



Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time,

June 28, 2015

Jesus Isn't Afraid of Dark Places

By Janel Esker

It's said that a woman often marries someone like her father. It appears I married someone who resembles my mother. They're both warm and generous—and seriously directionally challenged. If not for online maps and GPS technology, neither would get to their destinations. My assessment is that both are beyond hope and help when it comes to improving their navigational skills.

Two of the people in today's Gospel are also beyond hope and beyond help,

but in much more dramatic ways. The woman who touches Jesus' cloak has hemorrhaged for twelve years. She's not only physically ill, she's also considered ritually unclean and a societal outcast. Jairus's daughter deteriorates from serious illness to death, and the crowds vocally discourage Jairus from bothering Jesus anymore. Both individuals appear to be too far gone to be helped.

Yet that's exactly where Jesus' healing touch is found—where hope is lost and help is exhausted. The woman reaches out and finds healing; Jesus brings new life to Jairus's daughter.

Certainly we know the experience of feeling beyond help. Whether it's a physical illness, battles with depression, patterns of sinful behavior we struggle to shake, or feelings of being unloved—at times many of us feel that human intervention can't reach us.

But Jesus isn't afraid of those dark places, and that's exactly where he reaches out to touch us with his gentle healing. Jesus may be unable to fix the navigational challenges of my family members, but in our true places of pain, he couldn't be closer. †

A Word From Pope Francis

Many parts of the world are experiencing a dearth of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. Often this is due to the absence of contagious apostolic fervor in communities, which lack enthusiasm and thus fail to attract. The joy of the Gospel is born of the encounter with Christ and from sharing with the poor. For this reason I encourage parish communities, associations, and groups to live an intense fraternal life, grounded in love for Jesus and concern for the needs of the most disadvantaged. Wherever there is joy, enthusiasm, and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations arise. Among these vocations, we should not overlook lay vocations to mission. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the lay faithful in the Church, as well as recognition that they are called to take an increasingly important role in the spread of the Gospel. Consequently they need to be given a suitable training for the sake of an effective apostolic activity



Message for World Mission Day 2014

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 1:13–15; 2:23–24

Justice is undying.

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13–15

Jesus Christ, though he was rich, for your sake he became poor.

Mark 5:21–43 or (shorter form)

5:21–24, 35b–43

Little girl, I say to you, arise!

PRAYER

Lord, you promise eternal life to all who believe in you. Give me the courage to be an advocate for life.
Amen.



Reconciliation, Sacrament of Mercy

By Kimberly S. Yates

For some Catholics the sacrament of reconciliation seems like one of those Internet scams in which one click of the mouse will win you a new computer, TV, or car. It seems too good to be true. The rewards of reconciliation seem even more so—forgiveness and salvation for minimal effort?

Maybe that's why it's becoming a lost sacrament within the Catholic Church. A 2008 study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) or Georgetown University reported that 30 percent of Catholics surveyed participate in the sacrament less than once a year; 45 percent never partake.

There are dozens of reasons and excuses for this decline, including inconvenience or embarrassment. In our feel-good society, it's hard to willingly cause ourselves discomfort by examining our bad behavior.

I suspect, however, that for a lot of us it comes back to the too-good-to-

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- When did you last go to confession?
- Does confession seem too good to be true? Why or why not?

be-true ideology. You confess your sins, say you're sorry, and get assigned a penance—frequently a prayer or two—and *bam!* You're forgiven. It seems too easy.

Of course, it's actually more complicated than that. After all, you're talking to God, and he knows what's in your heart. You can't just say you're sorry; you have to actually *be* sorry. You have to earnestly and truthfully promise

to do better in the future—and, again, you have to mean it. Finally there's the penance, where you make up for what you did wrong.

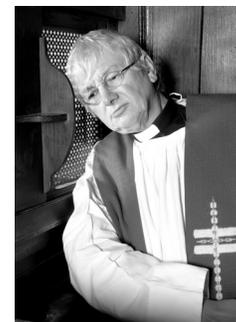
That still seems too easy. Most of us hold grudges so tightly that if they were visible, they'd be covered with fingernail gouges. Since it's hard for us to forgive others, we also find it hard to believe God can forgive us, especially so quickly.

We're supposed to think of God as our father. Aren't most parents capable of forgiveness? Mine are. Many times I asked for help, and they freely gave it.

How much easier must it be for God, whose love is divine and perfect? The hard part is on us. We need to believe in the ease and power of that love.

I encourage and challenge those of you who have avoided reconciliation to try again. Make a true confession, think about your sins, consider the harm to yourself and others, feel your sorrow, and work on doing the hardest part: *Believe*.

Believe the priest when he says you're absolved of your sins. Believe your sins aren't just forgiven—they're gone and of no consequence. Believe God's forgiveness is that easy. When doubt creeps in and a little voice insists it can't be that easy, that the sins still have power over you, force the thought away.



Are you among the 45 percent of Catholics who don't go to confession?

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 29–July 4

Mon. *Sts. Peter and Paul*
Acts 3:1–10 / Galatians 1:11–20
John 21:15–19

Tues. *Weekday*
Genesis 19:15–29 / Matthew 8:23–27

Wed. *Weekday*
Genesis 21:5, 8–20a / Matthew 8:28–34

Thurs. *Weekday*
Genesis 22:1b–19 / Matthew 9:1–8

Fri. *St. Thomas*
Ephesians 2:19–22 / John 20:24–29

Sat. *Weekday*
Genesis 27:1–5, 15–29
Matthew 9:14–17