



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Lent

February 21, 2016

Keep the Vision

By Janel Esker

I think people can be divided into two categories: detail people and vision people. Some people are both, but many of us lean one way. Some are vision people, good at seeing the big picture. Others are detail people, focused on carrying out each small step to make the big picture happen. I am, undoubtedly, a detail person. I love a good to-do list (or several), and I'm often consumed with crossing off as many items as possible. It feels oh so good!

My near-obsession with details and to-do lists came to mind when I read

St. Paul's description of "enemies of the cross of Christ." He particularly notes, "Their minds are occupied with earthly things." Oh dear. My lists are nothing but a bunch of earthly things. They're not all problems, but they can be distractions from God.

On the other hand, today's Gospel account of Jesus' transfiguration is all about vision. The disciples are given a privileged glimpse into Jesus' glorified body and the glory of eternal life. What an incredible moment—no wonder Peter wanted to build tents and remain there! I'm sure the apostles believed they'd never forget that experience. Yet we know Peter later betrayed Jesus, and the others abandoned him. They lost sight of the vision in the face of earthly concerns, which is easy to do.

This Gospel challenges us to keep the vision of eternal life always in front of us, especially as we navigate the mess and to-do lists of everyday life. Our earthly concerns are ever before us, but so too should be our hope of sharing in Jesus' glory. †

A Word from Pope Francis



Our whole life rests on three pillars... The pillar of the past is the choice.... The Lord chose us. Each one of us can say: "the Lord chose me, he loved me, he said come, and in Baptism he chose me to follow a path, the Christian path".... [The future is] to walk towards a promise; he made a promise to us.... [The present] is our response to this God who is so good, who chose me, who makes me a promise and suggests a covenant to me; and I make a covenant with him.

—Morning Meditation, "The Pillars of Christian Salvation"; June 22, 2013

Sunday Readings

Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18

"The LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I give this land.'"

Philippians 3:17–4:1

"Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior."

Luke 9:28–36

"While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white."

PRAYER

Lord, you desire to be with me and to walk with me along life's journey. Awaken in my heart a spirit of commitment to prayer and to the poor.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

Catholic Calendar: The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle

By Norman J. Muckerman, CSsR

If you really want to become a saint, I suggest two ways you may accomplish your goal. The first would be to pray always, all the while loving God above all things and your neighbor as yourself. The second would be to die during February, because this bleak month has fewer saints' days than any of the other eleven.

Note that this feast, celebrated on February 22, features not a saint but a chair. It is (or was) a real chair, a true antique, since a piece of it dates back at least to the first century. It is also a symbolic chair insofar as the feast celebrates its original owner—St. Peter, the leader of the apostles and the first bishop of Rome. He reputedly used the chair to teach and baptize newcomers into the Christian faith. This tradition has been the basis for the use of a special *cathedra* (chair) on which all the popes and all their bishops have been seated when they officiate in their own “cathedral” church.

On February 22, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI commented on Peter's arrival and stay in Rome. He recounted to an estimated eight thousand listeners that Peter, chosen by Christ as leader of the apostles, began his ministry as the first pope in Jerusalem, then moved briefly to Antioch, and finally settled in Rome, then the center of the world. He also died there, crucified head-down in the year 64.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How do I make time to be with God in prayer?
- What worries, challenges, and “earthly things” can I hand over to God?

This feast, however, does not celebrate Peter's martyrdom as much as his ministry. Jesus himself gave him the ministry, telling him, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). So while in Rome, Peter preached the gospel to all who would listen. His ministry and dying there sanctified and solidified the infant

Church and, to some degree, even the city. It was in Rome, seated on his *cathedra*, that the first pope taught the people what Jesus had taught him and firmly established the religious entity that came to be known throughout the world as the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

The Church has had its ups and its downs, its days of glory and nights of shame. Perhaps that is to be expected, since it is a church of sinners striving to become saints. Until the coming of the Spirit on the first Pentecost, its leader himself walked an uneven path—sometimes bold and brave, sometimes bent and befuddled, sometimes doubting or denying—even to the point of declaring under oath that he did not know the captured Christ.

Peter was also a man who always repented and eventually rehabilitated. So has, and so will, the Church. As Jesus himself told Peter on the eve of the first Good Friday, “I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:32). That was and is both reassuring and renewing.

A royal throne made of gold or precious woods and decorated with diamonds and other jewels symbolizes earthly authority and power. Likewise, a *cathedra*, a chair, even if made of straw, signifies these same spiritual gifts. A chair can also stimulate love, as the historic piece of furniture called the “love seat” implies. Hopefully, the authority that surrounds the chair of the pope will lead us to love and serve Creator and creature, just as Peter did, in our own life and death.

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 22–27

Mon. *Chair of Saint Peter*: 1 Peter 5:1–4/
Matthew 16:13–19
Tue. *Lenten Weekday*: Isaiah 1:10, 16–20/
Matthew 23:1–12
Wed. *Lenten Weekday*: Jeremiah 18:18–20
/ Matthew 20:17–28

Thu. *Lenten Weekday*: Jeremiah 17:5–10 /
Luke 16:19–31
Fri. *Lenten Weekday*: Genesis 37:3–4,
12–13a, 17b–28a / Matthew 21:33–
43, 45–46
Sat. *Lenten Weekday*: Micah 7:14–15,
18–20 / Luke 15:1–3, 11–32