



# Come and See!

August 12, 2018

## The Word...

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert,  
until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it.  
He prayed for death saying: "This is enough, O LORD!  
Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."  
He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree,  
but then an angel touched him and ordered him...  
"Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!"  
He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food,  
he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.  
*(From 1 Kgs 19:4-8)*

## Pondering the Word...

A prophet's life is lonely and hard. When we think of Elijah, we might be tempted to imagine him, a saint of the Old Testament, being whisked into heaven on a chariot of fire. But for the 20 or so years he prophesied in Israel, he was considered a nuisance, "a disturber." He spent most of his time on the run or in hiding. In this passage, we hear he is ready to throw in the towel. He questions himself and his call; he questions God. His words remind me of Peter's when he is too is called: "*Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.*"

When we study the lives of holy people throughout the ages, we might tend to sanitize their lives, looking only at their holiness or dramatic sacrifices. Conversely, especially for more modern day saints, we might look more closely at their shortcomings. Pope Francis tells us in his recent exhortation, *Gaudete Et Exsultate*:

*Not everything a saint says is completely faithful to the Gospel; not everything he or she does is authentic or perfect. What we need to contemplate is the totality of their life, their entire journey of growth in holiness, the reflection of Jesus Christ that emerges when we grasp their overall meaning as a person. [22]*

In the reading from Ephesians today, Paul gives us sound advice as to how we might work on our saintly and prophetic call: "Live in love." Yes, he means we should strive to show compassion and kindness as we go about our day, but even more so, he calls us to live in awareness of God's presence—Love—at all times. God's love is the nourishment we need to strengthen us on our journey to holiness.

## Living the Word...

Continuing with the Pope's words:

*This is a powerful summons to all of us. You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received... May you come to realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life. [23, 24]*

If you are feeling the temptation to seek out the nearest "broom tree," challenge yourself to consider instead ways to live in love. Jot down a few ideas on the lines below. Ask the Spirit for awareness and guidance.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

**Aug 13:** *“And he has lifted up the horn of his people. Be this his praise from all his faithful ones.”* (Ps 148)

When I was growing up, each mom in the neighborhood had a different bell to summon their kids home for dinner (or to tend to the bedroom they “forgot” to clean!) In ancient times, tribes had different horns and calls to summon their members as well. Jews still use the shofar to call the faithful on high holy days. Muslims are called to prayer five times a day. In Christianity, the angelus bells would remind us of the good news announced to the world. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people of all faiths could gather together to pray for peace? Wouldn't it be wonderful if this could be the praise from all his children? Let's start small. Get your family and friends together and commit to a brief moment of silence for peace at noon each day. (You can set a call to prayer on your cell phone!) If each person who reads these words could gather just five people, just think about the strength of the prayer we could offer! Let me know if you're up for the challenge.

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**Aug 14:** *“Son of man...open your mouth and eat what I shall give you...”* Written on (the scroll) was: Lamentation and wailing and woe! ... I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. (Ez 2:8-3:4)

Thinking that God's words of lamentation, wailing, and woe are as sweet as honey is a little hard to swallow. It gets even harder as you read on in the Book of Ezekiel—it's not until chapter 36 that you get any taste of redemption and mercy. I am reminded of Jesus' words to take up his yoke for it is easy and his burden is light. What yoke, what burden would that be?! There are very few of us who make it through this life without some suffering and pain. Our woes can be self-inflicted, like the sins of the Israelites; or, they can befall us out of no fault of our own. How they 'taste' to us, how light the burden really is depends on our faith and trust in God; that everything we experience—the good and the bad--belongs in the story of our lives and opens us up to a total reliance on God—the very yoke Jesus was willing to accept and that he offers to us. Reflect on this when you are struggling to find meaning in suffering.

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**Aug 15:** *“Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear, forget your people and your father's house.”* (Ps 45)

Today, in the Catholic tradition, we celebrate Mary, mother of God. While the words of this psalm refer to the bride of a Jewish king, it is an apt one for Mary as well. “Forget your people and your father's house.” When Mary agreed to bear Jesus, it required her to ignore the limitations of her humanity, to risk shame on her father's house, to risk her life. As Mary watched Jesus grow and move into his ministry, she also had to let go of the messiah images she and her kin held for so many years. Mary's “yes” required a lifetime of sacrifice and resolute faith in God's word. Turn to her if you are struggling with God's will for you.

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**Aug 16:** *“So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.”* (Mt 18: 21-19:1)

What does it mean to forgive from my heart? I don't think Jesus adds this phrase by accident. He is human, remember. He knows how tough this is. I try to forgive everything because I don't like the feeling of holding a grudge. It can be more of a protective, intellectual exercise than one that comes from my heart. Forgiving from my heart requires me to sit with and accept the pain and suffering I feel and to allow love to heal the hurt. That takes time, patience, and prayer. If heartfelt forgiveness and mercy are hard for you, consider reading, *Don't Forgive Too Soon*, by the Linns.

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**Aug 17:** *His disciples said to him, “If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”* (Mt 19: 3-12)

This passage from Matthew gets under my skin. The disciples are basically saying, “If I can't throw my wife out for any reason whatsoever, it is better for me not to take the risk.” But Jesus calls them out: ‘Sorry guys, but you can't do that anymore. Just because you are bored or tired or want a change doesn't cut it.’ This is a good message for us today as well, a commentary on the importance and seriousness of marriage. It is not an institution one enters casually, without forethought and a willingness to sacrifice, and that applies to all people—men and women--who enter into this commitment. Let's pray today for all married couples.

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**Aug 18:** *“Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*

(Mt 19:13-15) I imagine Jesus sitting among children torn apart from their parents, languishing in fear, desolate, damaged perhaps for life—not just in the US, but on borders and in villages all over the world. We cannot call ourselves Christian if we do not acknowledge and remedy these sins committed against those to whom the Kingdom belongs. We cannot cast judgment on other countries when we are guilty as well.