

*Keep on Teaching*  
*2021*



*Resource Manual*

# TURNING THE CORNER OF FAITH AS JESUS SAYS...

“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE”  
(JN 6: 35-40)

“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE  
WORLD” (JN 8:12, 9:5)

“I AM THE GATE” (JN 10:1- 10)

“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”  
(JN 10:10-19)

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND  
THE LIFE” (JN 11:20-27)

“I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH  
AND THE LIFE” (JN 14:6-11)

“I AM THE TRUE VINE”  
(JN 15:1-8)

# DEDICATION

The 2021-2022 Keep On Teaching Catechetical Resource Booklet titled "Turning The Corner of Faith" is dedicated to the memory of...  
**Margaret Booker, Natalie Mercer and Laura Thomas,**  
who were among the first and original Black Catholic Catechists thirty years ago, and were immersed and engaged in study to pursue their ministry from an Africentric cultural perspective.

Additionally, we remember...  
**Sr. Mary Reginald Gerdes, O.S.P.,** who freely shared her research on Black Catholic History with us, and **Sr. Mary Dolorosa Young, O.S.P.,** and **Sr. Mary Sharon Young, O.S.P.,** who catechized many youth and adults in the Archdiocese of Baltimore and Beyond.

They have "Turned the Corner of Faith" and now sit with Jesus at the Heavenly Banquet Table hearing Our Lord say. . .  
*See I Am... The Bread of Life, The Light of the World, The Gate, The Good Shepherd, The Resurrection and The Life; The Way, the Truth and the Life...  
I Am The True Vine!*

May They Rest In Peace



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# WELCOME

**Sherita Thomas**

Interim Director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministries

**W**elcome to the annual “Keep on Teaching” catechetical ministry. I am delighted that you are able to join us. We will journey together turning the corner of faith as Jesus says... “I Am The Bread of Life”, “I Am The Light of The World”, “I Am The Gate”, “I Am The Good Shepherd”, “I Am The Resurrection and The Life”, “I Am The Way, The Truth and The Life”, and “I Am The True Vine”.

We are called to reflect on the role that we each play, by virtue of our Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. It is time to reflect on our mission as a community of faith.

We honor the rich history of the ministry. “Keep on Teaching” is a catechetical ministry established thirty-one years ago in the Archdiocese of Baltimore to engage catechists who serve in the African American Catholic community. Its emphasis is to inspire and encourage catechists to factor culture (both Black and Catholic) and its deep roots into their catechetical planning and implementation.

The theme of “Keep on Teaching” is derived from scripture, particularly from Paul’s powerful and provocative story found in Acts 20: 7-21... “On the first day of the week when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them because he was going to leave on the next day, and he kept on speaking (teaching and preaching) until midnight.” The story continues, filled with rich insights regarding faith formation including a bit of drama. All through the night, Paul maintains a marathon of catechetical and evangelical discourse.

I pray that you strengthen in your faith formation opportunities by the insight of our roots and Catholic identity.

# TURNING THE CORNER OF FAITH...

Therese Wilson Favors

One thing we know for sure is that travelling through the Pandemic our faith has been tested, explored and hopefully grew deeper. From the first day of recognizing such a world-wide epidemic, people of faith fell on their knees, held hands with loved ones and prayed like they never prayed before. While the world shut down, our mouths could not shut up, asking God for His grace, His mercy and His Divine intervention. Those long days and nights of prayer provoked personal periods of conversion, supplication and employed ole time religion as we all faced the reality that... God was writing this story and revealing to people to turn the corner of faith as the Lord, Jesus says...

“I Am The Bread of Life” (Jn 6:35-40)

“I Am The Light of The World” (Jn 8:12-16, 9:5)

“I Am The Gate” (Jn 10:1- 10)

“I Am The Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:10-19)

“I Am The Resurrection and The Life” (Jn 11:20-27)

“I Am The Way, The Truth and The Life” (Jn 14:6-11)

“I Am The True Vine” (Jn 15:1-8)

There were and may still be some times when going thru the storm was scary, confusing and heartbreaking as we lost loved Brothers and Sisters. Still, by turning the corner of faith with Jesus and holding on, our walk was strengthened because we heard, we saw and we believe Jesus when He says... **I Am** ... The Bread of Life, The Light of the World, The Gate, The Good Shepherd, The Resurrection, The Way, The Truth and the Life as well as The True Vine, **AMEN**.

This is proof positive that WE belong to God. In turning the corner of faith during the pandemic, believe Jesus and His word when He says... **I AM**. Believe that we belong to God because it is the very reason why Jesus says... **I AM**. Pope Francis says... “The most important thing you can do with your life is to be in relationship with Jesus.

For all the times God brought us through... For all the times, God pulled us through... For all the times God caught us, carried us and is keeping us, God’s mercy has visited us and our families. Pope Francis writes... *Mercy is the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us and that JESUS is the face of God’s mercy.*

Thus we, the Naimah Writers of the “Keep On Teaching Ministry” want to testify, catechize and evangelize about the awesome and unconditional love and mercy of God to His people. Because of the pulsating challenges before us, this is the very moment to remind ourselves and others that... *Faith rises every time when We recognize that God steps in with His mercy, pulls us through and sends us Jesus.* Through the Seven “I AM”

Statements, Jesus is personally telling us that our hearts can rest in HIM. This is our focus and message for “Keep On Teaching 2021”.

In exploring this focus and discussing its power for spiritual awakening, the Naimah writers follow an Africentric approach/ methodology of catechesis. The writers were trained in this methodology which highlights and particularly includes what is called...**LACESS\***. The LACESS\* acronym explains the intentional flow within our teaching and reflecting that strives towards a soul stirring experience of...

**L** - Liberating from sin, darkness and confusion

**A** - Affirming Blackness that God’s Black Creation is Good

**C** - Calling forth conversion and a “turn around” in faith

**E** - Encouraging evangelization- motivates the notion that... “help is on the way” and that help is JESUS

**S** - Sampling something from both the sacred and the secular world to deepen understanding

**S\***- Scripture Base as a direct source in developing a relationship with God and growing in faith

The **LACES** methodology was developed by Dr. Toinette Eugene. Naimah Ministers added the second **S\*** through the direction and reflection of Therese Wilson Favors.

# JESUS SAYS...

## “I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD A GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP...I KNOW MINE AND THEY KNOW ME.”

Therese Wilson Favors

### I. The Word Made Flesh In Scripture- John 10:10-19:

#### Scripture Base

*A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep\* that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.\* This command I have received from my Father.” (John 10:10-18)*

### II. The Basic Elements of The Story

In this scripture reading from John, Jesus has just cured a Blind Man on the Sabbath. There is a little bit of tension going on here since it is the sabbath and Jesus confidently acts with authority. While Jesus heals, He also teaches in the company of the Pharisees. At one point the Pharisees challenge Jesus as he says... *I came into the world for judgement, so that those who do not see might see, and those who see might become blind.* Some Pharisees said to Jesus... *Surely we are not also blind.* Then, Jesus begins to explain just who He is and what He does. Jesus says... *I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus' sheep know His voice and proudly claims them as His own. Notice that Jesus makes it a point to say that even though the other sheep do not belong to His fold ... He will lead them too and lay down His life freely for them too... This is why the Father loves Me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.*

### III. Reflection For Personal Conversion and Liberation-

#### Liberates, Evangelizes and Converts

Look at our Jesus... looking out for you and looking for you especially if you are lost. Jesus knows your name and wants you to know just who He is and what He can do for you. Our Jesus is drawing Himself to you because Jesus wants you to have abundant life. Jesus defines Himself as the Good Shepherd because Jesus knows that in this world we need someone who we can follow and who willingly lays down His life for you not once, not twice but every time it is needed. Our Jesus says to us... *Trust that I know what I am doing and be ready to follow My LEAD.*

Jesus knows that in this life oftentimes, the situation demands more than what we have. We need a Good Shepherd who lays down His life to saves Us, rescues Us, redeem Us and renews Us when We find ourselves in dark places and slippery corridors of life. Jesus knows that oftentimes, in this life... we are forced to take the test before we learned the lesson. Y'all know what I am talking about... Tests in Life! That is when the Good Shepherd- Jesus swoops you up and picks you up, carries you on His back and whispers in your ear saying... "Your heart can rest with Me because **I Am... The Good Shepherd, the Living God.**

Jesus says... **I AM** coming for You and **I AM** coming to pour some love and mercy on You. God goes to the extreme for Us because we live life in some extreme times and under some extreme conditions. Therefore, Jesus says... I got something for You. Not only **Am I** The Good Shepherd...**I Am** The Bread of Life (Jn 6:35), **I Am** The Light of The World (Jn 8:12, 9:5), **I Am** The Gate (Jn 10:7, 9), **I Am** The Resurrection and The Life (Jn 11:25), **I Am** The Way, The Truth and The Life (Jn 14:6); and **I Am** The True Vine (Jn 15:1,5). Believe Our Jesus when He says, **I AM!**

Jesus is defining Himself because God loves you. When God makes these Proclamations of LOVE...Jesus defines Himself and calls you to re-define yourself, inside of the definition of who Jesus is. In other words... God calls us to a new identity built on the relationship we have with Jesus. (Go on up Church to the DMV and update Your Driver's License with Your New Identity so that you can drive... drive to places and to people and proclaim the goodness of the Lord!) It would please God to re-direct your life, change your identity inside of Jesus definition of Who He is and What He intends to do for You.

Jesus loves you and would lay down His life for you over and over and over again. You may not get to know how very deep this love of God is for You. Or you may not get to know the extremes that God will go to prove His love for us until we get a clearer picture of who Jesus is and so Jesus' tells us exactly Who He Is in the Gospel of John through Seven "**I Am**" Statements.



Jesus is the Good Shepherd... not the hired man who flees the flock when the wolf comes... only looking out for Himself- having no concern for the sheep. Our Jesus goes a little further saying ... I will lay down My life for My sheep. I will go a little further... come and go a little further with Me. Come be decisive. Come and be consistent, know that "there is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven and earth given to the human race by which we are saved but through the name of JESUS.

Our Lord knows how easy it can be to be lost, lost, lost and because Jesus is the Good Shepherd you can be found, found, found (Rev. Jabari Blackwell). Jesus says... *I got something for you...* when you think that all is lost and out of control Jesus will Catch you, Jesus will Carry you and Jesus will Keep you in His Perfect Peace. You see Jesus laid down His life for us on the cross but He picked it back up again so that you can rise with him, granting resurrection power, perpetual life, eternal life with Him and our ancestors in heaven.

Jesus' act of laying it down to pick it up again is not just a one time event... instead, every time we have close calls in life, every time we have hard times and deep down country blues in life... Jesus will lay down his life for you and pick it up again because there is always Resurrection. That is the second theme of this "Good Shepherd Story".

**Here's the deal; the spiritual wisdom packed** with spiritual power as we journey through life... 1. The space of emptiness and loss can grow wider if you don't know Who You are and Who's You Are, 2. The space of confusion in your life can grow wider... if You don't know Who You are and Who's You are, 3. The space of loneliness and fear of not being love can grow wider... if You don't know Who You are and Who Loves You!.

Jesus says... *I AM the Good Shepherd, I know Mine and they know Me. For, The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters He leads me* (Psalm 23). Brothers and Sisters, the Good Shepherd wants us to know that being with Him is the safest, the most restful and happiest place in the world.

Jesus is defining Himself because God loves you. When God makes these Proclamations of LOVE... Jesus defines Himself and God calls YOU to re-define Yourself, inside of the definition of who Jesus is. In other words... God calls us to a new identity built on the relationship we have with Jesu.

And when you do, know this for sure... There is no force more powerful in the universe as God's Love... *May the Force Be With You.* That is what those Seven "I Am" Statements are telling us and defining for us. That Powerful Force Called God's Love and Mercy is Active and Ever Present through good times and in bad times, in health and in wellness, for richer or poorer... That is some powerful LOVE. Jesus wants us to have the joy of being loved... deeply, richly and constantly. Think about it... Seven Proclamations of Love are placed before Us.

Perhaps God is speaking through Stevie Wonder in these words... *I don't want to bore You with it but I Love You, I Love You, I Love You. I don't want to bore you with it O' but I love you, I love you, I love you... (AND We Answer) There's supmtin' bout your love O Lord...That makes me weak and knocks me off my feet...Knocks me off my feet.*

Jesus calls us to follow Him as “The Good Shepherd” a Shepherd who can be trusted and a Shepherd who lays down His Life for us. Let us follow Jesus and let us praise Him with Our lives for there is no powerful force in the universe than God’s Love and Mercy. *May The Force Be With You!*



#### **IV. Proverbs, Stories, Sayings, From African American Culture:**

##### **Affirms Blackness and Connects The Sacred With The Secular**

- **Tell** the Story of Harriet Tubman who listened to Her God and decided to take on a new identity with God in the mission to... *Let My People Go*. In this Tubman affirms that God’s Black Creation is worthy to be SAVED by Jesus like all of humanity.
- **Songs...***He Keeps On Doing Great Things For Me, Jesus Is Love, He’s Got The Whole World In His Hands, Lead Me, Guide Me, Great Is Thou Faithfulness*
- **Proverbs...** God does not put one who trusts in Him to shame-*Somalia*. God’s cup is always open-*Swahili*. God is always speaking some-where, we must go to that place and listen-*African*. Keep God’s name always on your lips-*Hausa*. .Being double-minded may make you miss your blessing- *Burkina Faso*.
- **Others From Your Experience**

#### **V. Questions For Reflection:**

1. When have You experienced Jesus saying to You “I AM” in Your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner in faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship with Jesus and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?

# JESUS SAYS... “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE WHOEVER COMES TO ME WILL NEVER HUNGER, AND WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER THIRST.”

Darron C. Woodus

## **I. The Word Made Flesh In Scripture-John 6:35-40**

### **Scripture Base**

*Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen [me], you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.”*

## **II. The Basic Elements of The Story**

God is still revealing to us every day how to turn the corner of faith. Biblical history reports on the struggle of the Israelites in the desert and how reluctant they were to turn the corner of faith. It was not easy to believe that life will be better. Remember, after the Israelites had been in the desert, believing they would die of thirst, but God led them to water. Following this was the reminiscing about the meals they had as slaves believing Moses had led them to die. God assured them with bread in the mornings. More importantly, it was incomprehensible for the crowds of the Gospel to understand that Jesus is God's presence in our life. God will always provide for us. He provides the manna as His love for us. John's Gospel brings to life the desert stories, and the thousands of hungry were fed to satisfaction.

## **III. Reflection For Personal Conversion and Liberation-**

### **Liberates, Evangelizes and Converts**

Let us visit how God is revealing Himself through His Son in everyday life. Think about a restaurant experience. What were the best experiences? Perhaps, the one experience held was with the excellent bread or rolls. The experience starts just as one begins their table meal. What is the first thing offered and served in the restaurant? Are we content

with the bread and rolls we receive with butter, honey, or marmalade? Have we ever questioned why bread is served first? It may be to occupy our time before the meat or fish arrive, furthermore, this bread is free. Maybe, it is a reminder of God's love for us. Let us speculate no more.

*"Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."* As God works to lead us to Jesus and provide everlasting life, Jesus teaches us that God is providing life-giving bread from heaven, Himself. Jesus, the Bread of Life, redeems us by inviting us to resurrection and eternal life.

**I am** the Bread of Life is the first of the seven "I am..." proclamations mentioned in the Gospel of John. In this proclamation Jesus reveals His character and His saving work. This teaching is God's wisdom and law that we feed on to compare to the food and drink of daily life. We learn from God's wisdom so that it transforms our life while we feed in God's gift to us. The gift of Jesus is God's wisdom who became flesh; therefore, believing in Jesus leads to a life void of hunger or thirst. When we go to Jesus, we know Him as the One who teaches us God's laws and fulfills God's promise of salvation. We turn the corner of faith when our hearts are transformed and moves us to faith in Jesus. Jesus will not reject us because God has given us to Jesus. Jesus does God's will, He loses not, and He raises us on the last day.

Jesus is the Bread of Life, flesh for the life of the world. For us, the Eucharist is wisdom; whatever Jesus was, is what the Eucharist becomes. This combination presents love to God where two flesh become one in marriage. When we receive the host at Mass, we become one with Jesus. Jesus is offering His love, His service. The Eucharist makes service present and invites us to serve others. Turning the corner of faith during a pandemic allows the Bread of Life, the Eucharist, the true and real presence of Jesus to move our spirit to love one another, which gives life to the world. With Jesus, life will be better.

#### **IV. Proverbs, Stories, Sayings, From African American Culture: Affirms Blackness and Connects The Sacred With The Secular**

- **Tell** the Story of Augustine Tolton whose life leads us to see a man that was faithful, educated, gentle, charitable, and full of zeal. His journey to become the first publicly know Black American Catholic priest in the United States is truly a story to celebrate. Let us be inherently drawn to this Black priest and his innate ability to offer compassion and attention to those in need.
- **Songs...** *Let Us Break Bread Together, Fill My Cup, Let It Overflow, Taste And See, I Am The Bread of Life*
- **Proverbs...** "In each of our lives Jesus comes as the Bread of Life - to be eaten, to be consumed by us. This is how He loves us. Then Jesus comes in our human life as the hungry one, the other, hoping to be fed with the Bread of our life,

our hearts by loving, and our hands by serving. In loving and serving, we prove that we have been created in the likeness of God, for God is Love and when we love we are like God. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. – Mother Teresa.

- **Others From Your Experience**

## V. Questions For Reflection

1. When have You experienced Jesus saying to You "I AM" in Your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner in faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship with Jesus and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?



# JESUS SAYS...“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF FAITH.”

Howard W. Roberts

## **I. The Word Made Flesh In Scripture - John 8:12-16; 9:5**

### **Scripture Base**

*Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” So the Pharisees said to him, “You testify on your own behalf, so your testimony cannot be verified. Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I do testify on my own behalf, my testimony can be verified, because I know where I came from and where I am going. But you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by appearances, but I do not judge anyone. And even if I should judge, my judgment is valid, because I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me, while I am in the world, I am the Light of the World.*

## **II. The Basic Elements of The Story**

Here again, when Jesus stands among the Pharisees, those Pharisees recognize that this is not a relationship of equals. I heard Bishop Holley once say... “The Pharisees don’t like Jesus yet they are always hanging around Jesus.” Why is this so ... they recognize with Jesus ...that this is no equal relationship, and they work at trying to dupe Jesus, set a trap or just have a plain ole fist fight with Jesus. (and even in these moments of discontent and disillusionment ... Jesus came to save the Pharisees too). The Pharisees were filled with doubt of Jesus yet intrigued by Jesus. They should have known that doubt is always followed by confusion. Don’t be confused about who Jesus is and what Jesus can do for you.

In this scripture, Jesus is teaching and preaching, feeling no anxiety at all when He faces the Pharisees and says ... “I Am The Light of The World”. The Pharisees are alarmed because they know when Jesus says... “I Am The Light of the World” He self-designates Himself par with Yahweh! The Pharisees can’t come to grips with this message and that Jesus replaces the torches of illumination of the Temple as the Light

of Joy. Those Pharisees are messed up, tore up from the floor up. Better yet ... Jesus verifies what He says, and who He claims to be. *I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me ... while I am in the world, I am the Light of the World.*

The Pharisees understood the power behind Jesus saying that... "I AM The Light of the World". They knew scripture, they remember God saying... "Let There Be Light" in the creation of the world. They remembered God saying... "it was good". They remembered God saying ... "Let Us Create mankind in Our image and likeness". And that Us was The Holy Trinity ... Father, Son and Holy Ghost". They remembered God leading and guiding Moses and the Israelites towards the Red Sea ... *The LORD preceded them, in the daytime by means of a column of cloud to show them the way, and at night by means of a column of fire to give them light. Thus, they could travel both day and night (Exodus 13:21).* Yes, those Pharisees got the memo and they were jealous that Jesus was the Light. They were blind and could not see the great Light of Jesus. That is why, Jesus says again in John 9: 5... "*While I am in the world...I AM The Light of the World*". In John 9... Jesus goes on to heal the Blind Man, bringing His light on the Man... once I was blind but now I see!

### **III. Reflection For Personal Conversion and Liberation- Liberates, Evangelizes and Converts**

Henry Berry Esquire, a politician in the Virginia house of delegates in 1834 said the following to his fellow enslavers; "*Sirs, we have so far as possible closed every avenue through which light "may enter the slave's mind ... if we can extinguish their capacity to see the light then they would be on the level of the beast of the field ... our work would be complete and we would be safe.*" Delegate Esquire, like so many historically and still regrettably to this day, failed to account for a Savior Who's Life gives Light and who never forgets His people. In another story related to the power of Jesus' light comes from Cape Coast, Ghana. It has been told that in the days of capturing our African Brothers and Sisters, the Slaveholder intentionally housed those enslaved in Caves beneath Castles that were void of any light... no windows anywhere. The purpose for this cruel gesture lies in the belief that Our African Brothers and Sisters held which states... "*As long as We have light, God is with Us*".

Our big Sister Harriet used the light and location of the North Star to guide many to freedom. Records say roughly 300 were freed under her direction ... I say people are still being freed in a host of ways because of Elder Tubman's example and that of the many who before and since have modeled her legacy of liberation and "Gotten into Good Trouble". She never forgot Her people ... that brightest of light within moved her to act on her beliefs. Soaking in the light of Christ, the Civil Rights Movement got direction, moral impulse and purpose. Our path forward is lit by that same Light of the World ... this Jesus' Light can and has guided us for generations ... we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and what He reveals. Why have light and sight if you don't have direction and a vision. Why have strength if you don't have a purpose to use your strength.

**“Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen I say to you, many prophets longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.” - Matthew 13:16-17**

Sometimes when Jesus speaks in scripture ... He speaks directly to the Pharisees. And then sometimes Jesus speaks particularly to the Disciples. Then again, sometimes Jesus speaks specifically to the Crowds. However, whenever Jesus speaks ... EVERYBODY ought to listen, including Us. Revelation is coming ... light is coming; a light that can save You.

Back in the day, before electricity, folks had to carry their light with them in their homes and outside as they navigated through the streets, the woods and through life. One candle in a dark room brings forth a lot of light. Light exposes things that darkness denies. People of faith are Children of the Light and as we journey, we must carry the light of Christ in our hearts and allow Jesus to help Us see our way.

Several stories in scripture of Jesus giving sight to the Blind is directly connected to Jesus as He says ... “I AM The Light of the World”. Jesus heals the blind as a sign for you and for me so that we come to know that within our relationship with Jesus, within our faith walk with Jesus ... people of faith will see more in life... of this life. This Jesus’ Light reflects the mighty acts of God. Y’all know them ... Grace, Goodness, Generosity ... Healing, Loving and Salvation itself.

Jesus knows that it is easy to become like the Pharisees ... blinded by narrow-mindedness, blinded by a lack of vision and blinded by selfishness. When this happens we must embrace Jesus as our Guide and as our light. Remember that when Lightning strikes it always happens when dark clouds accumulate. Lightning is a source of Light and it comes swiftly, piercing the atmosphere and in some cases bringing along destruction. If dark clouds are forming around you, seek out the power source of Jesus and hear him say to you ... “ I can help you navigate, I will come to you swiftly and clear up the dark clouds of confusion, I will destroy that which needs to be relinquished in your life ... I AM The Light of the World.” This is why at Baptism, we are given a candle ... Jesus Is The Light Of The World.

In challenging situations in life, remain faithful... The Light of Christ is coming, it will surround you, engulf you ... Hold On as in the book of Exodus 14:14 ... ***“ The Lord himself will fight for you; you only have to be still. ”*** Stillness is what the Pandemic is about. Every time Jesus says “I AM” accept the spiritual insight that a greater story is about to reveal itself. Without accepting Jesus As The Light of The World, you will find yourself groping in the dark, destined to take short shaky steps, lost and confused. Order My Steps O Lord, Lead Me, Guide Me and Follow the Light of Jesus.



**Proverbs, Stories, Sayings, From African American Culture:**  
**Affirms Blackness and Connects The Sacred With The Secular**

Imagine running one lap around a track full speed. At 16 it was tough, at 62 it is the definition of pain. I have yet to get it right ... back in the day I often started too fast, lately, too slow is an overstatement. There are countless times I've run out of gas and I still had my warm-ups on. The most challenging point in every race I've ran, running, walking, living, is when the finish line is in sight ... at that point, at that turning point, it doesn't matter how I started or how far it seems I have to go ... I know I must finish ... and finish strong.

As many of us turn our last corner ... lets do it together with renewed faith. Don't ignore the light of prophetic justice ... we must continue to walk, run for the greater good of Humanity. When Jesus says "I Am The Light of The World" He says that His Life can give Light to movements of justice such as Black Lives Matter, Voters Rights, Restoring Justice To Those Who Are Oppressed, Dismantling Racist Systems and so much more. But to address this ... our prayer, our ordered steps must reflect a heartfelt belief that the light that is Jesus will see us through to our finish. While we are in this world let us continue to be a light to the world ... don't just finish ... **finish strong!**

**VI. Questions For Reflection**

1. When have You experienced Jesus saying to You "I AM" in Your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner of faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship with Jesus and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?

**JESUS SAYS... “I AM THE GATE  
WHOEVER ENTERS THE GATE  
THROUGH ME WILL BE SAVED,  
AND WILL COME IN AND OUT  
AND FIND PASTURE.”**

Sr. Magdala Marie Gilbert, OSP



*Whimsical Gates, Heritage Museums and Gardens  
Sandwich, Massachusetts, USA*

**I. The Word Made Flesh In Scripture-John 10:1-9  
Scripture Base**

*Jesus said... “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold\* through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” Although Jesus used*

*this figure of speech, they did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came [before me] are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

## **II. The Basic Elements of The Story**

John 10:1-10 states... "I am telling you the truth; anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore, Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

### Jesus, our Gate

Jesus is the **Gate Keeper**, He is the Alpha, the Beginning, and the Omega, the End, and no one can get into heaven without Jesus saying yes. Jesus is the Keeper of our fate. Jesus is the only guardian of the gate of life or death. A gate is an opening to a fence or other opening. It is used to keep people or animals in or out. It might be called a barrier which prohibits anyone or anything from entering or leaving. A gate allows one to enter or exit. It may be able to be locked or left unlocked. Do not mess with Jesus. Jesus takes His job seriously. We too, must take our salvation seriously and carry out the commandments of God, the example of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

How do we do this? We do this by obeying the directions of Jesus. We follow the guidelines laid out for us, namely the commandments and precepts of the Church. Following Jesus will never lead us astray. When we feel lost, we go to Jesus, **The Gate**. Jesus will always open the door of knowledge for us.

Become a friend of Jesus; knock at the **Gate** daily. Be ready to go to the **Gate** and have heart to heart talks with this **Gate Keeper**, you will not be sorry. Jesus knows all about us, our wants, our needs, our frustrations, our joys and our sorrows but wants us to be the one who knocks. Never be afraid to disturb Jesus. He will always open the **Gate**.

### The - I AM's OF JESUS

I Am the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35-40), I Am the Light (Jn. 8:12, 9:5) I Am the Gate (Jn. 10:1-10), I Am the Vine (Jn. 15:1-8), I Am the Good Shephard (Jn.10:10-19), I Am the Resurrection (Jn. 11:20-27), I Am the Way, I Am the Truth, I Am the life(Jn. 14:6-11).

### **III. Personal Conversion and Liberation**

Jesus teaches us daily to come to Him for all our needs. No matter the situation we can always go to Jesus. As Black People we have always leaned on Jesus to help us out of any situation. Jesus has been with us from our time of slavery, to this racist society of the modern world. During slavery and even now, Jesus is the rock on which we stand. As Black people, all of the **I Am** can be claimed by us. Where would we be without this **Wide Open Gate** called Jesus the Christ? Who else would we go to, if not to the **Gate**? When times are rough and as they say, the going gets tough, to whom do we turn? We run to the source that can solve all our good and bad situations. Sometimes when we think Jesus is saying no, He really is saying yes but not yet. Jesus answers all of us when we need the aid. In the Black Community we know what people mean when they say not yet. Not yet mean, some good is coming but we must wait, the question will be answered.

Jesus will get us out of all sorts of difficulties but we must do our part before we climb through that **Gate**. Our intentions must be genuine and we have to have faith. Jesus does not put us through hoops just to see us jump. He wants to see some faith and some belief within us. We show Jesus all this through our actions. They say that actions speak louder than words. Words can sometimes be empty and meaningless. Jesus, our Gate loves us and will hear all our pleas. However, we must be willing to do our part in society to bring about change. When it is time to vote, go out and vote, be an **I Am** to somebody. When something of importance needs to be addressed in our Black Community and need Black presence "**Show up**". We too can be an "**I am**" with Jesus. Something like, I am not Jesus but I know Jesus so I can help. I will be of assistance to my brother or Sister in their time of need. That is what an **I AM the Gate** means from the point of view of Jesus.

Although we are not "**THE GATE**", we can be miniature gates, be blessings to our folks. We can be willing to stand in the gap when it is needed. We can be teachers, politicians, merchants anything we want to be to be there for our people in time of need. Prayers are always welcome. We can teach and preach by our actions in a cruel and hateful world bent on beating the Black man or woman down. We sometimes forget that we are all children of God and that God loves each of us individually and collectively. We will all be surprised when we meet our **Gate** in Heaven. Jesus is the **Gate** to all humankind.

We must pray for each other that all will live in peace with one another. We pray at all the times for all the needs of our society and try to assist each other as we walk this road of Life. We can be the human gate to all that is good for the neighbor.

#### **IV. Proverbs, Stories, Sayings from African American Culture:**

##### **Affirm Blackness and connect the Sacred to the Secular**

###### **Proverbs ...**

- Washing a dirty object with dirty water does not cleanse it of its dirt. **Liberia**
- When a drummer beats his drum, he believes that only people in his immediate presence enjoy the music, but others far away are enjoying it too.
- Use your tongue to count your teeth. **Nigeria**
- A fully grown up tree cannot be bent into a walking stick. **Kenya**
- As persons of color and religious at the same time, we wish to conciliate these two qualities... **Mother Mary Lange, OSP**

###### **Stories ...**

- Tell the Story of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. They refused to be disrespected and insisted people revere these holy habits, if nothing else.

##### **This Woman**

Mother Lange was no quitter  
She faced up to her dissenter, without a jitter  
Stood steadfast to her conviction, so proudly  
Unsafe for a black woman to disagree publicly.

Backed by her God and a good friend,  
She bucked the system to the very end.  
Started a school, which was risky at best.  
Was she trying to put God to the test?

Such a fine spiritual woman was she.  
Stood up for her right to be free,  
Free to be as other Church folk with equality  
As she fought to gain some stability.

Bowing down to no one on this earth,  
Undaunted, she prayed for all she was worth.  
She carried her Congregation with humility

Up to the heights of credibility and respectability.

Through good times and through bad times too,  
Her reliance on Providence never wavered a sou.  
Humbly relying solely on her God,  
To hold her hands, in spite of all odds.

**Songs...**

- We've Come This Far By Faith...Lead Me, Guide Me... Here I Am Lord

**Sayings from African American Culture ...**

- Black don't crack
- I was not born yesterday.
- One monkey don't stop no show
- Saying something is right does not make it right.
- Your stomach is no Bible.
- God helps those who help themselves.

**V. Questions for Reflection**

1. When have you experienced Jesus saying to you **"I AM"** in your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner of faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship to Jesus and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?

## JESUS SAYS...

**“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME, EVEN IF THEY DIE, WILL LIVE, AND EVERYONE WHO LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER DIE.”**

Sharon H. Winchester

### **I. The Word Made Flesh In Scripture- John 11:20-27**

#### **Scripture Base**

*When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [But] even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise.” Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.”*

### **II. The Basic Elements of The Story**

Before this conversation, we should know that this Martha is the same Martha that was complaining to Jesus that her sister Mary would not help her in the kitchen. Mary, the woman who poured the oil on Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair was sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to the Master. Lazarus is the brother of Martha and Mary. We gather from that story that Jesus was friends with the family. Before the encounter we have in this scripture, Jesus was out of town. Martha and Mary sent for Jesus because Lazarus was very sick. Jesus got the message, but he didn’t go right away. He continued his mission out of town and went to the home of the family a couple of days later. By the time Jesus reached them, Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. Before Jesus could reach their home, it was announced that Jesus was coming. Our scripture picks up there. Martha, not Mary runs out to meet Jesus. Our scripture is the conversation they had when she reached him. Her brother is dead, but Martha acknowledges that if Jesus had been there, she believes Lazarus would not have died and she believes that if Jesus asks God for anything God will give it to Him.

After this conversation, Jesus moves toward the mourners and Martha goes to get Mary. He is so moved that 'Jesus wept'. Jesus thanks God and calls Lazarus to life.



### **III. Reflection For Personal Conversion and Liberation- Liberates, Evangelizes and Converts**

The story is about the raising of Lazarus from the dead. For the entire story check out John Chapter 11:1-44.

It appears Jesus was very deliberate about showing up after Lazarus was dead. Isn't that when we most think about resurrection? When someone starts talking about resurrection, don't you start thinking about the cross, Easter, the passion and all of the events around Jesus' resurrection? Maybe not all the time but mostly. The reason we aren't focused here on the story of Lazarus is because his death is just a prop. Jesus wants to give God the glory. Raising Lazarus is a way to do that for sure. But this is not about Lazarus. It's about resurrection and belief. Martha has had a turning point somewhere along the way. She was the one in the kitchen trying to get Mary to leave Jesus and come help her. But if you listen to Martha now, she is a believer. She believes that there is a resurrection at the end of time. She believes that God will give Jesus whatever He asks. And, Martha believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God!! Martha believes...do we?.



When Jesus tells Martha her brother will rise, she didn't say not possible, she said on the last day. Jesus HAS to say to Martha what He HAS to say to us. I AM the Resurrection AND the Life! It was necessary for Martha and it is necessary for us to hear the this. Why, to get our heads out of the cross, Easter, passion of Jesus and death mode. Jesus is saying OH YEAH, when you die, on the last day I WILL raise you up. But He's saying to us, my dear babies, you don't need to wait until death to have a resurrection in your life. Can I get an AMEN, or 2, or 3!!! I AM the LIFE TOO! Martha had another turning point in her life when Jesus said that. As he goes on to say 'whoever Believes in me'. Our turning points happen all the time. I'm sure during the pandemic you have had some times where 'whoever believes in me' was something you had to seriously ponder. Is God doing this? If not, why is He letting it happen? If he did let it happen, why is He letting it last so long and take so many lives? Even when doubt crept in, you kept turning back to God. You believe. You trust.

This is why Jesus had to tell Martha and us that He is not just the resurrection at the end of life He is the resurrection in Life itself. Some didn't make it through the pandemic. We don't know how we survived on the natural level. On the spiritual level we know that Jesus is the life. He can raise us after a pandemic. He can raise us anytime if we believe. Jesus is the resurrection life from the heartache from the loss of a loved one. Jesus is the resurrection life after the loss of employment/business. Jesus is the resurrection life after divorce. Jesus is the resurrection life after war, famine, earthquake, fire and every natural disaster. Jesus is the resurrection life of our illnesses! Yes, all of them, every illness. And Jesus is the resurrection life of our doubt. Every day when we are resurrected from our sleep, there are Seven I AMs awaiting our belief. Everyday Jesus is resurrection life at our door just waiting to be let in. Can't you just see Him standing at every bad situation saying, 'Want to be Resurrected from this? Let Me in I can do it!'

People, Jesus is the Resurrection AND the Life. Please don't wait until the last days to use the get out of jail free card called Jesus. Call Him today, he'll answer right away!

#### **IV. Proverbs, Stories, Sayings, From African American Culture: Affirms Blackness and Connects The Sacred With The Secular Story:**

Tell a story about a caterpillar who is released from the cocoon. Parallel the beauty that shows up after the cocoon becomes the butterfly. Note that the life of the caterpillar changes within the cocoon like a sort of resurrection and new life. It may appear as in death but after the situation in our lives, Jesus is the resurrection and there is beauty there.

Tell a story you saw on the news where something happened and they said 'it's a miracle'. Relate that to Jesus' being the resurrection AND the life. Make it personal, tell a story of

a pandemic situation that you, or someone in your family is living to tell, or of how you are surviving through the loss of someone who didn't make it.

**Songs:**

I am the Bread of Life, Because He Lives; Resurrection Power, He Looked Beyond My Faults and Saw My Needs, Life is Good, Everyday

**Sayings:**

The remedy for dirt is soap and water. The remedy for death is living; To die is to stop living but to stop living is something entirely different than dying; In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway, there is no death; The downfall of a man is not the end of his life; Life is the beginning of death; Souls re-reconstructed with faith transform agony into peace.

**V. Questions For Reflection**

1. When have You experienced Jesus saying to You "I AM" in Your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner in faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship with Jesus, and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?

## JESUS SAYS...

**“I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME. IF YOU KNOW ME, THEN YOU WILL ALSO KNOW MY FATHER.”**

Joyce L.T. Logan and Mary L. Watties

### **I. The Word Made Flesh In Scripture- John 14:6-11**

#### **Scripture Base**

*Jesus said to Thomas, “I am the way and the truth\* and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves.*

### **II. The Basic Elements of The Story**

Jesus knows that He is fated to die soon. We are at the Last Supper. I think of him with a checklist in his head and I see him going through it. Wash the disciples feet - check. Acknowledge the betrayal of Judas - check. Warn Peter of his part in the story - check. Help the disciples understand what is going down - that’s the step He’s on now. This is a hard step because He knows that there are some who dream of Him as the conquering Messiah and He is, but not the way they think. His first words to them for this part “Let not your hearts be troubled.’ Then He tells them that He is leaving and that He is preparing a place, a mansion for His believers. He tells them that they know the way. He has taken care of all that they need. They are confused, but Thomas asks the questions they all want to know. He asks where is Jesus going and how do they get there? Good questions also for his 21<sup>st</sup>. century believers to know the answers too.

### **III. Reflection For Personal Conversion and Liberation- Liberates, Evangelizes and Converts**

The significance and importance of the statement...**I AM** takes us back to Old Testament days when Moses asked God His name. God answered, 'I am who I am.' I am Who I Am. Now, that is a name that says I know who I am, I will not change. I am the same, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Make no mistakes, I am strong in who I am. 'I am' is a powerful name. God's son also knew the power of I am. So pay attention to the words that come after I am, it will be deep.

#### **I AM the WAY**

Jesus knows that sometimes the world is scary and we don't know which way to turn. Jesus knows us so well. He knows how frightened and unsure we get. That's why God's words of "Fear Not" are repeated 365 times in the Bible. In other words, Our God, the Great Divine says, 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and in Jesus.'

Many times in the scriptures, Jesus tells everyone who will listen that He is the Way. He says over and over again throughout His entire ministry, that He is the Way. He said that the scriptures tell us that He is God (John 5:39-40), that if you know Jesus, you know the Father (John 14:7), that if God were your Father, you would love Jesus, for He came from God and is here. (John 8:42).

Early Christians were so impressed by the message of Jesus they called themselves "Followers of the Way". Today, we don't have to change our name, just our hearts, and walk in the path that God has set before us. So that we too are Followers of the Way. Do you want to know which way to turn? Turn to Jesus. Jesus is the Way.

#### **I AM the TRUTH**

In the Old Testament, all of the Jews knew that the Laws given to them by Moses and the words of the prophets was the truth, given to them by God. In Matt 5:17, Jesus says that He is the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets. In other words, He is the Truth

When Jesus shows up here comes Truth, here comes a way to live in hope and joy, here comes Life and life to the full. India Arie's words say what I want to say about Jesus... "Cause He is the truth. Said He is so so real. And I love the way that He makes me feel. And If I am a reflection of Him, than I must be fly... because His light it shines so bright."

Jesus is true God, true man, true prophet, true priest, true King. We are children of God. We are truly humans, truly prophets, truly priests, truly kings, and truly God's because the Holy Spirit lives in us and we are God's children. A prophet is a messenger sent by God or a person who speaks for God. We are prophets because as Christians we have a message that the world needs to hear. A priest is a mediator, or bridge between God and human beings. We are priests because like Jesus, we are children of God and

like a child we can come to our Father whenever we want. As a true priest we need to tell the world more about our heavenly Father.

A king is a person who has supreme authority over a territory. We are kings, but kings like Jesus, whose kingdom is not of this world. In this world, we have to follow His example and help out our followers and go out of our way to be good to people. We rule over ourselves and our neighbors. Our God is the creator and ruler of the universe. We are godly people because God is our Father and made us in His image and likeness. Do you want to follow that Truth? Follow Jesus. Jesus is the Truth.

### **I AM the LIFE**

One of the reasons that Jesus came to earth was that He wanted us to have a good life. He said in John 10:10, *I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

When we come to Jesus, He will give us that abundant life and the power to become new people, people who can call God our Father. Gal 4:6 says that *"we are his children and heirs through God"*.

When we participate in the Eucharist, John 6:56-58 says that *"when we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we remain in Jesus and He in us and we will have life and live forever"* because of Jesus.



Another reason Jesus came to earth was to give us His life. We are so important to Jesus, that He laid down His life so we would be saved from our sins. Life is precious, so we must be pretty special for somebody to love us so much, despite our sins and shortcomings that they would willingly die for us. But Jesus did. Do you want that good life? Follow Jesus. Jesus is the Life.

Do you want to know how to live Your life better? Do you want that abundant life filled with love? You know the way, don't you? You know the truth. OK, just in case you don't know, I'll tell You. When life is hard, turn to Jesus. God made you the way that you are so that the way you are is beautiful. We just don't know that we are beautiful and Jesus is our secret weapon. Is life beating you up? Are your bills due? Are you ill? Call on Jesus and ask for His help. I have learned that Jesus will help, but He also wants you to learn and grow, so getting to the answer might be hard. Once He gives you that help, show others the way, tell the truth, and live the truth that Jesus told you about how to save, how to walk away from fools, and how to keep your peace, keep your mind strong,

and how to shut up when necessary. Don't forget in the process to love one another and treat each other as if we were all children of God, because we are. Cherish life, each life is precious to God. All lives matter, Black, unborn, White, disabled, homeless, helpless, healthy.

Do like Jesus and stand up for truth. Even if people make fun of Your truth, or even go so far as to persecute you for standing up for what you know is right. Remember Jesus and do it anyway.

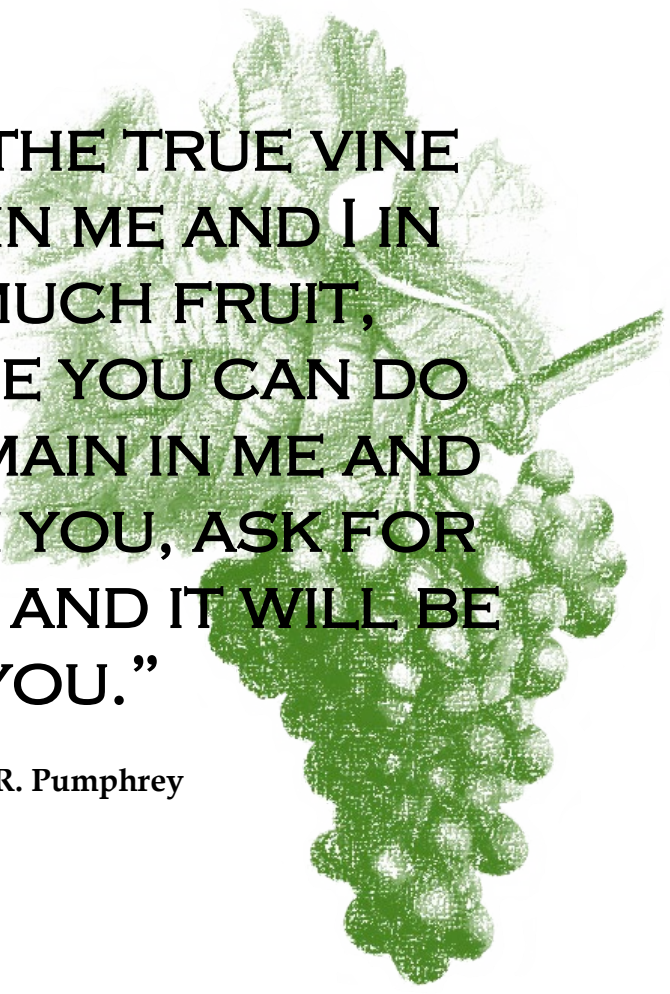
Oftentimes, we question if we can truly be good people, holy people and avoid sin, and dance with the devil. Sometimes, we can't thus we have to start all over all over again. BUT, the good news is that Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. Turn the corner of faith and follow Jesus.

#### **IV. Proverbs, Stories, Sayings, From African American Culture:** **Affirms Blackness and Connects The Sacred With The Secular**

- **Tell** the Story of Rosa Parks who listened to her God and decided to take a stand for the truth so all people could have a new identity with God. Rosa Parks affirms that God's Black Creation is worthy to be SAVED by Jesus like all of Humanity
- **Songs** - 1. A Mighty Fortress is our God. 2. You Know My Name. 3. The Way The Truth and the Life Song 4. The Way. 5. The Battle Hymn of the Republic. 6. Just Jesus
- **African Proverbs** - However far a stream flows, it doesn't forget its origin. (*Yoruba*). If you think you're too small to make a difference, try spending the night with a mosquito. Only in God is there true belief. (*Egypt*). Truth should be in love and love in truth. He who loves, loves you with your dirt. (*Ugandan*). If you are loved by the king, then love others. (*Sukuma*). If you follow the path of the elephant through the tall grass, you do not get soaked with dew (*Ga-Dangme, Ghana*).

#### **V. Questions For Reflection**

1. When have You experienced Jesus saying to You "I AM" in Your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner in faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship with Jesus and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?



**JESUS SAYS... “I AM THE TRUE VINE  
WHOEVER REMAINS IN ME AND I IN  
THEM WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT,  
BECAUSE WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO  
NOTHING...IF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND  
MY WORDS REMAIN IN YOU, ASK FOR  
WHATEVER YOU WANT AND IT WILL BE  
DONE FOR YOU.”**

Mary G. Clayton and Edith R. Pumphrey

**I. Word Made Flesh in Scripture- John 15:1-8**

**Scripture Base**

Jesus said...” I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes-so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire, and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want, and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

**II. The Basic Elements of The Story**

In the scripture reading from John15:1-8, we find Jesus giving an extended farewell talk to his disciples after he shared a last meal with them before being arrested. Jesus said “**I Am the Vine**”, God the Father is the vine grower the disciples are the branches. *Jesus is our sole source of life:* (John15:1) without him we can do nothing.

He talks about how the disciples must remain in him as he remains in them – that is the key to becoming who they were meant to be. (Matt 19:26) Jesus talks about a good vine

grower needs to cut off the unproductive branches and prune the good branches to make the produce more good fruit.

Jesus is not talking about the grape vine that you get different kinds of fruit from. He is telling his disciples about the spiritual fruit to remain joyful, gentle, good, meek, and faithful. He also tells them they will experience trials and tribulations, but if they do his work, his Father will take care of them.

### **III. Reflection for Personal Conversion and Liberation- Liberates, Evangelizes and Converts.**

Jesus is giving us so many opportunities to know him and trust and follow his commands. Compare your house plants...if you wouldn't water it and take care of them, they will have leaves that will die. Jesus is telling us that we need pruning and without him we can do nothing. Jesus is our sole source of life. Jesus has issued warnings to all who profess to become believers. Unfruitful branches are those who profess Christ but do not keep his commandments. They will be cut away. Fruitful branches are those who truly remain in Christ and will be pruned to bear more fruit for his kingdom. As scripture tell us, God prunes his vineyard where some are pruned by death (1Cor.11:36). While some branches are pruned to become more fruitful (Jn.15:50).

Pruning is painful but necessary. When was the last time you felt pruned? Was it due to the COVID out-break? Was it due to illness of family members? Was it due to death of a loved one, friend or neighbor?

Jesus knows that to remain in his love through all the ups and downs in life are challenging times. First, we need to stay as close to the vine as possible. Jesus taught us how to pray, to talk to him about our trials and tribulations.

God is like a Wi-Fi; he is available everywhere. But you must connect to him, with a correct password which is **prayer**. Gods' presence and Gods' grace is always with you. Stay **connected**.

During the last ten months, being connected to the Vine has been my saving grace. As a branch being pruned, it has been very painful but knowing and experiencing his power has helped me to be a help to others in the time of sorrow. It has been hard... tossing and turning through sleepless nights. But God's grace and mercy brought me through. Something deep down inside of me was telling me to go on... go on. I know that voice and now I hold on to it hearing Jesus saying repeatedly... "**I AM The Vine**". The Vine I know has remained in me and I in him. He is very close in times like these. My constant prayer is...Thy will be done.



Remaining in Jesus has transformative power because...

1. He wants us to be successful in all that we do.
2. He wants us to bear fruit as his disciples, spread the good news to others.
3. He wants us to put our hope and trust in him, without him we can do nothing.
4. He wants us to live and follow his word.
5. He wants us to be joyful
6. He wants us to know we have everything we need all we must do is remain in him.
7. He wants us to know if we let sin into our lives, we lose connection with him and other believers (John 15:4) (1John1:6-7)

I know the True Vine is present in our lives. The True Vine is Jesus who gave his life so that we might have the right to eternal life. I know the True Vine gave us a road map in how to behave and treat one another. I know the True Vine wants us to know we will have ups and downs in life but if we remain in him everything will be alright.

#### **IV. Proverbs, Stories, Sayings, From African American Culture: Affirms Blackness and Connects the Sacred with The Secular**

Tell the store of Jane Edna Hunter (1881-1971) who had abiding faith in God's love and care for his own. She states she had a real Christian faith taught to her. She was driven, accomplished, and persevering despite constant setbacks and struggles to benefit other African American women. More information can be found in "Hope for the Hunter".

**Song :** This is My Will, Go makes Disciples  
This is My Commandment  
For the fruits of the Creation  
Your Grace and Mercy Brought me Through

**Proverbs:** A Bee doesn't start it's hive with honey.  
It takes hard work to produce fruit.  
Between true friends even water drunk together is sweet.  
Even the smallest things are enjoyable when shared with a friend.  
Only a fool will test the depth of a river with both feet.  
The sun does not forget a village because it is small.

#### **Prayer**

Thank you for the healing power of friends and for the positive emotion's that friendship brings. Thanks for sending companions to us so we can support and encourage one another and share in joy and sorrow. Our family and friends represent your presence and friendship here on earth. We need each other, and we need you Lord,. Amen

## V. Questions For Reflection

1. When have You experienced Jesus saying to You **"I AM"** in Your life?
2. How has it helped You to turn the corner in faith?
3. How has it strengthened You in Your journey towards holiness?
4. How can You use Your relationship with Jesus and these reflections to bring Others to Christ and evangelize?



# TURNING TOWARDS SCRIPTURE AND WISDOM FROM AFRICAN PROVERBS:

Patricia A. Waddell and Muriel E. Rice

When the COVID 19 began its float throughout the world, people of faith knew where to go to get some **HOPE** (healing, opportunity for positive change/ optimistic outcome, peace and everlasting joy.) The answer is written in the BIBLE (Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth). Yes, the Bible is Our Blueprint for **Turning The Corner of Faith.**

Starting with creation in Mother Africa and passing through generations wisdom and thought provoking words have been passed down to inspire and direct us in life's journey. "Proverbs are the palm oil by which words are eaten." (*Nigeria*) Proverbs are words of inspiration, consolation, celebration and advice. Such adages help to share the genius within our African ancestry. These African proverbs can convey wisdom, truth and a discovery of ideas as well as life lessons. Proverbs are to illustrate ideas, reinforce arguments, and deliver messages of consolation, inspiration, celebration and advice. The most important function of proverbs is to teach and educate the audience.

Within your reading you will find scripture parallel with African proverbs to convey wisdom, truth, a discovery of ideas and life lessons as we continue through this COVID 19 period in our life's journey. Using your imagination with your eyes closed listen for South African drumming to the cadence of an ole freedom song." Come with me, the journey will be long but fruitful and full of strength for the journey.

Now travel back with me to childhood by recalling the song "Yes Jesus Loves Me"... for the Bible tells me so". Yes, because of His love, God has given us the blueprint through scripture coupled with African proverbs to carry us on life's journey. Together we can walk through any storms of life singing "Blessed Assurance" knowing "I still Have Joy" because He is the great "I AM". Because the Word of God lives within us, we share the victory in Jesus. **Alleluia!**

# SEPTEMBER

## **5<sup>th</sup>** Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time ....Mark 7:31-37

**Gospel Reading:** ...And people brought to Jesus a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged Jesus to lay hand on him.. **African Proverb-** God does not leave God's child tied up overnight (*Africa*) .

## **12<sup>th</sup>** Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time....Mark 8:27-35

**Gospel Reading:** "Along the way, Jesus asked his disciples, Who do you say that I am?" **African Proverb-** We can not love who we do not know. (*Guinea*). Tell the Oppressor, God is mightier than they. (*Hausa*) Tell the truth and shame the devil (*Traditional*) .

## **19<sup>th</sup>** Twenty- Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time...Mark 9:30-37

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus said, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent Me." **African Proverb:** God is always speaking somewhere, we must listen and go that place. (*Dogan*). We don't count our children, we just say, God has been good to us". (*Yoruba*). God gives you gift. Do not forget where He took you from (*Burundi*).

## **26<sup>th</sup>** Twenty- Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time....Mark 9: 38-43, 45,47-48..

**Gospel Reading: (v-39)** "There is one who performs a mighty deed in my name (Jesus) who can at the same time speak ill of me." **African Proverb-** There are two hard things to accomplish in life, one is knowing your purpose, the other is harder which is harder, is not to corrupt it after knowing what your purpose is ( *Nigeria*). If an opportunity is not taken when it comes, it passes away (*Ghana*).

# OCTOBER

## **3<sup>rd</sup>** Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time...Mark10:2-16

**Gospel Reading:** And people were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus notice this, he was angry and said to his disciples. "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.". **African Proverb-** It is not good to greet some people and pass by others as if they were dogs. You may miss your blessing. (*Sakuma*) Ring and finger do not separate (*Swahili*).

**10<sup>th</sup> Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.....Mark 10:17-30**

**Gospel Reading:** "Why do you call me (Jesus) good? No one is good but God alone." (Zaire). **African Proverb-** God cannot be deceived". (Zaire) . God loves him who cares for the poor more than him who respects the wealthy (Egypt).

**17<sup>th</sup> Twenty -Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time.....Mark 10:35-45**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus replied... "What do you wish me to do for you?" James and John answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." **African Proverb-** Unless you call out, who will open the door (Ethiopia) .

**24<sup>th</sup> Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time....Mark 10:46-52**

**Gospel Reading:** (v 49) So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." **African Proverb-** You don't give into despair before God for everything is possible with God (Burundi).

## NOVEMBER

**1<sup>st</sup> Thirty -First Sunday in Ordinary Time (All Saints) -Matthew 5:1-12a**

**Gospel Reading:** Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. **African Proverb-** Justice is like fire, even if you cover it with a veil, it still burns (Madagascar).

**7<sup>th</sup> Thirty- Second Sunday of Ordinary time...Mark 12:38-44**

Jesus replied... "You shall love the Lord with all your heart and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." **African Proverb-** He who does not do his duty is like a tree without fruit (Africa).

**14<sup>th</sup> Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time...Mark 13:24-32**

**Gospel Reading:** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my (Jesus) words will not pass away. **African Proverb-** Happiness is to follow the will of God (Egypt).

**21<sup>st</sup> Feast of Christ the King.... John 18:33b-37**

**Gospel Reading:** For this I (Jesus) was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth **listen** to my voice. **African Proverb-** Only in God is there true belief (Egypt).

**28<sup>th</sup> First Sunday of Advent.... Luke 21:25-28, 34-36**

**Gospel Reading:** Be vigilant at all times and pray that you may have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and stand before the Son of Man.

**African Proverb-** If heedless of warnings it is you who will suffer, not I (Angola).

# DECEMBER

## **5<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday of Advent....Luke 3:1-6**

**Gospel Reading:** Make ready the way of the Lord....and all mankind will see the salvation of God. **African Proverb**-Sending someone to do something for you gives rest to your feet, but not to your heart (*Dagbani*). God's cup is open. (*Swahili*). New things lie in front of moving feet (*Shona*).

## **12<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday of Advent....Luke 3:10-18**

**Gospel Reading:** John answered them all by saying: "I am baptizing you in water, but there is one to come who is mightier than I. I am not fit to loosen his strap. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire". **African Proverb**- He who trust in God does not lack anything (*Tanzania*). The tree may float for years in the river, but it will never become a crocodile (*Bambara*).

## **19<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday of Advent....Luke 1:39-45**

**Gospel Reading:** Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled. **African Proverb**-Travel with both eyes open and you will see God (*Swahili*). He who remains near the fire is the one who receives its warmth (*Swahili*).

## **25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day.... John 1:14**

**Gospel Reading:** And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw the glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. **African Proverb**- If you do not laugh on Christmas then you will be unhappy the rest of your life (*Ethiopia*).

## **26<sup>th</sup> Feast of The Holy Family....Luke 2:41-52**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus said to his parents...." Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" **African Proverb**- An antelope wouldn't be strong enough to carry the tusks and elephant bears, therefore yet small he must be an elephant (*Zaire*). A tree cannot stand without roots (*Mayombe*).

# JANUARY 2022

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Epiphany of the Lord....Matthew 2:1-12**

**Gospel Reading: (v2)** The astrologers from the east arrived, inquiring “Where is the new born king of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” (v 11) They (Magi) prostrated themselves and did him (Jesus) homage.

**African Proverb-** The tree that bears fruit is always treated with respect (*Zulu*).

Whoever is destined by God cannot be stopped (*Nigeria*). Everything visible has a connection to an invisible force, to which it is subject.

(*Amondou Hampate Ba*). Only the traveler will see the holy city (or holy one)- (*Swahili*).

## **9<sup>th</sup> Baptism of the Lord....Luke 3:15-16,21-22**

**Gospel Reading: (v15)** The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ.

**African Proverb-** The body is easily satisfied, but not the heart (*Angola*). He who trusts in God, does not lack anything (*Tanzania*).

## **16<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.... John 2:1-11**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus’ Mother said to the servers (at the wedding in Cana, Galilee).. “do whatever Jesus tells you.” **African Proverb-** You do not become chief by simply sitting on a big stool (*Ghana*). It is the influence of the fountain which causes the stream to flow (*Africa*). In harmony, everything succeeds (*Burundi*).

## **23<sup>rd</sup> Third Sunday in Ordinary Time.... Luke 4:14-18**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. **African Proverb-** *Love has to be shown by deed, love is not words* (*Swahili*).

## **30<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.... Luke 4:21-30**

**Gospel Reading-** Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on, as he said, “This passage of scripture has come true today, as you hear it being read.”

**African Proverb-** God knows how to find the oppressor (*Egypt*).

Happiness is to follow the will of God for following His law will open the gates of Paradise (*Swahili*).

# FEBRUARY

**6<sup>th</sup> Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time .... Luke 5: 1-11**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus told Peter, "Go out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch." **African Proverb**-Courage is the fruit of the decision of faith. When we band together (*Swahili*).

**13<sup>th</sup> Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.... Luke 6: 17, 20-26**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus raised his eyes to his disciples and said ..."Blest are you who hunger, you shall be filled." **African Proverb**-God will provide (*Yoruba*).

**20<sup>th</sup> Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time.... Luke 6:27-38**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus said..."To you who hear me, I say... Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you". **African Proverb**- Don't let your enemies get in the way of your blessing (*Hausa*).

**27<sup>th</sup> Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time .... Luke 6:39-45**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus told a parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they both fall into a pit? **African Proverb**-When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. You can't lead anyone further than you have gone yourself (*Traditional*).

# MARCH

**6<sup>th</sup> First Sunday of Lent ...Luke 4:1-13**

**Gospel Reading** The devil said to Jesus "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to turn into bread." **African Proverb:** Tell the oppressor that you know someone mightier than He. Light and darkness cannot stay together (*Traditional*).

**13<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday of Lent...Luke 9:28b-36**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus took Peter, John and James up onto a mountain to pray (Story of Transfiguration). **African Proverb**-Not through height does one see the great light of the moon. You have to look up (*Zaire*).

**20<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday of Lent.... John 4:5-42**

**Gospel Reading:** Meanwhile the disciples were urging Jesus, "Rabbi eat something." But he told them 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.'" **African Proverb**- An elephant does not die of one broken rib. Your body is a temple of knowledge (*Traditional*).



## **27<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday of Lent...John 9:1-41**

**Gospel Reading:** The man who recovered his sight told them “He (Jesus) put mud on my eyes. I washed it off and now I can see. **African Proverb**-The man who escorts you through the night wins your gratitude at daybreak (*Nigerian*).

# APRIL

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Fifth Sunday of Lent...John 8:1-11**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus straightened up and said to them “Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone at her. **African Proverb**-A lie has many variations, the truth none. Where many are gathered there is much to be said (*Nigerian*).

## **10<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday.... Luke 22:14-23, 56**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus said...“And yet the hand of my betrayer is with me at this table.” **African Proverb**-The betrayal of trust carries a heavy taboo. Realize that you are involved in a situation that is a lot greater than who you are (*Sobonfu Some*).

## **17<sup>th</sup> Easter Sunday...John 20:1-9**

**Gospel Reading:** Mary saw that the stone had been moved. She ran off to Simon Peter and the other disciple and told them “The Lord has been taken from the tomb.” **African Proverb**- Examine what is said, not who is speaking (*Nigerian*)!  
The eye never forgets what the heart has seen. God does not sleep (*Bette*).

## **24<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday of Easter....John20:19-31**

**Gospel Reading:** At the sight of the Lord the disciples rejoiced. “Peace be with you.” He (Jesus) said again. **African Proverb**- Peace is the father of friendship (*Yoruba*).

# MAY

## **1<sup>st</sup> Third Sunday of Easter... John 21:1-19**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus came over, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This marked the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after being raised from the dead. **African Proverb-** If a person goes to bed hungry or thirsty, His soul will wander about all through the night (*Swahili*).

## **8<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday of Easter .... John 10:27-30**

**Gospel Reading:** God says my sheep hear my voice and they follow me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. **African Proverb-** Tomorrow belongs to people who prepare for it today (*Nigerian*).

## **15<sup>th</sup> Fifth Sunday of Easter.... John 13:31-33a, 34-35**

**Gospel Reading:** This is how all will know that you are my disciples; your love for one another. **African Proverb-**Where there is love, there is good (*Ewe, Ghana*).  
When goodness takes a seat, good people live longer (*Nigerian*).

## **22<sup>nd</sup> Sixth Sunday of Easter.... John 14:23-29**

**Gospel Reading:** Anybody who loves me (Jesus) will be true to my word, and my Father will love him. **African Proverb-** Truth should be in love and love in truth.  
Where there is love, there is no darkness (*Traditional*).

## **29<sup>th</sup> Seventh Sunday of Easter....John 17:20-26**

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus prays "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given Me will be with Me where I am, so that they may see my glory. **African Proverb-**However long the night, the dawn will break (*Swahili*).

# TURNING THE CORNER OF FAITH BY REFLECTING ON THE KEEP ON TEACHING BIBLE READING AND PRAYER...

On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship meal. Paul spoke to the people and kept on speaking until midnight, since he was going to leave the next day. Many lamps were burning in the upstairs room where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window, and as Paul kept on talking, Eutychus got sleepier and sleepier, until he finally went sound asleep and fell from the third story to the ground. When they picked him up, he was dead. But Paul went down and threw himself on him and hugged him. "Don't worry", he said, "he is still alive!" Then Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, and ate. After talking with them for a long time, even until sunrise, Paul left. They took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted. (Acts 20:7-12)

## A Prayer For Catechists And Youth Ministers As You Teach

Lord God, we hear You saying to keep on teaching until the dead come back to life again. We thank You for calling us into this mighty ministry.

Walk with us Lord, so that we may know the path which You want us to take. Keep watch over our hearts, so that we may share Your word in spirit and in truth. Give us a well-trained tongue so that we may proclaim the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Stir our spirit and use us to lift up those who are trampled down upon. And finally, Lord, help us to remember that through Christ, You have given us what we want, given us what we need and have given us a new attitude to teach until the dead come back to life again. Amen.



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