



Scripture: John 14

Instructions: On the first day you pray with this guide, use the whole chapter for your prayer time. Then, highlight the sections, verses, or even phrases that strike you and spend subsequent days going more in-depth into those passages: why is God calling you to focus your attention there? Let these words sit with you even after your prayer time, and let God continue to speak to you through them throughout your day.

Reflection from Archbishop Aquila:

You can watch Archbishop's video reflections at archden.org/easter2021

This week, we begin to pray through a section of John's Gospel, John 14-17, that comprises some of my favorite chapters of the Bible. These discourses from Christ are part dialogue, part address, and part prayer while in the Upper Room at the Last Supper with the apostles. Each of these four chapters is remarkably rich and contains some of the most remarkable insights into Jesus' ministry and his relationship to the Father. They are, in many ways, what I consider to be the most important texts for our current focus on building a culture of apostolic mission in the Archdiocese of Denver. Here, in this section, we see all three themes: Relationship with Jesus, which leads to a new Identity in the Father, which enables us to be sent on Mission by the Holy Spirit.

I believe these will be impactful chapters to pray with over the coming weeks because, as I said, these four chapters are rich. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a commentary that dives deeply into the whole Gospel of John, and the volume on chapters one through five alone is over three hundred pages. To exhaust these chapters' insights would require a similar number of words from me, so I will spare us all by focusing my brief reflections on just one or two key themes in each chapter. I pray that God will reveal to you what he desires for you to focus on in your own time of *lectio divina*.

What stands out to me most clearly from reading this chapter is the closeness of Jesus'

own relationship with the Father and his desire to extend this relationship to us. In the sacrament of Baptism, we become “sons and daughters in the Son.” When we draw near to Jesus, we do not just become close to him, but he also brings us close to the Father, “If you know me, then you will also know my Father,” (John 14:7).

For many, one of the most significant developments in their walk with God occurs when they truly come to see God differently, that he is a Trinity of Persons, with each Person seeking to have a relationship with us. As he reveals himself to be the Father, we understand our identity as a beloved son or daughter more deeply. This change makes all the difference in the Christian life. When we realize that “even the hairs of your head have all been counted,” (Luke 12:7), it changes everything. For me, personally, I count coming to this more profound knowledge of my own sonship in the Father on a silent retreat as one of the most important spiritual moments of my life.

We hear that “Jesus loves us” or that “God is love” so often that these phrases can begin to lose some of their actual impact or meaning. What does it mean that God loves you and me? It means that he knows us individually, and wants to come close to each of us, personally. Each Person of the Trinity wants to know us personally and be in relationship with us.

I am reminded of a story I heard about some little girls whose dad was working for the U.S. Army in 1952, and because he was deployed and poor, he couldn’t come home for Christmas. On Christmas morning the girls half-heartedly played with their new toys and eventually went outside to play. One of the girls, named Katie, thought she saw her dad in the distance, so she ran inside to tell her mom. But her mom assured her that daddy said he couldn’t make it and then warned her not to make up stories. Katie recalled what happened next:

I turned to go back outside when I heard familiar footsteps. I ran down the stairs. Daddy was home!

As I rushed into his outstretched arms, Daddy explained that he had tried everything to get home for Christmas, but without success. At the last minute, a group of the workers had decided to drive.

But the nearest guy lived miles away. So, Daddy started walking on Christmas Eve until he arrived home. He had walked all night to get home to his family.

This story of an unrelenting father whose love drove him to go to such great lengths should remind us of the love of the Father. It is this story that captures the deepest truths of who God is and, given that, who we are: beloved.

God’s love for us is not passive; it cost him something. God does not just love

“humanity” in a generic way. He loves you. He did not just die for “humanity,” he died for you. He did not just send the Holy Spirit for “the world,” he sent him so that your heart would know the love he has for you. The Holy Spirit lives in you crying out ‘Abba, Father.’

Objectively, by Baptism, we have been brought into this relationship, but are we daily aware of this kind of closeness and intimacy that the Father desires to have with us? Or do we walk around, living our lives completely unaware of who we really are, with our identity still hidden from us? Do we still see God as a distant and uninterested lawgiver, watching over us to just make sure we do not mess up? Do we recognize the kind of personal interest God has in our lives, the specific relationship he wants with each of us?

Knowing these truths intellectually is still a far cry from having them really sink into an awareness that we carry with us always. Once we develop that awareness, though, it fundamentally changes the way our faith is lived out. We become bolder, more trusting, more peaceful, less critical. We discover the fruits of the Holy Spirit and can love others in ways we never imagined possible.

How do we allow this truth of our identity as beloved sons and daughters to sink in? Jesus speaks clearly in John 14 about the Advocate, the Paraclete, who, we know from Paul’s letter to the Galatians enables us to realize our beloved-ness in the Father, “As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father! So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God” (Galatians 4:6-7).

Only the Holy Spirit can gradually reveal this truth to our hearts. A great way to begin opening your heart to this new identity that the Father has bestowed on you in Baptism is to pray, every day, to Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, as Philip prayed, “Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

May God bless you abundantly during this third week of the celebration of Easter.