

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Seventh Sunday of Easter

We are drawing to a close of the Church's Easter season. The spirit of this season is one of joy and hope. We live in joy because God loves us so much that our sins have been forgiven through the death of Jesus. The new life of God's grace transforms us through his Resurrection. We live in hope for the same reasons. These two wondrous gifts from God are singled out at the very beginning of a very important Church document that was created by the Second Vatican Council. The document, ***The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World***, discussed the relationship of the Church to the modern or contemporary world.

One of the most recognized lines from the Gospel according to John is where we read, "God so loved the world that God gave his only son [to redeem it]" (John 3:16). This passage deserves to be on every Catholic's **Top Ten** list of important biblical lines. Note that God deeply loved the world, this world, and our world. This is the background against which we read today's Gospel. It mentions "the world" eleven times! If read quickly, we can end up being somewhat confused about this section of the Gospel according to John. Keep in mind that the world, created by God and loved by God, is basically good. It's the place where we live this part of our lives.

A Gospel Word for the Home

John 17:11b-19

In brief, Jesus said that we are in the world, which can be a dangerous and difficult place. But there is more to our lives than being in this world. While we are here, Jesus urges that we, like him, make it holy. Boiled down to essentials, this means that life in this world is exceedingly important and all that we do in this world can be holy and pleasing to God. Being *worldly* is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, the Church continuously teaches that the vocation of the laity is to the world. We live out our vocation by what we do for our families, neighborhoods, communities, and work places, and wherever we find ourselves in this world.

That's no small truth. Some like to separate the world from the spiritual or religious. Vatican II notes that to separate Sunday worship from what we do the rest of the week is an error. Biblical scholars like to point out that Jesus spent most of his life in "worldly" pursuits as a dutiful family member and as a skilled artisan. Home and workplace were made holy by the life of Jesus. To "consecrate" the world is to act out our Christian values and virtues in the world. The world from God's viewpoint is a holy place.

Thought for the Week

One of the greatest challenges of Christian faith is connecting it with the ordinary activities of life. In human history, there arose a way of describing creation as partly good and partly bad. Some thinkers underestimate the importance of this world by contrasting it with afterlife. Early heresies in the Church claimed that Jesus really didn't become fully human. What was sometimes lost in this thinking was the importance and value of life here "in the world."

Fortunately, the Church has correctly reminded us that there is a need to make better this world, to erase injustices and to sanctify the workplace and family life. Saint Paul wrote that whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God. "All" includes everything! This week we are invited to examine our thoughts about "this world" and whether we realize that all what we do here is important for us and for God.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Parent Survival

When they are infants, it's those middle of the night feedings that are tough. When they are toddlers, it's the constant picking up after them that tires us. When they are children and teens, it's that constant driving them to various activities. When they are young adults in school or working fulltime, it's staying in touch with them and helping them solve inevitable problems. And in all these phases of life, money issues abound. The government estimates that the cost of raising a child to age 18 is immense. Most families need two fulltime salaries to meet the expenses.

So how do we parents think about these things? Are they heavy burdens? Do we lose sleep over some of them? Do they bring on stress? Many parents say that the obligations of being a good parent are much more than they envisioned when their children were infants. Aside from winning the lottery, are there ways to lighten the parental cost? Here's a suggestion. We can handle most of what life brings us if we nurture passion to find rich meaning in what we're doing. Recall the words from Matthew 25 where we're told that when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, it is the same as doing it to Jesus. As parents, we're doing these kinds of things all the time! Even a cup of water shared with someone who's thirsty counts as a gesture of love and concern in God's Kingdom. Everything we do as parents to care for God's children contributes to building God's Kingdom. Everything counts!

Car or Meal Talk

Name at least one "worldly" thing you have done today that was holy.

One-Line Prayer

God the Father, we thank you for the world you created and love. Amen.