



Bringing Home the Word



Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 12, 2015

No food, Sack, Money or Extra Clothes

By Janel Esker

I'm glad Jesus doesn't pack my luggage. Not that I'd mind his holy hands going through my stuff—but his packing skills, in my opinion, leave something to be desired. Based on what he suggests his disciples carry with them in today's Gospel reading, he'd refuse me my hair dryer, my jewelry, and definitely my lipstick. "But, Lord!" I'd protest, "I need those things! You don't understand how my hair looks if I don't use the hair dryer right after my shower!" Somehow I sense he wouldn't be sympathetic.

Of course, the journey Jesus sends his disciples on in today's reading is far more

important than any weekend getaway I have planned. He sends them on a missionary journey to challenge people to repent and bring healing to those in need. It was a spiritual journey as well as a physical one, and his packing list clearly reveals what he felt was most important for their travels. No food, sack, money, or extra clothing—nothing to weigh them down, hold them back, or make them feel self-important.

Instead, he told them to bring three things: a walking stick, solid footwear, and a companion. A stick to support the journey, shoes to ensure they could travel far, and someone to share the road. What they would bring with them would sustain them for the long haul.

What have we "packed" on our journey of discipleship? Who helps sustain us as we walk our spiritual path? Perhaps we're weighed down by excess baggage—needless guilt, unhelpful images from our childhood, feelings of self-importance. Most likely, God has given us the supplies we need to go the distance—supportive friends, meaningful prayer practices, nourishing spiritual communities.

Are we using them well? †

A Word From Pope Francis

For this reason, he said, "the Lord never speaks to the people as to 'the masses'; rather, "he always speaks to them personally," calling each person by name. The pope then added that the Lord also "chooses personally," and he cited the example of the account of creation. "The same Lord, who fashions man with an artist's hands, gives him a name: 'you will be called Adam.' And so began the relationship between God and the human person." Pope Francis then pointed out another fundamental aspect: "A relationship exists between God and us, we who are little. God is great and we are little," and so "when God wants to choose people, also his people, he always chooses the little ones." So much so, the pope added, that "he says to his people: I chose you because you are the littlest, those with the least power among all the peoples."



Morning meditation in the chapel of the *domus sanctae marthae*
January 21, 2014

Lord, you offered your life in humble service to humanity. Empower me with your Spirit that I may be a humble servant of love and compassion to all people. Amen.

Sunday Readings

Amos 7:12–15

I was no prophet, I was a shepherd, and the Lord said to me: Go prophesy to my people.

Ephesians 1:3–14 or 1:3–10

He has made known to us the mystery of his will.

Mark 6:7–13

He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick.

It's often been said that you can't legislate morality. That might seem like an odd statement given that many civil and Church laws have a moral foundation. But it's true, mainly because everyone has different ideas about what constitutes morality. Someone who sees abortion as a women's rights issue doesn't want the same laws as the person who sees it as plain old murder.

So it's probably more accurate to say you can't legislate everyone into having the same values you do. You might scare them into behaving a certain way for fear of punishment, but you haven't changed what's in their hearts, and people who don't agree with the values behind a law often justify disobedience by dismissing the law as unjust.

Other people disobey laws simply because they don't consider consequences before they act. Those two groups are the reason that one of the tenets of civil order, "If the penalty is stiff enough, people won't disobey the law," is a myth. For example, states without the death penalty consistently have fewer murders (some by as much as 46 percent) than states with it.

So we can safely assume that making abortion illegal won't stop the practice (although it would probably reduce the number). It will simply put a bandage on the problem, and that never works very well.

What if we take a different approach? What if we stop the desire (some would say need) for abortion? What if it were a



legal option that no one needed or wanted because we had addressed the reasons most women seek an abortion?

For instance, some women have been turned out by families and abandoned by the baby's father. Other women consider their lost wages and medical bills and the expenses of raising a child and conclude that they can't afford to have the baby. Other women are too young or not emotionally capable of raising a child and, truth be told, some people shouldn't be parents.

Abortion opponents are quick to offer adoption as an alternative, but have you ever thought about adopting one of these infants or one of the countless

older orphans? How about taking in a homeless pregnant woman, giving her food and shelter during her pregnancy so she has a healthy baby for someone to adopt? Are we "pro-lifers" willing to make sacrifices so these children might have a life? If your answer is, "Well, I'm not the one who got pregnant," let me ask you this: How can we ask others to adopt and live our values when we don't live them ourselves?

Even if we could change all the laws to fit our own code of moral conduct, we wouldn't transform society. Our own conduct serves better than rules and regulations. If we really want to change things, we must not only live according to our own moral teachings—we must demonstrate that those teachings bring us to a better place, make us more joyful.

It isn't easy to live a righteous life. It's even more difficult to convince others to live righteously. But it's almost impossible to convince them to do it when we ourselves aren't living righteously. And I don't mean living righteously for the sake of following the rules. I'm talking about living righteously because we truly believe it's the right thing to do and because, in so doing, we find contentment.

Living according to these principles *should* give us joy—not from being self-righteous, but because we know we're doing the will of God.

And making God happy should make us happy.

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 13–18

Mon.	Weekday: <i>Exodus 1:8–14, 22 / Matthew 10:34–11:1</i>	Thu.	Weekday: <i>Exodus 3:13–20 / Matthew 11:28–30</i>
Tue.	St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin: <i>Exodus 2:1–15a / Matthew 11:20–24</i>	Fri.	Weekday: <i>Exodus 11:10–12:14 / Matthew 12:1–8</i>
Wed.	St. Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church: <i>Exodus 3:1–6, 9–12 / Matthew 11:25–27</i>	Sat.	Weekday: <i>Exodus 12:37–42 / Matthew 12:14–21</i>