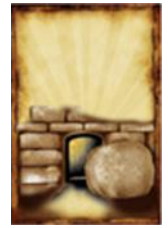


Provisions for the Journey to Jerusalem

Brief reflections on the week's Scripture readings
Easter Week Six, 2025



Sunday, May 25: *May God grant us grace and bless us, may he shine his face upon us. To know on the earth your way, among all the nations you rescue. Nations rejoice in glad song, for you rule peoples rightly* (Ps 67, Hebrew translation).

A lovely, hope-filled prayer to start our week. Recently, I have been overwhelmed by images on the news: the destruction and death in Gaza juxtaposed with pictures of opulence and excess during the US president's visit to Saudi Arabia. Mothers and children being taken from each other by deportation. Faith leaders being arrested for praying. This psalm brings me comfort and hope and reminds me to continually pray for God's grace and blessing so I may persevere for the Kingdom. It is the only way to peace. God rules the nations rightly and with equity so I must have faith in God's plan for justice. *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you"* (Jn 14).

Provision: Continue to stand firm in faith. Standing firm in faith does not mean we stand still. Much work remains to be done, so as St. Teresa of Calcutta reminds us, we must work "without getting tired." Each morning, pray for peace and pray for courage to be a bearer of that peace. Stand firm as you move to make a difference.

Monday, May 26: *On the sabbath we went outside the city gate along the river... We sat and spoke with the women who had gathered there. One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying* (Acts 16:11-15).

A few things of note here: Paul and his companions are wandering around on the sabbath looking for a place to pray. They sit down on a riverbank with a bunch of women. I wonder if Paul or the other disciples stop to think about how much has changed for them! This kind of behavior would lead one to be expelled from the synagogue. They meet Lydia who deals in purple cloth. Read: she is rich. It brings to mind Jesus' words in Mt 19: *"it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven."* I'm sure Paul is eloquent in his preaching, but the important phrase here is "the Lord opened her heart." Though materially rich, she is open to the richness of faith given by God.

Provision: Allow your heart to be opened. What does an open heart look like for you? I wonder what Lydia does after Paul and his crew leave her house. We hear her household is baptized. Her household is used to a certain lifestyle that comes with wealth. Does she forego her riches and live as a poor person? Have the hearts of all her family been opened as well, or does tension develop? Or do they all recognize the good they can do in community by continuing to work their trade, while at the same time, simplifying their lives to share more of what they have? God calls each of us where we are, just as God called Lydia. Will you open your heart to hear how God is calling you to simplify your life?

Tuesday, May 27: *Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened, there was suddenly a severe earthquake... When the jailer woke and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped.... "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved"* (Acts 16:22-34).

So, what happens to the prisoners locked up with Paul and Silas? We know they listened to these two naked and beaten men as they sang songs to their God. Paul tells the jailer, *"We are 'all' here,"* so it seems none of them make a run for it (although I imagine after an earthquake, I'd probably not be able to move either!). We hear Paul and Silas baptized the jailer and his family, but I like to think they would not have ignored their fellow prisoners.

Provision: Be a non-anxious presence among those who fear. The film, *Entertaining Angels*, is the story of Dorothy Day. If you haven't seen it, it is worth your time. The movie begins and ends with an aging Dorothy in a prison cell along with a panicking woman. Dorothy quietly sings songs of peace and embraces the woman. I don't know whether this scene is a true story, although I would guess it is. But as with the prisoners in our reading today, while we don't know what happens to this woman, I like to think Dorothy's holy presence, along with the work of the Spirit, inspired a change in her life. Amid these days when so many live in fear of deportation, lost jobs and income, the threat of lost healthcare and support, allow your faith and trust in God to be evident to those oppressed as you stand peacefully with them in solidarity. Be a NAP (non-anxious presence) for those who need rest and comfort. (If you are interested in learning more about Dorothy Day, go to <https://www.dorothydayguild.org>).

Wednesday, May 28: *"Athenians, I see in every respect you are religious. As I walked around looking at your shrines, I discovered an altar 'To an Unknown God.' What you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you"*(Acts 17:15, 22-18:1).

Paul continues on his journey to preach Jesus Christ far and wide to foreign audiences, breaking Jewish laws and traditions as he goes. After roaming around the altars to the Greek gods (which no Jew would do) and causing a ruckus with the Greeks, he is taken to the Areopagus (the court in Athens) to explain his teachings. On the surface, Paul's faith and the Greek's religious beliefs are totally different; most would see no common ground at all. Yet Paul recognizes an opening for dialogue.

Provision: Look for openings to dialogue. The Greeks are open to discussion and debate, so Paul knows his audience. He doesn't criticize them but compliments them on their commitment to worship. Does everyone in the audience buy what he has to say? Of course not. But some do, and others may feel the Spirit's promptings later. Are there people you know who are open to calm, respectful dialogue? Are you? Remember: if you believe you know the truth, there is no reason for shouting and condemnation. Look for common ground and assume those whose beliefs are different come from a place of commitment and goodwill. And be open to learning something from them.

Thursday, May 29: *Paul...met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, [and] his wife Priscilla...he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade* (Acts 18:1-8).

We read today that Paul finally settles down in Corinth for a year and a half (v.11), making tents and preaching Christ. He stays with fellow tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla and assists them as they establish themselves in Corinth. We hear so much about the Apostles and their travels and ministries, it might seem they have abandoned their former trades and lives, but we know that is not the case. They worked to support themselves and their families (see 1 Cor 9:1-12). But everything they did, all aspects of their lives, were focused on one thing: building the Kingdom of God.

Provision: Build the Kingdom every day! As we go about our daily lives: in our workplaces, homes, schools, and communities, we too are called to keep focus on the Kingdom. Challenge yourself: how will you build God's Kingdom in every place and situation you encounter today?

Friday, May 30: *"I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. On that day you will not question me about anything"*(Jn 16:20-23).

"YOU will see ME again, too...if only for a little while. And it will bring you great joy and you will begin to understand what I have shared with you. And this will be so important as you move forward into the world to share the Good News. So, hold this joy in your heart. Go back to it again and again because the road will be rough and your challenges many. Keep your ears and hearts open to the Advocate who will nurture and grow your understanding. If you do these things, I promise, you will begin to 'see' me everywhere you look."

Provision: Look for Jesus. Find joy! Jesus is speaking of his resurrection and subsequent appearances to the disciples. But the real key is what happens after Jesus no longer appears to them. They need to continually go back to the memory of his risen presence to find courage and hope. St. Ignatius of Loyola suggests that throughout our lives, we experience "consolations"—the felt recognition of God's presence, and "desolations" when we feel distant from God. He suggests we commit times of consolation, joy, and hope to our heart's memory, so we can return to them in periods when we feel God is absent. Spend some time in prayer today journaling about times you have felt or seen Jesus' presence. If this is hard, spend time praying with Mt 28, Psalm 4, 27, or 67. Then go about your day looking for Jesus in the eyes and faces of those you meet, even those that are sorrowful. Let your compassion and love spark a wee bit of joy in their hearts. Then, when you do your nightly examen, give God thanks for the joy of being one to bear God's Light.

Saturday, May 31: *"Brothers and sisters: Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation"*(Rom 12:9-16).

Provision: Use this reading for experiences of Lectio Divina. Read the passage aloud and slowly a few times. What word, phrase, or image resonates with you right now? Use your head (your intellect and memory) to consider why this speaks to you and what it means to you. Share your thoughts with God. Let your conversation with God come to rest in your heart as prayer. Now, pay attention to your feelings. Listen for the whispered wisdom of the Spirit. Give thanks to God for this time of prayer. Record what you have experienced in your journal. Then, make a note to read this same passage again in a month or so: what is different for you now? (You could even commit to repeating this exercise each month for a year to see where the Lord is leading you.)