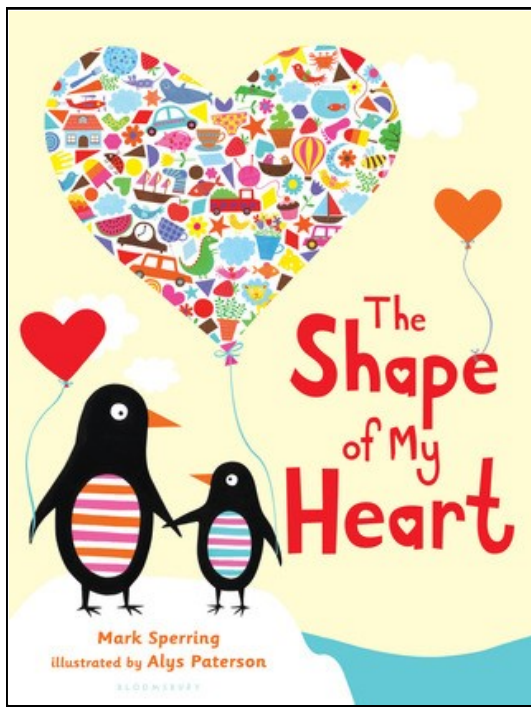


Living Grace

CYCLE B 4TH SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME

"WITH EYES OPENED BY GOD WE LIBERATE
LOVE & LIGHT IN ALL"



*In **The Shape of My Heart**, we find a different way of looking at the world all around us. From sun up to sun down, from our hands and our feet, to animals, cars, food, stars in the sky - and even the shape of our hearts - the world is alive with endless shapes. Once we start to look, who knows what shapes we'll discover next! We are invited to look beyond the obvious and explore the world in a whole new way.*

Sunday Gospel

MARK 1:21-28

Then they came to Capernaum,
and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue
and taught.
The people were astonished at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority and
not as the scribes.
In their synagogue was a man with an unclean
spirit;
he cried out, "What have you to do with us,
Jesus of Nazareth?
Have you come to destroy us?
I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"
Jesus rebuked him and said,
"Quiet! Come out of him!"
The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud
cry came out of him.
All were amazed and asked one another,
"What is this?
A new teaching with authority.
He commands even the unclean spirits and they
obey him."
His fame spread everywhere throughout the
whole region of Galilee.

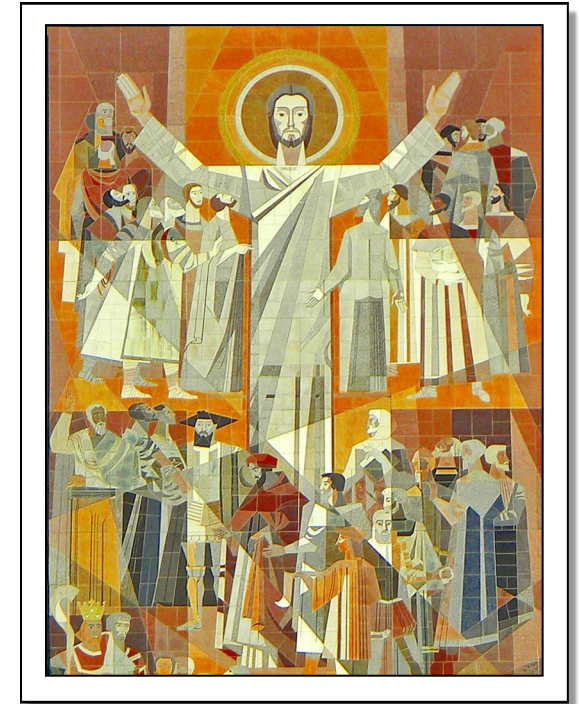
Read-aloud video link:

[THE SHAPE OF MY HEART](#)

Written by Mark Sperring & Illustrated by Alys Paterson

Art & Faith

EXPLORING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



WORD OF LIFE MURAL
Mural by Millard Sheet ~ 1964
University of Notre Dame Library ~ South Bend, Indiana, USA

EXPLORING THE ART:

Millard Sheets was commissioned to create a work large enough to cover the entire side of the library facing Notre Dame's football stadium. The artwork depicts a procession of figures representing Christian saints, thinkers, teachers, and writers, a topic that connected to the idea of the library. Figures were selected from different centuries and places to convey the concept of the Catholic Church's historical continuity. At the top of the procession the central figure is the resurrected Jesus Christ, conceived as the great teacher and master, and the fountain of knowledge contained in the library. The thought was that the various periods that are suggested in the theme have unfolded in the continuous process of one generation giving to the next.

The artwork, which is titled Word of Life, is 134 feet tall and 68 feet wide. The mural's image of Jesus, visible from Notre Dame's football stadium, has arms raised in the same fashion as a referee signifying a touchdown. From this similarity came the mural's nickname, Touchdown Jesus. Sheets wasn't offended by the nickname, he thought it was funny!

Learn more! [VIDEO](#)

TOUCHDOWN JESUS

THROUGH THE LENS OF GOD'S LIGHT AND LOVE WE WILL ILLUMNIATE THE DARKNESS.

In our children's story, *The Shape of My Heart*, we are led to open our eyes to truly "see" - to see the extraordinary in the ordinary! We have all had these "aha" experiences. It could be a day that is super crisp and clear and everything seems extra clean and beautiful. We are able to see the details....or the shapes of things, and everything seems extraordinary.

As Jesus taught in the synagogue in this Gospel, the same thing happened - all could see. The words he spoke were congruent with who he was. It all came together - a people, their history, their story, their future. And Jesus, he was it, and they all knew it. How does this happen, both in a beautiful day, and in a group sharing a revelatory insight all at the same time? All "see" because they see with the heart. With God alive prompting the heart, we become one heart. It is the heart that gives them their ability to see the world as amazing and beautiful. Everything has a unique and distinctive shape, filled with color, purpose, and definition. We can all be shapes filled with love. As our children's story closes, YOU and ME discover it is through the shape of the heart, that they see the beauty of all the other amazing shapes, colors, and unique expressions all around them.

The people in the synagogue are having the same kind of experience. All of the sudden they see, and they hear, and they feel, and it comes from their heart. And they are together because they ALL see!! In unison and in unity. In the contrast of this explosion of seeing all things new, the darkness is also revealed. The darkness stands out and resists the light - it screams out against being revealed. But this does not deter Jesus - this is his moment. Light conquers darkness and He, Jesus, is the Light of the World. Yes the demons cry out, evil does exist in the world, but God is here to win, to eradicate evil from our midst. The more we open our hearts to God's light and love, evil presents itself lurking in the corner. We only need to address it and address it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, we too, are called to deliver evil from our midst.

When we grow families and communities filled with light and love, the darkness in all areas of the world is diminished. This is Good News! And together, like YOU and ME in our children's story, once we "see" we can get a new world started! This was the call of the followers of Jesus then, and this is the call of the followers of Jesus now. Let's get this mission started! Open up hearts, let the light in, here and now!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Do you ever really take time to slow down and notice everything? Do things look different than before when you do that? What helps you to truly see?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: Why do you think all of a sudden the people in our story see everything in a new way? What are they awakened to?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Why do you think everyone saw Jesus in a different way that day? What do you think was different about Jesus from the scribes? What could Jesus see that they couldn't?

How do you think we are called to snuff out the darkness in our communities? Where can we get the power to eliminate the darkness as Jesus did? How do teachers, doctors and nurses work to diminish the darkness? What other professions work to diminish the darkness? Do you think you might be called to one of them? How does the awakened heart make the difference?

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: How does our seeing things more brightly eliminate the darkness in this world?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: SPIRITUAL SIGHT
LIGHT-BEARER

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Take a walk as a family, and take time to explore truly "seeing" with new eyes shapes, sounds, feelings, and insights together. Talk around the dinner table about times you have seen someone's gift or aptitude emerge in a new way. How is that seeing light? How might what you see be related to a persons call or vocational gifts? To gifts of service for their faith community? How can we encourage each other to spread our light and sight?

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: The beginning of Jesus' ministry begins in Capernaum. Capernaum is an exciting place to learn about. There are wonderful archeological digs of this area. Capernaum sits on the Sea of Galilee. It is a very pastoral setting with open fields and lake views. It is easy for large crowds to gather here as the open fields and beauty creates many natural amphitheaters. The archeological digs have uncovered this very synagogue that Jesus taught in here.

TERMS: *Synagogue* Where Jewish people gathered weekly to hear the word of God read from the scrolls. The Old Testament readings were handwritten on large scrolls as there were no books in the 1st Century. Each synagogue community had their own set of scrolls that would be brought out to be read and taught from to the community.

Scribes The scribes were entrusted with the care and copying of the manuscripts onto the scrolls. They carried out this purpose and were held accountable for the translation of the readings.

Man with an unclean spirit Middle Eastern cultures believed in spirits, good and bad. The Western world has allowed science, and particularly the medical sciences, explain instances of "human beings possessed by spirits" in a different way. Though the church to this day initiates Christians with a rite of exorcism given to all at baptism, today it would be understood that as sin takes root in a person's life, that evil can more easily reside and be of influence. Deliverance and an unbinding of one's sin to this day can be understood as bringing about a changed state within a person - a change in energy and even appearance. In the time of Jesus, people believed that spirits were more powerful than humans, but less powerful than God.

Holy One of God According to ancient practices one means of protection against the power of malicious spirits is to call out the name and identity of the spirit. The evil spirit tries to subject Jesus by calling out his name and identity. The bad spirit can see fully what the people are just beginning to see. Jesus demonstrates that He is of God and is filled with light revealing his ability to dispel the evil from the person. Darkness and Light are fully revealed, and through this encounter the people are now able to see more clearly the identity of Jesus.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: There were cultural norms that gave people their stature and source of identity in the life and time of Jesus. People were identified based on their cultural place of origin, i.e. Jesus of Nazareth. Another way of identifying people is by their family i.e. James and John, sons of Zebedee. A third way is by their occupation, i.e. Joseph the carpenter. In this parable Jesus' honor is established, and his Godly identity is established. Thus no longer is Jesus the Nazorean, the carpenter, the son of Joseph. The public now understands that he teaches with authority and has powers that unbind and heal. These actions free him from his worldly identity and for a work that is truly beyond this world.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: Authority is a major problem for people in the life and times of Jesus. The Jewish people had the role of the prophet integrated into their way of life. They saw Jesus as a prophet fairly easily, but the source of his authority was what was made their heads spin. He was able to do actions they have previously held only for God. Thus the actions of Jesus do not just point to God, but he acts as God - speaking with authority, healing, performing miracles, and expelling of demons.