

#65 – THE HEALING OF LANGUAGE



Juan Bautista Maino (1581-1641)¹ - *Pentecost* (1615-1620) in Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain

¹ From *Oxford Grove Art Online*, article by Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez - “**Maino** [1581-1641] was one of the most interesting painters of his generation, working in a most advanced artistic language compared with his Spanish contemporaries. From his time in Italy and because of his particularly receptive sensibility, he created a personal style that revealed an early awareness of the art of Caravaggio while also reflecting aspects of classicism as developed by the Carracci family.”

Senator Robert F. Kennedy (1925-1968)² - "Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully to change. And I believe that in this generation those with the courage to enter the moral conflict will find themselves with companions in every corner of the globe.... For the fortunate among us, there is the temptation to follow the easy and familiar paths of personal ambition and financial success so grandly spread before those who enjoy the privilege of education. But that is not the road history has marked out for us. Like it or not, we live in times of danger and uncertainty. But they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other time in history. All of us will ultimately be judged, and as the years pass, we will surely judge ourselves on the effort we have contributed to building a new world society and the extent to which our ideals and goals have shaped that event."

Dear Peregrinus (the 10th Week of Ordinary Time³):

I have begun to write this letter to you on Monday, the day after Pentecost, when liturgically speaking we have re-entered Ordinary Time, in its 10th Week.⁴

REMEMBERING

² *Wikipedia* notes: "Robert F. Kennedy's *Day of Affirmation Address* (also known as the *Ripple of Hope Speech*) is a speech given to National Union of South African Students members at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, on June 6, 1966, on the University's 'Day of Reaffirmation of Academic and Human Freedom'. Kennedy was at the time the junior U.S. senator from New York. His overall trip brought much attention to Africa as a whole. In the address Kennedy talked about individual liberty, Apartheid, and the need for justice in the United States at a time when the American civil rights movement was ongoing. He emphasized inclusiveness and the importance of youth involvement in society. The speech shook up the political situation in South Africa and received praise in the media. **It is often considered his greatest and most famous speech.**"

³ "**Ordinary Time**" this refers to the way the Liturgical Calendar designates the weeks in the year that are not within the "special Time" of Advent-Christmas-Christmastide or Lent-Holy Triduum-Easter-Eastertide. The "color" of Ordinary Time in the tradition of the Church is *green*. Why? Because green is something we associate with plants and trees that are healthy and actively growing. In other words, the "ordinary" condition of Christians ought to be one characterized as healthy and actively growing (not afraid of growth; not resistant to its demands, and its "letting go").

⁴ The first to ninth weeks of Ordinary Time happened between the conclusion of Christmastide and the beginning of Lent.

Much has happened in our lives, in our nation, and internationally since Ash Wednesday on March 2nd. For example, the Russo-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014 (Crimea and part of the Donbas region), suffered a major expansion on Thursday, 24 February 2022. Our need for Lent could not have been more obvious, as was our need for God to do what only God can do.


Jeremiah 17 (NJB) –

⁹ ‘The heart is more devious than any other thing,
and is depraved; who can pierce its secrets?*

¹⁰ I, Yahweh, search the heart,
test the motives,
to give each person what his conduct
and his actions deserve.* ⁵

The month of May for centuries has been dedicated to honoring Mary, the mother of Jesus.⁶ But now, in America, the month highlights the questionable⁷ mental health of Americans! And currently, many families in our nation celebrate the graduations of their children from grade schools, high schools, and universities.

* Mk 7:21

* 11:20+ Pr 17:3; 32:9; Ps 62:13  Mt 16:27

⁵ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jeremiah 17:9-10.

I deploy this quote not to scare my readers, who imagine that God threatens us. Rather I want us to notice just how *attentive* God is to each of us. God is the One who truly knows us, or as St. Augustine put it, “God is closer to us than we are to ourselves.” We *want*, finally, to be known, fully known, but by a person, or a divine Person, whose knowing is filled with love and discernment. It is difficult for me to say it, but it is my experience that most people really do not work very hard at knowing others, the distinct otherness of others. Perhaps teenagers were given to the world to remind those older how insufficiently adults know them. Teens do not know who they are – not yet. But they do know when those who imagine that they know them *do not know them well at all*.

⁶ One of her most famous, and dogmatically important, titles is: “**Mother of God**”, a title meant to mirror the two natures of Christ, fully human (He has a mother) and fully divine (of God). But this title does not cancel the honorable title, “**Mother of Jesus**.”

⁷ I say “**questionable**” not to be cheeky, but because from many sources, credible sources (not to mention our own observations of the American scene), the stability and health of our mentality is, well, being questioned. The problem is that we are questioning the *results* produced by the instability in our American mentality, hating those results, rather than *taking responsibility for the cultural choices* that we allow to stand that catalyze such instability.

Of course, *commencement* is the better word for what they are doing. *Graduation* is a word that acknowledges the steps (Latin, *gradus* – “a step”) that each student took to get to his or her Diploma; *commencement*, from a 14th century verb meaning “to start anew; to begin” (Latin, *com-intensive* and *initiare*: “to begin”) puts the focus of what their hard work has made possible for them to pursue if they can be brave.⁸

But today - June 6th Monday – is the anniversary of the death of Robert F. Kennedy, and I have found myself wandering inside of some *dangerous memories*.⁹

I have memories of the assassination of three men who even in my boyhood communicated powerfully to my emerging awareness of the world what needed to matter to us. There was nobility of spirit in these men, just as there was in President Abraham Lincoln, who delivered his *Second Inaugural Address* one month before he was assassinated on Friday evening, 14 April 1865.¹⁰ That particular Friday evening of his death was Good Friday,¹¹ a couple of days before the dark of the Moon.

Abraham Lincoln, the *Second Inaugural Address*, given on Saturday, 4 March 1865 – “On the occasion corresponding to this one, four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the [first] inaugural address was being delivered from this place [Monday, 4 March 1861], devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war – seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the

⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**brave**” – “Of persons and their attributes: Courageous, daring, intrepid, stout-hearted (as a good quality).”

⁹ This idea of “**dangerous memories**” was one made famous by the German theologian and Catholic priest Johannes Baptist Metz (1928-2019). He recalled the existential jolt he experienced, when he, a 16-year-old German soldier, he returned to his unit on the German front in the closing weeks of World War II. He had been sent to carry a message to headquarters far back from the battle line. He discovered that all the members of his unit, all about his age, had all been slaughtered. Now quoting him: “Now I could only see dead and empty faces, where the day before I had shared childhood fears and laughter. I remember nothing but a wordless cry. This is how I see myself to this very day, and behind this memory all my childhood dreams crumble away.... What would happen if one took this sort of thing *not* to the psychologist, but into church, *and if one would not allow oneself to be talked out of such unreconciled memories even by theology*, but rather wanted to have faith *with* them, and *with them* to speak about God?”

¹⁰ From the *History.com* website – “On the evening of April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth, a famous actor and Confederate sympathizer, assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D.C. The attack came only five days after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his massive army at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, effectively ending the American Civil War.”

¹¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**Good Friday**” – “The Friday before Easter Sunday, on which the Crucifixion of Christ is commemorated in the Christian Church, traditionally observed as a day of fasting and penance.”

other would accept war rather than let it perish, and so the war came.” And then Lincoln’s famous peroration¹²: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

In my boyhood - I had just turned 9-years old in June - John F. Kennedy was assassinated, on Friday, 22 November 1963. In my youth, when I was concluding 8th grade at Sacajawea Junior High, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on a Thursday evening, 4 April 1968, and a few months later Senator Robert F. Kennedy was shot just after midnight on June 5th and who was then pronounced dead in the early morning of Thursday, June 6th.¹³

Senator Kennedy’s last words spoken on earth, said to those leaning over him right after he had been shot were, “Is everyone OK?”

Even though I was still unformed, I had recognized in the voices of these three men a vision of what the world was for, of what needed to matter to us Americans, as we went about trying to be a good nation. I thrilled to the voices of such leaders who had things important to say to us Americans, speaking to us in an age when we *expected* this of the people whom we called our *leaders*.¹⁴ I heard a voice like theirs when later I read the speeches of Václav Havel of the Czech Republic.

Václav Havel (1936-2011)¹⁵ – “I feel that the dormant goodwill in people needs to be stirred. People need to hear that it makes sense to behave decently and to help

¹² The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**peroration**” – “A concluding part of a speech or written discourse which sums up the content; a rhetorical conclusion, *esp.* one intended to rouse the audience.”

¹³ At *History.com* website: “Shortly after midnight on June 5, 1968, Senator Robert Kennedy is shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles after winning the California presidential primary. Immediately after he announced to his cheering supporters that the country was ready to end its fractious divisions, Kennedy was shot several times by the 24-year-old Palestinian Sirhan Sirhan. He was pronounced dead a day later, on June 6, 1968. The summer of 1968 was a tempestuous time in American history.”

¹⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**leader**” – “One who guides others in action or opinion; one who takes the lead in any business, enterprise, or movement; one who is ‘followed’ by disciples or adherents; the chief of a sect or party.” What is lacking in this definition is the essential connection that needs highlighting: the *character* of a leader, which directly conditions what it means for him or her to “*guide* others in action or opinion.” Just *having followers* is no sufficient insight into the nature of a leader.

¹⁵ *Britannica* notes: “**Václav Havel**, (born October 5, 1936, Prague, Czechoslovakia [now in Czech Republic]—died December 18, 2011, Hrádeček, Czech Republic), Czech playwright, poet, and political dissident who, after the fall of communism, was president of Czechoslovakia (1989–92) and of the Czech Republic (1993–2003).... By 1968 Havel had progressed to the position of resident playwright of the

others, to place common interests above their own, to respect the elementary rules of human co-existence." And, "The tragedy of modern man is not that we know less about the meaning of our own lives, but that it bothers us less and less." And, "Ideology is a specious¹⁶ way of relating to the world. It offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality, while making it easier for them to part with them."

The activity that I loved the most when I was in high school, at Gonzaga Preparatory School (Jesuit) in Spokane, WA, was the Glee Club. At that time, G-Prep was still an all-boys school. At our major performance, in the Springtime of my freshman year, in a gym packed with students and our parents, we sang "Abraham, Martin, and John", a song familiar to us in Dion's recording of it. That evening, as we performed that song, we all began to sing from our truest boy-hearts. And as we proceeded through those verses, we all began to weep, as did many listening to us, and watching. It was the single most moving, and heartfelt experience of my high school years.

Anybody here seen my old friend Martin?
Can you tell me where he's gone?
He freed lotta people but it seems the good they die young
I just looked around and he's gone
Didn't you love the things that they stood for?
Didn't they try to find some good for you and me?
And we'll be free
Someday soon; it's gonna be one day.
Anybody here seen my old friend Bobby?¹⁷

Theatre of the Balustrade company. He was a prominent participant in the liberal reforms of 1968 (known as the *Prague Spring*), and, after the Soviet clampdown on Czechoslovakia that year, his plays were banned, and his passport was confiscated. During the 1970s and '80s he was repeatedly arrested and served four years in prison (1979–83) for his activities on behalf of human rights in Czechoslovakia. After his release from prison Havel remained in his homeland."

¹⁶ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**specious**" – "Having a fair or attractive appearance or character, calculated to make a favourable impression on the mind, but in reality devoid of the qualities apparently possessed."

¹⁷ *Wikipedia* notes: "'Abraham, Martin and John' is a 1968 song written by Dick Holler. It was first recorded by Dion, in a version that was a substantial North American chart hit in 1968/69. Near-simultaneous cover versions by *Smokey Robinson and the Miracles* and *Moms Mabley* also charted in the U.S. in 1969, and a 1969 version by Marvin Gaye was the hit version in the UK. It was also a hit as part of a medley (with "What the World Needs Now Is Love") for Tom Clay in 1971 and has subsequently been recorded by many other artists. **The song itself is a tribute to the memory of four assassinated Americans, all icons of social change: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Robert F. Kennedy. It was written in response to the assassination of King and that of Robert Kennedy in April and June 1968, respectively.**"

In each case – President Abraham Lincoln, President John F. Kennedy, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert F. Kennedy – what also was murdered was beautiful, carefully composed, noble language that each of these men wrote and spoke. The hard work of literacy¹⁸ and eloquence, of becoming worthy of one's mother tongue, was replaced in each case by the unholy grossness of gunshots ... of bullets turned against our own.

A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

I remember Sam Cooke,¹⁹ who stood among those giants of the African American voices of his generation – speakers (e.g., Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.) and singer-songwriters (e.g., Marvin Gaye, especially his album “What’s Going On” – he was shot and killed by his dad in April of 1984)²⁰. Many of them died far too young (Cooke was shot on 11 December 1964). Cooke’s greatest song was “A Change is Gonna Come”, which he was inspired to write upon hearing Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind”.²¹ A few lines from Cooke’s song are these:

It’s been too hard living, but I’m afraid to die
‘Cause I don't know what’s up there beyond the sky
It’s been a long, a long time coming²²
But I know a change gon’ come, oh yes, it will.²³

¹⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**literacy**” – “The quality, condition, or state of being literate; the ability to read and write. Also: the extent of this in a given community, region, period, etc.”

¹⁹ For example, see the compilation album of Cooke’s songs: *Thirty Greatest Hits: Portrait of a Legend, 1951-1964*.

²⁰ His *What’s Going On* album was released in 1971. It an important artifact of American culture.

²¹ Sam Cooke heard the line in Dylan’s famous song, “How many roads must a man walk down / before you call him a man?” It bothered him that a white man composed the lyric that so deftly captured the plight of black people in America. What I mean by “bothered” is not that Cooke disliked or disrespected Dylan, who was an undeniable genius, but that it was a white man who had courage enough to write and sing so biting and honest a question.

²² Consider this lyric by Cooke (1964) in relation to the song by David Crosby called “Long Time Gone” (1969), one of the songs among the greatest hits of the iconic group, Crosby, Stills and Nash (flourished 1968-1974). After the publication of their *Crosby, Stills & Nash* album, their debut album, in 1969, they would add a member, becoming from then onward *Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young*, whose first album was the next one, *Déjà Vu* (released in March, 1970).

²³ *Wikipedia* notes: “Though only a modest hit for Cooke in comparison with his previous singles, **‘A Change Is Gonna Come’ is widely considered one of Cooke's greatest and most influential compositions and has been voted by various publications as among the greatest songs ever released.**”

Jesus, not a singer, expressed “a change gon’ come, oh yes it will” in this way:

John 14 (NJB) –

¹⁵ If you love me you will keep my commandments.^{h*}

¹⁶ I shall ask the Father,
and he will give you another Paracleteⁱ
to be with you forever,

¹⁷ the Spirit of truth
whom the world can never accept
since it neither sees nor knows him;
but you know him,

because he is with you, he is in you.^{j*}

¹⁸ I shall not leave you orphans;
I shall come to you.* ²⁴

SPEAKING

In 2007, the song was selected for preservation in the Library of Congress, with the National Recording Registry deeming the song “culturally, historically, or aesthetically important.” In 2021, it appeared on *Rolling Stone’s* list of the *Rolling Stone’s 500 Greatest Songs of All Time*, ranked at No. 3. See <https://medium.com/history-uncut/sam-cooke-a-change-is-gonna-come-f6feca00674f> - “Sam Cooke, himself the son of a Holiness minister, was wary enough of losing his gospel audience that he released his first single, “Loveable” (1957), under a pseudonym. By the time of the March on Washington six years later, Cooke was firmly established as a pop star, with an impressive run of crossover hits – “You Send Me,” “Wonderful World,” “Cupid.” But he was chagrined when he first heard Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” which borrowed its melody in part from the old spiritual “No More Auction Block.” The song asked a barbed question: “How many roads must a man walk down/Before you call him a man?” Cooke, marveling that it took a white boy to write it, vowed to write his own song for the progressive movement.... Despite its muted release, “A Change Is Gonna Come” has been handed down as Cooke’s best and most significant song. It was added to the National Recording Registry in 2007.” See also: <https://americansongwriter.com/sam-cooke-behind-the-song-a-change-is-gonna-come/>.

* 15:10; Dt 6:4–9; 7:11; 11:1; Ws 6:18; 1 Jn 2:3; 5:3

* 14:26r; 1:10g; 1 Co 2:12–14; 2 Jn 1–2

* Mt 28:20

²⁴ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jn 14:15–18.

The most astonishing effect of Pentecost was *the healing of language*. It was not about God giving the disciples the instant capacity to be polyglots.²⁵ It was about the disciples being able to speak “with authority”, to speak beautifully, powerfully, eloquently ... and in truth.²⁶ I think of Adam and Eve in the garden of God able to speak to each other in this way – in the same language that they used when talking with God “in the cool of the evening” (Genesis 3:8-13), and the language that God used when speaking to them. *That* language. What *was* that original language?

Acts 2 (NJB) – ¹ When Pentecost day came round, they^b had all met together,*
² when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind^c which filled the entire house in which they were sitting;* ³ and there appeared to them tongues as of fire;^d these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.*
⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.* ⁵ Now there were devout men^e living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, ⁶ and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language.* ⁷ They were amazed and astonished. ‘Surely,’ they said, ‘all these men speaking are Galileans?’ ⁸ How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language?²⁷

THE PAINTING

Peregrinus, I have spent time with Juan Bautista Maino’s painting (seen above at the head of this letter), which is the fruit of his contemplation of Pentecost. And I want to

²⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**polyglot**” – “Of a person: that speaks, writes, or understands a number of languages.”

²⁶ Have you ever noticed that the farther away from truth a person is the *louder* of voice he or she becomes?

* Ex 23:14d

* 4:31; Ps 33:6; 104:30; Jn 3:8d; 20:22

* 1:5f; Lk 1:15k

* 1:8j; Mt 28:19; Lk 24:47; Col 1:23

* Gn 11:1-9, 1a

²⁷ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Ac 2:1-8.

tell you what I have noticed, but always asking for your own insights about the painting.

Let me do this, offering five short observations, and then be done with my letter.

First, how often it happens that people notice those “tongues as of fire” (γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρὸς - Acts 2:3).²⁸ They rarely, in my experience, pay attention to “a sound as of a violent wind” (Acts 2:2). How like human beings that we miss the (divine) Person, because we pay more attention to what that Person gives! In this case, by paying more attention to the gift (“tongues as of fire”) we overlook the *wind* – the living presence of the third Divine Person! Pentecost was meant to be understood as an act of the *re-creation* of the world out of the chaos that we had made of it, a world capable of murdering the Son of God, which becomes more possible when we have a habit of murdering each other. *We misunderstand Pentecost if we overlook the wind.* Is it not likely that the “violent wind” is meant to evoke Genesis 1:1?

In the beginning God created heaven and earth.^{b*} ²Now the earth was a formless void,^c there was darkness over the deep, **with a divine wind^d sweeping over the waters.** ²⁹

Second, those “tongues as of fire” are a description that confuses what the divine fire *looked like* with the most astonishing *effect* of that fire: that the disciples began to speak their language in a distinctly God-like way. Remember the *effect* of Jesus’ resurrected speech inside of those two disciples on the way to Emmaus?

Luke 24 (NJB) – ³²Then they said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts *burn* within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?’ ³⁰

It seems to me that the gift of Pentecost was about the healing of language through the action of the Holy Spirit. It was the burning away of all our misuses and abuses of our mother tongue, causing the truth and courtesy and measured eloquence of our

²⁸ From the *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* - TONGUE (Heb. lāšôn; Gk. glóssa).† In biblical usage not only the physical organ (e.g., Ps. 22:15 [MT 16]; Mark 7:33), but also, by extension, **the capacity for speaking** (Exod. 4:10; Jas. 1:26; KJV, 1 John 3:18; RSV “speech”), different manners of speaking (Job 5:21; Prov. 6:24), and any language as distinguished from other languages (Rev. 5:9; KJV, Gen. 10:5). The KJV also translates Gk. *diálektos* “language” as “tongue” (Acts 1:19; 2:8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14).

* Jb 38–39; Ps 8; 104; Pr 8:22–31 📖 Jn 1:1–3; Col 1:1–15; Heb 1:2–3; Jn 8:12b • 2 Co 4:6

²⁹ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Ge 1:1–2.

³⁰ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Lk 24:32.

Christian speech to cause the hearts of our hearers “to burn within” them.³¹ That “burning” is I think what the people meant when they spoke of the powerful effects Jesus’ language had in them during His public ministry.

Mark 1 (NJB) – ²² And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.* ³²

Third, Juan Bautista Maino places Mary right at the center of those gathered disciples. It occurred to me how her conception of the child in her womb – the “Word” as tradition has called Him – might most easily (from God’s perspective) have been accomplished by having the Holy Spirit “descend” or “overshadow” her much in the way of this painting. Instead, God sent first a created being – an Angel of the highest rank, Gabriel by name – to ask Mary in person, *in her own language*. I wonder if Mary was startled that the Angel knew her language (or that she could understand his language). What *was* the language of the Archangel Gabriel? Was it that first language of the Garden of Eden – the *original* language existing before all the languages?

Fourth, I notice how Peter is standing to Mary’s right (our left). We know it is he, because we see the “keys of the Kingdom” in his hand, or, interestingly, just one of the two keys – which one?

Matthew 16 (NJB) – ¹⁹ I will give you the *keys* of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.^{i*33}

Matthew 18 (NJB) – ¹⁸ In truth I tell you, whatever you *bind* on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you *loose* on earth will be loosed in heaven.^{j* 34}

³¹ Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) once wrote: “A person who is not on fire is nothing; he is ridiculous, he is two-dimensional. He must be on fire even if he does make a fool of himself. A flame must burn somewhere, otherwise no light shines, there is no warmth, there is nothing.”

* Mt 7:28seq.

³² [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Mk 1:22.

* Is 22:22; Rv 3:7; =18:18

³³ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Mt 16:19.

* 16:19i; Jn 20:23

³⁴ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Mt 18:18.

But what especially holds my attention is that Peter is not looking *up* towards the Holy Spirit. Instead, Peter is looking intently *at Mary*, as if he had learned from long experience that Mary could teach him *how to receive a divine gift*. He held the keys her son had entrusted to him, but he is watching Mary. In my experience of people, few of us are very good at receiving divine gifts. I admire that Peter knows this about himself, and so he looks to Mary to teach him, who is looking up with both hands open, *not clinging to anything*. See, the Holy Spirit is already illuminating Peter's self-understanding and showing him from whom to learn.

Fifth, it must be John, the Beloved, who stands to Mary's left (our right). For all his famously profound spiritual insight, it is interesting to me that John points *upwards* towards the divine Person descending, *but he looks away and down* at one of the kneeling disciples. We might have assumed that he, like Mary, would have his eyes firmly fixed on the Holy Spirit descending. But people who are less mature in the spiritual life look upwards (Mary is looking up for a different reason):

Acts 1 (NJB) – ¹⁰ They were still staring into the sky as he went when suddenly two men in white were standing beside them ¹¹ and they said, **'Why are you Galileans standing here looking into the sky?'**³⁵

People more mature in the spiritual life understand that gifts from above are most often given *in other human beings*, so that we might learn how to find them there, and having found them, that we might use those gifts for the common good.

John 10 (NJB) –

¹⁰ The thief comes
only to steal and kill and destroy.
I have come
so that they may have life^e
and have it to the full. ³⁶

Well, old friend, I must be off. I will go with my brother Mark to visit my uncle Frank and his wife aunt Carol. Frank, my mom's youngest sibling, is the only one who remains of that generation of Frohoffs. He is in his dying time. Remember us in your

It is this quote, paired with the earlier one about the "keys", that suggests to us that there were *two* keys entrusted to Peter, which resulted, in the Tradition, that Peter is painted holding two keys in his hand. But I have noticed how Peter is never painted holding one key in one hand and the other key in his other hand. Peter clutches both keys in the same hand. Interesting.

³⁵ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Ac 1:10-11.

³⁶ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jn 10:10.

prayers, Peregrinus.

Love,

Rick