God’s Generous Love

Our painting by Aldo Carpi (1886-1973) shows the Virgin Mary bringing the Baby Jesus to visit the poor. She doesn't make distinctions. Mary understood that Jesus didn't come just for the rich and powerful but for everyone.

Peter learns this lesson when speaking to Cornelius and his household. Until this time, the apostles were preaching to the Jewish people, but when Peter speaks to these Romans, the Holy Spirit comes upon them just as he had upon the Jews. They repent and believe. This for Peter was essential, because it showed that Jesus wanted to send his Spirit and teachings to everyone, not just the chosen race. God doesn't show favoritism.

The same goes for us. It’s natural to want to love our own: our family and those sharing our social status, political party, club, school, or parish. But our love has to spread to all peoples, especially those in the most moral, material, and spiritual need. God is love, and those who love show they come from God.

Another element of love is that it is free, wanting nothing in return. Recently, while sitting at an outdoor café, a woman walked up and gave me a small wrapped gift. “I like to give gifts to complete strangers, just to make their day,” she said. What a beautiful gesture.

We should also note that Cornelius accepted God’s love, was baptized, and began following the Way. He and his family didn’t take that free love of God for granted. They responded to it in joyful obedience. God’s generous love asks for an equally generous response. —Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection
How often do I help or love someone who disagrees with me, or doesn’t believe what I believe?

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.
1 John 4:7
Calendar

Monday
May 7
Easter Weekday
Acts 16:11–15
Jn 15:26–16:4a

Tuesday
May 8
Easter Weekday
Acts 16:22–34
Jn 16:5–11

Wednesday
May 9
Easter Weekday
Acts 17:15, 22–18:1
Jn 16:12–15

Thursday
May 10
Easter Weekday
Acts 18:1–8
Jn 16:16–20

Friday
May 11
Easter Weekday
Acts 18:9–18
Jn 16:20–23

Saturday
May 12
Easter Weekday
Acts 18:23–28
Jn 16:23b–28

Sunday
May 13
Seventh Sunday of Easter
Ascension of the Lord
SEVENTH SUNDAY
READING:
Acts 1:15–17, 20a, 20c–26
1 Jn 4:11–16
Jn 17:11b–19

A Word From Pope Francis
Therefore, this Word of God calls us to love one another, even if we do not always understand each other, and do not always get along....It is then that Christian love is seen. A love which manifests even if there are differences of opinion or character. Love is greater than these differences!

—Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 10, 2015

Dear Padre,

Is it acceptable for a Catholic health-care professional to be employed by a hospital that performs abortions, provided she has nothing to do with these procedures?

You raise an important issue about intentional involvement in wrongdoing, and my response extends to many other life situations. A person may work in a hospital that performs abortions, provided that he or she is not involved with the procedures. Because performing abortions is only one part of what the hospital does, a person may work there contributing his or her expertise to other areas of health care. If the circumstances were different, and the place of employment was dedicated to terminating pregnancies through abortion, it would be wrong to work there.

My response is guided by the principle of cooperation. It asserts that we may never intentionally cooperate approvingly in the morally wrong action of another person. To help another and approve of his immoral action is termed formal cooperation. Cooperating with another reluctantly, disapproving of what he is doing, is called material cooperation. A person may never cooperate formally in another’s wrongdoing because, in doing so, he or she also knowingly performs an immoral action. Some material cooperation may be morally justified, but not if a person’s cooperation is necessary for an immoral action to occur.

The Church advises Catholics to avoid any level of moral cooperation. While many don’t have the luxury to consider employment elsewhere, other considerations include: Is the individual creating scandal by employment at this hospital? Has the individual made his or her moral understanding known to this hospital?

Sundaybulletin@Liguori.org

Adapted from Life, Death, and Catholic Medical Choices, © 2011 Liguori Publications
Sent to be Missionaries

The beginning of the Book of Acts presents a summary of the life of Christ and how he called and taught the apostles in the Holy Spirit. After his resurrection, Christ kept the apostles in Jerusalem, where they prayed together with the Virgin and awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit which would give them power to witness to him beyond the city and into the outlying countries and regions, just as the Gospel reading commands.

This Spirit given to them by Christ is a spirit of mission and witness. When Jesus was finished speaking, when his revelation had finished, he was taken to heaven. And the apostles were left standing there, looking up after him.

That looking up can be interpreted as a longing for Jesus’ presence that was no longer in human form. Things had radically changed. Jesus’ mission had finished, and now theirs was beginning. Their situation is the same as ours. We are sent on a mission!

An essential element of being Christian is to understand that we are sent into the world to build Christ’s kingdom. We are his missionaries, his representatives. He counts on us to go into the world and bring his message to all his beloved children just as he did—with preaching, testimony, and love. Jesus doesn’t send us to be comfortable, professionally successful, and wealthy. He sends us to be missionaries!

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection

Do I live as if I am Christ’s presence on earth, aware that I am his missionary?

If Jesus were in my family, social, and professional situations, what would he do?
Dear Padre,

It says in the Gospel account of the ascension that Jesus was taken up body and soul into heaven. Why would Jesus need a body in heaven?

In the Old Testament, there was a great chasm between our bodies and heaven. We were told that no one could see the face of God and live, let alone live with God in heaven. Jesus came to bridge that gap through his body and blood.

Jesus’ glorified body is in heaven to show that we, too, will be glorified like him, showing that, as part of God’s creation, our bodies are inherently good and worthy of heavenly life. Jesus’ ascension will be followed by our ascension into heaven. Our bodies will become like Jesus’ glorified body. Our life with God will become like Jesus’ life with God. We see in Jesus our own future. Our lives and our loves will not be snuffed out like a candle. Rather, we will carry them in our spiritual and glorified self, leaving behind pain, death, and human inadequacies.

Christianity is a flesh-and-blood religion. We can’t bypass the physical to reach the spiritual. Jesus ascended into heaven, body and soul. We do not reach higher spiritual truths by rejecting the material world. Heaven won’t contain disembodied spiritual beings, but will be full of glorified human bodies without the inadequacies we suffer now. Saint Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:35–40, tries to explain this to the people of Corinth. He tells them that the splendor of the heavenly body is of one kind and the splendor of the earthly body is another.

Heaven won’t contain disembodied spiritual beings, but will be full of glorified human bodies without the inadequacies we suffer now.

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The Patience of Mary

The image of Mary—surrounded by the apostles in the upper room, awaiting the Holy Spirit—has a name: Regina Apostolorum, Queen of the Apostles. She is enthroned as Queen Mother because, when her Son the King was enthroned and lifted up, he told her, “Behold your son.” With those words he entrusted Mary to the care of John, the apostles, and the whole Church. As any good queen and mother, she defends her own.

She is also called the Spouse of the Spirit, because it was in union with the Spirit that she engendered the Son. She also engenders him in the apostles and in our souls through her powerful intercession and waiting on the Spirit.

One of Mary’s best qualities is waiting patiently until God’s power arrives. After the annunciation she waited nine months with Jesus in her womb. Then she waited some thirty years while Jesus grew and prepared for his mission. She waited during his public life and watched as his fame spread, but also as his enemies plotted. She waited at the foot of the cross and endured that unending Holy Saturday until the resurrection. And she waited patiently on the first Pentecost Sunday for the coming of the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by her Son. She knew he would come through, as he always did.

We get impatient with God and want him to respond on our timetables according to our expectations. He waits to give us a chance to adapt our hearts to his plan and timing. He waits until the time is just right.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection

How often do I seek Mary’s intercession or help?
Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. How can you practice more patience this week?

But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.
John 16:13
Dear Padre,

There are many gifts given by the Spirit, but I don’t understand “speaking in tongues.” What is the significance of this gift?

You are probably speaking from the experience of a “charismatic” prayer service, in which an individual suddenly enters into an ecstatic state and begins speaking what sounds to others like gibberish.

Sacred Scriptures offer us some examples of this phenomenon. On the day of Pentecost, for example, the apostles were overtaken by the Holy Spirit and were understood by people of many nations, each in his or her own tongue (Acts 2:3–4, 6). The phenomenon occurred again when the first Gentiles were converted to the faith: Peter heard them “speaking in tongues and extolling God” (Acts 10:46). Paul, too, saw the ecstatic condition of the people he confirmed (Acts 19:6).

Saint Paul reminds us that speaking in tongues is one of many gifts the Spirit may bestow upon a person (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30), but that, above all of them, there is love (1 Corinthians 13:8). He tells us that, like the gifts of prophecy and knowledge, so also will the gift of speaking in tongues come to an end. Love will prevail.

We must remember Paul’s words as we contemplate all the gifts of the Spirit: “So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:39–40).

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A Word From Pope Francis

As he did on Pentecost, the Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; he wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands to continue building the world of today.

—World Youth Day prayer vigil, July 30, 2016

THUMBUTCH/SHUTTERSTOCK
The Mission of the Trinity

This detail of the Trinity is part of the very first fresco Raphael painted for Pope Julius II. Christian iconography commonly represented the Godhead as a triangle with the all-seeing eye in the center, often with rays of glory flooding forth. Yet Raphael chooses to make it much more personal, more real. He depicts the three persons of the Trinity.

God is not merely an idea, a first principle, or a mental criteria for moral choosing, but three real divine persons, each one active in your life. A triune God, an eternal explosion of love in which the Father begins by creating you; the Son continues by saving you; and the Holy Spirit consumes their love by inspiring and sanctifying you.

Although all things change, God never changes. He is still, the point of the pendulum from which all things hang and are supported. He wisely governs with his one hand lifted in authoritative and assuring purpose. In his other hand, the sphere of the world rests secure. His decisions are not arbitrary, swayed by public opinion, or motivated by insecurity needing affirmation. He is who is. It is we who need him and not the other way around.

Yet, his absolute authority doesn’t convert him into an aloof despot. God lovingly takes interest in everything! Nothing is unimportant—from the greatest things on earth to the smallest minutiae of my day. If it is important to me, it is important to him, and his providential hand keeps it all in balance.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection
Each person of the Trinity has a mission: The Father creates, the Son saves, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. Do I thank each one for each one’s gift?

[Jesus said,] “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
Matthew 28:19
**Dear Padre,**

**Did Jesus know that he was God?**

Everyone, Jesus included, has self-knowledge—at least in principle. For example, even though we know that we are individual human beings, we still find it almost impossible to formulate what that really means. Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that our knowledge of all things is conceptual—we make abstractions, express them in concepts, and think by combining these concepts. But self-knowledge is the one exception—it is intuitive knowledge, not conceptual, and extremely difficult to formulate in concepts.

Did Jesus know that he was God? Yes, intuitively. But if it’s hard for us to express what we somehow sense as our basic humanity, imagine how difficult it would have been for Jesus to express what he profoundly grasped as his divine/human self-identity. His knowledge of his radical selfhood would have been a genuine self-awareness of who he truly was—both God and human—but he wouldn’t have been able to express it in a conceptual way.

Jesus was able to build upon this profound, intuitive self-knowledge. Human beings perceive they are human early in life, but they know even more when they’re forty than when they are twenty. A similar deepening perception took place in Jesus. Through life experiences, Jesus constantly discovered what being divine in human circumstances implied. That’s why Hebrews 5:8 says he “learned obedience through what he suffered.”

How wonderful it is to have Jesus, true God and true human, as our Savior.

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**A Word From Pope Francis**

The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity invites us to commit ourselves in daily events to being leaven of communion, consolation, and mercy. In this mission, we are sustained by the strength that the Holy Spirit gives us: he takes care of the flesh of humanity, wounded by injustice, oppression, hate, and avarice.

—Angelus, May 22, 2016