

# You will be my witnesses.

(Acts 1:8)



## The Week of the Word Daily Meditation Booklet

***You Will Be My Witnesses.***  
**Daily Meditation Booklet for the *Week of the Word***  
**from Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

*“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

(Acts 1:8)

It is not that simple for us to be witnesses of Christ ourselves.

People have the impression it is harder to do this today. Yet, throughout the ages, it has been a challenge to be witnesses of the God whom Jesus has revealed to us as *Good News* for this world.

This year the *Week of the World* is calling on you to discover seven witnesses drawn from the *New Testament*. In an original **approach**<sup>1</sup> where you will have the feeling of conversing with Biblical witnesses, you are called on to imagine listening to their experiences by allowing yourself to be inspired and challenged in your way of bearing witness. Following each of these testimonies of faith, some lines of thought and prayer are suggested.

Note: The texts of the testimonies have been composed based on people as they are presented in the Gospel narratives. We are not seeking here to recollect the historical persons which may have inspired these narratives. This is also the case for the Evangelists, who are presented based on what each Gospel is relating about its author and community.

\* The presence of an asterisk indicates that a biblical reference is given at the end of the passage.

**FACEBOOK** – You can follow the Daily Meditation in French on the Facebook page of the *Diocese of Saint-Jean-Longueuil* or on the page for *The Week of the Word* and in this way enrich your personal meditation via sharing with others.

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1 The approach being offered was developed by **Francine Robert**, a biblical scholar.

**Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Jesus said to his disciples:

*“You are the salt of the earth;  
but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?  
It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.  
You are the light of the world.  
A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.  
No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket,  
but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all in the house.  
In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your  
good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”*

(Mt 5:13-16)



**May these biblical witnesses inspire your own way of witnessing and  
bring the taste and the light of the Gospels about you.**

**Have a good *Week of the Word* and a good meditation!**

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Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## John the Baptist, Witness of an Astonishing Messiah

**Matthew (11:2-6)** When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.”



*John, why did you end up in prison?*



Herod had it in for me because I criticized his marriage with his brother’s wife, Herodias. Note that it might be a pretext. I know I do upset a lot of people with my calls for conversion. Many consider me to have an unduly radical tone. However, what else could be expected when I am steadfast in my conviction the Kingdom of God is at hand?\*

*Do you know you are considered to be a prophet, a great witness of God?*

I see myself rather as a voice crying in the desert. Indeed, many came to hear me and even to be baptized in the River Jordan. However, will this be fruitful? I often have the impression people would prefer living a nice quiet life. It makes me so impatient having all these believers with weak convictions, indifferent to anything outside their little bubble! Can’t they see the judgement of God is coming? Coming back to God with all one’s heart is urgent!

*You sent your disciples to question Jesus of Nazareth. Yet you have recognized him as one sent from God, haven’t you?*

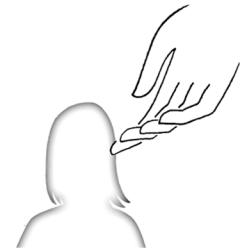
That’s right, before my disciples I have even borne witness to him; I called him the “Lamb of God”.\* However, later it no longer appeared to be so obvious. Perhaps I am in too much of a hurry. I expected him to put forth clear signs of the imminent coming of God, which would show the power of God is already at work. Then I hoped he would continue making an urgent call for conversion in view of the coming Judgement of God. So, when people relate to me that he is speaking more often of forgiveness and of God’s mercy, I was a bit confused. It looks like he is rather mild-mannered with people while as for myself, I am rather outspoken, perhaps too outspoken. Finally, he takes the time to eat and celebrate with anyone, even publicans and Pharisees. For sure, he and I don’t have the same style!

*Finally, what do you think now of all this?*

His reply had me mull over this. I knew he was healing people and yet there was the reply he sent me. Then I understood; he was healing people to proclaim the *Good News!* That was what came first in his mind; proclaim God as the *Good News* for the poor and the most disadvantaged and this meant that salvation and God's love are more important than any judging.

I understood at once Jesus' welcome and patience with sinners as well. He wanted to show them God loves them, too. With that, they may come back to Him with joy and gratitude rather than in fear of punishment. Jesus taught me the greatest power of God is His desire to have all of us enter into the covenant with Him. That is quite powerful. You will see people will find him shocking, but not for the same reasons as I do.

I can assure you if I leave this prison, I, too, am going to proclaim this facet of God. Meanwhile, I will repeat loud and clear what I previously stated in my testimony about Jesus; he is the one we are waiting for, even if he doesn't seem to be what was foreseen. He is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn 1:29) As for myself, John the Baptist, I am a witness to this.



### ***My Personal Meditation***

- ✚ In the Gospels, do certain aspects of Jesus, either his person, his mission or his words surprise me? ...disturb me? ...shock me?
- ✚ Does it sometimes happen that I wonder, like John the Baptist, whether Jesus has really been sent by God?
- ✚ How do I understand that people may have been shocked or even scandalized by him?



*Prayer*

*In what deserts are You crying out, Lord?  
Let's go out to prepare Your ways in our hearts!  
In what prisons are our doubts being planted, Lord?  
Awake in us a new Hope in You  
and let us find again our trust in ourselves.*

\*(Mt 3:1-12); (Jn 1:35-36)

**Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

## **The Emmaus Disciples and the Risen Lord**

**(Lk 24:13-24)** Now on that same day two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about [two hours] from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

**(Lk 24:25-35)** [Jesus] said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.





*Cleophas, we know the narrative about your encounter with the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus, but it intrigues me you didn't recognize him right away.*

Yes, people are always asking that question. I thought at first that perhaps he was different. You know, all the brothers and sisters that saw him had the same problem. However, after mulling it over with my wife, we saw this problem didn't originate with him, but with us. We were so crushed by his death that it was impossible for us to see him as alive, especially, as we were so disappointed it had ended so badly since he had been so powerful in his actions and words. It was this discouragement that made us blind. Based on our notions about him, he had failed, period. People had even refused to believe the testimony of the women coming back from the tomb, who said he was alive! For us, it was too difficult to believe. We took this to be the delusion of women.\* By the way, I admire you for believing in Jesus' Resurrection just on the word of the witnesses who saw him alive.

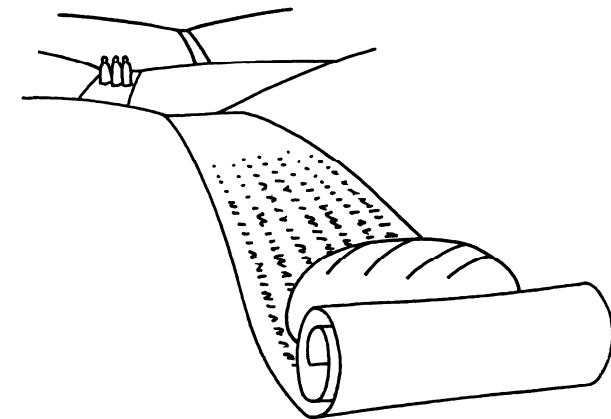
*What about the breaking of the bread?*

Yes, indeed! However, due to everything that had happened previously as well, he heard our disappointments; he spoke to us about the Scriptures... We wanted more of it. You know, we needed the desire to perceive his presence. So, when we saw him take the bread and bless it, we realized that it was he. Everything he had done for us, everything he had taught us, all at once had come back to us! So we felt, we knew he was with us, but in a way it was different from before. To have that presence, we don't need to see him; it is taking place within us and among us. It was like a fire shining in the night, within us in the night.

*It was dark outside and yet you left for Jerusalem.*



Oh, that's right! It was important for us to get together to share his presence. We were so happy! I assure you on the road back, Jesus was with us even more than on the way there. Finally, in Jerusalem the whole group was already enthusiastic, the Eleven Apostles and the others, not just the women this time. We were no longer the same. Then he came again and told us to be his witnesses.\*



Naturally, we had some qualms, some doubts. Honestly, I think it still happens to us. However, I no longer have any longing for what it was like before, for the time when he was with us in the flesh, you know. In any case, we hadn't really understood who he was. Speaking from experience, when we saw him in the flesh, we didn't really know who he was, and when we recognized who he was, we could no longer see him. Now, we are recognizing his presence and his profound truth in narratives, preaching, gatherings, Scripture, events in our lives, relationships that tell us something about him through what we are feeling and experiencing. That's what the presence of the Risen Lord means for us. You know it well, even though you have never seen him. Indeed, it is our testimony which opens up the way for you and now it is your own testimony that will let other people discover him.



### *My Personal Meditation*

✚ In my faith journey, have I already experienced times resembling the first part of the narrative,...

...feelings of failure related to my experience of faith?

...my images or my desires about God, Christ, the Church that have stopped me from seeing what is there; or grieving that I need to do about "what used to be"?

...a discovery, in retrospect, that Christ was with me without me knowing it?

✚ Have I experienced times resembling the second part of the narrative,...

...exploring the Bible that warmed my heart and led me further?

...experiencing sharing or communion that let me perceive God's presence?

...belonging to a group or community where the experience of faith could be expressed?



*Prayer*

*You are Lord, the Bread,  
which is looking for our hunger.  
Stay with us, as night is falling.  
Open our eyes to your presence.*

\*(Lk 24:10-11; 24:33-49)

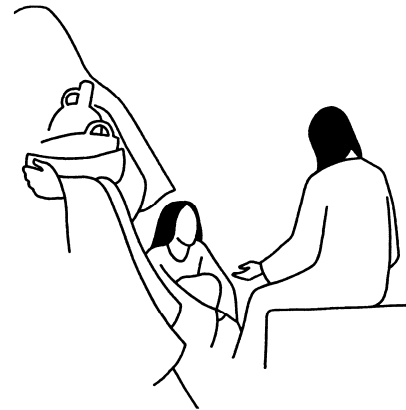


**Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**Martha, a Witness of the Lord of Life**

**(Jn 11:19-27)** [M]any [...] Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother[, Lazarus]. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

*Martha, since Jesus was the friend of your brother, Lazarus, were you somewhat acquainted with him?*

Yes, indeed, and be careful! He was also a friend of my sister, Mary and me. He was quite at ease with women. He thought highly of us and even accepted us as disciples. When my sister remained seated listening to him, he refused to send her back to her pots and pans to help me. I understood, you see; today, I am the one who is bearing witness for you, while Mary is preparing the meal.\*



Yet I am sure that we didn't really know him, we meaning neither my family, nor his other disciples.

God was dwelling in him; that's for sure. However, it was the kind of experience that he couldn't clearly explain. We were disconcerted sometimes when listening to him. After his resurrection, we began to reflect more over the mystery lying within him.

*Indeed, however, you saw his power at work, anyway!*

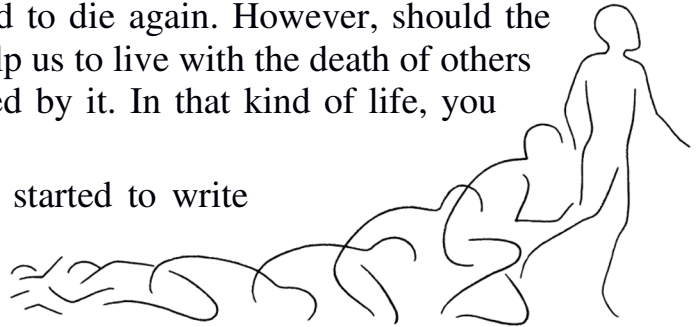
You are talking about the raising of my brother who had died? Everyone was fascinated by this story... Yet, it was the moment when I am began to intuit that the true power of Jesus was not in this direction. First, we were all sure that Jesus would heal Lazarus. He had healed so many others, but he had come too late; my brother had died. How can I express our sorrow as well as the shock of his unexpected death... Mary and I were all so disappointed that Jesus had not stopped him from dying. We were heartbroken as if our own lives were slowly veering towards death. When Jesus finally arrived, I recovered my trust in him and had a crazy hope; with God's help, he could bring my brother back to life!

*Yet didn't you believe that God would bring the righteous back to life with the coming of his Kingdom?*

Indeed, it was already part of my faith in God as a Jew. However, you know when you lose someone really close, you need quite a bit of time for faith to console us. People would rather that there be no death and that's what we expected from Jesus. How deluded could we be! As for Jesus, he never denied death, and he was headed already towards his own. Nothing living can escape it. The death of Lazarus really affected him; that's for sure. However, when I saw him crying with my sister, Mary, I realized that his real sorrow came from ours; he felt our life force diminishing in us.

Finally, then I began a bit to understand what he had just told me... When he was speaking about eternal life, it is not just life beyond death. It's now. To really console us would not be to bring Lazarus back from the dead, but to lead us to a communion with a life having God so that our life would have a savour of eternity. It is already sheltered in God forever. He said eternal life was to know God\* with His infinite love and His immense desire to fill us with His own life. It became a bit clearer after the resurrection of Jesus. God's life in him was stronger than death. I know death remains a troubling, tragic reality. Jesus himself was disturbed by it.\* Finally, I do know Lazarus had to die again. However, should the vitality of God dwell in us, it would help us to live with the death of others or our own, without us being destroyed by it. In that kind of life, you don't really die...

It is difficult to explain all that. John started to write about it. I suggest you read where he speaks about being reborn from on high.\* You will see it better.



### ***My Personal Meditation***

✚ Like Martha, our culture bears a certain denial of death; people die for want of being cured from some disease. How can this narrative help me to go past this trap? ...and help me to live with the troubling, sorrowful reality of death?

*Prayer*

*Where are we going, Lord? You have the words of eternal life.*

*You call us out of our inner sanctums;  
you wake us from the death that dwells in us.*

*May Your Life in us bring forth fruitful life for others.*

\*(Lk 10:38-42); (Jn 17:3;11:38;12:27;13:21 & 3:3-8)

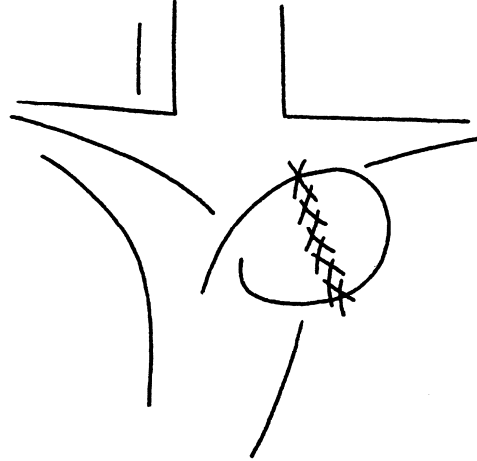
Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Mark the Evangelist, Witness of the Crucified Messiah

(1:1) [T]he good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

(8:29-33) Jesus [...] asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”



*Mark, you were the first to write a Gospel. How did the idea come to you?*

First of all, don't forget the word “Gospel” means “Good News” and it had already been some forty years that the first disciples of Jesus had been proclaiming the *Good News* of the Risen Jesus. My only real innovation was to gather together what I had heard and read into a single manuscript. As the earliest witnesses were getting old, it was our turn to become witnesses to pass on the traditions about Jesus.

*So were you just assembling the information you had about the life of Jesus?*

Not quite, proclaiming the *Good News* is still catechesis, rather than just conveying information. Everything is in the way you go about relating what happened to make the deep meaning of things understandable. At first glance, it resembles a “Life of Jesus”, but in reality, you can't speak about Jesus of Nazareth without bearing in mind everything his resurrection had us understand about him. What I tried to write is rather the *Good News* of Jesus, Christ and the Son of God! Hearing the catechesis of witnesses like Peter, I saw it was not enough to just relate the past. Even if the life of Jesus is a beautiful, essential story, you also need to let this story give meaning to our lives as Christians here and now!

*So you are telling me, you are writing about Jesus but aren't you trying to let us see the Son of God?*

That's right! You have to bear witness of the mystery of his person... in the final analysis what we can perceive of this mystery. Nobody is understanding it totally, but each Christian community is deepening its thinking about Jesus the Christ based on our own lives, our experiences, our setting, etc. For instance, regarding those of us in Rome, you know the Emperor Nero has been persecuting us recently. All of us have lost relatives and friends. I am sure that this hard ordeal has influenced our way of reflecting on the meaning of Jesus' life.

*Isn't that, I imagine, nourishing your hope in the resurrection with Christ?*

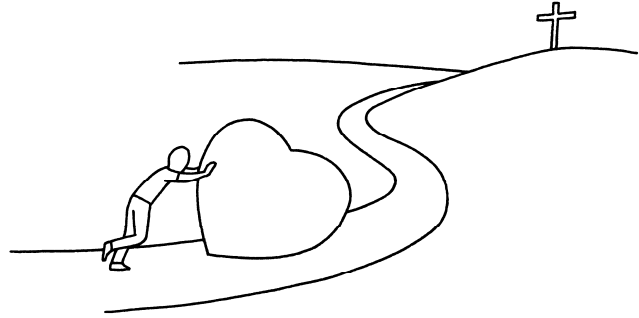
To be honest, it made me think about the scandal of his death. You see, several of us are hoping Christ would be coming quite soon with great power in order to free us finally. After all, he is the Son of God! We are feeling so powerless in this world of violence where our faith may get us killed. Several of us wanted something extraordinary to happen...

However, with some brothers and sisters, we meditated on the meaning of the death of Jesus. He, too, was powerless like us to counter this violence. Why? Remember that Peter related having the same reaction; "No, you will not let yourself be killed, if you are the Messiah!" We ended up understanding that God does not operate with us in a mode of power. He doesn't want to impose Himself by force. My wife reminded me that Love may not be imposed by force. She is well acquainted with the human soul and stated that we are sure of being loved only when we know the other is not going to take advantage of our frailty. So Jesus chose the only way possible; he is not going to impose himself by force. Revealing a God who loves us means also accepting the risk of being refused. It is for that reason that his death is an important sign for us, who have been rejected as he was. Up to the end he refused to play power games. So, when I was writing about him, I wanted to bring out clearly this choice Jesus made in order to give meaning to our difficulties and our hopes as well.

*However, there are so many narratives of healing in your Gospel, where the power of Jesus may be seen!*

Of course, however, this force is a force of salvation that did good for people, not a force that was dominating them. I wanted to show that the miracles God is capable of, manifested in Jesus, was not a means to impress crowds and get them to recognize him as the Messiah. I presented a Jesus who was really one of us, with the limitations of a man, not an all-powerful superman. In my book, I stressed this because I see Christians who imagine him too much to be some sort of God-man, for whom everything was obvious and who would undoubtedly triumph. They are mistaken; the God Jesus revealed to us does not act like that. He is fully committed with us, as we are, to the human drama.

*Yet don't you open your book by stating that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God?*  
Of course I did and I would still bear witness to this conviction! So, I am convinced as well that in his choice to act without power he is truly the Messiah and Son of God. Remember as soon as Peter called him the "Messiah", Jesus started to proclaim his death and only when he had died was someone able to designate him to be the Son of God, as it was in this choice, experienced right to the end that Jesus revealed to us the face of God. For it was in this choice, lived to the end, that Jesus reveals to us the face of God. This is what the curtain of the Temple being torn means. God leaves and He is perceptible in the destiny of Jesus.\* That is the strength of God!



Some people cry out for miraculous signs; others want wisdom, but as for us, we proclaim the crucified Messiah, a scandal and folly in everyone's eyes. There stands the power and wisdom of God, as what is a folly of God's is wiser than men and what is a weakness of God is stronger than men.\*

### ***My Personal Meditation***

- ✚ Do I see Jesus of Nazareth during his life rather like a man or like a God?
- ✚ In my way of seeing God, what desires do I have to see him act as all-powerful? How would you like Him to intervene?
- ✚ What place am I making for what God reveals of Himself by being fully committed in the Incarnation? How do I live with His choice to respect our liberty?

### *Prayer*

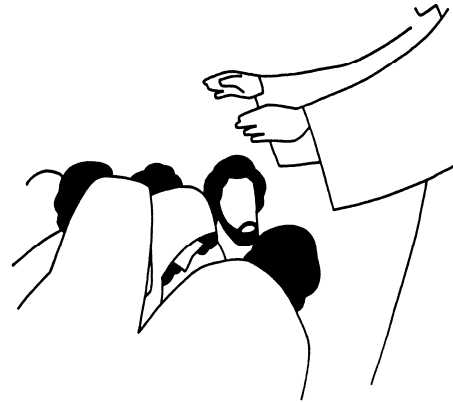
*Lord God, who are you then to love us in this way?  
A wounded God, so down and out, so great, so vulnerable?  
You have no other Word than this fragile, rejected Jesus,  
Teach us the wisdom of your wonderful folly!  
Finally, let us recognize you in all human suffering.*

\*(Mk 15:38-39); (1Cor 1:22-25)

**Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**Matthew, Witness of Emmanuel**

**(1:22-23)** All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel”, which means, “God is with us.”

**(28:16-20)** [T]he eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”



*Matthew, why are you writing a Gospel, when we already have Mark's?*

May the Eternal Father be blessed for having inspired Mark with this great idea! He wrote to help the Christians in Rome to deepen the mystery of the Lord Jesus. This allowed me to understand that I, too, have to nourish the thinking in my community, which has a different faith experience and different needs.

*People say your community especially gathers together Jews, who have become Christian, is that right?*



Yes, that's right and we were fortunate to have received from our Galilean brothers several manuscripts dealing with the teachings of Jesus that Mark doesn't appear acquainted with. For us, these teachings about Christian life are essential as in our Jewish tradition faith is always expressed through action. You can really see it in the Torah given to Moses. So, Jesus has become for us a new Moses; he guides us on the life journey that the Eternal Father is offering us. This is not really a law or a heavy yoke to bear. Rather it is a call to become better, to work to act more like the children of God that He created us to

be. Happy are we to be able to advance little by little on this journey towards perfection!\*



*Do you suffer from the same persecutions as the Christians in Rome?*

Not really, our difficulty is that we are being torn between our belonging to Judaism and our loyalty to the Lord Jesus. Their families have rejected some of us. Some have lost their work. We are being refused entry into synagogues because we are proclaiming Jesus is the Messiah, who is hoped for by the prophets. It is hard to be marginalized in this way because of our faith. To cope, we need a Gospel, which inspires us, which stimulates us to follow the Lord. So, I did what Mark did; I wrote a catechesis adapted to my community. All of us are sharing the same faith in Jesus but have different sensitivities and needs. We are speaking about the same past events but we have to state it in terms of our own present situation. That's also the way the old Scriptures were developed; I am quite familiar with that, being a scribe myself. Speaking about the Lord Jesus, just like speaking about God is never about the past alone. It's always in today's terms!

*Yet, aren't you speaking about the same Jesus?*

Yes, that is obvious. However, I will give you an example; I tend to stress the solemn, even mysterious side of Jesus. In my community, one of our most inspiring convictions is to see in him Emmanuel, *God is with us*, proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah. I think Emmanuel is the finest title that we can give him. Inevitably, this influences my way of presenting the Lord. I even dared to speak about people prostrating themselves before him. I do know that it was not seen so clearly when he was living in Galilee. However, through the person of Jesus, I would like readers to sense the presence of the living Risen Lord. He is the one who is really "*God is with us*", consistent with his promise, "And remember that I am with you always, to the end of the age."

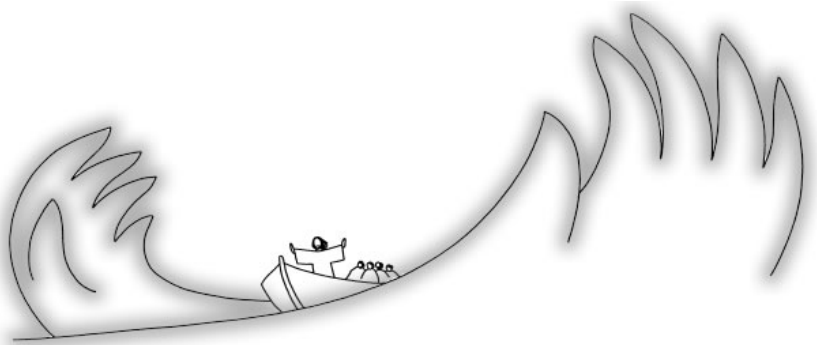
*With the presence of the Risen Lord, it is true that people feel confident.*

Yet, I confess to you that it is far from always being obvious. Our Church is like a sailboat on a stormy sea.

You can sometimes get the impression that the Lord has left us all alone. Finally, we call him as in the Psalm\*, "Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord?" Perhaps if our faith were greater,

we would not be afraid of anything, we would always know that He is there. Our sacred history shows that God never abandons His people; neither does the Lord Jesus. However, our faith is not perfect; it goes through times of doubt. We are fortunate that he knows how to be patient without judging us...

Finally, we must learn as well to perceive his presence among the littlest ones, instead of seeking extraordinary signs. He told us, "[F]or I was hungry and you gave me food. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave



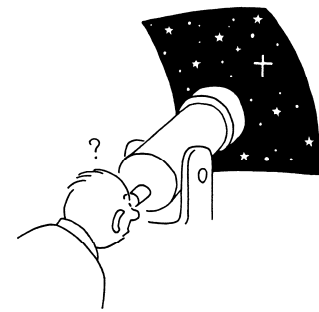
me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me.”\* There again, you can see that believing is an act within reach of everyone, like the prophets stated as well.

*You often speak about the prophets, Matthew. Are they still so important?*

Yes, indeed! Then, it is not just because they belong to our heritage as Jewish Christians. He helps us to see the meaning of the coming of Jesus, his Messiah role and all that. Above all, reading Scripture allows all of us to recognize in Jesus the traits of the already revealed Saviour God. That’s where we see how much God remains faithful to His covenant, concluded long ago with Abraham and then with his people in the desert.

*I see, but the majority of Christians today aren’t children of Abraham. They are Greeks, Romans, Syrians, etc.*

Of course, and we rejoice that everyone today can get acquainted with the one God through Jesus. I am sure this novelty, the Eternal Father has already foreseen and desired. I am still trying to figure out how I am going to incorporate into my manuscript a narrative to convey that this universality of salvation has been present from the beginning, some kind of sign of the call God is launching to the nations. I meditated on the old narrative of Balaam, one of the foreign magi, who was seeing a star... I hope the spirit of God will inspire me with the right way of bearing witness to that as well.\*



You see, this *Good News*, I would like it to go beyond mere words and spring from the parchment! The Risen Lord is “God with Humanity”, whether this be Greeks, Romans, Egyptians... This “we” traverses seas and centuries!

### *My Personal Meditation*

- ✚ Do I feel, on account of my faith, that I am excluded, marginalized?
- ✚ In what situations do I yearn to cry out to God “Rouse yourself”?
- ✚ Blessed are the peacemakers, those who thirst for righteousness, those who gave me clothing when I was naked, etc. How do these calls by Jesus echo within me to act in society on behalf of the faith?

*Prayer*

*Blessed are the people who seek you, Lord!*

*You call us to be the salt of the earth.*

*Do not let us lose our taste or become insignificant.*

*Emmanuel, open up my lips,*

*and my mouth will spread your praise!*

\* (Mt 5:1-9,48); (Mt 8:23-27) & (Ps 44:23); (Mt 25:31-40); (Mt 2:1-12); (Nm 24:15-17)

Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Luke the Evangelist, Witness to the Compassionate Saviour

(1:3-4) I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

(4:16-21) [H]e came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”



And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

*Luke, people are saying that you, too, have decided to write a Gospel as well, haven't you?*

Yes, I have, like Mark from Rome and others. We are Christians from the Greek world and Paul taught me that the Gospel must be Jewish for the Jews and Greek for the Greeks. The *Good News* of Salvation is too important, its mystery too rich and too marvellous to be confined to a single scripture. There will always be further thought needed and further aspects requiring thrashing out and understanding.

In addition we have received several manuscripts about Jesus, which were unknown to Mark. They were so inspiring that I wanted to incorporate them, while ensuring the whole document was well organized. I am not speaking at all here about the chronological order of events. Another type of ordering interested me, one that was deeper. We Greeks are open and cosmopolitan in our thinking. We needed to show the whole history of humanity has been transformed by the coming of Jesus. Nothing will ever be the same again. So I see history as foreordained to be divided into three periods: The “Time before Jesus”, the “Time of Salvation in Jesus” and the “Time of the Church” as a witness to salvation.

The Scriptures of Israel, up to John the Baptist, relate the meaning of the time before Jesus, a faithful God’s revelations. The coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus marks the beginning of a new period. The Spirit impelled him to act, to proclaim to everyone God’s grace. With the taking up of the Risen Lord, the gift of the Spirit impelled the disciples in the time of the Church to proclaim salvation in turn.\* It is still the Spirit, this inner power that is so real and almost physical!

*In your community, what aspect of Jesus' person inspired you the most?*

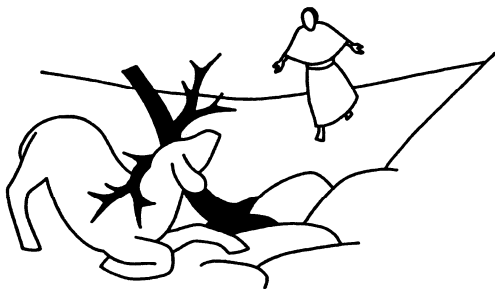
We are fascinated by his solidarity with us. Didn't the Lord come close to the unfortunate every day? The sick? The women? The poor? He showed himself full of tenderness to all, always ready to welcome, forgive and gladden, as the father in the parable celebrating the return of his son.\* This side of Jesus is so important for us; there are so many people without riches, power or social status. How we would have liked to have encountered him, this Jesus of Nazareth! However, what he was with the people of his time, the Risen Lord is with us now; he is the Saviour, who is revealing the Father's salvation and love and is offering us this today and which we welcome with joy!



I think, if we are able to welcome Jesus and welcome in him God's salvation, it is because Jesus and God through him, welcomes us first of all. That is what Jesus manifested when he had partaken in the table of sinners or when he was invited to Zacchaeus'.\* He didn't wait for people to convert to tell them of God's love. He thought the opposite; if someone is seeing that God loves him, perhaps he might be converted and open up to Him. That is indeed the strength and joy of the *Good News!*

*You speak a lot about joy, Luke. Yet, Jesus' life ended up in a drama.*

Yes, this image of a compassionate God upset quite a few people... Besides, it is still the case today. However, Jesus stayed faithful to his witnessing, as did the ancient prophets, and he paid a price for it. He kept his solidarity with us right up to his death. Then, while he was not able to save himself from death, he still



wanted to reveal the saving and forgiving God\*, who forgives even those who refuse him and kill him. That's what, you see, shows the tender mercy of God's compassion; he desired so much that we would live in communion with him! Think of the parables! God, the shepherd, is the One Who is relentlessly seeking His lost sheep until He finds it and Who is calling on us to join in His

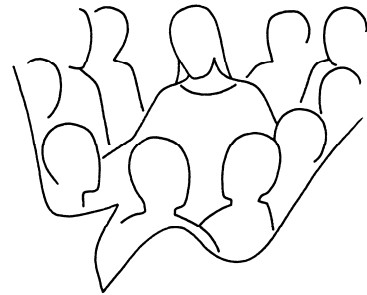
joy when the sinner finally comes back to Him, or who would rather work to help a sterile fig tree to bear fruit than to cut it down!.\* Who would have imagined a God who goes so far in Divine Love? It's His great strength! Finally, that strength is what converts us! Even a bandit crucified with Jesus is... and even common folk who were shaken and challenged by the way he died.

*However, this does not include the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests...*

You will be surprised to learn that several of them have become Christians.\* Jesus never excluded anyone. He went to the Pharisees who invited him. Their problem was that they didn't want any sinners around; some of them treated these sinners with scorn. Jesus himself didn't judge anyone. If God is merciful and cancels our debts to Him, who are we to judge? People have properly passed down Jesus' teachings to me; the one challenging me the most is, "Be tenderhearted as your Father is tenderhearted".\* You know, each little gesture of mutual aid that is done brings about a bit of salvation. Each time, it is a reflection of God that is saving. Every time, it is bearing witness.

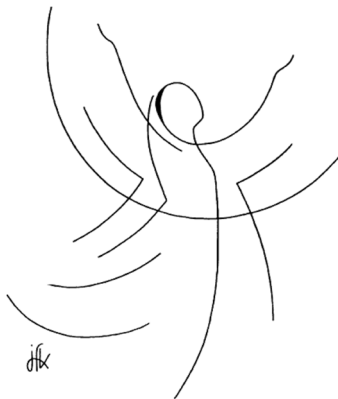
*When will you finish your Gospel? I am eager to read what you say!*

I have almost finished the first volume. Yes, indeed! I think I will write about the beginnings of the Church. After all, it is the community of the faithful which is for us the place of the Risen Lord. The Spirit impelled this community to bear witness to the Lord Jesus in the whole world and the Word is spreading! Isn't that also *Good News?*



### ***My Personal Meditation***

- ✚ Luke 1:78 speaks of "the tender mercy of our God". How does that expression echo within me?
- ✚ When God's compassion turns into forgiveness and mercy for sinners, it upsets quite a few of the righteous, like Zacchaeus' neighbours. What about me?
- ✚ The Gospel of Luke takes a positive view of humanity. Do I happen to see, like he does, in each small gesture of welcoming and mutual aid, the salvation of God at work?
- ✚ God's freely given love is a source of joy. Am I able to feel this joy as well?



*Prayer*  
*My soul glorifies and sings to you, Lord!*  
*My spirit rejoices in you, God, my Saviour!*  
*You look upon us with tenderness.*  
*Holy be your Name!*  
*The joy of your salvation re-enchants the world!*

\* (Acts 2); (Lk 15:21-32; 15:1-2; 19:1-10; 24:34-48; 15:1-10; 13:6-9); (Acts 6:7; 15:5); (Lk 6:36)



**Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**John the Evangelist, Witness to the Love of the Son,**  
**Light of the World**

**(Jn 1:1)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...]

**4** [I]n him was life, and the life was the light of all people. [...]

**12** [T]o all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, [...]

**14** And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**(Jn 20:30)** ...Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

**31** But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.



*John, you are someone who really knew Jesus well; will you write someday to recount his life?*

Indeed I have already started writing about Jesus. However, I quickly realized that it was not really useful to recount the events as I witnessed them. That is disappointing you, I know, since you figure people were truly understanding the significance of what Jesus was saying and the deep meaning of his deeds. However, I admit to you this was not the case. I recall Philip, who was seeing and hearing Jesus and yet, he dared to tell him our desire, “Lord show us the Father and we will be satisfied.” and Jesus answered him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father.’?”\* How can this be? It was because people were not really seeing him, you see. They were just seeing the man, Jesus. The essential aspect was beyond our reach.



It was after his glorification that people started to think in a new way, to better understand. The Spirit has led us to the mystery of his identity.\* The Spirit of truth is the one who helps us to see in a new way. Then in my writing, I will do as I did when I am bearing witness and catechizing my community; they are still asking me to explain the meaning of things,

to help them to delve into events rather than just recount what I saw when I was not understanding. I decided to write less about facts and to add words that gradually guide readers to their significance. The Risen Lord was the one who was the real catechist. He was the one speaking in truth about what he knew of the Father.



*However, will you be recounting the healing that Jesus did, which you witnessed?*



Yes, I will touch on some of it. However, I was especially a witness of what this meant. We are proclaiming what we saw and perceived of the Word of Life\*, which is much more than Jesus of Nazareth. His healing was a sign of something else. Just seeing the miracles is to miss the essential point, which remains invisible to our eyes. Aren't we all blind at birth regarding the realities of on high? I mean those realities from God. How can we be helped to see beyond Jesus' deeds? How can we be offered a glimpse of God's mysterious presence in him? As an example, instead of

recounting several instances of the healing of blind people, it was enough for me to recount just one instance to help us to understand that, from our inner spiritual blindness\*, Jesus wants to heal each one of us. The same is true for the healing of a paralysed person or the bread handed out to the crowds. We are always the ones whom Jesus picks up and feeds; for us, this happens; here, now, tomorrow is when all who discover in Jesus the Way, the Truth and Life! This is for those who welcome him and become God's children.

*So are you telling me that you are using the healing as a symbol?*

Yes, indeed, this is a sign that reveals more than a past instance of healing. The strength and richness of symbolic language is like the strength and richness of who Jesus was; a way of speaking which evokes something other than just words and facts. This reflects God's world. The water gushes forth from the spring of eternal life. The light illuminates our night. The good shepherd knows us; he gives us the wine of the new covenant. He has us be reborn from on high\*...and from still other images. It wasn't enough for people to see Jesus with their own eyes. We need to see him from within ourselves and to see more than Jesus, the mystery of the Son coming from the Father, the Divine Word, the Word of God made flesh. That's what I now have to proclaim, so that he may dwell in you and your joy would be perfect.

So if you begrudge me having seen and known Jesus, you are mistaken. Today is the day I see him and know him. To you and others, the Risen Lord did say, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."\*

*Your disciples are saying that Jesus loved you a lot...*

He loved all of us a lot. Yet, the glorified Son, who now lives in the Father, loves me infinitely more and you, too, and Martha and Mary as well as all those who have opened up their hearts to him so that he may take up his abode in them! You always wanted to know Jesus, but he wanted to make God known to us. So, knowing God is to welcome God's love for us and respond to this love. We aren't the ones who loved God rather God is the One who first loved us.\* That, we saw, heard and felt through the way Jesus acted with us. That last night when he washed our feet\*, did you realize that? I wanted to refuse, and I am still quite shaken up by this. Having the Son of God undertake to do what a slave would do? That tells you how much God loves us! Being a disciple, first of all, is understanding that we are the beloved of God and the Son. Each and every one of us is a beloved disciple when we guard his words and attempt to observe them. So, the main commandment is that we should love one another, as he loved us.\* Whoever claims to love God but does not love his brother is a liar.\*

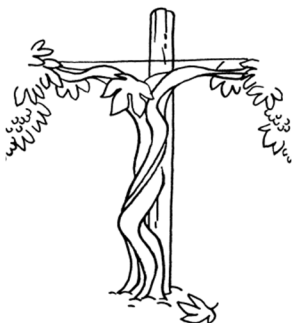


*Isn't that a bit radical? Too difficult to do?...*

Indeed, this is since the greatest love is to give one's life for those one loves as Jesus did for us to give us Life. Surely, we have quite a way to go. However, there was no harshness in Jesus' gaze. He didn't come to judge the world, but to save it.\* So, when we are not up to it, with our hearts judging and condemning us, we need to remind one another that God is greater than our hearts. There is no place for fear in love. Do not worry, the peace of the Risen Lord is with you.\*

### ***My Personal Meditation***

- ✚ Am I able to believe that God works in our innermost core? Have I felt this already in myself or someone else?
- ✚ Have I been – or have I encountered – the paralysed person that Jesus has put back on his feet? ...the servant that Jesus healed? ...the blind person whose sight was restored?
- ✚ The people are saying to us, “where is your God?”. Do I happen to see with the eyes of my heart the presence of God or Jesus?



*Prayer*  
*Jesus, Light of the World,*  
*in somber times, light up our narration,*  
*You, having become the Tree of Life,*  
*tell us again the Love of the Father*  
*so that our joy may be perfect.*

\*(Jn 14:8-9; 12:16; 13:7,12; 14:26); (1Jn 1:1);(Jn 9; 3:1-9;20:29); (1Jn 4:10); (Jn 13:1-17; 13:34; 15:10-15); (1Jn 3:16-24; 4:16-21); (Jn 3:17; 12:47; 20:19-21)

