



Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 1, 2018

Saved by Faith Alone

By Mary Katharine Deeley

A fourth-century legend from Catholics in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire tells us the name of the woman in today's Gospel is Beronike. A woman of great faith, she knew that the law considered her unclean because she had a flow of blood and no one could touch her. When she saw Jesus, she didn't ask him to touch or even speak to her. She didn't want him to feel what she felt—outcast and isolated. She simply believed that touching his garment would bring her relief.

A couple of weeks ago, St. Paul told us that we walk by faith, not by sight. Faith was all this woman had to go on; everything else had failed. What she heard about Jesus stirred something in her soul, and she followed her convictions. She wasn't disappointed. The power of Christ, who heals us of whatever wounds us deeply, went out immediately to her who dared to hope. When he called out to see who touched him, her fear didn't keep her away. She was saved by faith alone.

Being saved doesn't always mean miraculous cures, but it does involve standing before Christ as we are—bleeding, broken, sinful—and trusting that he is our answer. We don't know for sure what happened to the woman. But her legend continued.

When Jesus carried his cross to his crucifixion, a woman stepped out to stop the flow of blood and sweat streaking his face. We know her by the Latin translation of Beronike—Veronica—which carries with it an additional meaning: "true icon," in reference to the facial image that Jesus left on her cloth. +

Faith was all this woman had to go on; everything else had failed.

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 1:13–15; 2:23–24

God formed us to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made us.

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13–15

He became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Mark 5:21–43 or 5:21–24, 35b–43

[Jesus] took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"

A Word From Pope Francis

Countless people suffer trials and injustice, and live in anxiety. Our hearts need anointing with God's consolation, which does not take away our problems, but gives us the power to love, to peacefully bear pain. Receiving and bringing God's consolation: this mission of the Church is urgent.

—Homily in Tbilisi, Georgia,
October 1, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can I better embrace the challenging moments in my life rather than rebel or run from them?
- How can I better accept and let go of those things that cause me pain?



The Power of the Meek

By Donald Senior, CP

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land (Matthew 5:5).

As a boy I remember seeing the ad about the “weakling” shamed by a bully who kicks beach sand in his face, then walks off with his girlfriend. Only when the weakling decides to lift weights to build muscles is he ready to bop the bully on the chin and reclaim his “prize.” The meek inherit the earth? No way!

Few of the beatitudes confront our cultural values so directly. In today’s geopolitics, the land belongs to the strong, not the meek. In the Bible, the same equation played out daily: Both sides believe that the only language their opponent understands is force.

What can Jesus mean in the third beatitude of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount? The Greek word translated as “meek” is *praus*, and its meaning is not meekness in the sense of unassertiveness—as the English term can imply—but as powerlessness or defenselessness. When one sees tattered lines of Syrian refugees or staring eyes of starving African children, their plight is not one of being “meek” in the sense of shy or retiring, but of being without power or resources and, therefore, terribly vulnerable. By extension, the word can also move beyond the level of one’s social condition and refer to a lack of pretense or arrogance, a gentleness and authentic humility that comes from

understanding that ultimately one’s life and power depend upon God.

Biblical Vision

Jesus’ beatitude is a quotation from Psalm 37:11: “But the poor will inherit the earth, will delight in great prosperity,” and taps into a strong biblical vision. Because the Israelites were people of the land, their dreams for peace often included longing for a time when the land’s bounty would not be destroyed and all could live together peacefully.

Particularly beautiful is the vision of the future in Isaiah: “They shall build houses and live in them, they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit; They shall not build and others live there; they shall not plant and others eat. As the years of a tree, so the years of my people; and my chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (65:21–22).

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus also envisions a kingdom of God where peace and justice abound, where God’s children have a place of security and joy. This is the powerful dream Jesus summons up early in his ministry. Blessed are the meek, the powerless, the downtrodden, because in God’s reign they will not remain disenfranchised but will inherit the land. The Gospel’s vision of a just future that reverses oppression now

extends beyond Israel to the whole earth, encompassing all those whose lives and hopes are threatened and who have no resource to lean on other than God’s providence.

Embraced by Jesus

What is remarkable in the Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus himself throws his lot with people like this. He describes himself as “meek and humble of heart” (11:29) and the evangelist cites the words of the prophet Zechariah, emphasizing the paradox of Jesus the king entering Jerusalem on a donkey. “Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass...” (Matthew 21:5, citing Zechariah 9:9). Jesus’ mission is to identify with the least (21:35–46), to teach and heal that they might have justice, and to exemplify the virtues of gentleness and humility that the Spirit of God instills.

Without fail, Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount summons us to take stock of our values from God’s point of view. +



Lord, you promise eternal life to all who believe in you. Give me the courage to be an advocate for life.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 2-7, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Am 2:6–10, 13–16 / Mt 8:18–22

Tuesday, St. Thomas:
Eph 2:19–22 / Jn 20:24–29

Wednesday, Weekday:
Am 5:14–15, 21–24 / Mt 8:28–34

Thursday, Weekday:
Am 7:10–17 / Mt 9:1–8

Friday, Weekday:
Am 8:4–6, 9–12 / Mt 9:9–13

Saturday, Weekday:
Am 9:11–15 / Mt 9:14–17



Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 8, 2018

Overcoming Our Stubbornness

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My mother always thought I was a little bit stubborn. “Not stubborn,” I said, “but sometimes, I think things should be done a different way.” What I usually meant by that was that things should be done my way. “I know,” she said, “stubborn.” I recalled that conversation when my daughters reached the same age that I was when I thought my mother was dumb and didn’t know anything and my desire was to do always what I thought best. They have since conceded that I might know a little, just as I gave my mother that same credit

as I got older. We all have our periods of stubbornness. Sometimes we are right; sometimes we can be persuaded differently, and sometimes we have to persist until our mistakes become evident even to us, even if that means we suffer the consequences of our folly.

The people of Nazareth were astonished at Jesus’ teaching and wisdom. Their stubborn refusal to believe in him grew out of their familiarity. “We know him and his family,” they thought. “He can’t possibly have this power.” Stubbornness is a hard thing to overcome. Mark records that Jesus was amazed at their refusal to believe. Their very refusal made it difficult for him to perform mighty deeds (a phrase used of God in the Old Testament), and so he did what he could: He healed a few sick people. Some of us still have a stubborn streak. Has that ever interfered in our recognition of God’s power? Do we hang on to our belief that our way is best even if that hurts us? Reflect on that. +

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 2:2–5

Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites.

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ.

Mark 6:1–6

Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary? ...He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Stubbornness is a hard thing to overcome.

Mark records that Jesus was amazed at people’s refusal to believe.

A Word From Pope Francis

Some of you might ask me: “Don’t you ever have doubts?” I have many....Of course, everyone has doubts at times! Doubts which touch the faith, in a positive way, are a sign that we want to know better and more fully God, Jesus, and the mystery of his love for us.

—General Audience,
November 23, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Does my familiarity with Jesus lead me to routine and lack of faith?
- What ways have I seen Jesus work and answer prayers?



To Serve as Jesus Did

By Kathy Coffey

[Jesus said,] "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Who in his right mind really wants to be a servant? Uneasily, we picture a butler in a British movie holding a tuxedo jacket for a wealthy, pampered boss. Is *this* what Jesus asks?

Perhaps our aversion to servanthood springs from the spunky independence of Americans. Descendants of bold pioneers who broke away from an entrenched system of servitude, we stoop to no one. We serve no master!

Maybe we need to wrestle with what Jesus' words mean today. Like conversing with a friend, we pose objections and he expands upon his original idea:

We might protest that we dread feeling vulnerable. When our livelihood, our schedule, and our work depends on the whim of another, we feel diminished. We're used to being independent adults—staying in charge, controlling our lives, setting our agendas. Then Jesus, with his startling one-liners and his heartbreaking humility, challenges us to rethink those easy assumptions.

He might gently point out that, bluster aside, we *do* serve others most days. Even the millionaire dad might chauffeur his kids to soccer games; the mom with the advanced degree still cooks the family breakfast—at least occasionally. Every time we fold laundry, weed the garden, or check homework, we are serving someone.

Quiet, Simple Sanctity

Jesus might remind us how our tradition has always honored quiet, ordinary service. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of the lay brother Alphonsus Rodríguez, contrasting the glorious deeds of warriors or martyrs with the simple dailiness of Alphonsus' job: Today we'd call it being a receptionist at a Jesuit institution. Years of upheavals passed while, uneventfully, "Alfonso watched the door."

Yet his name is preceded by a revered abbreviation: "St." The fact that Alphonsus achieved sainthood with little drama is good news for us. Perhaps we don't need to found religious orders, travel to remote missions, or perform great exploits, either. Perhaps sanctity is as close as the kitchen door, the math homework, the soup shared in kindness, the clean laundry, the offer of friendship.

As our imagined dialogue continues, Jesus gives not only his words, but also his life to help us understand. He directly experienced what he describes: total vulnerability. He who could have come into our world as a political ruler, military general, or respected scholar comes as a defenseless child. We all begin as infants, so perhaps that's not extraordinary. Then the surprise: He grows not into adult power but into

servanthood. He who made the universe washes feet, serves meals, and does "women's work."

Servants and Friends

Jesus' example of the great one becoming a servant begins radical reform of a social order built on superiority/inferiority, domination/subordination. He replaces that rickety social ladder with a paradigm where *all* serve each other. In Jesus' community, the distinctions are irrelevant because all belong to one mystical body.

God, then, is not distant dictator, but intimate friend. Furthermore, God not only befriends, but also serves. Any stigma attaching to serving is removed because it is done lovingly.

Through his words, actions, and vision, Jesus shows us that human life can sometimes seem as defenseless as a servant at the whim of an arbitrary master. But here's the difference: Our childlike vulnerability places us squarely in the hands of a compassionate God who never abandons and keeps us wholly secure. Our every breath depends on a creator who desires only good for us, loving us for all eternity. That is, indeed, a mercy. +



Lord, you accept everyone with unconditional love. Help me overcome my fear of others so I can love and accept them as you do.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 9–14, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Hos 2:16, 17b–18, 21–22 / Mt 9:18–26
Tuesday, Weekday:
Hos 8:4–7, 11–13 / Mt 9:32–38
Wednesday, St. Benedict:
Hos 10:1–3, 7–8, 12 / Mt 10:1–7

Thursday, Weekday:
Hos 11:1–4, 8e–9 / Mt 10:7–15
Friday, Weekday:
Hos 14:2–10 / Mt 10:16–23
Saturday, Weekday:
Is 6:1–8 / Mt 10:24–33



Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 15, 2018

Discerning God's Call

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Spiritually, discernment is the process of listening for and responding to God's call. It's a popular activity these days in churches, schools, and businesses. Discerning the right career, the right person for a job—or even the right person to marry—occupies a lot of adults. I often talk about discernment with college students because Catholic tradition has much to offer to the process.

We can draw some principles of discernment from our readings today. From Ephesians, we learn that God has

called us into the mission of Christ and to praise his glory in the world. Does the life you live now allow you to do that with a full heart? From Amos, we learn that God doesn't call only the ones we think are holy enough, brave enough, or religious enough. God calls all of us wherever he finds us. Amos was a dresser of sycamore trees. We might be teachers, parents, or students in school, but we are all part of Christ's mission by baptism. Finally, in Mark, we learn that mission is a communal affair. We are together in mission. We are to go into every house, depending on God to tell us what to do and give us what we need.

With our different gifts, we help each other spread God's word and love those we meet. Finally, we learn that not everyone will hear us, but we must not let that weigh us down. We must shake the dust from our feet and move on. These and other principles of discernment can apply no matter where we find ourselves along the road. How have you responded to God's call today? +

We might be teachers, parents, or students in school, but we are all part of Christ's mission.

Sunday Readings

Amos 7:12–15

[Amos said,] "I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamores, but ...the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

Ephesians 1:3–14 or 1:3–10

In him we have redemption by his blood.

Mark 6:7–13

[Jesus said,] "Whatever place does not welcome you... leave there and shake the dust off your feet."

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus himself tells us in no uncertain terms that we will be judged by the mercy we show to the poor: those who hunger and thirst, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and those in prison. Particularly in our prosperous societies, Christians are called to guard against the temptation of indifference.

—Jubilee Audience, June 30, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I participate in the Church's mission of serving the poor?
- What more can I do to educate my children or others about this important subject?



Accepting That God Has Chosen Us

By Richard Rohr, OFM

It was not because you are more numerous than all the peoples that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you; for you are really the smallest of all peoples (Deuteronomy 7:7).

God has chosen us. That is simple and clear. But for us to accept that we are chosen is difficult, just as it was for Israel. God chooses each of us—not to “raise us up a notch,” but to lead us through necessary, transformative journeys so we can allow ourselves to be beloved, and to relish a mutual relationship. At Pentecost the Spirit is poured out on “all humankind” regardless of status.

The election of the Jews, God’s Chosen People, eventually becomes a message for the whole world and not something to keep them superior or apart. It will take the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Jesus himself, the rest of the Book of Acts, and the fierce ministry of Paul to resolve God’s universality. Because the implications of “one God who created all things” gradually became clear, they soon called this new religion “catholic.” Our attempts to limit this election have often made us more ethnic than catholic. Not only does God end up looking very small, but we do, too.

We are ready for the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit only after fifty days of enjoying the wisdom of the risen Christ. It takes a while to move from “Jesus as mine” to “Jesus as everybody’s.”

Originally only Paul was strong enough to understand this, and his ministry to the Gentiles (most of us!) was scandalous to James and Peter. He had to argue with Peter about this, and God had to give Peter a vision to prove it to him.

Choosing, Changing

When God makes a choice, it’s definitive and irrevocable. God does not love us *if* we change, but *so* that we can change.

God has not stopped choosing Israel any more than God stops choosing us because we do not respond (see Romans 11). As Catholic tradition and recent popes have affirmed, the Jews are still the Chosen People.

God’s love is never determined by the worthiness of the one loved, which is difficult for us to comprehend—because that is the only way we know how to love. The biblical God seems both extremely patient and extremely humble. This is good news, for where would we be if God’s choice depended upon our response?

Since God’s choice is not determined by the worthiness of the chosen, the Bible speaks of God’s love as being faithful, forever, and like a rock! We never keep our side of the contract, yet God always

rises to the occasion and holds up God’s side. You could say that is the very definition of what it means to be God and what it means to be human in the Bible: Humanity always fails, God always saves.

Resting, Rejoicing

As humans, we cannot recognize another person’s inherent, God-given goodness until we have rested in that lovely place ourselves. God is inviting us first of all to rest and rejoice in what it means to be God’s beloved son or daughter. When we have learned to live for that chosenness, then can we communicate that same beloved status to anybody in any situation at any level of depth, joy, or freedom.

This is the only wedding feast there is. If we have been there, we can proclaim a true, new alternative to the drudgery and darkness of this world. This is healthy, happy religion, and it’s offered to us. +

PRAYER

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.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 16–21, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Is 1:10–17 / Mt 10:34–11:1

Tuesday, Weekday:
Is 7:1–9 / Mt 11:20–24

Wednesday, Weekday:
Is 10:5–7, 13b–16 / Mt 11:25–27

Thursday, Weekday:
Is 26:7–9, 12, 16–19 / Mt 11:28–30

Friday, Weekday:
Is 38:1–6, 21–22, 7–8 / Mt 12:1–8

Saturday, Weekday:
Mi 2:1–5 / Mt 12:14–21



Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 22, 2018

Jesus Gathers His Flock

By Mary Katharine Deeley

At the ranch where my mother lived in her adolescence, sheep wandered through pastures of grass and shrubs. When it came time to gather them into the corral at night, the ranch hands would get the dogs out and set them to work running around and behind the sheep to keep them together while the hands drove them in the right direction. Occasionally a young lamb or an injured ewe would fall, and the man closest would pick the animal up with a tenderness that seemed out of character with callouses and sunburned, weathered skin. When we visited the

ranch, I remember vividly the look and smell of the sheep and that the ranch hands thought they were dumb.

While the sheep may not have been the smartest of animals, they knew the men, and the promise of a safe pen and water at the end of the hot day undoubtedly made the job easier. From my mother's stories, I remember most the way she described the shepherders. They did not lead the sheep so much as walk with or behind them. They became part of the procession, rather than the head of it. This kept the sheep calm and moved them faster. When Jesus looked at the crowd, he saw a people that needed someone to walk with them and show them the way to go. They needed someone occasionally to go behind them to pick up the strays and the wounded and carry them tenderly home. This is what Jesus does for us. In his compassion, he brings us to pasture and, at the end, he gathers all people into his one flock and guides them home. +

Jesus saw a people that needed someone to walk with them and show them the way to go.

A Word From Pope Francis

The family is where we daily experience our own limits and those of others...The family, where we keep loving one another despite our limits and sins, thus becomes a school of forgiveness. Forgiveness is itself a process of communication. When contrition is expressed and accepted, it becomes possible to restore and rebuild the communication which broke down.

—Forty-ninth World Communications Day, January 23, 2015



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the flock.

Ephesians 2:13-18

For he is our peace, he who made both one.

Mark 6:30-34

[Jesus'] heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I humble enough to admit my faults to myself and others?
- How often do I ask forgiveness from my loved ones and in confession?



Celebrating Faithfulness

By Kathy Coffey

You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).

Of all the commandments, this is one of the most ignored in the Old Testament. Just consider Solomon's seven hundred wives! Another story shows the web of deceit and unintended consequences that adultery can provoke. David's desire for Bathsheba is so intense, he arranges the murder of her husband, Uriah. The union of the king with the beautiful woman (*before* Uriah's death) leads to the illness of their first child, David's intense fasting and prayer, and then the child's death. The affair's cost is terrible.

If the story ended there, it would be a cautionary tale, sending a loud message about adultery's evils. But the plot twist comes through the surprising mercy of God. The second child this couple conceives is Solomon, Israel's revered king and Jesus' great-great-grandfather. When the crowd waved palm branches, hailing Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, they called him "Son of David"—David the adulterer.

Jesus as Son of God and Son of Man blends two natures: the divine, which is splendid beyond understanding, and the human, which can get us snarled in lies, infidelity, and murder. Because Jesus is our brother, we too carry the same tension: At times we're lofty and transcendent, then low and deceitful.

The Sixth Commandment calls us to

be the best we can be: loyal, committed, upright.

We have been criticized as a "tissue culture," in which everything, including a spouse, gets easily discarded. We work harder at our careers than our marriages and then wonder why couples eventually become disposable strangers. Adultery usually occurs only after the marriage has begun to disintegrate.

Shelter for Each Other

Remaining faithful and loving throughout a long marriage is one of humanity's finest accomplishments. We can get dewy-eyed and romantic about a wedding. We want the couple's happiness, give them lavishly gifts, and pray for abundant blessings.

We should celebrate a silver or golden anniversary with the same vigor. The couple may be bent and pudgy, but they have woven a life together, composed of countless stresses, joys, failures, delights, arguments, illnesses, laughter, and achievements. They have talked through many issues and survived innumerable crises. They have negotiated finances, lifestyles, household duties, and parenting. The tie that binds them is a strong fabric made of tiny threads. As the Irish say, they become "the shelter for each other." In a chaotic world of change, people need such permanent anchors.

Adultery short-circuits this learning curve. People who flee at the first serious argument don't learn that there is more to their union than one disagreement. A fresh face may first seem to carry less baggage than the spouse, but adultery misses the chance to grow old with the same person who intimately knows and accepts *our* baggage.

Models of God's Presence

Marriage experts say that when we make a vow, we offer ourselves the way we cup water in our hands. Adultery not only harms the other person but also undermines the best we are: When the vow is broken, the water spills out of our hands. Remaining faithful enables us to be like God, whose compassion never wavers and whose presence weathers all storms.

A story about an Alzheimer's patient in a care center ties the bow to complete this consideration of fidelity. A nurse said compassionately to a husband who traveled a great distance to visit his wife, the patient: "You really don't need to come every day. She doesn't know you." "Ah," replied the husband. "But I know her."

May our following of this commandment give us all that kind of commitment. +



Lord, you are the Good Shepherd who cares for all people. Help me be a good shepherd of love and compassion.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 23–28, 2018

Monday, Weekday:

Mi 6:1–4, 6–8 / Mt 12:38–42

Tuesday, Weekday:

Mi 7:14–15, 18–20 / Mt 12:46–50

Wednesday, St. James:

2 Cor 4:7–15 / Mt 20:20–28

Thursday, Sts. Joachim and Anne:

Jer 2:1–3, 7–8, 12–13 / Mt 13:10–17

Friday, Weekday:

Jer 3:14–17 / Mt 13:18–23

Saturday, Weekday:

Jer 7:1–11 / Mt 13:24–30



Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 29, 2018

Abundant Life From Jesus

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My Irish aunt's motto was, "If there aren't leftovers, somebody went away hungry." The motto is shared by aunts, mothers, and grandmothers in nearly every culture. During holidays, our table was a groaning board of food prepared by my mother and aunt, brought by other family members, and shared with everyone. On the many occasions when we had more guests than we realized, the whispered command, "FHB," would make its way through our house. The initials stood for "Family, Hold Back" because our first duty was to make sure that our guests had enough to

eat, and there were always peanut butter sandwiches and apples for us later.

Whenever I think of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, I think about holidays at our house. Impossibly, it seemed, everyone had more than enough to eat. There were always leftovers. But Jesus started with far less than we did. The five barley loaves and two fish were a meager beginning, food of the poor. That food became abundant in Jesus' hands. It wasn't the first miraculous multiplication. The Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, both multiplied scarce resources, but not for so many. Jesus outdoes them all. It is John's way of saying that Jesus isn't just another prophet. He is more powerful than any who came before him. As we will hear in the coming weeks, he is life itself. This is John's eucharistic story. The life that Jesus brings is abundant—we will all be satisfied. Think about that when you next receive Communion. +

Jesus isn't just another prophet. He is more powerful than any who came before him.

Sunday Readings

2 Kings 4:42-44

"For thus says the LORD: 'You will eat and have some left over.'"

Ephesians 4:1-6

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live...with all humility and gentleness.

John 6:1-15

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining.

A Word From Pope Francis

Love is not a word, it is a deed, a service....Furthermore, it is expressed in the sharing of material goods, so that no one be left in need. This sharing with and dedication to those in need is the lifestyle that God suggests, even to non-Christians, as the authentic path of humanity.

—Jubilee Audience, March 12, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Am I generous with my time, treasure, and talent?
- Do I multiply what I have by giving it to God and others, allowing him to return it to me twelvefold?



Why Should We Read the Scriptures?

By Michael D. Guinan, OFM

When I was first ordained, an older friar asked me if I knew what my assignment was going to be. I told him, “I’m going to study and teach Scripture.” His face grew serious, and he said, “Oh my! Be very, very careful!” For him, there was something dangerous, not quite Catholic about studying Scripture. As common as this attitude was, it was also wrong. The Scriptures are a foundation of Christianity.

When we begin reading the Bible, we notice that it is quite a different world and culture. The Bible was written in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Its stories occur within the setting of the ancient Near East. Because of this, it is a “closed book” to us. That’s why it is a good idea to have a Catholic study Bible at hand.

But we also pray the Bible. We believe that somehow, in and through it, God speaks to us. Our first encounter with the Bible is usually within worship. The community of faith gathers to celebrate, and the Bible has a special role. It is proclaimed, meditated on, preached, and applied to our lives. Outside of the liturgy, we find prayer groups that read, reflect on, and share the Bible. It is also an “open book” to us.

So there is a curious tension between

these two activities. The Bible is an ancient book that needs to be studied like other ancient documents. But more than that, it speaks to us in the context of our community of faith.

Jesus: The Man, the Christ

Although we refer to the Bible as *the word of God*, Jesus is Word of God #1. In Jesus’ teachings, actions, life, death, and resurrection we see who God is (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 101–102). Central to our faith is the belief that, in Jesus, God has become incarnate. Within himself, Jesus combines the human and divine.

As human, Jesus was a first-century Palestinian, a Jewish male who ate, drank, and slept as he walked the roads from Galilee to Judea. As divine, however, Jesus was united to the Father through the Holy Spirit from the first moment of his existence. This same Spirit guided him throughout his life and eventually raised him up in the resurrection.

The Bible is the word of God insofar as it relates to the mystery of Christ. The Bible also has a human and divine side. Because the Bible is human, it is firmly rooted in ancient languages, cultures, and history; it expresses itself in the literary

forms of its time, which are different from ours. As such, it must be studied.

The Spirit Still at Work

But because the Bible is of God, it reveals God to us. Just as the Holy Spirit was in Jesus, the Spirit was also active in creating the Bible. While they may contain historical and scientific errors, we affirm “the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach the truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures” (CCC 107).

The Church has officially affirmed the analogy between the mystery of the Incarnation and the Bible. It is the foundation of a Roman Catholic approach to the Bible. Because the Bible is so intimately tied to Christ, the old friar was right—but in a way different from what he intended: With the Bible, we must indeed be very careful (full of care) to approach the Bible with reverence and to make it a part of our spiritual lives. +

PRAYER

Lord, you are the bread that satisfies hungry hearts. Remove the selfishness from my heart, that I may be generous to people in need.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 30–August 4, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Jer 13:1–11 / Mt 13:31–35

Tuesday, St. Ignatius of Loyola:
Jer 14:7–22 / Mt 13:36–43

Wednesday, St. Alphonsus Liguori:
Jer 15:10, 16–21 / Mt 13:44–46

Thursday, Weekday:
Jer 18:1–6 / Mt 13:47–53

Friday, Weekday:
Jer 26:1–9 / Mt 13:54–58

Saturday, St. John Vianney:
Jer 26:11–16, 24 / Mt 14:1–12