



*Homiletic starters  
and scriptural  
reflection points for  
each day of the month*

**CELEBRATION:**  
A Comprehensive  
Worship Resource  
[celebrationpublications.org](http://celebrationpublications.org)

The Lectionary provides a kind of spiritual script for the universal church that keeps us, literally, all on the same page as we journey through the liturgical seasons. These short reflections, written by four authors who meet regularly to share the readings, are intended to help daily preachers and others who pray from the assigned scriptures each day to orient themselves to the Living Word addressed to the church in the world. Authors are identified by their initials, with short bios provided on the last page.

# May 2012

## Fourth Week of Easter

**Tues., May 1: Acts 11:19-26; John 10:22-30**

### Joseph the Worker

... for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith. While these words refer to Barnabas, who went out to Antioch and Tarsus to lead others to discipleship, they can also apply to Joseph the Worker, whose memorial we celebrate today. His humility and simplicity remain a model for all who serve the Lord and others. Through his work as a carpenter, he provided for Jesus and Mary. More broadly, he shows the dignity of faithful service to the Lord in the daily work and stewardship of what we've been entrusted. He exemplifies the vital role of the father in family life and the sacrifices that many men undertake out of love and respect for their spouses and children. *For dignity in our work and the means to provide for our loved ones, we pray.* PR

**Wed., May 2: Acts 12:24-13:5a; John 12:44-50**

### Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the church

*I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness.* St. Athanasius is one who lived out these words. Despite great difficulty and outright persecution, he fought against heresy in the early church. He spent 17 of his 45 years as bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, in exile. Yet he didn't waver in his zeal. His writings contributed significantly to the shape of the future church. He's credited as the greatest champion of the subject of the Incarnation and is often referred to as the "Father of Orthodoxy." He made it his mission to teach and defend the truth about Jesus. *For the courage to persevere as we practice and defend our faith, we pray.* PR

**Thurs., May 3: 1 Cor 15:1-8; John 14:6-14**

### Feast of Philip and James, apostles

*Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."* Philip is so close to Jesus he can't fully grasp that Jesus reveals himself as one with the Father through his person and works. Jesus' response appears to be a mild rebuke of Philip's inability to see who he is, who has sent him, and how he tries to teach the disciples the Father will respond if they act and ask in his name. As we celebrate the feast of Philip and James today, we should reflect on our own lack of understanding and faith and pray for the wisdom to see the work of the Father in our ordinary daily encounters. *Open our eyes, Lord, we pray.* PR

**Fri., May 4: Acts 13:26-33; John 14:1-6**

*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Our path to the Father is clear. Belief in Jesus Christ, and following his example, draw us to him. Jesus reveals himself to all people and enters creation to redeem us through his words and actions. He makes the previously mysterious and unimaginable clearly visible. He's our sign and our path. By uniting our lives with Jesus and living as Christ-like as we can, we can find hope in knowing the Father and one day uniting with him. *Show us the way to you, O Lord, we pray.* PR

**Sat., May 5: Acts 13:44-52; John 14:7-14**

*So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.* Though Paul and Barnabas successfully spread the word of the Lord to the gentiles, they meet persecution from some prominent Jews who expel them from their territory. The act of shaking the dust from their feet in protest is one of complete exasperation and disassociation. The Jews, first to receive the word of God, reject it, prompting Paul and Barnabas to turn to the gentiles. Then, the Jews react in jealousy and abuse. How often do we fail to see the value of something until it's offered to another? How selfish and possessive are we of our faith and our God? How long will we allow our



stereotypes and divisions to separate us from our brothers and sisters in Christ? *For communion with all God's people, we pray.* PR

### Fifth Week of Easter

#### Mon., May 7: Acts 14:5-18; John 14:21-26

*Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.* After Paul and Barnabas cure a man lame from birth, the townspeople believe them to be Zeus and Hermes in human form. The people are convinced and bring animals to sacrifice to these men whom they believe to be gods. This error in judgment seems silly to us today, but how often do we let the attributes of the “messenger” overshadow the truth of the message? We may not like the personality or attitude of the minister, and for that reason stay away from Sunday worship. Conversely, we may idealize our religious leaders and later become disillusioned with their teachings when they demonstrate human failings. *Lord, open our hearts and increase our understanding, we pray.* PC

#### Tues., May 8: Acts 14:19-28; John 14:27-31a

*It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.* We may not be stoned or dragged out of town and left for dead, as Paul was, but being a believer in Jesus and working to bring about his kingdom can still cause hardships. Differences in religious beliefs still result in violence in many parts of the world, even though the ideals of peace, justice and brotherhood are central to our religion. How can we misinterpret Jesus' message of love and forgiveness so completely? To heal past wounds and injustices, we must put Jesus' words into action and be servants to all. *O Lord, give us the courage to face the hardships that come from belief, we pray.* PC

#### Wed., May 9: Acts 15:1-6; John 15:1-8

*Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.* Jesus is the vine; we are the branches. Any fruit we bear, any good works we accomplish, are the result of Jesus and his Father, the vine grower. As John says, we cannot accomplish anything alone, but only in connection with Christ. This passage is a good reminder, as we go about our various ministries, to take time out to reconnect with our Father in prayer. Connection to Christ as the source of our strength is vital so that exhaustion and discouragement don't overwhelm us. Through prayer, we are nourished and reminded that we are not alone. *That in all things God may be glorified, we pray.* PC

#### Thurs., May 10: Acts 15:7-21; John 15:9-11

##### Damien Joseph de Veuster of Moloka'i, priest

*As the Father loves me, so I also love you.* The Father loves us unconditionally and forever. He gives us all good things: the air we breathe, the food we eat, the health we enjoy, the love of family and friends. He gives us freedom to determine our course in life, the chance to change and correct our mistakes. He gives us children to love and nurture, and who teach us what unconditional love is. He gives us warmth and light and

refreshes our spirits with snow and flowers. John tells us that Jesus loves us in this very same way, unconditionally and forever. Today we celebrate the life of Fr. Damien, minister to the lepers. *Lord, in thanksgiving for your love, we pray.* PC

#### Fri., May 11: Acts 15:22-31; John 15:12-17

*I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.* This remarkable statement in John's Gospel is a turning point in Jesus' relationship with his disciples. He now calls them friends. Our relationship with Jesus, then, is not one of parent-child, or teacher-student, or master-servant, or judge-defendant, or employer-employee. We are friends. This relationship is unique. The relationship between friends denotes a certain mutual respect, fondness, almost a kind of equality, at least on the human level. A friend is a favored companion, one attached by affection or esteem, one trusted and united by mutual understanding and compassion. Friends enjoy each other's company. This is how Jesus describes us! *O Lord, keep us friends always and let us enjoy each other's company, we pray.* PC

#### Sat., May 12: Acts 16:1-10; John 15:18-21

*Day after day the churches grew stronger in faith and increased in number.* The early church grew because of the zeal of the apostles and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of the love they showed to everyone, people wanted to join this movement. Today, more people would be drawn to Christ's message if we, the church, would proclaim his teaching in our actions. We don't need an expensive PR campaign to bring people back to the church. We only have to love others as Christ demonstrated to us. We have to spend more time carrying out the directives of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Only then will our church grow stronger in faith and increase in number. *Lord, guide your church in your path, we pray.* PC

### Sixth Week of Easter

#### Mon., May 14: Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15:9-17

##### Feast of Matthias, apostle

*I have called you friends.* What does it mean to be Jesus' friend? Maybe this is Jesus' way of reminding us that we can't be disciples by ourselves. All of us — even introverts — need a community of people with whom we can share the joys, sorrows, challenges and victories of everyday life. As individuals, and as the church, Jesus has “friended” us, called us to live in community. I have called you friends, Jesus says; now you must friend my other friends. Make room around the table. Reach out to the lost and forgotten. Turn no one away with words of hatred or condemnation. *We thank you, God, for the friendship of Christ and for the opportunities you give us to be friends with each other.* JL

#### Tues., May 15: Acts 16:22-34; John 16:5-11

*Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened.* Could you sing under those circumstances? I'm not sure I could. But Paul and Silas can sing because their hymns tell the story of God's love — a love that can reach into any place and circumstance, even to itinerant preachers who



find themselves in a jail cell precisely because of the story they're trying to tell. The jailer, stunned because the prisoners didn't escape when they had the chance, wants to know why anyone would sing in jail. Paul and Silas tell him about Jesus, about the love of God that gives them the strength to sing praises to God even in prison. *You are our refuge and strength, Holy God, regardless of the prisons we may be in.* JL

**Wed., May 16: Acts 17:15, 22-18:1; John 16:12-15**

*You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious.* When Paul went to Athens, he found a city full of shrines and altars dedicated to many different gods. He even discovered an altar dedicated "to an unknown god." Apparently the Athenians were trying to cover all the bases: If one god failed them, maybe an as-yet-unnamed god would bless and protect them. This may sound like an ancient problem, but we do the same thing in our ongoing search for God. Sometimes, like the Athenians, we look for God in all the wrong places. The good news is that God created us to be in relationship with God. As Paul says, God is "not far from each one of us." *God, you are not far from us even as we look for you.* JL

**Thurs., May 17: Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mark 16:15-20**

**Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord**

*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?* In Luke's scheme of things, there are 10 days between Christ's ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but the disciples didn't know that. They didn't know what would happen or when. How many days to wonder and worry, remember and hope? They had little to go on except 40 days of resurrection appearances and a promise that the Holy Spirit would indeed come. They were not sure what God might do — or what God might want them to do. Even the sky is not the limit when it comes to what God's future might bring. *God of all peoples and places, we await the gift of your Holy Spirit.* JL

**Fri., May 18: Acts 18:9-18; John 16:20-23**

*I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.* How do you say goodbye? For Jesus, preparing to leave his disciples seems to have been a long process. A large portion of John's Gospel — Chapters 13-17 — is often called the "farewell discourse." Jesus' main concern is not what will soon happen to him, but what will happen to his disciples after he is gone. Over and over again, Jesus promises that he will not abandon them. Remember that I'm always with you, but soon I will be with you in a different way. You must say goodbye to the old life, the old way. *Our hearts rejoice in your steadfast, gracious presence, O God.* JL

**Sat., May 19: Acts 18:23-28; John 16:23b-28**

*I came from the Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.* Only by returning to the Father can Jesus send the Advocate. Who is this "other" Jesus will send? John uses a word found nowhere else in the Gospels: *paraclete*, "one who is called alongside of." *Paraclete* has been translated as "advocate," "counselor" and "comfort-

er." Jesus makes clear that the *paraclete* is the Spirit of truth who will guide the disciples when Jesus is gone. The Spirit will help them remember all the things Jesus has taught them. The Spirit will guide them so they can continue Christ's work. *Walk with us, Spirit of truth, that we may be faithful disciples.* JL

**Seventh Week of Easter**

**Mon., May 21: Acts 19:1-8; John 16:29-33**

*We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.* These are the words of some early disciples. Many of us could say the same. Oh, we include the Spirit when we make the sign of the cross or when we sing a Trinitarian hymn (unless the presider has left the building and we stop after the second verse). But what role do we give the Holy Spirit in our personal lives or in the life of the community? There is a healthy tension between order and inspiration. Order shapes and monitors inspiration. Inspiration energizes and sometimes creates a new order. The Spirit-filled life can be scary, but isn't it the only life worth living? *Spirit of God, inspire and encourage us today.* PBS

**Tues., May 22: Acts 20:17-27; John 17:1-11a**

*Father, the hour has come.* In today's readings both Paul and Jesus are anticipating the end of their earthly lives and reflecting back on a life well-lived, doing what they were called to do, living truthfully whatever the cost, hoping only to finish the race before their last days. It is a privilege to sit with the dying, to know their last thoughts, their joys and their regrets. Most are grateful for the love in their lives. Many regret not loving more. But it's also true that some care little for love and die feeling bitter and cheated. That's choosing hell when heaven is within reach. It's a lesson for the rest of us. Choose life. Choose love. Live well. Now. *Spirit of God, inspire and encourage us today.* PBS

**Wed., May 23: Acts 20:28-38; John 17:11b-19**

*Now I commend you to God.* Again there is a parallel message in today's readings. Both Paul and Jesus are confronting the hardest part of leaving this all-too-short earthly life: saying goodbye to loved ones. If we feel responsible for those loved ones, it is so much the harder. We can only commend them to God's care. Many of us have opportunities to practice this difficult act of trust — as our children go out into the world, as a friend cannot be dissuaded from self-destructive activity, as we leave jobs or neighborhoods or parish communities. Perhaps this act of "commending to God" is something we should practice every night, imitating John XIII, who is said to have prayed, "It's your church, God; I'm going to sleep." *Loving God, we commend to your care all those you have given us to love.* PBS

**Thurs., May 24: Acts 22:30; 23:6-11; John 17:20-26**

*That all may be one.* T.A.M.B.O. I saw it on a poster in a friend's dorm room years ago. For a while I used it as my screen saver. "That all may be one" was among the last wishes of Jesus. When loved ones die, we try to honor their last wishes, and this should be no different. There is such energy when people who are diverse in belief and practice come together with the



intention of just being together, loving each other, enjoying each other, working for the common good. Such gatherings are blessed by the Holy Spirit, and we leave inspired and energized. *Spirit of God, fill us with a desire for unity.* **PBS**

**Fri., May 25: Acts 25:13b-21; John 21:15-19**

**Bede the Venerable, bishop and doctor of the church**

*They had some issues with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died but who Paul claimed was alive.* These passages telling of Paul's adventures feel like the old cliffhangers we watched before the feature film. We are left to wonder, "How will Paul get out of this mess?" Why is he in a mess in the first place? Because he can't help but tell the truth about Jesus over and over again. In the Gospel, Peter is given a hint of what such truth-telling will cost him. There is a cost to telling the truth, which is why most of us so often stretch the truth or outright lie. Yet it is by telling the truth over and over again — as Jesus made Peter do when he asked him three times, "Do you love me?" — that we come to know and live the truth. *Spirit of God, inspire and encourage us to be true to you and come to know ourselves.* **PBS**

**Sat., May 26: Acts 28:16-20, 30-31; John 21:20-25**

**Philip Neri, priest**

*There are also many other things that Jesus did.* Today we hear the last verses of the Book of Acts and the Gospel of John. In both we hear that the story is not — is never — complete. There is always more to discover about Jesus, more to learn about being a disciple. Tomorrow is Pentecost. Let us pray that we may trust in the Holy Spirit's gifts to us and have the wisdom and the courage to open those gifts and practice using them every moment of every day. *Spirit of God, inspire and encourage us today and always. Amen.* **PBS**

**Eighth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Mon., May 28: 1 Pet 1:3-9; Mark 10:17-27**

*At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.* When we assess our treasure by our material worth, we'll walk away sad. We are deeply impoverished without the ability to recognize the value of a relationship with Christ. When we become slaves to things, we cannot know the freedom that comes from a life modeled on following Christ. How often do we hear of the true happiness and peace of those who live simply? When we get caught up in attaining items that hold little value, even though they often come with a high price tag, the steepest cost is our inability to bond with the Lord. *For the grace to distinguish between wants and needs, we pray.* **PR**

**Tues., May 29: 1 Pet 1:10-16; Mark 10:28-31**

*Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."* This is such a difficult concept to grasp in our materialistic society. We're often defined by what we do, how much we make, where we live, what kind of car we drive and so many other conditions based on wealth and status. We fail to take into account just how short-term is the happiness that the things of this world may give. Jesus assures Peter that the

sacrifices made by foregoing earthly treasures are repaid one hundredfold, both in the present and in the age to come. We have to rethink what defines us and gives us value — and precious little of that is something that can be purchased. *For the grace to discern what truly matters, we pray.* **PR**

**Wed., May 30: 1 Pet 1:18-25; Mark 10:32-45**

*Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant.* Jesus, the suffering servant, who taught us how to put others before ourselves, reinforces our call to give without concern for recognition or honor. His very life provides the ultimate model of selflessness and compassion. His example propels us to ensure the well-being of our brothers and sisters without expecting reciprocation. To drink from the cup from which he drank is a significant challenge. It demands sacrifice and an unyielding commitment to the needs of the least among us. *Lord, help us to give freely and tirelessly, we pray.* **PR**

**Thurs., May 31: Zeph 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-56**

**Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.* When Elizabeth greets and honors Mary as the mother of the Lord, Mary humbly intones a song of praise. Initially overwhelmed and confused, Mary nevertheless embraces the role of service. Elizabeth immediately recognizes how blessed and favored her cousin is. Though Mary's service elevates her to a position of veneration, she acknowledges that it's only possible through the grace of the Mighty One, and glorifies his name. Her example leads Elizabeth, pregnant herself, immediately to desire to be of service to Mary and to offer her own hymn of praise. Both offer us models of the greatness that comes from our receptivity to God's will. *Lord, help us to be open to your call and to serve you, we pray.* **PR**

**Daily Bread** is now available in an e-mail sent directly to your computer each morning. To receive this e-mail, sign up at [www.celebrationpublications.org/dailybread](http://www.celebrationpublications.org/dailybread).

**Daily Bread Authors**

**Portia Clark** earned a bachelor's degree in English and theology and a master's in English literature from Oklahoma State University.

**Jeanne Lischer** grew up in St. Louis and Ghana, West Africa, where her parents were missionaries. She is a graduate of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, was ordained in 1990 in the United Church of Christ and is currently the pastor for two rural congregations in Missouri.

**Patricia Russell** graduated from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich., with degrees in English and secondary education.

**Paige Byrne Shortal** earned a bachelor's degree in theology at Saint Louis University and a master's degree in pastoral studies at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. Visit her website and contact her at [www.paigebyrneshortal.com](http://www.paigebyrneshortal.com).