

Good News Daily

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Sunday, January 16

Ephesians 4:1-16 *Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (v.3 NRSV)

The last fifty years in church have been a real time of division and struggle. It seems to me that we spend a lot of time announcing who is “wrong” to our being “right”! I look at people during coffee hour. There always seem to be two small groups of people huddled together at opposite ends of the room, glaring at one another other. It’s truly tragic and sad!

Paul teaches us that our baptisms have bound us together. We’re bound together so organically that he calls us the Body of Christ! Then what on earth are we doing glaring at each other, wishing that the “those” people on the other side of the room would disappear forever?

I believe if we we’d walk to the opposite side of the room, greet our brothers and sisters with a smile, saying to them, “I miss you!”, we’d see the Holy Spirit at work, moving us together to start again toward unity.

Genesis 7:1-10, 17-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Mark 3:7-19

Include in your prayers: Our country; for wisdom and guidance for our leaders and the leaders of all nations; for our armed forces, especially those now in danger and any continuing to struggle, including Rory Fitch, Sarah Fitch, Gregory Campbell, Lieutenant Ryan Morie, Houston, General John Shepherd, Russell Clark, Peniel Reid, and their families; for our enemies; for peace, justice and reconciliation in all places where there is conflict, especially among the peoples of the Middle East; for Haiti and Bondeau; and for Todd and Patsy McGregor and their work with SAMS training missionaries.

Monday, January 17

Hebrews 4:14—5:6 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are...* (v.15a)

I believe that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14) to share the experience of human life, not as a keen observer, but as a participant! That has been the most exciting, comforting and healing truth in my adult life.

I’m a USMC veteran of the Vietnam War. I’ve spent almost 30 years of my life working with other Vietnam veterans to help them deal with the spiritual issues and moral injury that are the lasting result of their combat experience.

Over and over again, they’ve told me, “God can’t ever forgive me!” I tell them, “That’s not true! What this sentence of Scripture seeks to tell us is that God in Jesus Christ was right there with us, really sharing the fear, anger, and violence of the horrors of combat. God understands exactly. Through that shared experience, God will and has already forgiven us.”

The next time you feel that God will never understand the testing you’ve experienced, don’t turn to despair. Let Jesus embrace you with love—because he does understand exactly!

Genesis 8:6-22; Psalm 25; John 2:23—3:15

Include in your prayers: Ricardo Acuña, Nadia Amerman and family, Joanna Aras, Karin Armbruster, Daryl Bacon, Kay Bailey, David and Jayne Baker, Liz Bardin, Todd Baron, Wally and Evelyne Bates, James Baur, Nicholas Beswick, Saxon Birdsong, Joe Bishop, Lance Block, Pete and Julie Bohnsack, Kelly Bonneau, Brad Brett and Linda Johnson-Brett, Abigail Browne, Barbara Buttner, Melanie Casey, Gloria Chung, Linton Chung, Nico Clothier.

Tuesday, January 18

Psalm 26 *Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and mind.* (v.2)

I do a daily devotion that leads me to recite most of the Psalms aloud over the course of several weeks. I confess that I cannot read Psalm 26 aloud, especially the verse above. Psalm 26 has a tone of self-righteousness that hurts my heart and soul.

Frankly, having God test my heart and mind, telling me what God finds as God “tries me” would be a painful experience, because I know that a lot of what God will find in me will be darkness, self-centeredness, and failure to trust God.

I’ve been blessed to have a Trappist monk for a spiritual guide for forty years. Whenever I shared with him some of what I’ve discovered deep within me, he has always said the same thing. “Good! The beginning of a deeper walk with God is discovering and knowing the real truth about yourself. Once you’ve started acknowledging that, you can begin learning to trust how deeply God loves you!”

Genesis 9:1-17; Psalm 28; Hebrews 5:7-14; John 3:16-21

Include in your prayers: Martin Conlon, Robert Connell, Shirley Connell, Mark Connell, Ray Constable, Alan Costa, Sam Couillard, Cindy Croushore, Joe and Connie D’Alessandro, Ruth Dans, Pam DeFelice, Joseph Devan, Dave Downing, Marion Downing, Joan Dowrick, Lynn Duncan, Rachel Dwyer, George Dzama III, Nolan Eicher, Joan Engskow and family, Susan Feldman, Mary Fietze, Drew Fogg, Joe Follayttar, the French family, and John Fullager, Cassandra Fuller.

Wednesday, January 19

John 3:22-36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.* (v.36a)

I often find myself believing that eternal life is a reward given for a life of participating in an obstacle course of rule following and righteous behavior. Actually, belief in Jesus Christ is the only requirement for obtaining eternal life. What we are called to do is to follow the Holy Spirit’s lead in living out eternal life in everyday life. This requires trusting the truth of what the above verse states is actually true for me, and all of us. God, the Holy Spirit, who dwells within our hearts and souls, knows more about us than we can ever know about ourselves. Therefore, we have to learn to listen to the Spirit’s prompting.

What’s difficult for me is that I have to keep myself from believing that I’m actually in control of my transformation into becoming an icon of Christ. This is actually harder work than rule following and righteous behavior! The gift of eternal life has already been given to us. Our spiritual life is living into the already given gift we have received.

Genesis 9:18–29; Psalm 38; Hebrews 6:1-12

Include in your prayers: Charlie Gasperino, Bob and Kim Gorman, Jake Graybill, Janie Greene, Dennis and Janet Grote, Barbara Gustafson, Joe Hagerty, Leslie Hahn, Richard Halpern, Madeline Hanlon, Patty Hart, Hart family, Shirley Hazen, Pam Heatley, Janet Heithaus, Tom Henry, Janet Hullihen, Sally Honeyman, family of Alice Hopkinson, Mike and Alicia Howard and family, Mary Imle, Tindy Islip, Marj Johnson, Stephen Johnson, Jr. and Jennifer Corson, Kristian Joseph, Marie Kerwick and family, Allison Kieffer and family, Keith and Janet Kieffer, Susan Kelly, Roy Klein, Sarah Lawler, Jeff Lefevre, and Frank Lepore.

Thursday, January 20

Hebrews 6:13-20 *Where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered* (v.20)

One of the great truths of our Christian Faith is that forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended to the Father. Slicing through all the technical theology, what that means is our human nature (which is part of Jesus Christ) went along to dwell with the Father. Put another way, the separation between God and humanity no longer exists. That’s incredibly wonderful news!

Because we are baptized into union with Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ has taken our humanity into inseparable union with God, we are always with God, and God is always with us. I know this truth, but I still spend time trying to figure out how to connect with a distant God. The fact is that God is right there with all of us.

God loves us. God wants to have a deeply personal relationship with each of us. If you want God's attention and help, just start talking! God is there waiting with amazing loving kindness and gentle power. Amen! Alleluia!

Genesis 11:1-9; Psalm 37:1-18; John 4:1-15

Include in your prayers: Becky Mahoney's family, Patricia Malloy, Elaine Mariggio, Priscilla Marshall, Steve McCue, Joey Mitchell, Bob Montheard, Judy Mozer, Ashley Munoz, Mindy Nash, Dawn Neher, Sammera & Dash Parker, Anthony, Olivia and Vincent Parrone, Peter Pawlikowski, Joe Pellegrini, Sal & Colleen Perrone, Chris Peters, Brook Pitman, Marcia Pollard, Pat Powell, Jim and Jerre Rannie, Debbie Rannie, Ana Reid, Kerry Robb.

Friday, January 21

Psalm 31 *You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me.* (v.3)

A few months ago, I was driving my friend Tom home after a church meeting. He was very quiet throughout the ride. Finally, he said, "John, I want to tell you something."

He took a deep breath and said, "John, I'm afraid of God! I read all those stories in the Bible about God being angry, and punishing and even killing people, because they sinned! I've done my share of breaking the Ten Commandments. I'm scared that someday God is going to punish me!"

I responded, "Tom, the whole point of the Good News of Jesus Christ is that God loves all of us. Jesus came among us, died, and rose from the dead so that sins could be forgiven and we could have a new relationship with God no matter how often we ask—a permanent relationship of love, hope, forgiveness, and healing. I told him I was betting my life that what I'd just said is true for all of us! We can trust God not to hurt us!

Genesis 11:27—12:8; Hebrews 7:1-17; John 4:16-26

Include in your prayers: Carlos Salmán, Danielle Salman, Jessica Sanchez, Maggie Sandin, Don Schofield, Paul and Lydia Schweizer, Arnie Selna, Cheryl Seyfert, Tammy Simpson, Amanda Smith, Brian Smith and family, Howard Smith, Kathryn Smith, Kimberley Smith, Melissa Smith, Philip Smith, Susan and Charlie Smith, Allison Spencer, Diane Spero, Audrey Sprague, Cliff Stehle, Rob Steiner, Leah and Kaala Taylor, Jane Thomas, Roger Thomas, Richard Timmerman, Phil Toren, Keith van Cleave, Harold Vandersea, Patricia Vreeland, Grace Wasko, Les Waton, Karen Weitz, George Whiteley, the Willcox family, Wendy Williams, Bob and Joetta Wright, Mirabelle Wrist, Peter Wrist, Ray Wrist, Ric Wrist, Ali Zygmunt.

Saturday, January 22

Hebrews 7:18-28 *Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* (v.25)

As I listen to people talk about salvation, I often hear them talk about salvation in a conditional way. They say that Jesus saves us, but we can lose our salvation because we sin. Those statements bother my soul—because I don't believe that salvation is conditional. I believe salvation comes to us in the new birth through the water and indwelling of the Holy Spirit than comes to us in Baptism.

The Prayer Book my Christian Tradition uses states, "The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble." One of the promises people make at their Baptism is this: "Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?" Those preparing to be baptized respond, "I will with God's help."

Part of the gifts of Baptism is that we are incorporated into the way into the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. I believe Salvation isn't conditional. Saved is saved! The love of God for us isn't conditional. I trust this with all my heart and soul!

Genesis 12:9—13:1; Psalms 30, 32; John 4:27-43

Include in your prayers: Alec, Andy and Rita, Bonnie, Bunny, Chrissy, Clay, Dale Anne, Dave and Marion, Glenda, Jane, Jay, Kim, Karen and family, Laurette, Laurie, Leo, Lindy, Marilyn, Marty, Meg and family, Mika, Nancy and Stan, Noelle, Pat, Trish, Victoria and family.

by John Fergusson

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