

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Open a bible at the center of your group and light a candle beside it.

LEADER: God, you reveal yourself in the depths of our being—

ALL: Drawing us to share in your life and your love.

LEADER: One God, three Persons, you are near us, a people formed in your image.

ALL: You are close to the world your love brings to life. Amen.



“**R**emember all music was once new music.” That’s the sign-off for a public radio music broadcast that features current compositions and performances. Sounds that wrap us in melody and memory today may have once jarred listeners.

The same theme applies to revelation. All revelation was once new revelation, that is, if we believe that God has entered history, called Abraham and Sarah, made a covenant with Moses, inspired Isaiah and the prophets, suffered with the Israelites in exile, and become one of us in Jesus Christ.

And, all revelation is dialogue. Our God speaks and invites people into covenant, friendship, and mission. In *Ecclesia Suam*, written during

the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI describes salvation history as dialogue between an irrepressibly creative and loving God and humans who hear and respond—Jacob, Moses, David, Mary, Peter, John, Mary Magdalene. God first loves us.

Scripture preserves the dialogues between God and humans, once new, now familiar. In Sunday’s gospel Jesus talks with his disciples, preparing to leave them. His words strain to express the communion in which he lives with his Father and the Spirit. “All that the Father has is mine.” “The Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

A word some theologians use to describe the mystery of the Trinity is *perichoresis*. *Peri* is the Greek word for *around* as in perimeter. *Chor* is the Greek root of the word *chore*, the circling we do daily to keep up our commitments. The word tries to express the indwelling, intertwining relationships of three in one love.

God is irrepressibly in relationship at the heart of all that is. Father, Son, and Spirit live three in one loving communion so abundantly creative we live in its spill.

● What word is God speaking to you? What word do you answer to the dialogue?

Sunday Readings: Proverbs 8.22-31, Romans 5.1-5, John 16.12-15

GOSPEL



The Spirit will guide us into the truth.

NARRATOR: Jesus spoke to his disciples after their Passover supper together and prepared them for his leaving them.

JESUS 1: I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.

When the Spirit of truth comes, this One will guide you along the way of all truth.

JESUS 2: The Spirit will not speak independently but will speak only what the Spirit hears

and will declare to you the things that are to come.

JESUS 3: The Spirit will glorify me because the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you.

JESUS 4: All that the Father has is mine. That is why I said: "It is from me that the Spirit will receive what the Spirit declares to you."

John 16.12-15

guiding them only as they face problems and conflicts in his absence. In Sunday's gospel Jesus promises his Spirit will live in us.

| Whose spirit has arisen in you to guide you at key points in your life?

Jesus' disciples face an experience similar to losing a parent or moving out of a close relationship with a mentor. When a parent dies or we leave a mentor, the relationship both changes and persists.

What we could not see or bear to hear as a son or daughter we find out for ourselves. What didn't yet make sense as an inexperienced professional we live into understanding as our experience accumulates and discloses truth a mentor knew.

As we struggle on our own, parents and mentors still speak in our memories. We may try handling a conflict as we experienced them doing it. This is an experience of their spirits guiding ours.

| How do you experience the Spirit guiding you in your present life?

| What do you imagine the transition was like from knowing Jesus face to face to knowing Jesus in Spirit?

The Spirit is no newcomer to salvation history. The Spirit is the wind of God rippling the waters of the deep at creation (Genesis 1.2). From that

We experience the Spirit in our daily lives.

Sunday's gospel invites us to reflect on the Holy Spirit, the Third Person and often neglected person of the Trinity, the three in one divine love at the heart of all that is. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, who will continue to teach us as Jesus has. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, from whom Jesus receives all he teaches.

The four verses of Sunday's gospel come from Jesus' four-chapter farewell address to his disciples just after their last supper together and just before his passion and death (John 14-17). In these chapters Jesus is readying his friends for a radical change in their relationship.

With his death Jesus' physical, face-to-face presence with them will cease. The questions

Jesus' friends ask are basic and profound: Where are you going? Can we go, too? Will you have a place for us? How do we find the way?

At the beginning of Sunday's gospel passage, Jesus recognizes he has much more to say than his friends can hear or bear. He cannot ready his friends fully for the future. They are going to have to live into the mystery of his death, resurrection, and return to God. He insists their friendship with him will last through the radical transformation ahead.

People who face blindness report that learning to use the white walking cane is difficult until eyesight is finally gone. As long as one can see, one continues to depend on the eyes. Perhaps similarly, Jesus' friends can discover his Spirit

first appearance, the Spirit has a reputation for creatively stirring things up.

Jesus' words remind us that the Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Spirit does not speak independently of the Son's message any more than Jesus speaks independently of his Father's word.

The same Spirit who is at work in Jesus will be at work in his followers after Jesus returns to the Father. Jesus' followers will experience and share the abiding, dynamic inter-relationship of Creator, Son, and Spirit.

Most Christians grasp an image of God as creator and God as incarnate Son more easily than an image of God as Spirit and guide. We see the creator in parents and grandparents, the one giving birth to all. We see in Jesus God become human, revealing as one of us what God is like.

The Spirit in whom we live, move, and have our beings may elude us, until perhaps we lose a parent, grandparent, or



friend and experience their spirit and voice arising within us. The Spirit is the love or relatedness between Creator, Son, and all that lives.

Jesus shows us God is triune, a community of loving interrelationships that is both one and many. In our human experience three is the beginning of a social threshold. Two people in I-Thou relationship make room for one more and one more to form families and communities. God's love is always opening out to hold more in communion.

God is not only the Creator of old or the Savior of 2,000 years ago but the Spirit of our daily breath and deepest present desires, conflicts, and challenges. The Spirit breathes in us today.

● **Breathe in deeply, pushing your diaphragm down with the air you inhale; then exhale. Do this five times together in your group. Then share your understanding of how the Holy Spirit is like breath.**



"I will gather them," says the Holy One.

In Sunday's first reading Lady Wisdom describes her beginning with God. Lady Wisdom personifies the creative providence of God at play in all creation. She expresses in Jewish tradition what Greek thought calls *logos*, the ideal and eternal blueprint in nature.

People in the centuries after Israel's exile in Babylon no longer picture God as the invincible Lord of Hosts and Warrior of earlier history, but as Lady Wisdom, who builds her house in creation and sets her table for all with its fruit.

The exiled Israelites who come home after more than 50 years in Babylon return to a city in rubble. Their great temple, monument in

DO SOMETHING

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● **Honor the work of the Spirit by learning more about another Christian community in your area. Go to a service, read their bulletin or website, attend a social event such as a rummage sale or ice cream social. Find out who they say Jesus is and how the Spirit moves them to action in Jesus' name.**

stone to God's power, lies in ruins. Those who return begin rebuilding the people as God's true sanctuary. Lady Wisdom roots the spirituality for the rebuilders of Israel in creation rather than in their earlier history.

Lady Wisdom shows us God in the image of a creative homemaker and skilled artisan at play in the world, embodying the potential for rebuilding the shattered, scattered community of Israel. In Proverbs 8, Lady Wisdom is not so different from the familiar valiant woman of Proverbs 31, who rises early, provides for her household, and trades in the marketplace.

The Christ hymn that begins John's gospel borrows Wisdom imagery to describe who Jesus is. John 1.1-18 substitutes Word for Wisdom to describe Jesus as pre-existent Son. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Sunday's first reading begins much the same way, describing Wisdom as with God from the beginning and delighting in the children of earth.

Wisdom is at play.

Lady Wisdom speaks:

God created me at the beginning as the first of God's acts long ago.

From of old I was poured forth, at the first, before the beginning of earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled into place, before the hills I was brought forth, while as yet the earth and the open fields were not made, nor the first bits of soil.

When God established the heavens, I was there. When God marked out the vault over the face of the deep, made firm the skies above, established the fountains of the deep, set for the sea its limit, so that the waters should not transgress God's command, then was I at God's side like a skilled artisan.

I was daily God's delight, playing before the Holy One always, rejoicing in the earth; and I found delight in the children of earth.

Proverbs 8.22-31

- What does Wisdom imagery add to your sense of who God is? Who Jesus is?
- How do you respond to feminine imagery for God?

PRAY

Pray together to conclude your reflection on the Sunday scriptures by naming God and asking God's help for your needs.

LEADER: Spirit Guide, help our children find the paths through their conflicts.

ALL: You delight in the children of earth.

LEADER: Wise Creator, help us treat our world as a household for all creatures.

ALL: You delight in the children of earth.

Continue this pattern.



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