

Saturday Afternoon Talk: Walking with Jesus

Introduction:

We need to take a closer look at Jesus as the fulfillment of the “golden thread” of God’s love woven throughout salvation history.

I Jesus’ Mission... Why Did Jesus Come?

Jesus came to fulfill God’s promise of salvation. Jesus *is* God’s promise of salvation. Heb 1: 1-3

II A Closer Look at Jesus

Edward Leen was a wonderful spiritual author in the 1950s. In his book **In the Likeness of Christ** he suggested that we need to go thru a three step process when we talk about the place of Jesus in our lives.

- 1. We need to admire Christ*
- 2. Admiration leads to love and devotion towards Christ*
- 3. Love and devotion beget imitation... imitating Christ in thought, emotion and volition. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. (Jn 14:23)*

Let’s look at the Gospel stories of Jesus and about Jesus.

III Obstacles Get in the Way... It’s about Me

Why is it so hard to “keep our eyes on Jesus?” (Heb 12:2)

IV Keep Your Eyes on Jesus... How?

The Eucharist is central.
Rev 3:20...a simple invitation
Talk with Jesus... The Story of the Empty Chair
Guided Meditation
Other forms of meditative prayer

Conclusion

Conference: Walking With Jesus

Introduction

I would like to talk about *Jesus* in this Retreat Conference.

Jesus embodies the love of God the Father, Creator God, who covenanted God's self with the Chosen People, and now joins God's self irrevocably in a new covenant with a new people.

Jesus came to deliver this Good News... God is on our side, despite the darkness, evil, suffering and sin in our world. God has not abandoned us. The Golden Thread of God's love continues.

I Jesus' Mission... Why Did Jesus Come?

In his letter to the Hebrews Paul put it this way...
Hebrews 1:1-3

In times past God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets. In this, the final age, he has spoken to us through his Son, whom he has made heir of all things and through whom he first created the universe. This Son is the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

What are we to say about this, we who are Christians, disciples of Jesus?

One question always confronts me when I reflect on the meaning of Jesus' coming...

Darkness still overshadows our world.

Suffering and pain still haunts us.

Sin... even if it is politically forbidden to mention this word in polite company... sin is still a part of humanity – read your newspapers daily.

Obviously Jesus' mission of healing, reconciliation, peace-giving and forgiveness-bringing still needs to be spread in our world. Who will do that? I believe we need to take a closer look at Jesus and at our understanding of Him if we are to understand what it means for us to be his disciples in our time.

II A Closer Look At Jesus

Edward Leen was a wonderful spiritual author in the 1950s. In his book **In the Likeness of Christ** he suggested that we need to go thru a three step process when we talk about the place of Jesus in our lives.

1. *We need to admire Christ*
2. *Admiration leads to love and devotion towards Christ*
3. *Love and devotion beget imitation... imitating Christ in thought, emotion and volition. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. (Jn 14:23)*

The life of Jesus is the divine way of living on earth. Jesus reveals God and reveals true humanity. Therefore we need to study Jesus' whole life, actions, words, judgments... – Jesus is human in the way we should be human – his views on life, on earth and his whole portrayal of what is valuable in life... Jesus is the only life that is truly human. (Leen, Chapter 1)

Pope Francis in his Audience of April 10, '13 says:

Being Christian is not just about obeying orders but means being in Christ, thinking like him, acting like him, loving like him; it means letting him take possession of our life and change it, transform it and free it from the darkness of evil and sin... Let us show the joy of being children of God, the freedom that living in Christ gives us which is true freedom, the freedom that saves us from the slavery of evil, of sin and of death.

As you look at the life of Jesus, what do *you* admire about Jesus?

What teachings of His do *you* find important for your life?

What stories about Jesus do *you* find appealing?

Do any of his parables speak to you?

Do any of Jesus' stories impress you?

What do you find hard to understand among Jesus' teachings?

Why did Jesus, such a good man in the eyes of so many, have to die?

What were the first words out of Jesus mouth when he began his public ministry?

Mark 1:14-15

Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel."

Mathew 4:17

Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

What is "God's Kingdom" that Jesus talks about and attempts to bring about?

I would say that Jesus brings about God's Kingdom whenever he heals someone, or forgives someone, or shows compassion to someone. This is God's will. This is God's Kingdom come among us.

Look at the Gospel stories.

Remember the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15,
or the story about the Good Samaritan in Luke 10,
or the forgiven steward who will not forgive a fellow steward in Mt 18:21ff.
Remember Jesus' compassion when he feeds the hungry 5000 (Jn 6),
or his sympathy when he cures the crippled woman (Lk 13:10)
or brings life back to his good friend Lazarus? (Jn 11)
These stories give us insight into the Good News Jesus brings.

What about the "hard" teachings of Jesus... those that don't quite sit well with many people.

How can we love our enemy? What's that all about? (Mt 5:43 ff)

Can we be forgiving? (Mt 18:21 ff)

Can we be a peacemaker or a justice bringer? (Mt 5: 3-10)

Remember, Jesus was executed for many of these actions?

Jesus had some powerful enemies.

The great 4th century doctor of the Church, St. Jerome, said that ignorance of the Scriptures was ignorance of Jesus.

I believe we need to get to know Jesus better thru the Gospels...

(See suggestions for Gospel study in the Handouts.)

III Obstacles Get in the Way... Life Is about Me

A further question always arises in my mind when I talk about or write about getting to know Jesus...

Why is it so hard to take time with Jesus?

How much time do we take every day with Jesus?

Did we say "Good Morning" to Jesus today yet?

Did we offer this day to Jesus yet?

Paul encouraged the Hebrew disciples of Jesus...

Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who inspires and perfects faith. (Heb 12:2)

Why don't we spend more time with our eyes fixed on Jesus,

our Good Shepherd,
who walks with us each day,
who is at our very side,
who companions us on our life's journey?
(Cf the Breastplate Prayer of St. Patrick)

How many times does Jesus go unnoticed in our lives?

Why?

There's our iPad or our cell phone, Twitter or Facebook.

How many of us are so busy about ourselves so much of the time.

And there's our worries...my bills, my job, my career, my kids or grandkids,
my health...my, my, my.....

How many of us are caught up in what folks in AA call "bondage to self?"

So many people worry so much.

Listen to these words of Jesus:

Which of you by worrying can add a moment to their life span...? Stop worrying then about what we are to drink or what we are to wear. The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides. (Mt 6:27,31-33)

How difficult these words of Jesus are to understand for us 21st century disciples. Of course, I have no doubt they were hard to understand for those who followed Jesus during his lifetime.

Why is it so difficult to "keep our eyes on Jesus?"

Look at the Story of Martha and Mary in Luke's Gospel (Lk 15)

Jesus was visiting, and Martha was intent on being the good hostess,
preparing the meal,
getting the meat and veggies ready,
checking on the wine,

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

setting the table...

So many things to do so that Jesus, her friend,
would be sure to recognize what a good hostess she was...

And she was a good hostess...

And where was Mary, Martha's sister?

Why wasn't Mary helping her?

Didn't her sister realize there was so much to do?

Mary was wasting time with Jesus.

Couldn't she do that later?

After the meal?

Of course, she would have to first help clean up after the meal,

Wash and dry the dishes,

Put the leftovers away,

Clean the table,

Sweep the kitchen...

Then maybe there would be time to spend with Jesus... maybe?

But Martha would be pretty tired after her busy day –

After all, it's a lot of work being a hostess.

And the name of this Movie is... Martha the Wonderful Hostess!

But what about Jesus?

Martha missed the opportunity of spending time with her friend Jesus!

Well, maybe next visit!

How many of us are so busy that we don't really have time to visit with
Jesus?

IV It's about Jesus

Another way of thinking about this would be:

Ask yourself...

Who is Jesus to me?

How do I name Jesus?

Friend? Redeemer? Savior? Brother?

Do I ever tell Jesus that I love him?

Here are some ways of speaking *to* and *about* Jesus...

Jesus is the First and Last,
the Beginning and the End...

Jesus was bruised and brought healing...

Jesus was pierced and eased pain...

Jesus was dead and brought life...

Jesus is alive and brings new life...

Our world can't understand Him...

Our armies can't defeat Him...

Our schools can't even mention Him...

So many of our leaders ignore Him...

But...

Nero couldn't crush Him...

Hitler couldn't silence Him...

Stalin couldn't purge Him...

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

Who is Jesus... To you?

Jesus will never leave you...

Jesus will never forsake you...

Jesus will never forget you...

Jesus will never mislead you...

Jesus will never overlook you...

When you fall, Jesus will lift you up...

When you fail, Jesus will forgive you...

When you are lost, Jesus is the way...

When you are in darkness, Jesus is the light...

When you are broken, Jesus will mend you...

When you face trials, Jesus will strengthen you...

When you face loss and grief, Jesus will console you...

When you face death, Jesus will take you home...

Just take time to turn to Jesus, to fix your eyes upon Jesus.

Why is it so hard then to keep our eyes on Jesus each day?

Young Moslem men in Afghanistan are throwing their lives away and killing others – dying for Allah...

Why is it so hard to us to live for Jesus?

Why is it so hard to tell Jesus that we love Him?

He loves us...

He showed the depth of his love for us by dying on that cross for us and for our sins...

And please don't tell me you are sinless!

V Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

In the Book of Revelation, Chapter 3 at verse 20 Jesus says:

Behold I stand at the door and knock

If anyone opens the door

I will come in with her or him,

And dine with them,

And they with me...

Jesus stands at the door of our hearts right now...

Can you hear Him knocking?

Open the door and invite Jesus into your heart right now...

Let us bow our heads and pray...

Jesus, come into my heart now, in this room, on this retreat.

I open the door of my heart.

Enter and come in.

Be with me.

(Pause)

At this point I would like to give several suggestions for opening our hearts to Jesus.

1.) In the Eucharist Liturgy of the Word we are fed with our Sacred Scriptures. Do we listen closely to God's Word in the Readings? Many times we hear the stories of the Old Testament and especially of the New Testament – the Gospel stories of Jesus.

Do we take time to listen closely and even reflect on these Gospel stories ahead of time? What do they teach us of Jesus?

After the Liturgy of the Word we enter into the Offertory – we and Jesus offer ourselves to our heavenly Father.

Then we remember Jesus' love for us poured out upon the Cross as Jesus confronts the darkness of sin and evil – our darkness and our world's darkness - with His forgiving love. In this we are saved, reconciled to God, redeemed from our slavery to sin and darkness... we realize that we are our loving Father's children.

At communion the Father feeds us, refreshes us, and nourishes us with his beloved Son – Jesus our Lord and Savior. Open your heart and welcome Jesus.

Now we can go out and continue Jesus' mission in our world.

2.) Through our personal prayer

Jesus wants to abide with us. In Paul's beautiful letter to the Christians at Ephesus in which he dwells on what our life as disciples of Jesus means, he prays for these disciples:

...May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith,

May you be rooted and grounded in love...

May you know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge

(Eph 3:17,19)

Lectio Divina is a form of personal prayer using the Scriptures.

The activity known as Lectio Divina simply invites us to read the scriptures slowly pausing at a word or a phrase, even an image evoked by the words.

These pauses become prayer, leading us to a deeper experience of the word within the words of the page. (See the handouts for a fuller description of this prayer form.)

Meditation is a form of personal prayer...

A meditative reading of the texts, especially the Gospels, invite us to place ourselves within the scenes and to listen for the words Christ wants to speak to our hearts. Listen to Jesus, see his actions...talk to him and let him talk to you.

3.) Another way of praying is what is called a **Guided Meditation...**

Let's meet Jesus now in a Guided Meditation

Conclusion

There are so many ways of keeping our eyes on Jesus. I have only described several:

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

Our participation in the Eucharist... this is at the heart of our Catholic lives.

Inviting Jesus into our hearts – a short prayer

Lectio Divina

Mediation on Gospel Scenes

Part of our walk with Jesus is to keep our eyes on Jesus. These are some forms of prayer which enable us to do this.

What is the goal of these many forms of prayer?

Let me quote Pope Francis again:

Being Christian is not just about obeying orders but means being in Christ, thinking like him, acting like him, loving like him; it means letting him take possession of our life and change it, transform it and free it from the darkness of evil and sin... Let us show the joy of being children of God, the freedom that living in Christ gives us which is true freedom, the freedom that saves us from the slavery of evil, of sin and of death.

Amen.

Resources for Sat Afternoon Conference: Walking with Jesus

Lectio Divina... A Way of Praying

(Cf **A Retreat with the Psalms**, Enders and Liebert, Paulist Press, 2001, pp 21ff)

A monastic form of meditative prayer

Having a conversation with a text

No set amt of time... just what feeds the soul / 10 min at the beginning

Choose a text... could be the Bible, or something from spiritual reading

Four movements

1. Read (lectio) - read and reread... maybe even out loud (esp if the psalms)... till something feeds you and/or you desire to pause.
2. Meditation (meditatio) - repeat the word or phrase that fed you, turn it over in your mind...til you feel like stopping.... (This leads to memorizing the text or phrase, which then gives you words when you have no words of your own for prayer... and it gives you something to go back to during the day time and time again...the text becomes your own.)
3. Prayer (oratio) - the text sooner or later evokes a response to God...when the time comes you will feel like moving to petition, thanksgiving, praise, or repentance, or simply talking to God.
4. Contemplation (contemplatio) - the process can lead to simply resting in God's presence, allowing God to nourish, love, heal, challenge or teach you.

At any time during this process the mind can wander and we can become distracted... or we can simply "dry up"...simply return to the lectio if you want to continue the prayer.

Lectio Divino need not proceed according to the steps outlined... you can move from lectio to oratio to contemplatio, then back to oratio and meditatio...

You might want to take a few moments after your prayer to write down the major movements which you experienced....

Keeping a prayer journal can be helpful...

Be patient with this type of prayer, and perhaps talk it over with your spiritual director, or with a spiritually mature friend.... Don't be a loner!

Gospel Study

Go to Amazon.com and search for:

The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible:

Gospel According to Mark by Scott Hahn and Curtos Mitch

Gospel according to John by same authors

Gospel according to Luke by same authors

Gospel according to Mathew by same authors

Google *Liguori Pub*

On that page put **Bible Study Gospels** into search engine

Some helpful Scripture Stories and passages:

The story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15,

or the story about the Good Samaritan in Luke 10,

or the forgiven steward who will not forgive a fellow steward in Mt 18:21ff

Remember Jesus' compassion when he feeds the hungry 5000 (Jn 6),

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See The Passion Stories in all of the Gospels.

Passionist Prayer at the foot of the Cross

Loving Jesus,

For how many ages have you hung upon your Cross,

And still men pass you by and regard you not,

Except to pierce anew your Sacred Heart.

How often have I passed you by,

Heedless of your great sorrow, your many wounds,

Your infinite love.

How often have I stood before you,

Not to comfort and console you,

But to add to your sorrow, to deepen your wounds,

To scorn your love.

You have stretched forth your hands

To comfort and console me,

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

And I have taken those hands
 That might have struck me into hell,
And bent them back on the cross
And nailed them there, rigid and helpless.
Yet I have but succeeded in engraving my name
 On your palms forever.
You have loved me with an infinite love
And I have taken advantage of that love,
To sin the more against you.
Yet my ingratitude has but pierced your Sacred Heart
And forth upon me has flowed your Precious Blood.
Loving Jesus, let your blood be upon me
Not for curse, but for a blessing.
Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on me... Amen