic, all-embracing lovers. Love is our vocation. Love is the heart of our Catholic identity. †

***Jesus was an artist at loving.  
He could play all the pieces.  
He loved rich and poor,  
saints and sinners.***



Lord, you offered the healing love and compassion of God to the sick and poor. Help me to be an instrument of God’s love and compassion to all people. Amen.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 21–26

Mon. St. Pius X:  
Jgs 2:11–19 / Mt 19:16–22

Tue. Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary:  
Jgs 6:11–24a / Mt 19:23–30

Wed. Weekday:  
Jgs 9:6–15 / Mt 20:1–16

Thu. St. Bartholomew:  
Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

Fri. Weekday:  
Ru 1:1, 3–6, 14b–16, 22 / Mt 22:34–40

Sat. Weekday:  
Ru 2:1–3, 8–11; 4:13–17 / Mt 23:1–12



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 27, 2017

## Get Ready for Change

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**T**he last long days of summer are always a paradox. We anticipate the break in the summer heat and look for the crisp, cool air that refreshes us.

Children play outside as though they can't get enough of summer even as they get new school supplies and look forward to seeing their friends. Everywhere is a sense of change. Something is about to happen, and we won't be the same.

I wonder whether Peter felt the same way. He and the disciples had seen Jesus heal, cast out demons, and teach the ways of God. But did Peter and the disciples

really know what they were getting into or who they were following? Students are often tested at the end of summer vacation to see what they've learned and retained. Did the disciples have any sense that this might happen to them? Change is in the air and, ready or not, the lessons of the past are about to be put to the test.

"Who do you say that I am?" Jesus asked. Peter's answer shows he's been paying attention. He names Jesus for who he truly is—the Messiah.

Peter gets more than he bargained for. His name is changed, his life is changed, and he finds himself at the head of the class. Maybe he longed for the time he could fish all day, but now he's headed toward Jerusalem on the path that brings him face to face with the living God.

Vacation is almost over for us now as well, and school will soon begin. What have we learned from our encounters with God this summer?

Are we open, as Peter was, to be really changed by him? †

*Change is in the air and, ready or not, the lessons of the past are about to be put to the test.*

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 22:19–23

"I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station."

### Romans 11:33–36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

### Matthew 16:13–20

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

## A Word From Pope Francis

Peter knocks at the door. Behold! There is joy, there is fear... "Do we open, do we not?"...Fear paralyzes us, it always paralyzes us; it makes us close in on ourselves, closed to God's surprises. This detail speaks to us of a constant temptation for the Church, that of closing in on herself in the face of danger. But we also see the small openings through which God can work....Prayer enables grace to open a way out from closure to openness, from fear to courage, from sadness to joy...from division to unity.

—Mass and blessing of sacred pallium for new archbishops, Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29, 2016



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How willing are you to let the pope, Peter's successor, confirm your faith today?
- What are you doing to ensure your faith is built on a solid foundation?



# Celebrating Our Big Church

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

**W**hen I think Catholic, I think big. The Catholic Church is

a big Church: big numbers (over one billion members) spread all over the globe and big buildings—cathedrals and basilicas—with big parking lots.

But before we get carried away with too much of this external bigness, it might be good to remember that the Church was Catholic already at the first Pentecost, before there were any big cathedrals, parking lots, or a billion members. The Church was Catholic even when the disciples could all gather in one house.

Catholic implies big or universal—not just on the outside but big on the inside. Catholic is a mark of the inner nature of the Church. The Church is Catholic because it is all-embracing. The Catholic Church is the sacrament, the outward sign of a God who is Catholic, a God who is all-embracing and wants to share the one eternal banquet with people of every race, language, and way of life.

The Church is Catholic because, like God, it is not limited to one country or culture. In ancient times it was able to move from its Aramaic/Palestinian origins and adopt the language and culture of Greece to preach God's message. It then expressed itself in Syriac

and spread to India and beyond. It expressed itself in Coptic and spread to Egypt and throughout Africa. It adopted Roman customs and Latin language into its rituals. It employed Greek philosophy to explain its beliefs. It used the Roman legal system to organize its hierarchical structure. The Church is Catholic because it can take whatever is good in disparate cultures and embrace it as its own.

## A World of Disciples

The Catholic Church is not limited to one interpretation of what it means to be a disciple. When people, moved by the Holy Spirit, decide to live the gospel in a unique way, they don't have to start a new Church. The Catholic Church has room for a Benedict of Nursia, a Francis of Assisi, an Angela Merici, to name a few. There are many ways to live the gospel within the Church. That's what makes it Catholic.

Just think of the diverse groups that may exist within your own parish: Daughters of Isabella, Knights of Columbus, Opus Dei, St. Vincent de Paul Society, for example. It's a *Catholic* Church.

But what happens when our Catholic Church embraces people we don't like or don't agree with. (For example, most Catholic would have difficulties with

at least one of the organizations listed above.) When this big, all-embracing Catholic Church welcomes people who don't think like I do, and when I have to worship with people different from me, I sometimes wonder if it would be better to belong to a little Church where everyone is more alike.

## Growing, Becoming

Being Catholic isn't always comfortable. It stretches me to think new, bigger thoughts. Our Church is not the place for narrow minds or one-issue religion. And this has been a problem from day one.

Jesus himself was too Catholic for some of his contemporaries. He dined with the wrong people, cured the wrong people, and made friends with the wrong people. His Catholicity was a scandal because his embrace was so inclusive that he shed his blood for all.

Being Catholic is not only a mark of pride; it is a challenge. Catholic is not only something that the church is. It is something the Church continually strives to *become*. †

***When people, moved by the Holy Spirit, decide to live the gospel in a unique way, they don't have to start a new Church.***

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 28–September 2

Mon. St. Augustine:  
1 Thes 1:1–5, 8b–10 / Mt 23:13–22  
Tue. Passion of St. John the Baptist:  
1 Thes 2:1–8 / Mk 6:17–29  
Wed. Weekday:  
1 Thes 2:9–13 / Mt 23:27–32

Thu. Weekday:  
1 Thes 3:7–13 / Mt 24:42–51  
Fri. Weekday:  
1 Thes 4:1–8 / Mt 25:1–13  
Sat. Weekday:  
1 Thes 4:9–11 / Mt 25:14–30



Lord, you entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven to your people. Help me be your wise and responsible servant. Amen.

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