



# Bringing Home the Word



Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 13, 2015

## Turning Loose What We Think Is Important

By Janel Esker

Anyone else dislike difficult conversations? I'm just not a fan. Every so often my husband and I sit at the kitchen table and talk about money, scheduling issues, or children's discipline. While these marriage-business meetings aren't the worst things in the world, I'd much rather we were out on a date or watching TV than discussing serious and sometimes contentious topics. As necessary as these meetings are to a successful and communicative union, I'd prefer to avoid them altogether.

Perhaps that's why I identify so strongly with Peter in today's Gospel. When Jesus initiates the difficult conversation about his own suffering and death, Peter doesn't want to hear it.

### Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 50:5-9**

"The Lord God is my help..."

**James 2:14-18**

"Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

**Mark 8:27-35**

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself..."

He loves Jesus and can't possibly imagine him suffering and dying. So of course he protests—but as we know, Jesus will have none of it. He harshly rebukes Peter, "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Human beings hold tightly to life and avoid suffering and pain. But Jesus reveals God's outlook on the matter—that those who lose their lives for God's sake will save them. To "lose" our lives begins with turning "loose" what we think is important. Releasing our firm hold on money, career plans, certainties, independence, and even actual physical life will actually open us to the deeper new life—including eternal life—God promises.

It's no easy task. It's like engaging in a difficult conversation. But God patiently waits for us to sit down at the table, ready to help us lose our lives just a little more each day. †

## A Word From Pope Francis

Morning Meditation, February 21, 2014

We can recite the Creed theoretically even without faith.... The demons know very well what the Creed says and they know it is the truth...but they do not have faith. Having faith is not a matter of having knowledge: having faith means receiving God's message brought to us by Jesus Christ, living it out and carrying it forward.... Faith without works, faith that does not really involve you and that does not lead you to bear witness, is not faith. It is words and nothing more than words.



## PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for  
the gift of faith.  
Help me to practice  
what I believe in my heart.

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

# Charity Is Giving With Faith-Filled Trust

By Paige Byrne Shortal

In September we hear the Letter of James proclaimed at Sunday Mass. The letter is actually quite short—only about 2400 words. It's an interesting read.

James wrote his epistle around the year 47 to encourage Christians whose faith was weakening. It has one dominant theme: Christianity is not a philosophy, but a faith that must be put into practice. James addresses many issues: gossip, the need for patience, care for widows and orphans and the sick, the responsibility of each Christian to live a virtuous life and to correct others when necessary. He also makes several passionate statements about the fate of the rich who oppress the poor.

This epistle sometimes reads like a sermon from a loving bishop and sometimes like a rant from a very frustrated pastor. After all, it's been less than twenty years since Jesus' tomb was found empty. James was addressing first- and second-generation Christians who were already wandering from the Way, but he saves his harshest words for the rich:

*Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries....Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord.... (5:1, 4).*



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I demonstrate my faith?
- What can I sacrifice or accept this week for the sake of God's kingdom?

How do *you* hear these words? I hear them as a rich person. Don't get me wrong: I live simply, yet I lack for nothing necessary—not only to sustain life but also to make it pleasant and interesting. The only time I feel poor is when I'm confronted with poverty my efforts cannot curtail. When I was in Guatemala to adopt our first son, I took him on a bus ride through the city.

A woman carrying a toddler on her back was bent over, picking up something from the ground.

As the bus paused in traffic, I looked closer and saw there had been a spill of corn. She was picking it up, kernel by kernel, and tucking it carefully into the folds of her shawl. I never saw her again—except in my mind's eye every time I scrape leftovers into the compost bowl. All I know about her is that a few kernels of corn were precious to her, but I pray for her and her child who, I hope, is now a help to her.

I believe most folks want to do the right thing, but many also hold back donating until their financial situation improves. The best antidote for feeling poor is not getting more, but giving more away. After visiting Guatemala, I became involved with an agency that creates sponsor relationships between children who need help and those who want to give it.

And what if the recipient doesn't "deserve" our hard-earned money or we give to an individual or organization that takes advantage of our generosity? First I use two organizations to evaluate charities: The American Institute of Philanthropy ([charitywatch.org](http://charitywatch.org)) and Charity Navigator ([charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org)). Secondly I accept the sacrificial nature of emulating God's love.

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 14–19

Mon.	<i>The Exaltation of the Holy Cross: Numbers 21:4–9 / Philippians 2:6–11 / John 3:13–17</i>	Thu.	<i>Weekday: 1 Timothy 4:12–16 / Luke 7:36–50</i>
Tue.	<i>Our Lady of Sorrows: 1 Timothy 3:1–13 / John 19:25–27 or Luke 2:33–35</i>	Fri.	<i>Weekday: 1 Timothy 6:2–12 / Luke 8:1–3</i>
Wed.	<i>Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian: 1 Timothy 3:14–16 / Luke 7:31–35</i>	Sat.	<i>Weekday: 1 Timothy 6:13–16 / Luke 8:4–15</i>