

Connect!

Uniting Word & World



Sunday, January 18, 2015

Searching for Jesus

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/011815.cfm>

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20

John 1:35-42



The search for the historical Jesus continues! *The Washington Post* had a report last week that a great possibility exists that the [site of Jesus' actual trial has been discovered](#). For centuries, archeologists, curious seekers, and people of faith have been trying to validate the historical path Jesus would have trod. With the Gospels themselves often being vague and even conflicted, discovering the “real” historical Jesus is something that can at best be left to the world of speculation.

While archeological discoveries are necessary for linking us to our past, connecting us to our roots, validating the chronicles of history, the question is begged as to how essential they are to our faith. Pilgrimages to historical sites, shrines, and places where revelations are said to have occurred are certainly popular expressions of faith. But is faith something that is validated outside of us or within? Belief in Jesus Christ has been a part of world culture in one way or another for centuries. Do we give the historical discovery of one thing or another the power to

negate that faith? The importance we place on historical validation and archeological discovery must be kept in check. The legacy of faith, rooted in Scripture and tradition, goes way beyond those things and contain timeless wisdom.

Spiritual master Jean-Pierre de Caussade tells us that “He [God] speaks to every heart, and to each one he utters the word of life, the only word applicable to us. But we do not hear it. We want to know what he has said to others and do not listen to what is said to us.” Our reading

from the First Book of Samuel shows the Lord calling out to Samuel in his sleep and Samuel repeatedly mistaking God's voice for someone else. We often mistake God's voice. And, in typical human fashion, we always want to validate what we are feeling, thinking, or hearing outside of ourselves, in history, in the common lived experience of others, or in things we can touch and analyze. However, God is not there.

What history reveals or even what others say must always take a back seat to what is happening now. Caussade further directs us to: "Come, not to learn the map of this spiritual country, but to possess it, to walk in it at your ease without fear of losing your way. Come, not to study the theory of God's grace, or to learn what it has done in the past and is still doing, but simply to be open yourself to what it can do. You do not need to know what it has said to others ... His grace will speak to you, yourself, what is best for you." The task before us is to wait and embrace the perpetual advent movement of our lives. Our palmist says it best: "I have waited, waited for the LORD, and he stooped toward me and heard my cry."

We struggle futilely to make intellectual sense of God. Do we pretend to think that we are greater than God and believe that our intellects can really figure him out? We need to wait and look elsewhere. The glance is not necessarily back into the archives of history but experience. "O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart!" After years of searching and bumping into closed doors, journeying down dead ends and getting lost, the exhausted soul can easily abandon the whole notion of God and close the door on faith.

Sometimes we are led to the least likely of places. Two disciples were enamored by Jesus and after hearing John point Jesus out as the Lamb of God they decided to follow him. They never responded to Jesus' question, "What are you looking for?" Curious. If we give faith a chance, not with our heads but with our hearts, we stand the chance of discovering something. If we approach Jesus not with a mind bent on figuring him out or validating his earthly existence but with a heart willing to listen and be taught, we may be drawn more deeply to the voice within our own selves where God is calling us.

The only real faith that lasts and takes root is the faith that is stumbled upon and awakened. It is discovered when we begin to connect the dots, untangle the voices, and listen to the voice within. The disciples' need to see Jesus' physical dwelling and know where he was staying quickly faded away to more pressing concerns. Ultimately it leads them to accepting the incredible mission of proclaiming the good news to others.

Until we unscramble the voices and get rid of the interference we will never know who we really are and how we are to act. St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian community, verifies them. They were confused and needed to be reminded that bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit comes from God and that their bodies are not their own. What a different view of things we possess when viewed through the eyes of faith!

Perhaps this, more than any historical validation, is the reason our faith in Jesus Christ persists. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the vision we achieve with eyes of faith validates not something outside of ourselves but something deep within. It makes sense, not always intellectually but in soul-speak! The very blood flows through your veins by movement of God's power. Caussade eloquently directs us to the truth: "There is not a single atom in your frame, even the marrow of your bones that is not formed by divine power." Listen.

Rev. Mark Suslenko

PRAYER

O my God, I firmly believe
that you are one God in three divine Persons,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
I believe that your divine Son became man
and died for our sins and that he will come
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe these and all the truths
which the Holy Catholic Church teaches
because you have revealed them
who are eternal truth and wisdom,
who can neither deceive nor be deceived.
In this faith I intend to live and die.
Amen.

—*Act of Faith from the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, © Copyright 2005, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

NOTICES

2015 CATHOLIC SOCIAL MINISTRY GATHERING

The annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering is organized by the USCCB's Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development in collaboration with four other USCCB departments and sixteen national Catholic organizations. The 2015 Gathering will take place from Saturday, February 7 to Tuesday, February 10, 2015, in Washington DC to explore the theme of To Go Forth: Encountering Christ in the Heart of the World. To register, visit <http://www.cvent.com/events/to-go-forth-encountering-christ-in-the-heart-of-the-world/event-summary-45867e9fce7444f9af42ed2b5d050392.aspx>.

SOLIDARITY FUND FOR THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

The Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa, which has no set national date, gives much needed aid to the Church in Africa while expressing the gratitude of the Church in the United States for the warm and generous assistance of the African priests and sisters in our parishes. The USCCB has resources available for this national collection on its website at <http://www.usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/solidarity-fund-for-africa/collection/index.cfm>.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Catholic Schools Week is celebrated in the United States from January 25–31. Many parish communities hold special events in honor of Catholic Schools. For more information and for resources and ideas, visit: <http://www.ncea.org/our-services/catholic-schools-week>.

COLLECTION FOR THE CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

Many dioceses will take up the collection for the Church in Latin America the weekend of January 24–25. More information and collection resources are available at: <http://usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/latin-america/collection/index.cfm>.

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