



Bringing Home the Word



Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 9, 2015

Getting Rid of the Clutter

By Janel Esker

If both my body and spirit are willing, I walk two miles early each morning. My daily route is the same, but I most enjoy walking on Monday because it's trash day. Seeing the interesting items at my neighbors' curbs definitely adds variety to my morning.

The recycling bins of weekend partiers overflow with soda cans and beer bottles. Discarded boxes from power tools and appliances reveal the do-it-yourselfers. You can also tell who's been purging their houses: Their curbs are stacked with broken chairs, old books, worn pillows, and other long-forgotten gems. It can be painful to discard our old treasures, but ultimately it can be liberating.

Saint Paul's admonition that "all bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice" strikes me as similar to house purging. That list of behaviors resembles some long-held but not particularly useful items in myself. They take up space in an otherwise lovely home, but they're challenging to let go of.

Get rid of all my anger? All my shouting? All my bitterness? Truthfully, I like hanging on to my occasional shouting, my residual anger, my resentment of someone who's wronged me—they're sort of like that old lamp I'm still attached to.

But how can our homes be welcoming if they're filled with all that clutter? How can our hearts be open to the Holy Spirit when they're cramped with malice? The crowds in today's Gospel were closed off to Jesus' words—they murmured and doubted with resistant hearts.

Regular heart purging is in order if we're to continually remain open to God.

What's being thrown out of our hearts this week? †

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus is "the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 209). His solicitude,



particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized, invites all of us to care for the frailest and to recognize his suffering countenance, especially in the victims of new forms of poverty and slavery. The Lord says: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25:35–36). The mission of the Church, herself a pilgrim in the world and the Mother of all, is thus to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind.

Message for the 101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees, September 3, 2014

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 19:4–8

Elijah prays for death.

Ephesians 4:30–5:2

"Be kind to one another..."

John 6:41–51

"I am the bread of life."

Making Eye Contact With Jesus

By Kathleen M. Basi

One afternoon, I pulled up to a stoplight—an ordinary mom driving a minivan with three small children chattering in the back. Beside our minivan stood a man in a camouflage jacket holding a cardboard sign that read, “HOMELESS—HUNGRY—ANYTHING HELPS.”

At moments like these, the wisdom of the world wrestles with the wisdom of Christ. You’re not supposed to give beggars money because they might use it to buy drugs; instead, you’re supposed to support the shelters that care for them. Still, I can’t escape the conviction that when Christ said, “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine...” (Matthew 25:40), he didn’t intend for us to just scatter our largesse from a safe distance. He meant for us to take a risk and look into his face, person to person.

Yet we hardly ever do. We stare straight ahead and pretend we don’t even see them, because eye contact with a beggar is a signal that we’re ready to open our wallets.

As I gripped the steering wheel in an agony of indecision, I realized the noise in the back seat had shifted. My children were waving enthusiastically at the homeless man while they laughed and shouted, “Hi! Hi! Hi!”

In that moment, Jesus’ words about becoming like children rang in my mind: “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When have my words and actions offended others?
- How do I acknowledge the face of Christ?

enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). It was in this moment that those words made sense for the first time. *My children are better Christians than I am*, I thought.

Obviously it’s easier for kids than for us. We’re the ones who have money to give. We know, or at least we think we know, the whole story—the mental illness, the addictions, and the bad choices that land people in such a place.

Kids don’t get caught up in all that, so they simply acknowledge the face of Christ.

Maybe that’s why Jesus urged us to be childlike. Often, adults see a problem and without realizing it, throw a roadblock in the way of solutions. Perhaps our mission as a Church is to stop focusing on the obstacles and strip away every question. After all, the face of poverty is the face of Christ. And regardless of where I give money, I still have a responsibility to acknowledge his presence.

These days I keep a few singles in my wallet, and I roll down my window when I see a person begging at a stoplight. Maybe that person will use the money wisely, maybe not. I’m certainly not giving enough to help much. But at least it gives me the reason to be little more childlike—and make eye contact with Jesus.



Lord, you give us your Spirit to renew the earth.

Instill in my heart the spirit of love, compassion, forgiveness, and peace, that I may be a source of healing.

From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 10–15

Mon. St. Lawrence:
2 Corinthians 9:6–10 / John 12:24–26

Tue. St. Claire:
Deuteronomy 31:1–8 /
Matthew 18:1–5, 10, 12–14

Wed.: Weekday: Deuteronomy 34:1–12 /
Matthew 18:15–20

Thu. Weekday: Joshua 3:7–11, 13–17 /
Matthew 18:21–19:1

Fri. St. Maximilian Kolbe: Joshua 24:1–13 /
Matthew 19:3–12

Sat. The Assumption of Mary:
Revelation 11:19; 12:1–6, 10 /
1 Corinthians 15:20–27 / Luke 1:39–56