

## 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

**Genesis 9:8–15**  
**Peter 3:18–22**  
**Mark 1:12–15**

### MONDAY

**Matthew 25:31–46**

*"Come, you that are blessed by my Father . . ."*

### TUESDAY

**Matthew 6:7–15**

*" . . . your Father knows what you need before you ask . . ."*

### WEDNESDAY

**Luke 11:29–32**

*" . . . something greater than Solomon is here!"*

### THURSDAY

**Matthew 7:7–12**

*"Ask, and it will be given you."*

### FRIDAY

**Matthew 5:20–26**

*" . . . be reconciled to your brother or sister . . ."*

### SATURDAY

**Matthew 5:43–48**

*"Love your enemies . . ."*

## Give Us a Sign

At baseball games the third base coach gives "signs" to the batter before every pitch. The gestures can be quite imaginative: pull the left ear, wipe the bill of the cap, touch a finger to the nose. These gestures may signal the batter to bunt, take a pitch, or do nothing, for not every sign is important.

This Sunday's readings show that, like an attentive batter, we need to watch carefully to make sure we see and understand the signs around us.

Genesis 9:8–15 tells us that the rainbow is God's sign of the covenant. Every time we see a rainbow, we can be assured of God's promise not to destroy the world again by water. What's interesting in this reading is that God makes this covenant with "every living creature," not just with humans. Is there a stronger ecological statement in the Bible than this?

In the reading from 1 Peter, the sign is the water of baptism, through which God saves us anew. So, we go from God using water to destroy the world to experiencing salvation through this same water.

Finally, in the reading from Mark, we again see the power of the waters of baptism. Although not a part of *this* reading, Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness only after he has been baptized with water from the river Jordan. For Jesus, baptism is a sign that he must now begin his life of proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

We all must learn to recognize signs from God and realize what they call us to do.



## The Faith of the Church

Signs are important. We find them everywhere and use them often to communicate through words, images, and gestures. Sacraments are also signs. What makes them different from other signs is that Jesus uses the signs of bread and wine and water and oil to confer his life and grace upon us by the power of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Church (Cf. *US Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p 169).



## Questions of the Week

Through the sacraments, we recognize Christ's presence among us through ordinary objects, such as water and oil. Can we live in such a way that others will recognize Christ's presence through our lives?

### Adults

*What is one thing that I can do or say this week to be a sign of the living Jesus Christ for others?*

### Children

*What is one thing I can do this week to show Christ's love by respecting others?*

## Responding to God's Word . . .

Following his baptism, Jesus went into the desert for forty days of prayer to prepare himself for his mission to proclaim God's Good News of salvation.

We, too, have been baptized and sent out into the world to proclaim this good news. What are we doing to prepare ourselves for this mission?

The Church calls us to fast—eat less lavishly—on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and abstain from meat on the Fridays of Lent. These minor forms of penance are mini-desert experiences meant to help us focus and pray about what truly matters.

Traditionally, during Lent, people

practice sacrificial giving. For some, this means "giving up" candy or drinks, while for others it means giving more of their time, talent, or treasure.

What sacrifices are you prepared to make during this Lenten season? Here are a few suggestions: turn off the TV and spend quality time with your family; give money you normally spend on luxuries to help someone in need; set aside 15 minutes each day to read the Bible or other spiritual material, and purposely place yourself in God's presence.

By doing such little things, we are made into signs of God's Kingdom here on earth.

## SUGGESTIONS

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

**In the home.** As a family, agree on the sacrifices you will make collectively this Lent, such as doing without desserts or bottled drinks, and how you will share with others the money saved through these sacrifices.

**In the workplace or in school.** Each day, choose one person to pray for in a special way. Write the person's name on a slip of paper and carry it with you. Add a new person to pray for each day.

**In the community.** Look for ways that you can volunteer your time and talents to benefit people in need.



## Meditation Moment

The movie *An Officer and a Gentleman* concerns a selfish young man who wants to be a naval flight officer. He is totally self-centered. A tough drill sergeant sees through him and makes it a point to challenge him with a variety of tests and ordeals. In the process of meeting these tests, the young man discovers his soul and undergoes a change of heart. He graduates from boot camp not only an officer but also a gentleman. It is this kind of discovery of soul and change of heart that Jesus invites people to make in today's reading.

### For reflection . . .

*What does it mean to find one's soul?*

CONSCIENCE IS THE WALKIE-TALKIE SET BY WHICH GOD SPEAKS TO US.

JAMES J. METCALF

ADAPTED FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

## Open Our Eyes, Lord

God, our Father, Signs of your love and care for us are everywhere for us to see, if only we have the eyes of faith. Give us these eyes. Open our minds, so that we may develop a sacramental imagination and experience your presence in all of creation. Open our hearts, so we may learn to care more deeply for everyone we meet and everyone in need. Open our hands, so we may serve others freely. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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

This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature . . . for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds . . .

Genesis 9:12-13

## Profile in Faith

### Mother Catherine Spalding

Mother Catherine Spalding (1793-1858) founded the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. In 1813, at the age of 19, she became the first superior of the community. Today, this community has missions around the world, focusing primarily on education and healthcare.

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