

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year A

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time—A

Reading 1

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

The LORD said to me: You are my servant,
Israel, through whom I show my glory.
Now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
that Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;
I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

R/ (8a and 9a) **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.
And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

R/ **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

R/ **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

R/ **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R/ **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

Reading 2

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Sosthenes our brother,
to the church of God that is in Corinth,
to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,
with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and
ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alleluia

John 1:14a, 12a

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.
To those who accepted him,
he gave power to become children of God.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

John 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
He is the one of whom I said,
‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.’

I did not know him,
but the reason why I came baptizing with water
was that he might be made known to Israel.”

John testified further, saying,
“I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven
and remain upon him.

I did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,
‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’
Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Exegesis

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Our pericope is selected from what scholars refer to as *Deutero-Isaiah* or *Second-Isaiah*. *Deutero-Isaiah* consists of Chapters 40-55 of *Isaiah*. The Israelites are now in exile in Babylon; Jerusalem has been destroyed along with the beloved temple. Although the deportations were somewhat scattered over a period of years beginning in 597 B.C., the bulk of the dispersion occurred in 587 B.C. with the fall of Jerusalem.

Scholars believe that Deutero-Isaiah wrote our selected passage from Babylon shortly after the Edict of Cyrus in 539 B.C., the first year of his reign, setting the Israelites free from bondage and encouraged them to return to Jerusalem. After nearly sixty years of captivity at the hands of the Babylonians, the Israelites began to return to rebuild their city, the temple and their lives.

The end of the previous chapter in *Deutero-Isaiah* introduces this setting. “Go forth from Babylon, flee from Chaldea! With shouts of joy proclaim this, make it known; publish it to the ends of the earth, and say, ‘The Lord has redeemed His servant, Jacob. They did not thirst when He led them through dry lands; water from the rock He set flowing for them; He cleft the rock, and waters welled forth.’” (Is 48: 20-23). Reflecting back on the Exodus experience of the Israelites, Deutero-Isaiah connects this new edict of freedom to the former paradigm of salvation, and this new freedom becomes a New Exodus. Once again, God is acting in human history to set His people free.

God is setting His people free from something, bondage; but also, for something, to become a light to the nations. As Deutero-Isaiah enters this new period in salvation history, he is experiencing a new calling and commissioning from the Lord. Chapter 49 begins a section in *Deutero-Isaiah* that the NAB titles *Expiation of Sin, Spiritual Liberation of Israel*. The NAB titles our pericope *The Servant of the Lord*. Chapter 49 begins the second Servant poem in *Isaiah*.

The LORD said to me: You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory. The Hebrew word that is translated as *LORD* in this verse and throughout is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *servant* is *ebed*. *Ebed* can be translated as *servant, slave, or minister*. Israel is commissioned to be the servant of the Lord. The servant however has many layers of meaning. Deutero-Isaiah is the object of this calling as we read on, but he represents the Israelite people who are called to be the light; but ultimately it is the Messiah who is the Light of the World, and we the Church as His Mystical Body.

Now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! Deutero-Isaiah presents his calling as that of the Prophet Jeremiah. “The Lord came to me thus: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born, I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.” (Jer 1: 4-5).

It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. The calling of Jeremiah clearly extended beyond Israel. “This day I set you over the nations and over kingdoms.” (Jer 1: 10). Similarly, Deutero-Isaiah’s calling extends beyond the mission to Israel and becomes the mission of Israel to the nations, i.e., to be a light to the nations. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *light* is *oar*. *Oar* is a common image that appears 27 times in *Isaiah*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *salvation* is *yeshua*. *Yeshua* can also be translated as *deliverance, help, healing, victory, and Savior*. The psalmist proclaims that the ends of the earth will experience the victory of our God. “He has remembered faithful love toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.” (Ps 98: 2). Upon holding the Christ child, the prophet Simeon proclaims the child to be, “A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Lk 2: 32). In reference to the Church Paul proclaims, “For so the Lord had commanded us. ‘I will make you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.’” (Acts 13: 47).

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

Psalm 40 consists of 18 verses. It is titled *Gratitude and Prayer for Help* in the NAB, and *My Help and My Deliverer* in the ESV. The beginning of Psalm 40 is a hymn of thanksgiving. The psalmist sings of gratitude to God who hears our cries and who opens our ears that we may hear His voice. This two-way communication with God allows us to come to know God and ourselves. True delight as the psalmist proclaims is to come to know and do the will of God. It is about aligning our deepest desires with God's will for us, "To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and Your law is written in my heart." (Ps 40: 9). True happiness comes from oneness with God. For that we are grateful. The final verses of the psalm (vs 12-18) turn into a prayer for God's continued help and deliverance.

St. Augustine and many others of the Church Fathers saw this psalm as a Messianic psalm. It is ultimately about Jesus' communing with His Father.

I have waited, waited for the LORD, and he stooped toward me, and heard my cry. The original Hebrew that is translated in this verse as *waited* is *yashab hedyudlamed*. The literal translation is *wait patiently*. The expression appears in Sacred Scripture in reference to God's grace and compassion that waits patiently for sinful humanity to return to Him. St. Peter uses the expression describing the patience of Christ: "For Christ also suffered for sins once... In it He also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water." (1 Pt 3: 18-20). In reference to the patience of humanity the psalmist speaks of this human virtue: "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him." (Ps 37: 7). It is interesting to note that the root of the Hebrew word for *patience* describes a woman in labor, waiting for life to come forth. In addition, the root of the Hebrew word for compassion, which is often attributed to Yahweh, and to Jesus, also describes the womb, i.e., being connected as a child in the womb is to its mother, or children of the same womb. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *cry* is *shaweah*. *Shaweah* suggests a *scream* or *call for help*, as of one who is in dire straits. The following verse describes the circumstance. "He drew me out of the pit of destruction." (Ps 40: 2).

And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. A more literal translation of the first half of this verse is as follows: He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. This hymn or song of praise in Hebrew is *tehillah*. *Tehillah* connotes an auditory expression of glory, praise and thanksgiving. The psalmist is exclaiming that it is God who put this expression of gratitude into his mouth. This is describing the dimension of gratitude that itself is a gift from God. God is love and gratitude is a dimension of love, and therefore, a gift from God. To the extent that we share in the divine life we possess, we participate in, the gift of gratitude.

Sacrifice or offering you wished not, but ears open to obedience you gave me. Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not; then said I, "Behold I come." Samuel proclaimed that obedience to the will of God was more important than all sin-offerings. "Samuel said, 'Does the Lord so delight in holocausts and sacrifices as in obedience to the command of the Lord? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission than the fat of rams.'" (1 Sam 15:22).

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me, to do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart!" "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jer 31: 33). In his *Letter to the Romans* Paul confirms this promise of God. "They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts..." (Rom 2: 15). *Hebrews* also supports the promise of God through the Prophet Jeremiah. "This is the covenant I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord: 'I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them upon their minds.'" (Heb 10: 16).

I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *justice* is *sedaquah*. *Sedaquah* is sometimes translated as *righteousness* and can also mean *faithfulness*. When speaking of the rise of the righteous (*sedaquah*) shoot of David, the Prophet Jeremiah writes: "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous (*sedaquah*) shoot of David; as King He shall reign and govern wisely, He shall do what is just and right (*sedaquah*) in the land. In His days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give Him: 'The Lord our justice (*sedaq*).'" (Jer 23: 5-6).

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Corinth was a very wealthy and diverse seaport city at the time of Paul, with access to both the Aegean and the Adriatic seas. The city was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. It became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. The province consisted of a very diverse population with a wide variety of religious practices. There is evidence of cults to the Roman emperors, temples dedicated to Greek deities and even Egyptian gods. In the midst of this diversity there was a Jewish presence. The Jewish presence may have dated as far back as the Diaspora. By the first century A.D. there was a thriving Jewish community with several active synagogues.

It was in this diverse metropolis that Paul introduced the Gospel. Paul established a community in Corinth in the year 51. “After this he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth.” (Acts 18: 1). “When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began to occupy himself totally with preaching the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus.” (Acts 1: 5). “One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, ‘Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in the city.’ He settled there for a year and a half and taught the word of God among them.” (Acts 18: 9-11).

“But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews rose up against Paul and brought him to the tribunal.” (Acts 18: 12). We know from extra-biblical sources that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in the years 51 and 52. This information has helped scholars date the writings and travels of Paul. Paul penned this letter approximately five years later while in Ephesus. “I shall stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.” (1 Cor 16: 8). This stay in Ephesus occurred during his third missionary journey which spanned the years 53-58.

Our selected pericope consists of the introduction of the letter and the greeting to the Church in Corinth. It is followed by a prayer of gratitude and then the body of the letter. The body of the letter is primarily a selection of teachings and exhortations addressing a number of issues in the nascent Church in Corinth that have been brought to the attention of Paul.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. There is no real dispute as to the authentic authorship of Paul. He introduces himself as the author in this verse and again in verse 16:21. “I, Paul, write you this greeting in my own hand.” (1 Cor 16: 21). Paul mentions often the fact that he was called to be an apostle by Christ Himself. (See 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1, Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). Because he was called personally by the Risen Lord, Paul humbly considers himself equal to the twelve who walked with Jesus during His public life. “For I think that I am not in any way inferior to these ‘super-apostles.’” (2 Cor 11: 5). An associate of Paul named Sosthenes is attributed as a nominal co-author with Paul in this letter. There was a person named Sosthenes that was once an enemy of Paul in Corinth. “They all seized Sosthenes, the synagogue official, and beat him in view of the tribunal.” It could be that this same person had a conversion and is now in ministry with Paul. Some (Estius, et.al.) suggest that he became Paul’s secretary. The Greek word that is translated as *apostle* in this verse is *apostolos*. The Greek word that is translated as *church* is *ekklesia*.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a very common greeting of the early Church. The Greek word that is translated as *grace* is *charis*. *Charis* means *gift, favor* or *goodwill*. It also carries a connotation of *gratefulness* or *thankfulness* for the experience of gift received. It is the root of the Greek word *eucharis* which means to give thanks. The Greek word that is translated as *peace* is *eirene*. *Eirene* is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *shalom*. In Hebrew thought *shalom* originated in God.

Exegesis (Continued)

John 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This encounter with Jesus and John the Baptist immediately follows John the Baptists' testimony to himself. Now it is the next day as this pericope is introduced. Some scholars suggest that John the Baptist had been in the wilderness perhaps as long as twenty years at this moment in time.

John the Baptist begins his proclamation with the word *behold*, translated from the Greek *ide*. *Ide* can also be translated as *lo, look, see, listen, or pay attention*. This exhortation precedes the appearance of angels and theophanies throughout the OT and the Gospels. God wants attention given to Himself and His messenger. The Hebrew equivalent to the Greek *ide* is *hinneh*. "Behold (*hinneh*), I send My messengers, and he will prepare the way for Me." (Mal 3: 1).

John the Baptist immediately proclaims Jesus to be the Lamb of God. The title suggests that God is providing the Lamb and the Lamb would be sacrificed according to the Father's will. The sacrificial lamb was at the center of the Passover ritual. "Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household... The lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish... It shall be slaughtered during the evening twilight... That same night they shall eat of its roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." (Ex 12: 3-8).

The Prophet Isaiah foretold the Messiah as the sacrificial Lamb. "We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon Him the guilt of us all. Though He was harshly treated, He submitted and opened not His mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers He was silent and opened not His mouth." (Is 53: 6-7).

The early Church clearly articulated Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb. Paul does so when instructing the Ethiopian eunuch. "So, he (Ethiopian eunuch) invited Philip to get in and sit with him. This was the scripture passage he was reading: 'Like a sheep He was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth.'" (Acts 8: 32). St. Peter also proclaims Jesus to be the Lamb. "Realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct... with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb." (1 Pt 1: 18-19).

The Book of Revelation uses the title *Lamb* twenty-eight times in reference to the Risen Lord. "Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders a Lamb that seemed to have been slain." (Rev 5: 6).

The expression *takes away* is a translation of the Greek word *airo*. *Airo* can be translated as *take away, take up, pick up, carry away, carry off, remove, or bear*. I think that it is important to distinguish this action of God as over and above the gift of forgiveness. Forgiveness is focused on the person who is going through the process of forgiveness. Bearing, taking away, removing sin is about the person who has that burden taken away. The *Suffering Servant* prophesy of Isaiah describes the act of God's servant bearing our sins. "Yet it was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured." (Is 53: 4). The OT describes this promise of God taking away our sins as God remembering not our sins. It is I (Yahweh), I, who wipe out, for My own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more." (Is 43: 25). The psalmist speaks of God removing sins out of love. "As the heavens tower over the earth, so God's love towers over the faithful. As far as the east is from the west, so far have our sins been removed from us." (Ps 103: 11-12). St. John reaffirms this idea of taking away sins in his First Letter. "You know that He was revealed to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin." (1 Jn 3: 5).

The Greek word that is translated as *sin* is *hamartia*. *Hamartia* can be translated as *sin, failure, fault, error, act of wrongdoing*. At its root it means *to miss the mark or miss the goal*. The Hebrew word most often translated as *sin* is *hataat*. *Hataat* suggests separation and brokenness resulting in a need for expiation and purification, a need for sin offering and atonement.

Exegesis (Continued)

John 1:29-34

The Greek word that is translated as *world* in this verse is *kosmos*. *Kosmos* describes the created universe and all created things. St. John reaffirms in his First Letter that Jesus came to take away the sins of all of creation. “He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world (*kosmos*).” (1 Jn 2: 2).

“*He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.*” The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *existed* is *eimi*. *Eimi* means *to be* or *to exist*. Jesus most clearly articulates His divinity by revealing Himself as the great I AM, (*Ego Eimi*). “Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM (*Ego Eimi*). God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as *I AM*. In the Hebrew of the OT it is *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*, which is sometimes translated as *I AM who AM*, or *I AM Being, I AM whose nature it is TO BE*. “God replied, ‘I AM who I AM.’ Then He added, ‘This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you.’” (Ex 3: 14).

John testified further, saying, ‘I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him.’ The Greek word that is translated as *testified* is *martyreo* which the ESV translates *bore witness*. It is the root of English word *martyr*. The descent of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s messianic prophecy. “Here is My servant whom I uphold, My chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put My Spirit; He shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, and making His voice heard in the street.” (Is 42: 1-2). The dove provides an interesting symbol. It was the dove that Noah sent out from the Ark in search of dry land. “Then He (Noah) sent out a dove, to see if the waters had lessened on the earth.” (Gen 8: 8). The dove returned and Noah waited seven days and sent the dove out again. “In the evening the dove came back to him, and there it its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf! He waited still another seven days and then released the dove once more; and this time it did not come back.” (Gen 8: 11-12). From that moment on the dove has been a symbol of peace and restoration of the relationship between God and humanity. The dove is now seen again above the waters made holy by the baptism of Jesus. The same Spirit that hovered over the waters of creation now hovers over the waters of the New Creation. The Spirit that once transformed the primordial chaos into the beauty of creation, now brings peace into our world once again as it descends upon and remains in the person of Jesus.

The Greek word that is translated as *remain* in this verse is *meno*. *Meno* can be translated as *remain, stay, reside, or abide*. This is the first of many occurrences of the word *meno* in John’s Gospel. Jesus describes His relationship with the Father as an indwelling presence. “Do you believe that I AM in the Father and the Father is in Me?” (Jn 14: 10). If you keep My commandments, you will remain (*meno*) in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandment and remain (*meno*) in His love.” (Jn 15: 10). In the *Bread of Life Discourse* of John’s Gospel Jesus speaks of His indwelling presence in those who eat His body and drink His blood. “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains (*meno*) in Me and I in him.” (Jn 6: 56). In the *Last Supper Discourse* of John’s Gospel, Jesus talks about His indwelling abiding presence. “I AM the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains (*meno*) in Me and I in him will bear much fruit.” (Jn 15: 5).

“*Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.*” The Greek word for *witness* is again *martyreo*. Some ancient texts conclude this verse *Chosen One of God* to reflect the prophesy of Isaiah 42:1. Most scholars agree that the original text read (*huios theos*) *Son of God*.¹

1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; page 952.

Reflection

Last Sunday we celebrated the Baptism of the Lord and this week we return to the scene on the Jordan River. John the Baptist was proclaiming a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Thousands of people were entering the water of the Jordan River to have their sins washed away, to be cleansed and refreshed by the living water and to rise to newness of life.

When Jesus entered the water of the Jordan River He entered fully into our humanity. He entered into a deep solidarity with us. The word Emmanuel is translated, "God is with us." The question is, "How is God with us"? God is with us in Jesus. Jesus emptied Himself to fully enter into our human condition. St. John Paul II used the word "solidarity" to describe how God is with us in Jesus. In Jesus, God enters into a deep solidarity with the human race. As Jesus entered into the Jordan River where sins are being washed away, He takes on our sins and will take those sins to the Cross. John the Baptist confirms this as he cries out, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Note that John the Baptist does not say, behold the Lamb of God who forgives the sins of the world. He says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. I think that there is a big difference between forgiveness and taking something away. Jesus is taking our sins away from us and unto Himself. In doing so He is taking the burden and weight of those sins off of our shoulders and off of our conscience.

There is an interesting scene that takes place at the Last Supper when Jesus puts a towel around His waist and gets down on His hands and knees to wash the feet of His disciples. Peter at first refuses to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus responds, "Unless you allow me to wash your feet you will have no inheritance with Me." In effect Jesus is saying unless you allow me to wash you clean, unless you allow Me to take your sins away you will not inherit the gift of eternal life. The purpose for Jesus entering into our humanity can be thwarted by our refusal to accept the gift. Love requires freedom at all cost. A gift is not a gift until it is received. We must allow Jesus to love us and take away our sins. We must accept the gift.

When Jesus came out of the water the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit was seen coming down upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The dove is an ancient symbol of peace and love. God's love and peace pour out upon the world and into humanity through Jesus who is now standing in solidarity with us. All things came into being through Him and God is now reconciling the world to Himself through Him, Jesus the Word made flesh. God's love is made visible in the incarnation. God's love enters into us through Jesus who is now with us standing in the waters of our lives.

We must stand with Him. We must become Him. We must become what we receive at the altar. We must allow the Holy Spirit to enter into us, to fill us and then allow that same Spirit to flow through us. And this is made possible by Jesus entering into the waters of our life. He shares in our humanity so that we may share in His divinity. We must become the incarnation of the Spirit. So come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love!

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

I was blessed to grow up in a very devout Catholic family. I was immersed in Catholicism. It was not just my immediate family, but extended family as well. In fact, the entire community in which I was raised was a very strong Catholic community. Almost everyone was Catholic. The social life of the community was very much driven by the Liturgical calendar and the events, liturgies, and activities of our local Catholic parish. The Sacraments were an integral part of my weekly experience, especially Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. The Sacrament of Reconciliation was a bi-monthly experience for me as well.

Intellectually I knew that God was always ready to forgive the repentant sinner. I am not sure if I believed that in my heart at the time. Over the years I found myself confessing the same sins over and over. Some of those were recurring sins and some were sins of the past that I was still holding on to. I am not sure if I was doubting God's love and mercy, or if I was simply not forgiving myself.

My entire life I had heard of God's love. I knew in an intellectual way that God loved me. I knew that He died on the Cross for my sins. I remember feeling the warmth of God's love as a child, but then for years God's love seemed absent in my life. I realize now that it was because I drifted from God. It was not an intentional act, like the Prodigal Son. It was more like the lost sheep who wandered away, with his own legs, but without a lot of forethought. Like the sheep I was wandering off looking for greener pastures and restful waters. I was lost.

Jesus, using the hands and feet, and the voice of a friend of mine, was seeking me out. He is the Good Shepherd who never stops searching for us. I can see now, what I could not see then. My friend dragged me, kicking and screaming, to a Cursillo weekend retreat. I heard that familiar story of the *Prodigal Son* at the beginning of the penance service on day two of the retreat. It was a story that I had heard many times. But this time it was different. The Father was talking to me each time He spoke. I was both sons. I was both the younger and the older son. I was lost, in that I had strayed from God. I was close like the older son, yet I was standing on the outside, refusing to enter God's love.

I had built a shield or a crust around my heart. I was not letting God or others in. In a moment of grace God melted my heart and I felt the embrace of His love as never before in my life. I was not expecting that! I was feeling unlovable. God loved me anyway. For the first time I felt free from the sins of my past life. It dawned on me that it was the first time that I had allowed God to take away my sins. The words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," came pouring into my mind and into my heart. I was living and experiencing that grace as never before. For that I will always be grateful.

Fr. Glenn