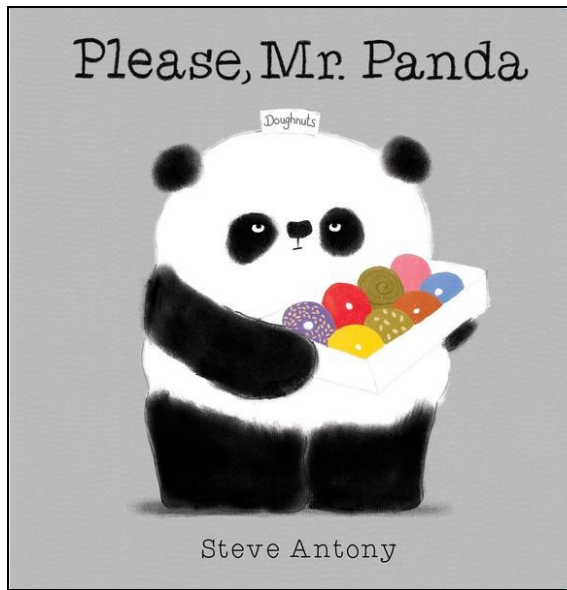


Living Grace

CYCLE B 2ND SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME

"PETER AND MR. LEMUR GET IT RIGHT!"



In Please, Mr. Panda, a panda bear has a tray of colorful doughnuts. Patiently and politely, he asks all the animals he comes across if they would like a doughnut. A penguin, a skunk, and a whale all say yes, they would like some doughnuts, but none of them remember to say "please" or "thank you," so the disappointed panda moves on. Would Mr. Panda find anyone with their heart in the right place to receive the gift of the delicious doughnuts?

Sunday Gospel

JOHN 1:35-42

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God."
The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?"
They said to him, "Rabbi" — which translated means Teacher —, "where are you staying?"
He said to them, "Come, and you will see."
So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day.
It was about four in the afternoon.
Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" — which is translated Christ —.
Then he brought him to Jesus.
Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" — which is translated Peter.

Read-aloud video link:
[PLEASE, MR. PANDA](#)
Written & Illustrated by Steve Antony

Art & Faith

EXPLORING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



*APOSTLES PETER AND ANDREW :
PETER HOLDING THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM
Stone Sculpture ~ 1210-1215
Façade of Chartres Cathedral ~ Chartres, France*

EXPLORING THE ART:

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

The Chartres Cathedral is considered "the high point of French Gothic art" and a "masterpiece". It is well-preserved for its age as the majority of the original stained glass windows survive intact and the architecture has seen only minor changes since the early 13th century. Its spiritual intensity is heightened by the fact that no direct light enters the building. All the light is filtered through stained glass, so that the whole experience of visiting the Chartres Cathedral seems out of this world. The exterior is embellished with three great façades, each adorned with hundreds of sculpted figures illustrating key theological themes and narratives.

The façade image above pictures St. Peter holding the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Peter is often depicted in paintings and other artwork as holding a key or a set of keys. In the Gospel of Matthew 16:19, Jesus says to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in heaven." The keys of heaven or keys of Saint Peter are a symbol of papal authority and are seen on papal coats of arms of the Holy See and Vatican City State. Today, Pope Francis holds the "keys" or the authority given by Jesus to Saint Peter. The keys or the authority was not and is not on Saint Peter, but in his office that is passed down through the process of Apostolic Succession and as each new pope is elected.

GIFTS OF GOD AROUND AROUND US, BUT THE READINESS OF OUR HEARTS TO RECEIVE IS WHAT COUNTS!

Peter and his friend Lemur get it right! What was it about them and their response to the unexpected gift that is being offered to them both? Both Jesus and Mr. Panda have a life of abundance to offer, but not everyone has a readiness to receive the gift. What are the qualities of Peter and Lemur that make them ready receivers? What is it about each of them that allows them to get it right? What is it about the other followers of Jesus, or the other animals that Mr. Panda meets along the road, that situates them in a state of being unable to receive? These stories give us a lot to ponder and reflect on as we just are coming out of the Christmas season.

What did Jesus see in Peter that he knew he had "it"? Many others were invited to follow Jesus, but to follow with one's full heart required something more. Jesus must have been able to perceive this in those he called. Those common fishermen would not only receive a life of adventure, friendship, miracles, and travel, but their "yes" would lead them through serious trials. Thus Jesus had to be very discerning, as to who had the qualities and the heart, to allow the Holy Spirit to empower and guide them. And what was it about Peter that Jesus changed his name and called him "Cephas" the rock? For later he says about Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church". After Jesus dies, Peter takes his place. He becomes the leader, the first Pope. It all has a lot to do with the state of one's receptivity and humility to receive - a very important thing to reflect on in this ongoing Christmas season the church leads us into. (On the liturgical calendar the Christmas season ends on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation.)

To bring it home, think about gift giving at your house this Christmas. How did it go? Were there some give gifts that no one really appreciated? Jesus offers the gift of eternal life. Do you think then and today there are many who do not really appreciate it? When Jesus called people to follow him they had no idea what was ahead. As Mr. Panda traveled from animal to animal offering abundant gifts of goodness in his wide array of donuts, they could have had as many as they wanted, but all the animals (but one) missed out. Why? Because they weren't ready to receive. Mr. Lemur got it right. He honored the giver, which put his heart in the right place to receive. All it took was a please!

As we move into the New Year, how might we grow in opening our hearts? How might we grow in love and respect of the giver? Maybe it's just with opening our hearts with appreciation of the great gifts around us. Then we are ready to receive!

YOUR STORY: Did you have a fun time giving and receiving gifts this Christmas? Did you get something that you always wanted?

Did you get something that maybe wasn't just what you wanted? How well did you receive your gifts? Did you always say please and thank you? Did you express gratitude? How open was your heart to receiving whatever you were given? Did you want to control what you got? Were you able to be open to new ideas others might have for you?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: What do you think made Mr. Lemur the one that got it right? How did he feel when he got it right? What was his reward? What did the other animals do wrong? What did they miss out on?

THE GOSPEL STORY: What do you think Jesus saw in Peter that was right? How did Peter, receiving this gift and call by Jesus, change his life? Peter goes on to be the first Pope. Might God have a call and gift for us that is so much more purposeful than our hearts or minds could imagine? What do we have to do to receive God's call and gifts for our lives?

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Talk about gift giving as a family. What makes a gracious gift giver and gift receiver? Based on the hearts of Peter and Mr. Lemur, what can happen when we allow ourselves to be open to receive the gifts and the love of each other? How does this help us understand the invitation of Jesus to follow him and how our hearts must be readied?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: READINESS
RECEPTIVITY

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Peter is symbolized as holding the keys to the kingdom of God. Raccoon got all the donuts he could ever want. What symbols might characterize God's call for you now in your life? Talk about it as a family. Make a chart for the New Year of each family member and their symbol/baptized call.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: This setting most like began in the area of the Jordan River soon after Jesus was baptized. In John's gospel, the title of Jesus as "The Lamb of God" is revealed through the baptism of Jesus. Therefore, John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, is the one who baptized Jesus. He the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, knows this revelation. Whether this story begins first in the Jordan or in Galilee, it gives authenticity to being a witness to the Baptism of Jesus and how the calling of Jesus apostles begins.

TERMS: *Lamb of God* The lamb is the animal that is used twice daily in the temple as the sin offering for the people. John is saying that Jesus is the one who will take away sin laying down his life to do so.

Rabbi Someone of respect; a Jewish person recognized as holding the wisdom of the community

Messiah God's promised savior as foretold in Old Testament writings. Andrew in a short time has come to the awareness that Jesus is the one who has the grace and presence to bring salvation to the people. It means the anointed one of God, one we have been waiting for.

Cephas/Peter means the rock, a name filled with the mission that Peter is called to.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: In Mediterranean culture everyone is named in relationship to who they belong to. Thus, Andrew is brother of Simon, and Simon is Son of John. Today in the Middle East men are called before their name, son of their father. Thus, when Jesus is called the son of God it establishes in a shocking way who he belongs to, God as his Father. It is God who is responsible for him and who he is responsible to. It is an association the Mediterranean ear is very use to, yet would be shocked by in the reference to God as Father. To 'Come and See' the place where Jesus is staying would likely mean come to share in the Sabbath meal with Jesus and his companions. Through the meal insight into identity would be established. This needs to happen first before relationship can be proclaimed.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: This text is rich in names and titles. Jesus is given the title "Lamb of God" at his baptism. Lamb of God is not a name like John or Jesus, but a metaphor. Lambs are central to the Jewish person as the primary animal to be sacrificed to atone for sins in the temple. Therefore, to the Jewish imagination this title/metaphor is flooded with questions, possibilities, and problems to resolve. The disciples then in turn called Jesus "Rabbi", which means teacher. Which indicates we are followers, we are here to learn from you. Then Peter is told we have found the Messiah, another loaded metaphor to the Jewish imagination. One must wonder if they had ever imagined their Messiah to also be "the Lamb of God". Two very strong metaphors in a juxtaposition of each other. It is in this context that Jesus meets Simon and calls him by his metaphor name, Cephas the Rock. Thus, in meeting Simon Jesus meets the human person Simon and anoints him in his possibly baptized name, Peter. Which is a name that holds the mission that God is anointing Peter for. One must wonder the dynamic of discernment as John meets Jesus and knows how to baptize him in his name and mission, "The Lamb of God". And Jesus meets Simon and knows to baptize him in his mission name, Peter the Rock. This could be the scripture that the tradition of a confirmation name springs from. A name that calls us forward from our human framework into Godly mission in the grace and knowing of the Holy Spirit.