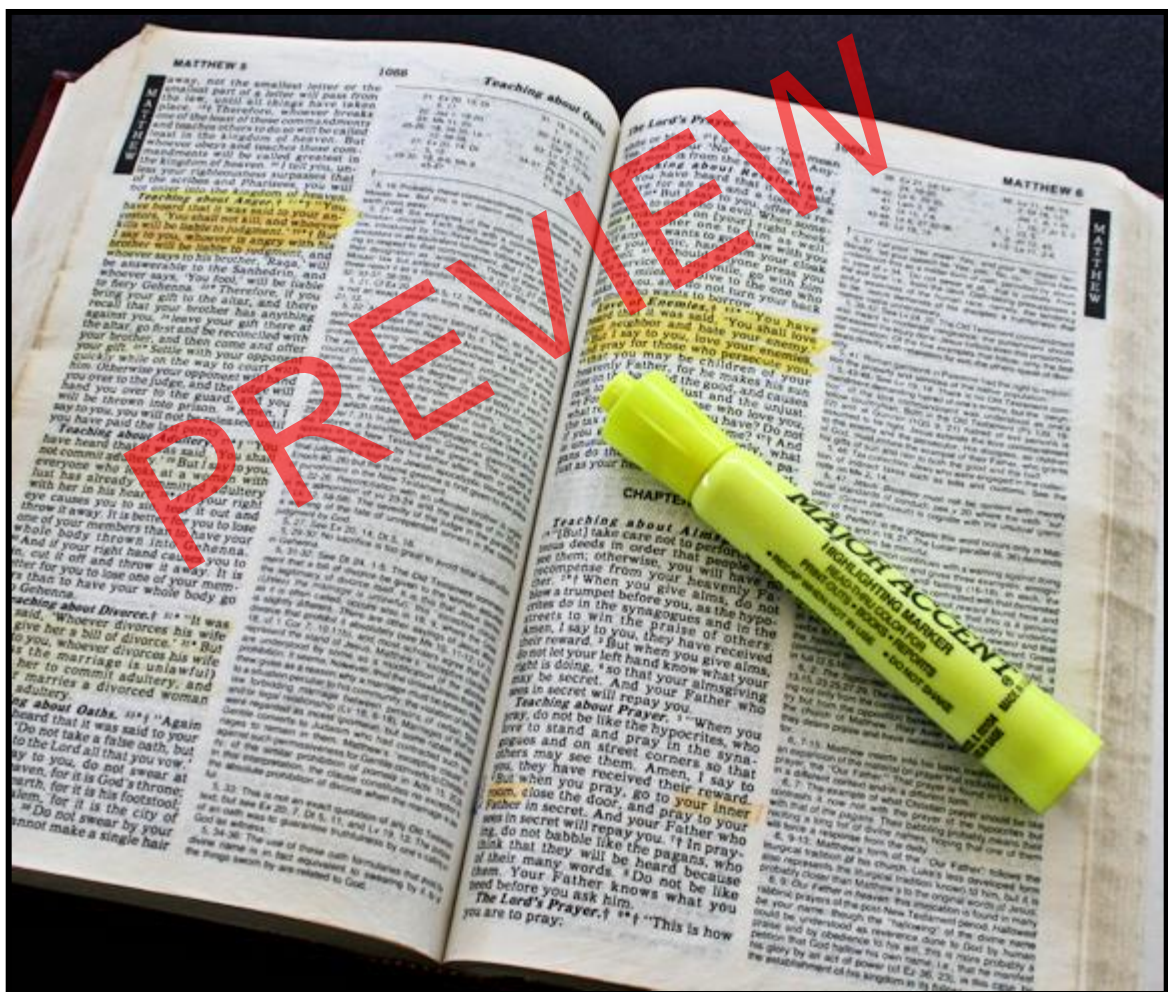


## Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of June, 2018

by Terry A. Modica



# Corpus Christi Sunday

June 3, 2018

Read:

Exodus 24:3-8

Ps 116:12-13, 15-18

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26



## Reflect:

This Sunday's readings speak to us of the Eucharist: "the blood of the covenant" and "the cup of salvation". What does the Eucharist mean to you?

Christ came to earth to serve us as our high priest. Unlike the Jewish priests of the Old Testament, who atoned for the people's sins with the blood of goats and calves, Jesus absolved our sins with his own blood. He said: "This is my blood of the covenant, shed for many." This is the *new* covenant. With it he achieved what no other high priest could do: He obtained for us eternal redemption.

Only the blood of God himself could accomplish this, because no matter how good our intentions are, and no matter how holy a priest might be, we all fall back into sin again and again. Only Jesus, the perfectly holy human whose divinity conquered death, could open the doors to eternal life.

Jesus paid a very high price to atone for our sins. What if we come to Mass with unrepented sins? We know we've done wrong, yet our desire to avoid the hard work and humility of changing is larger than our desire to let Jesus transform us. It's larger than our desire to enjoy all the benefits of the Eucharist.

To receive his body and blood in the Eucharist without letting it atone for our sins is to snub and reject the terrible price that Jesus paid when he died for us. To avoid his presence in the Sacrament of Confession because it makes us feel uncomfortable is highly disrespectful of the suffering that he endured for us.

If we accept the on-going atonement provided for us in the Eucharist without accepting the need to repent

of any sin, we are insulting Jesus while denying ourselves an opportunity to let him save us that sin.

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ has the power to "transubstantiate" us into his likeness. We should always leave Mass different than when we arrived. This is God's plan! His work as our high priest isn't yet finished.

## Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What sins have been most difficult for you to overcome? Why? Who or what is replacing Jesus as the god you imitate?

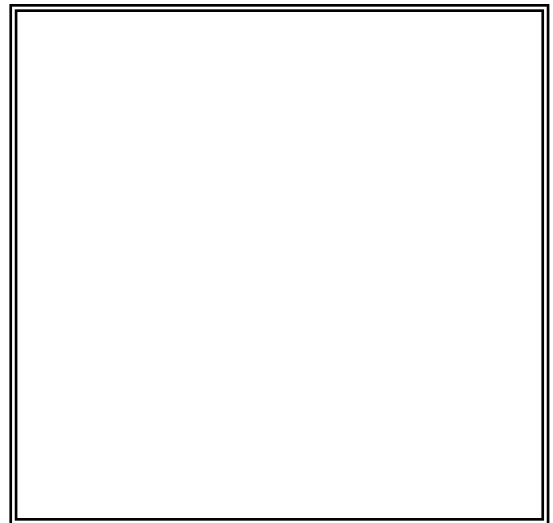
† What will you do this week to give Jesus the opportunity to save you from these sins?

## Questions for Faith Sharing:

† How did you learn that the consecrated bread and wine at Mass are truly the real Body and Blood of Christ?

† What makes you sure of it today?

† How does this affect your attitude about your sins?



# 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 10, 2018

Read:

Genesis 3:9-15

Ps 130: 1-8

2 Corinthians 4:13--5:1

Mark 3:20-35



## Reflect:

God will forgive any repentant sinner -- right? No matter what we have done, if we are truly remorseful and desire to be restored to God's grace, the Sacrament of Confession will secure our place in heaven -- right?

Then what is the unforgivable sin named in the Gospel reading? Are we in danger of going to hell because there's an unforgivable sin?

Let's look at the context in which Jesus is describing the unforgivable sin. He's talking about Satan, the strong man who steals (possesses) souls. Note how easy it is to plunder the strong man's property: We simply bind the strong man! ("No one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties him up. Then he can plunder the house.") Jesus will soon be sending out his disciples to start plundering, i.e., rescuing souls in the name and power of Christ. The sins of the rescued will be forgiven.

Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin." Demons blaspheme the Holy Spirit by being *fully aware* of the truth while *deliberately* lying to us about the goodness of the Holy Spirit, leading us, if they can, away from God. This is unforgivable!

What about humans who believe demonic lies? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (paragraph 1864) says that anyone who *deliberately* refuses to repent of sin rejects forgiveness: "Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss."

Most people, I believe, who allow demonic lies to influence them simply don't realize that the truth is better. As the first reading tells us, Adam and Eve sinned because Satan deceived them. Every sinner has been deceived. You and I sin when we believe a deception, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, helps us overcome every lie. The truth sets us free.

## Questions for Personal Reflection:

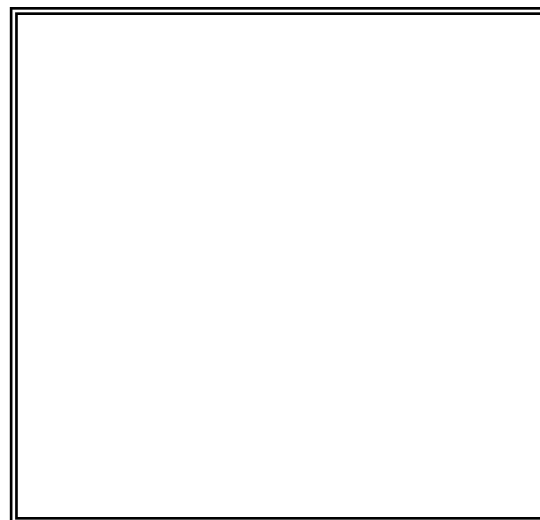
† Looking back over your spiritual growth through the years, when did you overcome deceptions about God?

† What sin are you struggling with today? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a new understanding about it.

## Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Name sins that you see commonly embraced in our world today. What truths about God do people fail to understand in each type of sin? If they were to open themselves up to these truths, how would it would change their minds and their behaviors?

† How can we evangelize them about the truth?





# 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 17, 2018

Read:

Ezekiel 17:22-24  
Psalm 92:2-3,13-16  
2 Corinthians 5:6-10  
Mark 4:26-34



## Reflect:

This week, something is going to happen that will give you the opportunity to touch someone's life with God's love. Watch for it.

If you consciously choose to make the most of the situation, you might feel challenged, perhaps a bit nervous or intimidated, but you will experience the joy of making a difference for the kingdom of God. And you might be surprised at how well you do!

God has been preparing you for this situation for a long time. Your trials, your spiritual education, your personal purification process, your prayer-time insights, your Christ-centered conversations with others -- all these and more have been part of the preparation.

You are like the seed in this Sunday's Gospel passage. Life's circumstances have fertilized you, watered you, and tilled your soil. Over time, the seed sprouted, the plant grew, and the flowers began to produce good fruit.

Every day, we all encounter small and sometimes large opportunities to serve the kingdom of God. We don't have to be full-time volunteers nor paid employees of the Church to work in the mission of Christ. If we are willing, he touches the world through us in our homes, our workplaces, our parishes, in the grocery store, in the traffic tie-ups, on the Internet, and everywhere we go.

Have any of your seeds sprouted into a tree that withered from neglect or got chopped down by others? This happens to all of us. The good news is: In every dead tree at least one fruit remains, shriveled up and

barely hanging from a lifeless branch, but secretly holding a very valuable seed.

We are to take those ugly, dead fruits and plant them in the freshly tilled soil of today. A new tree will grow and it will become taller and stronger and more abundantly fruitful than the tree from which it came, because the decay from the original tree is now additional fertilizer in the soil.

In everything that happens to you, remember: You have good fruits to share; God has been nurturing their growth. You are ready!

## Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What are some of the ways you have grown in your faith?

† How can this help others?

† Realizing that the good fruit that come from your growth is Jesus working through you to make the world a better place, how do you feel about this?

## Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Describe various ways that we continue the mission of Christ in our ordinary lives.

† What produces new growth in us so that we become more useful to Christ?

# Nativity of St. John the Baptist

June 24, 2018

Read:

Isaiah 49:1-6

Ps 139:1b-3,13-15

Acts 13:22-26

Luke 1:57-66, 80



## Reflect:

Consider how much you and John the Baptist are alike. God assigned John's vocation to him at his birth and gave him his name while he was still in his mother's womb. The Lord did the same with you! At your conception, even before you looked human and had a beating heart and a brain that could think, he named you as his precious child.

God gifted John with a sharp-edged sword, i.e., the ability to speak the truth (the sword of the Spirit), which cuts through the lies and deceptions of evil. He gave you the same gift during your baptism when you received the Holy Spirit.

God concealed John in the shadow of his arm, i.e., he protected him. No matter how difficult your life has been, and no matter how often you strayed from the Lord, you still belong to him. He is holding onto you.

Even though you sometimes toil in vain and your efforts to do God's work seem worthless, as if you've uselessly spent your strength, like John, your reward is with the Lord. He will reward you generously.

No matter how ugly you think you are, no matter if you are too short or too tall or diseased or malformed by a birth defect, you look glorious to the Lord, your Creator. The verses of the responsorial Psalm confirm this: You are wonderfully made! Since the moment of your conception, your life has been precious and important.

As it was with John, God is your strength. And like John, what you think you can do is "too little" compared to what he knows you can do. He has a more

important use for your gifts and talents and experiences and training. He wants to make his light shine through you! His salvation will reach others as long as you're willing to serve him.

What our Gospel reading today tells us of John is true of you also: You are God's child, growing and becoming strong in spirit. You have experienced the desert of hardships and training. Everything that has happened to you can become valuable and useful when you let God send you forth in service for his kingdom.

## Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Using Isaiah 49:1-6, how do the words reflect your own life?

† What is most surprising to you? Why? Do you see yourself as less useful to the kingdom of God than he sees you?

## Questions for Faith Sharing:

† God has wonderfully made you and each member of your family or group. Tell each other at least one thing that is evidence that God made a masterpiece when he created him/her.

† How is this useful to God?