



Bringing Home the Word



Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 20, 2015

Receive One Another In My Name

By Janel Esker

The day will come when an instruction I give my daughter—"Please make your bed," "Don't forget your lunch money," or "Stop hitting your brother over the head"—will go in one ear and out the other: Five minutes later the bed will be unmade, the lunch money forgotten, the brother still getting a bruising. I'm sure most parents have wondered how their child can misunderstand perfectly clear instructions.

I imagine Jesus felt similarly about his disciples in today's Gospel. Jesus teaches about his suffering and death—a time of utter vulnerability and humiliation.

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 2:12, 17–20

"Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious...."

James 3:16—4:3

"Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder...."

Mark 9:30–37

"If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last...."

Yet not moments later, his disciples are arguing about who is the greatest—as if they hadn't heard anything he said. He must have been shocked. But as a good teacher, he reiterates his message with an example. He brings a child forth and actually identifies himself with the child: "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me."

In Jesus' time, those who were dependent and couldn't provide for themselves—children included—had no social status or importance. Jesus claimed to be one of the vulnerable and dependent—in stark contrast to his disciples' arguments about who is the greatest.

Today, who are the vulnerable people Jesus identifies with? Perhaps a single parent who relies on the welfare system for survival. Perhaps a lonely elderly woman plagued with illness in a nursing home. Perhaps the man who's a regular at your parish's food pantry. Do we recognize Jesus in these people, or do we dismiss them as burdensome to society as we seek more for ourselves?

Does Jesus need to reiterate his message to us again, just as he did to his disciples? †

A Word From Pope Francis

REGINA CAELI, MAY 18, 2014

When Christianity, which



by the will of Jesus is destined for all peoples, opened up to the Greek cultural atmosphere, this homogeneity [of the early Church] is lost and the first difficulties arose. At that time, discontent was spreading, there was grumbling, rumors of favoritism and unequal treatment circling. This happens in our parishes, too!....

Conflicts in the Church are resolved by facing one other, by discussing and praying...with the certainty that gossip, envy, jealousy can never bring us to concord, harmony or peace....May the Virgin Mary help us to be docile to the Holy Spirit, so that we may be able to esteem one another and converge ever more deeply in faith and love, keeping our hearts open to the needs of our brothers.

Just Live It: Faith in the Midst of Conflict

By Kathleen M. Basi

We live in a pretty messed-up world: Countries pursue weapons that could wipe out everything. Mothers and fathers injure their own children. We justify derision, bigotry, and violence in the name of God. Young people objectify themselves and their peers because they lack good models of how to give and receive love.

The problems aren't hard to identify. What's hard is figuring out what to do about them. They're so big, so sprawling, and so tightly woven. Where do I even begin? What's the right plan of action? How can lowly little me, with my few hundred social-networking friends, interrupt the momentum of this juggernaut?

My impotence makes me angry. I'm jaded by the partisan bickering that ensures nothing ever gets solved. I'm tempted to throw up my hands and write off the future—and my responsibility to it—altogether. What do my actions matter, anyway, amid so much brokenness, so much willful ignorance?

But when I spend all my energy on anger, I cease to recognize the beauty, the potential for good, that exists alongside and is sometimes intertwined with the bad. The voices shouting vitriol, anger, narcissism, and greed drown out the whisper of the divine.

I bury myself in self-righteous judgment until, without realizing it, I become part of the problem instead of



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Where do I need to be less competitive and argumentative?
- How can I place the common good ahead of myself this week?

the solution. I go looking for a safe, insulated enclave, where the problems can't reach me, where I'm absolved of the duty to act where, when, and how I'm able.

The opportunity to act does exist, but it's usually uncomfortable. It's easier to stand back and complain than to dig in, get my hands dirty, and risk learning—through abject failure or

mediocre success—how small I really am. I think this is why St. Paul tells us to contemplate what is true and pure. If I wrap my worldview in anger, I leave no room for kindness and compassion. But if I fix my sights on all that is good and holy, I'm fortified against the bitterness and disillusionment that might otherwise cripple me as I fight the unwinnable battle against the effects of sin. After all, let's face it—the world will always be dark. My efforts aren't going to change that.

Fortunately, God doesn't look at the bottom line when measuring my job performance. As Mother Teresa famously said, "My job is not to succeed, but to be faithful to my mission."

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful that you are my advocate. Take away all my fears and doubts. Fill me with your wisdom and love that I may be an instrument of your peace in the world.

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

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS September 21–26

Mon. *St. Matthew: Ephesians 4:1–7, 11–13 / Matthew 9:9–13*
Tue. *Weekday: Ezra 6:7–8, 12, 14–20 / Luke 8:19–21*
Wed. *St. Pius of Pietrelcina: Ezra 9:5–9 / Luke 9:1–6*

Thu. *Weekday: Haggai 1:1–8 / Luke 9:7–9*
Fri. *Weekday: Haggai 2:1–9 / Luke 9:18–22*
Sat. *Weekday: Sts. Cosmas and Damian: Zechariah 2:5–9, 14–15 / Luke 9:43–45*