



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 7, 2018

Jesus Valued Marriage Highly

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My mother was convinced that none of her children would get married. We were older when we were called to that vocation but, one by one, we did marry. I'm happy to say that my husband and I continue to share this vocation three decades later, and we give our thanks to God. My sister was not as fortunate. After years of abuse, she divorced her husband. She didn't make that decision lightly. She went into counseling, prayed, and talked. She considered her children, her husband, and herself. And she read and reread

today's Gospel from Mark. In the end, safety for herself and her children was a major concern.

Jesus railed against the ease of divorce. A man simply had to hand his wife a piece of paper, and he could do so for any reason, including infertility and her failure to please him. But Jesus advances the woman's cause, refusing to allow her to be treated like a piece of property or disposed of at whim. He saw marriage as a sign of God's covenantal love and lifelong fidelity, and exalts it as a sacrament. When both spouses commit themselves to each other and to their vocation, this grace is made manifest, and their bond is strengthened. But sin and human brokenness can interfere with God's plan, leaving separation or even divorce as the only options.

In the longer form of this reading, the people brought their children to Jesus and he blessed them. Maybe we can do the same for those affected by abuse or divorce, so they, at long last, also can be healed. +

*Jesus saw marriage
as a sign of God's
covenantal love and
lifelong fidelity, and
exalts it as a sacrament.*

A Word from Pope Francis

[Marriage] is not merely a ceremony in a church, with flowers, a dress, photographs. Christian marriage is a sacrament that takes place in the Church, and which also makes the Church, by giving rise to a new family community....The love between spouses is an image of the love between Christ and his Church.

—General audience, May 6, 2015



Sunday Readings

Genesis 2:18–24

The man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

Hebrews 2:9–11

He... "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Mark 10:2–16 or Mark 10:2–12

[Jesus said,] "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female....So they are no longer two but one flesh."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Do I offer support, rather than judgment, to those who have experienced abuse or divorce?
- Do I celebrate all the good things my spouse or loved ones offer me? Do I thank them?



Living in Gratitude

By Kathy Coffey

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife (Exodus 20:17).

In Stephen Sondheim's riff on fairy tales, *Into the Woods*, two brothers sing a duet called "Agony." In Act One, they spill forth their unfulfilled longings—one brother for Cinderella, the other for Rapunzel.

The former has searched all night for the elusive maiden who fled his dance at midnight. The latter is intrigued by the unattainable woman confined to a tower. In folktale style, the obstacles are resolved, the slipper fits, the golden hair provides access to the tower. Both men marry their beloved.

By Act Two, reality sneaks in. The novelty wears off, and the brothers once again sing "Agony." This time, they pour out their desire for a maiden with creamy skin and black hair who sleeps in a glass coffin guarded by a stern dwarf. Snow White, because she is unattainable, becomes the object of their affections.

The shift not only creates amusing comedy, it also points to a stubborn trait of human nature: We want what we can't have. Both the Ninth and Tenth Commandments address this quirk.

These two commandments may puzzle us today. Wasn't it the itch for something more that settled our frontiers, built the transcontinental railroad, discovered penicillin, and designed the computer? Don't our longings for finer homes, education, and health care provide a better world for the next generation? And for those aware of gender roles,

isn't a prohibition against coveting the neighbor's wife an archaic attempt to protect male property rights?

Rooted in Judaism

These commandments make more sense in the context of ancient Jewish culture. When the tablets were given to Moses, the people were wandering, vulnerable, without land. How would they maintain their identity? Surrounded by larger, more powerful states, the last thing the Hebrews needed was internal division. Lust and greed would create fissures in a community that needed to stay united to survive.

Commentators have pointed out a unique feature in this community: the ability to be self-critical. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the prophets warn the people that unchecked desire takes a terrible toll on the poor. While the sacred texts of other cultures glorify kings and priests, the Old Testament criticizes both government and church leaders. In the same vein, the commandment encourages individuals to examine their own wants, refuting those that are inappropriate.

This stance is helpful because it encourages appreciating the family we have rather than restlessly seeking someone better. Coffee on the porch with the spouse may in the long run satisfy more than unrealized longings for Antonio Banderas or Reese Witherspoon. The balding guy who forgives his wife's

imperfections may act from a long history and a deep kindness. The familiar wife has developed a tolerance for hubby's oddities.

Admiring the Virtues

No matter what we lack, we can choose to focus on what we have. Though I may have a broken arm, the rest of me functions fine. In the context of the Ninth Commandment, we may not have the perfect spouse. But instead of focusing on flaws, we can admire the virtues.

This doesn't rule out having conversations about genuine failings, working at honest communication, or trying to improve. But most people change for the better only in a positive atmosphere.

In some ways, Christians today are as vulnerable as that small group of Jews that coalesced around their commandments. The larger, more powerful culture surrounding us sneers at our values. We, like the ancient Hebrews, find strength when we're united in gratitude—not comparing ourselves to others or endlessly wishing for someone better. +



Lord, I am grateful for childlike innocence. Help me to be more aware of and responsive to the needs of little children.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 8-13

Monday, Weekday:
Gal 1:6-12 / Lk 10:25-37
Tuesday, Weekday:
Gal 1:13-24 / Lk 10:38-42
Wednesday, Weekday:
Gal 2:1-2, 7-14 / Lk 11:1-4

Thursday, Weekday:
Gal 3:1-5 / Lk 11:5-13
Friday, Weekday:
Gal 3:7-14 / Lk 11:15-26
Saturday, Weekday:
Gal 3:22-29 / Lk 11:27-28



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 14, 2018

Jesus Expects More Than the Minimum

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Commonly in recent years, large corporations whose business practices are questioned have replied, “Everything we have done is legal.” I have always been uncomfortable with that because it implies that those in charge will not do anything more than they have to in order to stay within the law. The minimum standard becomes the maximum standard. In our hearts and minds, though, we know that the common good is best served

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 7:7–11

I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.

Hebrews 4:12–13

Everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Mark 10:17–30 or Mark 10:17–27

[Jesus said,] “Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

when people do more than they must. While doing the minimum required is everyone’s job, we expect more of those who are in positions of leadership. We expect more of our best and brightest. And Jesus expects more of those who follow him.

The young man who comes to Jesus is both secure and comfortable in doing what is required. Jesus agrees that he has done the minimum. But the young man himself knew there was more he could do. His intelligence, curiosity, and deep reflection told him that obeying the law was not enough. When he persisted in his question, Jesus called him to more. In the same breath, Jesus challenges all of us to find what more we can do. We might obey the Ten Commandments, attend Mass every Sunday, and not offend anyone. But do we: care for those who have less, support the Church, and follow Jesus even when it’s difficult? Are we willing to sacrifice our possessions and our lives, if necessary, for his sake? Is there more you can do today to reflect Christ to the world? +

*We expect more of those
who are in positions
of leadership.*

A Word from Pope Francis

A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: “Tell me: When God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?” We must always consider the person.

—Interview with *America* magazine,
September 30, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Jesus calls us to do more. Will we answer his call?
- God sees all that we do. Are we comfortable owning up to our actions?



Is There a Place for Change in the Church?

By Michael D. Guinan, OFM

As a young priest, right after the Second Vatican Council, I remember a man approaching me after Mass, shaking with anger. “There are too many changes!” he said. “They’ve taken the ‘Amen’ away from the Our Father! Now they’ve gone too far!”

His reaction was a little extreme, but it points to a problem. Over the last fifty years or so, the question of change in the Church has been one of the most divisive of issues. For some “conservative” Catholics, there has been too much change; for some “progressives,” not nearly enough. So is there a place for change in the Church?

First, some facts: Even a quick survey of Catholic Church history shows that whether we’re speaking of organization, liturgy, or doctrine—the Church has indeed changed. Yet our core faith remains constant. The Creed we recite at Mass goes back to the early Christian centuries and is firmly rooted in the New Testament. Our understanding of it, however, has grown and developed through different times, cultures, and questions.

Instead of asking, “Should the Church change?” perhaps we should ask, “Where did we ever get the idea that it doesn’t or shouldn’t?”

A Healthy Body

An analogy may help. In the New

Testament, faced with the divisive issues of the Church in Corinth, Paul compared the Church to a body with different parts. Today, in light of our divisive issues, we might extend his comparison. A human body must constantly take in new things: air, food, and water. This is essential for health and growth. However, not everything we take in is healthy; at times we pick up germs and viruses. The body has an immune system to warn us when things are going wrong and to help sort out what’s harmful.

We can apply this idea to the progressive and conservative functions within the Church. To be healthy, the Church takes in new ideas, challenges, and experiences: It must be “progressive.” However, not all that comes in is good, so it also has a “conservative” dimension to help sort out the unhealthy elements.

The immune system, however, can have problems. On the one hand, it can be weak (after cancer) or nonexistent (as with AIDS). In this case, anything that comes along can become a major problem and may be fatal. Conversely, the immune system itself may malfunction (the so-called autoimmune diseases such as arthritis or lupus). In such cases, the immune system believes the body is sick and begins to devour the body itself. This, too, can be painful and potentially fatal.

Radical Christianity on the far left would represent the broken-down immune system; it’s not balanced by healthy conservatism. Fundamental Christianity on the far right would represent a diseased immune system; it’s not balanced by healthy progressivism. Both extremes can be very destructive.

Looking for Balance

A balance of progressive and conservative dimensions is basic and fundamental to the life of the body of Christ, the Church. But radical Christianity is not healthy progressivism, nor is fundamentalist Christianity healthy conservatism.

We all have a basic identity that lasts throughout our lives. Each of us also constantly changes. The same is true of the Church. It has its underlying, constant identity, but it also undergoes change.

We have an English word for living entities that don’t change—*dead*. As the saying goes, to live is to change. We believe the Church is the living body of Christ in the world. +

PRAYER

Lord, I’m grateful for your gentle reminders of what’s important in life. Help me let go of anything that blocks the flow of love from my heart to the hearts of my sisters and brothers.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 15-20

Monday, St. Teresa of Jesus:
Gal 4:22–24, 26–27, 31—5:1 / Lk 11:29–32

Tuesday, Weekday:
Gal 5:1–6 / Lk 11:37–41

Wednesday, St. Ignatius of Antioch:
Gal 5:18–25 / Lk 11:42–46

Thursday, St. Luke, Evangelist:
2 Tm 4:10–17b / Lk 10:1–9

Friday, Sts. John de Brébeuf,
Isaac Jogues, and Companions:
Eph 1:11–14 / Lk 12:1–7

Saturday, Weekday:
Eph 1:15–23 / Lk 12:8–12

Bringing Home
the **Word** 
October 14, 2018

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 21, 2018

Jesus' Idea of True Greatness

By Mary Katharine Deeley

We might forgive James and John for their ambition. They had, after all, been with Jesus since the beginning. They had seen him heal the ill, cast out demons, and preach about repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Surely Jesus had a power that no one else had. And surely he would give it away to those who asked for it. James and John make a mistake. They thought power and greatness have to do with position.

We are so like them. We often think that people are great if they have abundant wealth or prestigious titles.

We consider them powerful if they have higher or several degrees, or if the world judges them to be attractive. And the world tells us this is so. But Jesus has a different message. Greatness has nothing to do with wealth or education. Sitting at the right and left hand of Jesus does not depend on appearance, position, or accomplishments. Rather, greatness comes from being willing to empty yourself for the sake of others. Our power lies in being the least among our neighbors.

Jesus challenges us in this reading. He dares us to let go of our ideas of greatness and to become servants of all. He invites us to “do the lesser things” with no strings attached or expectation of reward. (*Ministry* comes from the Latin *minus/minor* and Greek *meion*, meaning “less, smaller.”) We must serve in love out of love for him. This week, look for little things you can do for others, giving thanks to God for this invitation. +

A Word from Pope Francis

We are not called to serve merely in order to receive a reward, but rather to imitate God, who made himself a servant for our love. Nor are we called to serve only now and again, but to live in serving. Service is thus a way of life; indeed it recapitulates the entire Christian way of life.

—Homily, October 2, 2016



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 53:10–11

The LORD's will shall be accomplished through him.

Hebrews 4:14–16

...Let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Mark 10:35–45 or Mark 10:42–45

[Jesus said,] “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus invites us to give and not expect to get.

- Do your worldly ambitions get in the way of serving God and others?
- Every week, am I seeking out little things that I can do for others?





Faith Demands Action

By Jim and Susan Vogt

“Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?” It’s easy, in some ways, for the fundamentalist evangelical Christian. If you honestly answer yes to that question, you’re assured eternal life. If not, all the good works you may do are meaningless. But with due respect to evangelicals, it’s not that simple for Catholics. We can’t deny the strong message in James 2:14–17: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? ...[Faith] if it does not have works, is dead.”

Faith and good works are two sides of the same coin of Christian life. Our commitment to Christ calls us to both personal sanctification and active involvement in transforming the world. It’s in the dynamic interplay of these two dimensions that we achieve a growing closeness to God. It’s important to grow in prayer, to do spiritual reading, to study the Bible, and to participate in the Eucharist.

But as the priest says, “Go forth, the Mass is ended.” In plainer terms he means, “You have experienced Jesus in the bread and wine and in community. Now get out and take what you have received to those in need.”

Devotion in Motion

What does faith in action look like? It

can range from caring for a sick child, to serving meals in a soup kitchen, to working for world peace. It means putting others’ needs before our own and deciding where and how we can do that best. Each of us is called to discern how we can follow the Second Commandment of Jesus to love our neighbors as we do ourselves.

Service to our neighbors may involve works of mercy (direct service) or works of justice (social change). The works of mercy include activities like visiting shut-ins, transporting the elderly to grocery stores, or tutoring children. The works of justice include immigration reform, promoting care for the earth through recycling, or advocating for a more equitable economic system.

There are some principles that might help us decide where we can serve.

Tithe our money and time. Faith in action must be generous. We’re called to give financially to those in need and to generously share our time. Do we give 10 percent of our time and treasure to those in need?

Get out of our comfort zone. We might be called to something more challenging than we thought we could do. Remember it’s God’s call to which we’re responding. We believe if it’s a call from God, our Lord somehow will provide the resources we need.

Cultivate solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Whether we’re involved in serving the poor or advocating for government policies to help them, we can’t deny that Scripture repeatedly reminds us that care for the poor and outcast is our special duty.

“To the Least of My Brothers”

Most of us, however, can easily find excuses for inaction: I don’t have the time. I don’t have extra money to support those in need. I don’t have the necessary skills.

It’s helpful to reflect on the passage from the Gospel where Jesus talks about the last judgment (Matthew 25:31–46). The ones who entered heaven were the ones who were cared for the least: the poor, the naked, the hungry, the marginalized. Clearly Jesus calls us to respond to those in need. His call stretches us and challenges us. This is what faith in action is about. +



Lord, I’m grateful for your gift of humility. Give me a humble heart so I may imitate your compassionate ways with all people.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 22-27

Monday, Weekday:
Eph 2:1–10 / Lk 12:13–21
Tuesday, Weekday:
Eph 2:12–22 / Lk 12:35–38
Wednesday, Weekday:
Eph 3:2–12 / Lk 12:39–48

Thursday, Weekday:
Eph 3:14–21 / Lk 12:49–53
Friday, Weekday:
Eph 4:1–6 / Lk 12:54–59
Saturday, Weekday:
Eph 4:7–16 / Lk 13:1–9



Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 28, 2018

God Restores Us to Wholeness

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When my mother was alive and Thanksgiving rolled around, my siblings and I would pack up our respective families and travel home for the traditional holiday dinner. There was something so right and satisfying about seeing one another, sharing what had happened since we saw each other last and eating the good food that was part of the feast. Of course as we got older, we helped out with the cooking, serving, and cleaning up, and with entertaining

the frequent guests who showed up. On that day we were all family.

The year my mother died, my brother, sisters, and I weren't sure what to do. Her house had been sold, and we were scattered to different parts of the country. Thanksgiving was a very different feast that year, as it often is when matriarchs and patriarchs pass. We talked about what we missed and wanted, and now we celebrate Thanksgiving at my house with all who can make it. The tradition has become ours, and we look forward to it every year.

Imagine being unable to celebrate any of your traditions for forty years. That's what the Jews faced during their long exile. They were unable to gather as a family and worship God in their own way. Jeremiah's vision of their joyful return holds out the hope that God will once again gather them up and bring them home. There, God will restore them to wholeness just as Jesus restored Bartimaeus, who courageously called out to him and asked for what he most desired. +

*When my mother died,
my brother, sisters, and I
weren't sure what to do.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus' life, especially during the three years of his public ministry, was a continual encounter with people. Among them, the sick had a special place. How many pages of the Gospel tell of these encounters! The paralytic, the blind man, the leper, ...We cannot fail to visit and assist those who are sick.

—General audience,
November 9, 2016



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Proclaim your praise and say:
The LORD has saved his people,
the remnant of Israel.

Hebrews 5:1-6

...It was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: "You are my son."

Mark 10:46-52

[Bartimaeus] threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.... "Master, I want to see."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Like Bartimaeus, is there a need you want Jesus to fill? What is it?
- Might you be the answer to how Jesus wants to fill someone's need? Don't be one of the crowd holding him back.



Hungering for Justice

By Donald Senior, CP

[Jesus said,] "Blessed are they who hunger...for righteousness, for they will be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

Jesus' beatitudes hit their marks like well-thrown darts. In Luke's version, the focus is on raw physical hunger: "Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied" (6:21). Matthew's formulation doesn't soften the blunt force of Jesus' words but rather profoundly extends their meaning. Jesus' blessing now reaches all those who long for God's righteousness, whether they're physically hungry themselves or heart-stricken on behalf of those who are.

A key word here is *righteousness*, derived from the Greek word *dikaiosune*, which translates as "righteousness" or "justice." In English these terms have several connotations. To be righteous, for example, can be negative, referring to those who are too sure of their virtue and quick to let others know about it. Justice can be thought of as a legal term, as when we say someone is "brought to justice"—punished for unlawful deeds.

But the Bible's "justice" and "righteousness" have very different connotations. God is the best exemplar of what biblical justice means because God is trustworthy and faithful. God always does what's right. Therefore, the biblical peoples would pray that God would be just and righteous toward Israel, meaning that God would compassionately stand by his people. In turn, justice or righteousness in

the human realm should mirror God's justice, being faithful to one's obligations and doing what's right.

So the people Jesus blesses in this beatitude are those hungering for God to establish true righteousness or justice. In such a world there will be no child who goes a day without bread and no families will spend the winter in a tent. In a just or righteous world, those of us with resources will feel a sense of obligation toward the needy.

Gospel Echoes

As in every one of the beatitudes, Jesus' words echo throughout the Gospel. He warns his disciples that in order for them to enter the kingdom of heaven, their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). Above everything else, they are to "seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). In the end, God will judge us on the basis of our commitment to justice.

Jesus' vision of a just world expresses a fundamental longing of the whole Bible. The searing prayer of Psalm 107:5-9 may have stirred in Jesus' heart as he preached this beatitude to his disciples: "They were hungry and thirsty; their life was ebbing away. In their distress they cried to the LORD, who rescued them in their peril...Let them thank the LORD

for his kindness, such wondrous deeds for the children of Adam. For he satisfied the thirsty, filled the hungry with good things."

Where Justice Rules

Jesus wasn't an impractical dreamer looking in vain for an ideal world, but a tireless worker for justice. He would give his life healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, and confronting those whose sense of justice had withered. Jesus believed deeply that God's will for humanity is a place where justice rules. "Your kingdom come" was the heartbeat of Jesus' ministry and the voice of his great prayer. Every great saint steeped in the teaching of Jesus and animated by his Spirit has lived out this same vision of human life.

Those who hunger and thirst for justice "will be satisfied." Jesus' beatitude doesn't say how and when such satisfaction will come—only that it will. Any Christian who struggles to be just and treat others in the right manner follows in the footsteps of Jesus himself. +



Lord, I am grateful you came to heal the brokenhearted. Help me to trust in you when I am in trouble.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 29-
November 3

Monday, Weekday:
Eph 4:32—5:8 / Lk 13:10-17

Tuesday, Weekday:
Eph 5:21-33 or 5:2a, 25-32 / Lk 13:18-21

Wednesday, Weekday:
Eph 6:1-9 / Lk 13:22-30

Thursday, Solemnity of All Saints:
Rv 7:2-4, 9-14 / 1 Jn 3:1-3 / Mt 5:1-12a

Friday, Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls): Wis 3:1-9 / Rom 5:5-11 or Rom 6:3-9 / Jn 6:37-40

Saturday, Weekday: Phil 1:18b-26 / Lk 14:1, 7-11