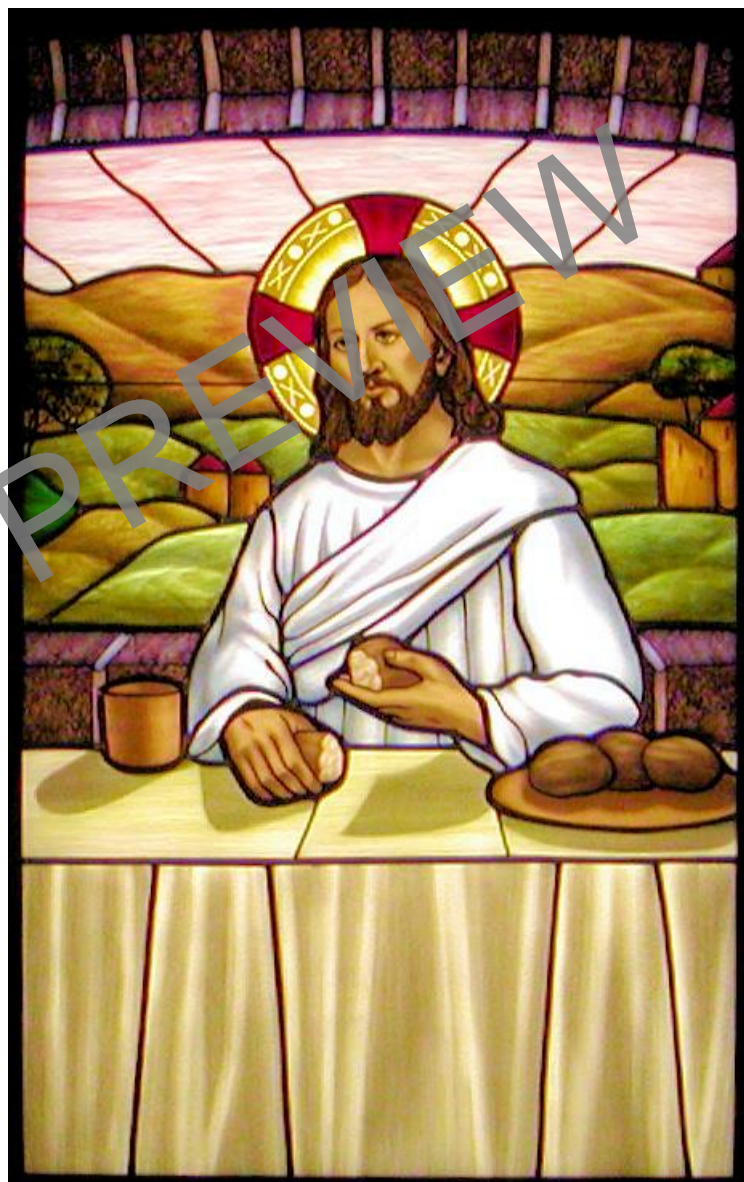


Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of May, 2017

by Terry A . Modica



4th Sunday of Easter

May 7, 2017

Read:

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Ps 23: 1-6

1 Peter 2:20b-25

John 10:1-10

Reflect:

Are you at an impasse in your spiritual growth or emotional healing or a difficult relationship? Do you need a breakthrough? Do you feel stuck behind a fence that's keeping you on the outside of peace, joy, satisfaction, or healing?

This Sunday's Gospel reading tells us that Jesus is the gate in that fence. He helps us reach the heavenly side of the gate, outside the realm of earthly restrictions -- not only when we die and enter eternal life, but also here and now in our earthly life, so that we might always "have life and have it more abundantly."

When our path seems blocked, we can only make progress by letting Jesus shepherd us around and through and over the obstacles. If people shut a door on something that God wants us to do, Jesus is still our open gate and no one can close him out of our lives. He will lead us into a new opportunity for accomplishing the plans of God. If he's given us a frustrated holy desire or a passion for which there seems to be no outlet, instead of complaining or quitting, we must look at Jesus and see him as a gate that opens into a new direction or location.

Remember, however, that until we get all the way through this gate, we must stick close to him like dumb sheep. There's a journey to take before we can reach the other side of the fence.

The thief that comes to steal and slaughter can only reach us when we stray away from Jesus and we take our eyes off of him.



Despair and worry are two common thieves, robbing us of peace, joy, satisfaction, and healing. But they're not as powerful as they pretend to be. We defeat them easily by remembering that they do not speak the full truth. The truth is: Jesus is our Good Shepherd safely guiding us into a life of abundant victory!

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What breakthrough are you hoping for? What's frustrating you and seems hopeless? What's causing you to think that a problem you're facing might lead to disaster and destruction?

† What will you do this week to follow Jesus more closely so that you can get through this with more peace?

Question for Faith Sharing:

† Share the story of a time when you experienced obstacles and Jesus provided a breakthrough that led to victory.

Comments/Prayer Requests:

The Ascension of the Lord

May 28 (or May 25), 2017

Read:

Acts 1:1-11
Ps 47:2-3, 6-9
Ephesians 1:17-23
Matthew 28:16-20



Reflect:

Why did Jesus ascend to heaven? Imagine how readily people would have converted if he had resumed his public ministry after his resurrection. Even the Pharisees who had seen him die would have fallen at his feet in repentance.

However, God's salvation plan for the world was much bigger than that. While Jesus walked the earth he was but one human. Afterward, by giving himself in the Eucharist to his disciples, he became every human who takes this gift seriously. When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we unite ourselves to his mission.

Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus commissioned every disciple – including you – for this task. “Commission” means “with the same mission, working together. This commissioning rite is repeated at the end of every Mass, when the Jesus, through the priest, sends us forth to love and serve the Lord to make a difference in the world.

Humanly we are quite inadequate to change the world, so Jesus gave us his Holy Spirit. By uniting our spirit to his Spirit and then relying on God in every situation, adequacy is not the question. It's willingness. Are we willing to put time and effort and spiritual growth into being Christ's hands and feet and voice for the world?

Because Jesus ascended to heaven, he has no hands but our hands, and he has no voice but our voice. After he sent his Holy Spirit to earth, God has chosen to minister to the world through us, first in our homes, then into our parishes and beyond.

A Prayer:

Lord Jesus, fill me with the presence of Your Holy Spirit and with the gifts You want me to use. Show me when and how to use these charisms. And help me to overcome my pride and fears and any other sins that are holding me back from the works that You are calling me to do. I want to be Your hands, Your feet, and Your voice, Lord Jesus. Amen!

Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † Are you unhappy about the evils that exist in this world? Are you concerned about the abuses you see? Immorality? Injustices? Divisions? What do you think your part in God's plan might be when you let him work through you?
- † What thresholds or new beginnings are you facing? How are these opportunities for the continuation of the ministry of Jesus?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † In what ways are you doing the works of Jesus?
- † Which parish ministries could use your gifts and talents?
- † How do you rely on the Holy Spirit to get it done?

Comments/Prayer Requests: