



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + March 14, 2021 AD + **The Season of Lent***

The Spirit, the Bride, and the Last Devotion

Where man fails, God succeeds.

The first act of devotion recorded in Holy Scripture, the offerings of Cain and Abel, ended in the murder of Abel and the curse of Cain. Blood soaked the earth for the first time! Yet what about the last act of devotion recorded in Scripture?

We find it in Revelation 22:17:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Because a very different blood has now soaked the earth, the blood of Jesus Christ, a new devotion is possible. From the same family of mankind, cousins of Cain and Abel all, God has now formed for Himself a Church, the holy bride of Christ, filled with the Spirit of life. What is the devotion of this bride?

"Come."

That single prayer, addressed to Jesus, is the spirit and soul of all devotion. No longer do we offer sacrifices; rather, we seek to receive Him who sacrificed Himself for us.

About the Cover Art

A woman coming to draw water from a well encounters Jesus, who asks her for a drink. Yet by the time she runs to tell others about Him, He has given her the true "living waters" (John 4:1-15). Judith Fritchman captures this dynamic in her painting of the event. A divine hand pours spiritual waters into the woman's jar, the entire picture bathed in red, the color traditionally associated with the Holy Spirit (remember His fire?). Notice how the curve of the waters reflect the curve of her veil. She not only drinks this water, but she is bathed and washed in it, as well.

Lenten Devotion as Rehearsal for the Future

The Church typically relies on the season of Advent as a time for teaching about the coming of the Lord. His arrival at Bethlehem foreshadowed His arrival at the end of history, when He will make the whole universe His manger. But what about Lent? Lent also serves as a kind of rehearsal for the future. Its focus on repentance, endurance, and the Cross, leading to Easter Sunday, helps us prepare for our own death and resurrection. Some have said that Lent and Easter are “Baptism unpacked.” Just as we die with Christ in Baptism that we might rise with Him, so does Lent teach us to die with Christ daily in preparation for our final hour and the ultimate day of resurrection.

Taking up Lent’s devotion (fasting, prayer, and charity) is therefore about more than “discipline.” It’s about emptying ourselves (stomach, soul, pockets) that we may receive Christ, even as death will empty us of life only to receive His Life in return.

Daily Readings for the Week of March 21 (Lent 5)

S	Jeremiah 23:16-32 I Corinthians 9:19-27 Mark 8:31-9:1	Th	Jeremiah 26:1-24 Romans 11:1-12 John 10:19-42
M	Jeremiah 24:1-10 Romans 9:19-33 John 9:1-17	F	Jeremiah 29:1-14 Romans 11:13-24 John 11:1-27
T	Jeremiah 25:8-17 Romans 10:1-13 John 9:18-41	Sa	Jeremiah 31:27-34 Romans 11:25-36 John 11:28-44
W	Jeremiah 25:30-38 Romans 10:14-21 John 10:1-18		

These readings correspond to pages 910-942 in Volume I of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

The Spirit and the Bride in our Daily Prayer

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’” Contemplating this final act of devotion recorded in Scripture helps us understand our own devotion even better.

First, who are they? The Spirit is the Holy Spirit. The bride is the Church (John 3:28-30, Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 21:2, 19). The fact that they both offer the same prayer is significant. It teaches us, first and foremost, that the Church’s prayer is not its own. This is good news! The Church prays in the power of the Spirit, and not in its own power. The Church will indeed be heard!

Why “bride” The selection of “bride” for the Church can seem like a strange image, but it has a powerful implication. What makes a bride? A woman is a bride when she is about to be united with her husband in body, soul, and mind by a set of vows. In the same way, the Church is united with Jesus, as close as bride to groom. Our Lord vows Himself to the Church, and the Spirit leads the Church to vow herself to Christ.

What does it mean for our daily devotion? First, it teaches us where to seek guidance and help for our devotion: the Church. As the bride of Christ, the Church has a 2000-year history of listening to her Lord and speaking to Him in prayer. Who knows a husband as his wife knows him? By listening to the tradition and teachings of the Church, we may each find strength and insight for living in the faith.

Second, it teaches us to rest in the *promise* of devotion: it is the Spirit who really works and prays in and through you. “For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26). The Spirit ensures that the Lord hears us, giving us the boldness to pray, even when we do not know the words to speak.