



Bringing Home the Word

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time June 19, 2016

The Daily Cross

By Janel Esker

I'm a woman of routine, particularly in the mornings. I do certain things in a certain way every morning as if I'm crossing items off a to-do list. Get up. Rub eyes. Stumble to the bathroom. Put in contacts. Wash face. Take shower. And on and on. Even if you aren't a routine-driven person during the rest of the day, you probably do some of the same things every morning.

What if "take up your cross" was also on our to-do list, right after "take shower" or "drink coffee?" Jesus asks us to do nothing less in today's Gospel when he declares we should take up our

cross daily. Ugh. I'm not so enthusiastic about that. Aren't crosses just for some days—those harder-than-ordinary days? Not every day, Lord. That seems like too much.

But while we may resist, we know the Lord is right. Even Jesus, who didn't carry a physical cross with him every day, carried the burden of knowing his way of life would lead him to crucifixion. He was aware of what lay ahead for him—but even with that heavy emotional cross, he still brought healing and peace to so many. He carried his cross with grace, courage, and perseverance.

Jesus doesn't simply tell us to carry our cross; he also says, "Follow me." Everyone has crosses, but how we carry them makes a difference. Do we follow him in the way we carry our cross—without complaining, still praising God, always seeking to bring life to others? Are we still joyful and hopeful while carrying our cross?

Jesus has given us quite an example. When drinking your coffee tomorrow morning, take time to ponder how you will take up your cross—and follow Jesus—that day. †

Sunday Readings

Zechariah 12:10–11; 13:1

"They shall look on him whom they have pierced."

Galatians 3:26–29

"Through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus."

Luke 9:18–24

"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter said in reply, 'The Christ of God.'"

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus is the center of creation; and so the attitude demanded of us as true believers is that of recognizing and accepting in our lives the centrality of Jesus Christ, in our thoughts, in our words, and in our works. And so our thoughts will be Christian thoughts, thoughts of Christ. Our works will be Christian works, works of Christ; and our words will be Christian words, words of Christ. But when this center is lost, when it is replaced by something else, only harm can result for everything around us and for ourselves.



—Homily for the conclusion of the Year of Faith, November 24, 2013

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- To what do I need to say no so that I'm freer to love and care for others?
- What routines and traditions keep me mindful of God and my vocation?

Discovering the Christian Message

By Elizabeth McNamer

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,” Jesus commanded his apostles (Matthew 28:19). And in the first hundred years after his death, the message had been carried to much of the known world. The evangelization process began early. On the first Pentecost, some 3,000 people were converted in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41). Paul would eventually travel thousands of miles creating Christian communities in Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and many other places. Through his efforts the message would reach Rome, where, 300 years later, it would become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

What, then, attracted so many to Christianity? The enthusiasm of the messengers cannot be underestimated. (The word *enthusiasm* means “filled with God.”) The Christian message offered something more substantial than the other options. It made demands. It called for right living, caring for widows and orphans and loving one another. It offered the solace of resurrection. And its adherents were willing to die for their beliefs.

Jesus left no books of theology. He had preached, taught, cured the sick, lived an exemplary life, and been crucified as a criminal. But he had risen from the dead! This was the basic message, the *kerygma*. “He is risen!” was the message proclaimed on Pentecost. The significance of this glorious message was



that if he is risen, so will we be raised! Belief in the resurrection, Paul reminds us, is the foundation of Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:12).

This essential proclamation contained the seed of all that would later develop: “Son of God,” “pre-existent Messiah,” “second person of the Trinity.” But it took the Church several centuries and four major councils to come to terms with who Jesus was. Unorthodox ideas arose early. The first of these was the Ebionite heresy (adoptionism). For its proponents, referring to Jesus as the Son of God meant that he, like Moses, had been adopted as a son during his baptism in the Jordan. They could not accept the developing theology of the Incarnation of Jesus in the womb of a virgin. Eusebius writes, “They regarded him as plain and ordinary. A man esteemed as righteous through growth of character and nothing more, the child of a normal union between a man and Mary.”

Gnostics spread the message that Jesus had been spiritual only and did not have a real body. This heresy is sometimes referred to as “the docetic Christ.” This meant that he had not died since he didn’t have a real body in the first place. Much later the Arians believed that Jesus had a real body but was less than divine, not on a par with God.

In the face of all these conflicting ideas, it was often difficult for the early Christians to understand exactly what they believed about Jesus. Nevertheless, they persevered in faith and continued to pray, discern, and dialogue about what God had truly revealed to them. From their efforts was born our creed(s), a canon of Scripture, and answers to questions of ritual and authority. This revelation of who Jesus is and what he stands for continued in and through the Church. With Scripture and Tradition, each generation is led to faith and hope in the paschal mystery and sent out into the world. †

PRAYER

Lord, you gave your life as a gift of love for the whole world. Help me be a selfless servant of your love, compassion, and peace.


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

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 20–25

Mon. Weekday: 2 Kings 17:5–8, 13–15a, 18 / Matthew 7:1–5
Tue. St. Aloysius Gonzaga: 2 Kings 19:9b–11, 14–21, 31–35a, 36 / Matthew 7:6, 12–14
Wed. Weekday: 2 Kings 22:8–13; 23:1–3 / Matthew 7:15–20

Thu. Weekday: 2 Kings 24:8–17 / Matthew 7:21–29
Fri. Nativity of St. John the Baptist: Isaiah 49:1–6 / Acts 13:22–26 / Luke 1:57–66, 80
Sat. Weekday: Lamentations 2:2, 10–14, 18–19 / Matthew 8:5–17

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