

MONDAY
27 APRIL
Acts 6:8-15
Psalm 119:17-24
John 6:22-29

TUESDAY
28 APRIL
Acts 7:51 – 8:1a
Psalm 31:1-5, 16
John 6:30-35

WEDNESDAY
29 APRIL
Acts 8:1b-8
Psalm 66:1-6
John 6:35-40

THURSDAY
30 APRIL
Acts 8:26-end
Psalm 66:7-8, 14-end
John 6:44-51

FRIDAY
1 MAY
Philip and James, Apostles
Isaiah 30:15-21
Psalm 119:1-8
Ephesians 1:3-10
John 14:1-14

SATURDAY
2 MAY
Acts 9:31-42
Psalm 116:10-15
John 6:60-69

REFLECTION

The first Christians had a tough time and we hear in these readings about Stephen's arrest and death by stoning and the persecution that was encouraged by Saul. Yet this climate of fear and violence did not deter others like Philip and Peter from telling the good news of Jesus. That good news led to healing some sick people, such as Aeneas, and raising the dead woman Dorcas. It also led to the inclusion of the Ethiopian eunuch whom Philip met on the road.

Such inclusions are very significant in a culture where to be sick or disabled might suggest that God is punishing you. So in its earliest days, under significant persecution and danger, the Church lived out the message of Jesus, that all are to be included because he is God's gift of "the bread of life". That bread of life, which the writer of John's Gospel speaks about, turns out not to be a special thing only for a few people but "for the life of the world". The first Christians did not think they should keep such good news quiet, but took the risk and shouted it for everyone to hear.

PRAYER

Dear God,
 when we are afraid to speak your words of loving inclusion
 in a world that wants to keep us apart,
 give us the courage that Stephen and Peter showed.
 Keep us from judgement and teach us your radical
 acceptance of all creation.



The martyrdom of St Stephen, St Etienne du Mont Church, Paris.

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GODPARENTING

PART I – A RICH TRADITION

Godparenting has evolved through generations of Christians and is, of course, inextricably linked with baptism, which is itself rooted in ancient Jewish purification rites – Jesus was baptised and baptised others. Early Christianity was a persecuted faith, so an important function of godparents – who were initially known as sponsors – was to confirm the sincerity of any adult who was seeking to be baptised and to protect the community from being infiltrated by persecutors.

Initially, because a confession of faith was required on the part of the person being baptised, baptism was reserved for adults. Nobody knows exactly when infant baptism was introduced, although we do know that it was at some point in the first or second century AD. Baptising babies is a practice which remains contentious to this day and is a fundamental doctrinal difference between, for example, Baptists and Anglicans. Writing in around 200 AD, in one of the earliest mentions of godparents, Church Father Tertullian made his disapproval clear: "For why is it necessary... that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfil their promises." It goes to show how seriously godparenting was taken.

Over time the focus of the role of the sponsor / godparent shifted away from acting as a gatekeeper of the Church, to vocalising the confession of faith on behalf of the person being baptised and acting as a guarantor of their faith going forward.

Understanding a bit of the history and background may be helpful for parents when it comes to choosing godparents for their children, and can help godparents and godchildren themselves – particularly older godchildren – to carve out a more meaningful and fulfilling role and relationship.

Even for someone who is not a parent, godparent or godchild, it provides a fascinating insight into the Christian faith. What does godparenting mean to you and how can your understanding of it inform and deepen your faith life?



LIVE
 the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
 Caroline Hodgson
 and Heather Smith

Third week of Easter

Monday 27 April to
 Saturday 2 May
 2020

WEEK