



Bringing Home the Word



Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 18, 2015

Do You Know Jesus?

By Janel Esker

The Lamb of God,” “the one who takes away the sin of the world,” “a man who is ahead of me because he existed before me,” “the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit,” and “the Son of God” are some of the profound descriptions for Jesus we hear from John the Baptist in today’s Gospel. John could have added “my cousin” to the list, but clearly he wished to draw attention away from himself and only to Jesus.

Sunday Readings

1 Samuel 3:3–10, 19

Samuel, hearing the Lord in the night, goes to Eli three times, thinking he had called him. Eli directs him to reply, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

1 Corinthians 6:13–15, 17–20

Saint Paul teaches that the human body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” and exhorts the Church to morality regarding others’ bodies and our own.

John 1:35–42

Seeing Jesus, John the Baptist says, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” Hearing that, Andrew and another disciple of John’s part to follow Christ.

I wonder what other descriptions we might add to the list. If someone asked you to describe who Jesus is, what would you say? Could you speak from your personal experience of Jesus? I think sometimes, as Catholics, we miss opportunities to really get to know Jesus on a more personal level. We relate to God, the Trinity, as a whole, but we may forget to spend time with the second person of the Trinity, Jesus—who, of course, fully experienced our humanity by becoming one of us.

This week we begin the liturgical season of Ordinary Time, and we’re probably back into patterns of our “ordinary” lives after holidays—back to school, back to work, back to having Christmas decorations packed away. But even in this most ordinary of times, we have a tremendous opportunity to come to know Jesus on a deeper level. Yes, he the Lamb of God, the one who takes away the sin of the world. But might we through prayer, conversation, and reflection also come to know Jesus as brother, partner, healer, motivator, confidant, supporter?

If we spend some “ordinary” time with Jesus this week, we may come to know him in a whole new and not-so-ordinary way. †

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?
- Do we treat the human person and body as holy and having dignity?



Prayer for Christian Unity

Lord Jesus, we pray that all Christians may be one. Grant us the freedom and courage to see our common purpose, to serve others in your name, and to witness to the Good News.

—Adapted from *Let’s Begin With a Prayer: 101 Prayers for Meetings*
by Sally Macke

The Sages of Various

By Fr. Kenneth G. Davis, OFM

Teasing Sister Veronica on her sixtieth birthday, I asked if she was going to dye her hair or get a face-lift. “Oh, no!” she countered. “Those are my badges of honor, my medals for having fought the good fight.”

Now that I qualify for AARP, I recall Sister’s wisdom. The most interesting faces, like the most appealing landscapes, reflect the turbulence of time. Flat and featureless expanses, perfect for corporate farms, are dreary for the driver who endures yet never enjoys such visual deserts of straightness and sameness.

Although tractors purr through topography without rock or stump, painters stir through terrain where glaciers once trudged or lava steamed.

Time-trudging and passions-steaming mark faces like places. Just as ridges ripple the sunshine, wrinkles crinkle the laughlines. Hollows dapple shadows as dimples brindle smiles. The fascination of a landmark, like a birthmark, is its individuality. Yet while organizations rail when a landmark is overwhelmed by development, industries race to vanquish a birthmark with any dermatological advancement.

Oddly, our culture markets individuality by selling sameness. Contestants at a beauty pageant only differ in the degree by which they conform to a single standard of attractiveness. The unexamined paradox is that all models must conform to one standard to market “be yourself” nonconformity.



Even in writing this piece, my attempts at a contradistinction to *beautiful* prove my point. Antonyms include *plain*, but that means featureless, which is what the beautiful strive for with cosmetics injections. Other opposites are *regular* or *common*, but again commonality describes those who have had plastic surgery to realize a shared aesthetic, not those of us content with our inherited genetics.

So we children of the counterculture continue to be today’s real mavericks. Sister Veronica was right. Our distinctive laughlines and receding hairlines, like whorls and beauty marks, make us unique and nonconformists. By giving up the fight for “perfection,” we are revolutionaries. Because we cooperate with nature rather than attempt to dominate it, we are all still distinct and varied. This is just as relevant now as it was in the Age of Aquarius! †

Gray Matters

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

Choosing the right thing to do is rarely simple. Yet it seems many wish to reduce issues to black and white. It is easier to flip a coin, but rarely does the problem stop there.

In the Bible, the Sadducees and Pharisees confront Jesus continually on points of law being ignored, such as not pulling the grains of wheat or not healing on the Sabbath. They say: It’s the law, so we need to obey it. Period. Jesus didn’t think Sabbath regulations were silly or unimportant, but he realized some things were more important than others.

Most decisions involve compromise, but not abortion. It is squarely wrong. Abortion is an individual sin *and* a communal sin. It illustrates the low value we often place on human life, not just that of the unborn. It speaks of frightened people making desperate decisions. It can also speak of decisions made for the sake of convenience. We *must* end legalized abortion.

As a community, we must decide how to respond to the circumstances that lead to unwanted pregnancies. How do we teach young people to understand the sacredness of life? How do we help them meet all the needs of unexpected parenthood? What about when the life of the mother is in jeopardy?

If even apparent black-and-white moral issues are shrouded in gray, how do we decide what to do? As Catholic Christians, our chief measuring stick must be the Gospel. We must always ask ourselves, as Jesus did, “What serves the *greater* good? What is the loving thing? And of course, *What gives greater glory to God?*” †

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 19–24

Mon. Hebrews 5:1–10 / Mark 2:18–22
Tue. St. Fabian, St. Sebastian: Hebrews 6:10–20 / Mark 2:23–28
Wed. St. Agnes: Hebrews 7:1–3, 15–17 / Mark 3:1–6

Thu. Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children: Hebrews 7:25–8:6 / Mark 3:7–12
Fri. St. Vincent, St. Marianne Cope: Hebrews 8:6–13 / Mark 3:13–19
Sat. St. Francis de Sales: Hebrews 9:2–3, 11–14 / Mark 3:20–21