



Bringing Home the Word

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 2, 2015

The Adventure of Faith

By Janel Esker

As an adolescent, I loved a popular book series called *Choose Your Own Adventure*. You'd read for several pages, then be faced with a choice: "Turn to page 67 if you want to explore the castle, or turn to page 82 if you want to continue across the stream." Many endings were possible, and you could end up regretting your choices if the story didn't go the way you hoped, but it was always an adventure.

In Exodus, the Israelites seem to regret their choice of an adventure in the wilderness with God. They appear to have forgotten the harshness of their Egyptian enslavement. Faced with a life without the certainty of daily bread, they complain bitterly to God that they'd rather be back in Egypt, where at

least they had three squares daily. Their current challenges lead them to forget how God led them out of slavery and promised to be with them always.

Their complaints may shock us, but are we any different? How many times, when life becomes difficult, have we forgotten God's goodness? How often have we tried to rely on ourselves rather than trusting that God is with us even when the adventure of life feels shaky?

It is a determined choice to believe God is with us, to believe Jesus really is the bread of life, and to commit to such trust. Paul encourages such willingness as he urges the Ephesians to "put away the old self of your former way of life" and to "put on the new self, created in God's way." We, too, are called to such faith. †

A Word From Pope Francis

So many problems are testing families.

One of these trials is poverty. Let us think of the many families who live on the outskirts of major cities, as well as those in rural areas....So much misery, so much degradation! And then, to make the situation worse, in some places there is also war. War is always a terrible thing. Moreover, it also strikes above all the civil populations, the families. Truly, war is the "mother of all poverty," war impoverishes the family, a great predator of lives, souls and of the most sacred and beloved bonds.

Despite all this, there are many poor families who try to live their daily lives with dignity, often openly entrusting themselves to God's blessing. This lesson, however, should not justify our indifference but rather increase our shame over the fact that there is so much poverty!



General Audience, June 3, 2015

Sunday Readings

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

This "is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

"Put on the new self..."

John 6:24-35

"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life."



Lord, you are the bread of love, compassion, and peace. Strengthen me with this bread so I can serve others.

From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Sharing God's Love Through Simple Acts

By Marianne Majewski and Jarreau Israel

The Catholic Church is steeped in the principle of the common good. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) stressed this truth in its 1999 document *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*: “Catholic social teaching is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity.”

James 2:26 says, “For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” Catholic social teaching urges us to preserve the life and dignity of every human, to answer the call to family and community, to care for God’s creation, and to uphold the dignity of work, the rights of workers, and the option for the poor and vulnerable.

So how do we incorporate these teachings into our daily lives? The first and most important step is to ground our families in them. It’s our Catholic responsibility to create environments of acceptance, respect, and protection and to contribute to a diverse and interconnected society.

Secondly, let every believer commit to a greater personal involvement in meeting the demands of the Gospel and the needs of our sisters and brothers. Serving the greater good isn’t assigned only to churches, leaders, and charitable organizations, but to each of us.

Thirdly, Catholics are called to reject and oppose any force that seeks to deny respect or dignity to anyone. We can



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I satisfy my inner hungers and thirsts?
- What satisfactions does God offer his faithful?

answer this call in many ways, most notably through charitable work and advocacy for social justice.

Charity

Recoveries from natural disasters and life emergencies like job loss are typically funded by believers who donate goods, services, and/or money to “charity.” Unfortunately, situations like these are not only more frequent and sustained but rather ongoing. The number of

people in need has grown. Look for ways to help, beginning with those around you. Offer a bag of groceries or a transit card to your neighbor. Better yet, invite him or her to a meal or share a ride.

Justice

In 2005, Nelson Mandela said, “Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.” Poverty often starts with an unjust distribution of resources that’s mischaracterized as a scarcity of resources. If we allow our sisters’ and brothers’ needs to multiply and move from one community to another and from one generation to the next, we deny them their due.

John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris* includes these among human rights:

- “Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services.” (11)
- “He has the natural right to share in the benefits of culture, and hence to receive a good general education...” (13)
- “A man has the inherent right to be given the opportunity to work (and) to be allowed the exercise of personal initiative in the work he does.” (18)

We must become active and informed participants in our governments, our parishes, our jobs, and the marketplace. The Catholic call to social action includes areas beyond our own backyard, but that’s a good place to start.

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WEEKDAY READINGS

August 3–8

Mon Weekday: Numbers 11:4b–15 / Matthew 14:13–21
 Tues. St. John Vianney: Numbers 12:1–13 / Matthew 14:22–36
 Wed. Weekday: Numbers 13:1–2, 25–14:1, 26–29, 34–35 / Matthew 15:21–28

Thu. Transfiguration of the Lord: Daniel 7:9–10, 13–14 / Mark 9:2–10
 Fri.: Weekday: Deuteronomy 4:32–40 / Matthew 16:24–28
 Sat. St. Dominic: Deuteronomy 6:4–13 / Matthew 17:14–20