



Bringing Home the Word



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 25, 2015

Drop Everything

By Janel Esker

What makes you drop everything you're doing and pay full attention to something else? The smell of cookies burning in the oven? The crack of glass from the living-room window that happened to block the path of a young boy's baseball? The holler of "Come quick!" from your child—or is it silence from your child's room that indicates mischief is occurring?

Sunday Readings

Jonah 3:1–5, 10

Jonah travels through Nineveh proclaiming the Lord's message of destruction. Heeding the prophet, the city begins to fast in repentance, and God relents.

1 Corinthians 7:29–31

Paul proclaims the imminent coming of the kingdom and exhorts the people in the church to leave their lives behind and fully direct themselves to preparing for God's arrival.

Mark 1:14–20

Jesus proclaims, "The kingdom of God is at hand." Seeing Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, and John working in their boats, he calls them, and they follow.

Usually an emergency of some sort draws our attention quickly. But do we ever respond to God so dramatically and immediately? The Gospel today tells us that Peter, Andrew, James, and John responded with immediate haste to Jesus' call to follow him. They left everything behind—so urgent was Jesus' draw on their hearts. Their priorities suddenly shifted.

When was the last time you felt your priorities shift so urgently in the direction of the Lord? So often, focusing on our relationship with God and taking time to listen to God's whisper falls fairly low on our priority list. Contrast this image with that of devout Muslims, who stop in the midst of their daily tasks to drop to the floor, face Mecca, and pray to Allah. They do this *five times a day*. In those moments, nothing takes their attention away from the priority of prayer and worship of God.

As we look at what fills our days, is there room for God to get in? Does it take an emergency for us to pay attention to God, or do we hear Jesus' call to follow him every day, in the ordinary moments of our lives? Perhaps today we can drop everything to reorganize our priority list—and reconnect with God. †

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I have distractions or unnecessary baggage impeding my relationship and journey with Christ?
- What can I do this week to direct my life toward receiving and building the kingdom of God?



Lord, I am grateful
for the gift of faith.
Help me to surrender
my life to you and to
trust in your infinite
goodness.

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*
by Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

“If It’s Not Possible...”

By Paige Byrne Shortal

I have a mantra: *If it’s not possible, it’s not necessary.* To live this way, I’ve have rules. If you’re looking for a New Year’s resolution, these might do.

1. Choose. Time is limited. Too much stuff and activity weighs us down. For everything that comes in, choose something to go out. Set priorities by creating a “bucket list” for 2015.

2. The people in front of you are the most important. Too often I’ve watched young parents text as their children vie for their attention. Too much energy is spent on social media or distant “friends”—energy that should be spent on immediate family and direct communities.

3. Do what you say you’re going to do. If you said you’d take Johnny to a baseball game, do it. If you said you’d lose ten pounds, avoid doughnuts. If you’re always ten minutes late, be five minutes early. If you said you’d raise your children in the faith, take them to Mass. Remaking decisions and making excuses is a waste of time and energy and makes us less trustworthy.

4. Live as if there is enough. Jesus fed 5,000 people and had leftovers. When we believe there is enough, we relax and worry less.

5. Do today’s work today. God gives us what we need for today. Don’t worry needlessly about yesterday’s or tomorrow’s work.

How do we select what’s necessary? Make a list, then sit with it for a few moments. One or two things always seem bigger than the others. Those are the ones to start with. †



Aligning Head, Heart

By Fr. Stephen Rehrauer, CSsR

Researchers in moral psychology have discovered that our feelings play a central role in our moral decision-making. They connected subjects to an fMRI machine and mapped their brain activity while they presented them with a moral quandary and asked what they should do. For many of the subjects, researchers were surprised to discover that the emotional centers of the brain became active *first*, before they gave their answer, and only *after* an answer was given did the intellectual areas of the brain become active.

This suggests that many people don’t make moral judgments on the basis of reasoning through the principles of morality. Rather, they make choices based on their gut feelings, and then create a rational explanation to convince themselves and others that their choice was the right one. Some participants

even admitted they were unable to give a rational explanation. It just *felt* right.

This calls into question the usefulness of establishing objective principles, intellectual guidelines, and moral norms to guide people’s behavior. Knowing that something is right or wrong doesn’t appear to cause people to choose what is right. If everyone is going to trust his gut and ignore such things, what’s the point of having them?

One answer comes from other moral-psychology research. Scientists have identified specific emotional tendencies that appear to be active in all people, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or social background. For example, almost all people feel anger when they see an injustice occur. People tend to feel favorably about the members of their own group and suspicious of outsiders. Every person appears to have a built-in “cheater detector” when it comes to rewards and compensation. These tendencies point to the effects of original sin. People are predisposed to detecting sin in others, even if their feelings often lead them astray when it comes to choosing right from wrong for themselves.

This research reminds us that Christian morality and conscience formation is about more than knowing right from wrong. It’s also about more than trusting our gut. It is about bringing our feelings into harmony with our knowledge. Looking at what angers and delights us reveals what we believe, and we must educate not only our minds but also our hearts. We must internalize God’s will and allow it to be written upon our hearts so that doing good feels right and doing evil feels wrong. Only then will our lives truly *feel* Christian. †

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 26–31

Mon. *Sts. Timothy and Titus: 2 Timothy 1:1–8 or Titus 1:1–5 / Mark 3:22–30*
Tue. *St. Angela Merici: Hebrews 10:1–10 / Mark 3:31–35*
Wed. *St. Thomas Aquinas: Hebrews 10:11–18 / Mark 4:1–20*

Thu. *Hebrews 10:19–25 / Mark 4:21–25*
Fri. *Hebrews 10:32–39 / Mark 4:26–34*
Sat. *St. John Bosco: Hebrews 11:1–2, 8–19 / Mark 4:35–41*