



# Bringing Home the Word +

*Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)*

**August 2, 2020**

## God's "Cookie Jar"

*By Mary Katharine Deeley*

A cookie jar sits on a table outside my office. Thin Mints, Oreos, and chocolate chip cookies are there for the taking—free and welcome. Sometimes I wish it wasn't there because the daily temptation is hard to resist, though I do avoid the sweets most of the time.

The cookies are part of our hospitality corner. Hot water for tea, coffee, and hot chocolate is also available. Students and associates come to take a break from studying or working and appreciate the refreshment. Over the years, many have stopped by my office to talk about school, jobs, and the meaning of life. Who knew

that such a little thing as free cookies would create such graced moments?

Today we celebrate and remember the free gifts God has given to the human community. "Come to the water," Isaiah urges us; "The LORD is good to all, compassionate toward all your works," the psalmist cries out (Psalm 145:8). Saint Paul reminds us that nothing can separate us from God's love, and Jesus multiplies bread for thousands, making sure that all have what they need.

We only have cookies in our jar, and the looks on people's faces tell me they're much enjoyed. How much more, then, do we welcome and need what is in God's "cookie jar"—love, life, mercy, forgiveness, and himself?

We lift up one another in welcome and conversation. God lifts all of us up—teaching us, refreshing us, and showing us where we can participate in his hospitality by taking what he has given us and feeding others. +

***"The LORD is good to all,  
compassionate toward all  
your works," the psalmist  
cries out (Psalm 145:8).***

## A Word from Pope Francis

...The Church organized the eucharistic liturgy into moments which correspond to the words and the actions performed by him on the eve of his passion....In the eucharistic prayer, we give thanks to God for the whole work of redemption, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

General audience,  
February 28, 2018



## Sunday Readings

### **Isaiah 55:1-3**

All you who are thirsty,  
come to the water!

### **Romans 8:35, 37-39**

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

### **Matthew 14:13-21**

They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Are you grateful for the good things in your life that were free of charge?
- Are you grateful God has used you to bless others?



# Power Over Persecution

By Kathy Coffey

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

(Matthew 5:10).

If a vote was taken for the least-favorite Beatitude, this one might win. Our culture worships movie stars, sports heroes, corporate moguls—not saints. So why does Jesus proclaim that the persecuted are indeed blessed?

Jesus' style is not to make rigid rules but to hold up inspiring models. He asks us to look with new eyes upon the celebrities we may have admired and find hidden virtues in people who are quiet, unpublicized, and principled. If we shift our sights, we may find them more courageous, uplifting, and creative than those who once received our adulation.

Relatively few North Americans have suffered the oppression that is known by those in Asia, Africa, South America, and Central America. In countries like Bosnia, Rwanda, and El Salvador, genocide is common, being a catechist is dangerous, and the parents of the “disappeared” mourn their missing children.

You've had a glimmer of their experience if you've been a spokesperson for an unpopular, moral cause; the only ethical one in the department; the woman calling the “ol' boys club” (or the Church!) to equality; or belonging to

a group scorned by authorities. While being outside the norm pales beside the pain endured elsewhere, it teaches a lesson about being ostracized for the gospel.

## Bone-deep Beliefs

Those who have undergone persecution are sustained by solidarity, inner freedom, and the knowledge that it doesn't last forever (though it might feel that way). Standing with others who believe in the same cause, at least we're not alone.

The persecuted find intimacy with others that can surpass the idle conversations or superficial ties of secure relationships. Etty Hillesum, author of *An Interrupted Life*, died at Auschwitz at age twenty-nine. At the Nazi concentration camp she called herself “bread shared among the hungry.” Her journal's last words resonate with compassion: “We should act as a balm for all wounds.”

The persecuted are united: Their relationships are based on bone-deep beliefs. Members of the armed services cherish wartime buddies. They put their lives on the line together. So our deepest affinities may be to those with whom we share unpopular beliefs.

## Resting in Hope

From the writing of people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gandhi, or Óscar Romero emerges a sense of inner freedom. As the Gospel says, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna (hell)” (Matthew 10:28). Like the early Christians, Archbishop Romero predicted he would outlive his own martyrdom: “If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people.”

The persecuted teach us how much in our lives is superficial, how little is essential. Those deprived of material things still find joy and fulfillment.

Finally, Jesus directs us to place our sufferings in an eternal context. A problem that looms large does not last forever. The persecuted teach us to carry burdens lightly and wear our chains loosely. They take God's mission on earth seriously but can laugh at themselves.

We can approach persecutions as Jesus did. When we feel diminished by criticism, rejected by the “in” crowd, or demonized by those who disagree with us, we can rest in Jesus' assurance that we aren't alone, the pain doesn't last forever, and the kingdom is ours. +

## PRAYER

*Lord, your love and compassion are always with us in times of trouble. Help me walk in solidarity with those who suffer and show them your love and compassion.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 3–8

**Monday, Weekday:**

Jer 28:1–17 / Mt 14:22–36

**Tuesday, St. John Vianney:**

Jer 30:1–2, 12–15, 18–22 /  
Mt 14:22–36 or Mt 15:1–2, 10–14

**Wednesday, Weekday:**

Jer 31:1–7 / Mt 15:21–28

**Thursday, Transfiguration of the Lord:**

Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 / 2 Pt 1:16–19 / Mt 17:1–9

**Friday, Weekday:**

Na 2:1, 3; 3:1–3, 6–7 / Mt 16:24–28

**Saturday, St. Dominic:**

Hb 1:12–2:4 / Mt 17:14–20

Bringing Home  
the Word 

August 2, 2020

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# Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 9, 2020

## Walking in Faith

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

**G**iovanni Lanfranco's painting *Christ Saves Peter from Sinking in the Water* is placed in a rather hidden place in the Vatican—on purpose. When a newly elected pope walks out of the Sistine Chapel, he processes across the Sala Regia (regal room) and into the Loggia della Benedizione (blessing hall) to step out onto the façade of St. Peter's and greet the world as pope for the first time. Along the way he passes this painting of Peter sinking in the water. It speaks to that sinking feeling he probably experiences at that time!

This Gospel passage holds a great lesson for us all, even the pope. When Jesus comes walking on the water, he scares the disciples; they think he is a ghost. Sometimes Jesus scares us by what he asks, by how he wants to bless and shape us if we say yes. Jesus tells us not to be afraid, but Peter says, "Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." That the ghostly figure responds doesn't prove it is Jesus; it just proves whoever it is has heard Peter and answered.

To really know if it is Jesus, Peter has to get out of the boat. He has to walk in and take a risk. Only once he steps out on the water, can he do the impossible? Even then, his faith falters and he notices the waves. Such is our experience. Even when we trust, step out, and Jesus does great things, we are still weak! But not to worry: Jesus loves our effort and will always reach out and grab us. In the end, that is what we want, isn't it? To touch Jesus, to know it is him. +

## Sunday Readings

### 1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

Elijah...stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

### Romans 9:1–5

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit.

### Matthew 14:22–33

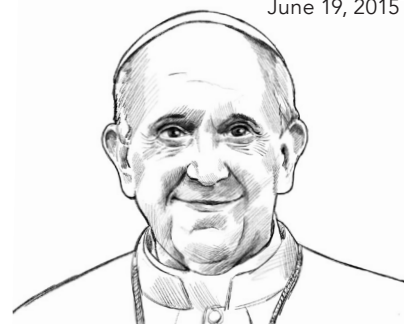
Peter said to [Jesus] in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

*Sometimes Jesus scares us  
by what he asks, by how  
he wants to bless and  
shape us if we say yes.*

## A Word from Pope Francis

We must ensure that in the usual activities of every Christian community, in parishes, in associations, and movements, there actually be at heart the personal encounter with Christ who communicates himself to us in his word, because, as St. Jerome teaches us, "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

Address to Catholic Biblical Federation,  
June 19, 2015



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When have you felt Jesus' presence most strongly in your life?
- Which "winds" distract you from Jesus?

# The Private Pain of Infertility

By Julie Irwin Zimmerman

The year after our wedding, I sat in church on Mother's Day and daydreamed about how joyful the holiday would be the following spring. My husband and I decided to have a baby, and I imagined we'd have our newborn the next Mother's Day. But the following May and the one after that we went to church with empty arms. To our dismay, we'd been diagnosed as among the 25 percent of married, childless couples in the United States who have trouble conceiving or carrying a baby to term.

It wasn't only Mother's Day that was hard to bear. Baptisms and baby showers were difficult. Sometimes merely seeing a pregnant woman or a couple with a baby sent me into despair.

The months developed an unwelcome rhythm, beginning with hope, then anxiety, and ending in tears. My prayer life had taken on the same rhythm: first, optimistic appeals for pregnancy; then, frantic pleas for help getting through the month; and finally, silent anguish when I felt my prayers had been ignored. I wondered: What have we done to deserve this? Why hasn't our simple wish for a child been granted?

Although infertility is common, it can be isolating to sufferers. Often friends and family don't know what to say, make awkward jokes, or avoid the



topic altogether. There are moral, ethical, and financial mine fields to navigate, and it's easy for spouses to disagree about what to do.

Couples facing infertility have three options: seek medical treatment, pursue adoption, or live without children. While it's understandable to want

to end the ordeal of infertility as quickly as possible, these decisions are important ones deserving prayer and discernment.

Catholic teaching on infertility treatment is often misunderstood. While the Catholic Church encourages couples to welcome children, not all medical options for infertility are considered acceptable. Surgeries and treatments that restore or enhance a couple's ability to conceive naturally or which assist the conjugal act are encouraged. Procedures that involve a third party, replacing natural conception or the conjugal act—artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and donor eggs or sperm—are considered unacceptable.

A document by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology," reiterates the long-standing position of the Church. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of physicians using NaPro Technology, which treats infertility in harmony with Church

teaching. The Pope Paul VI Institute is a leader in the field, and an internet search can help couples find local providers.

Adoption is also a path to parenthood that's filled with many blessings. Seeking out adoptive parents and hearing their stories can affirm for infertile couples the role God played in bringing them together.

And, of course, even in the midst of infertility, couples should take time to nurture their relationships and acknowledge that they're already a family. A weekend away, a walk in the woods, even setting aside dinner hours free from infertility talk helped my husband and me remind ourselves of our love and how satisfying our marriage was.

The experience of infertility helped me understand what Jesus did when he willingly accepted his cross. Before encountering infertility, I still believed if I worked hard enough at something, I could achieve it. Those years taught me a difficult, invaluable lesson about giving up control over my future and trusting God to reveal a future that was beyond my hopes and fears.

To learn more about Catholic teaching on reproductive technologies, please visit [usccb.org/LifeGivingLove](http://usccb.org/LifeGivingLove). +



*Lord, you taught your disciples to pray. Help me cultivate the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 10–15

**Monday**, St. Lawrence:  
2 Cor 9:6–10 / Jn 12:24–26

**Tuesday**, St. Clare:  
Ez 2:8–3:4 / Mt 18:1–5, 10, 12–14

**Wednesday**, Weekday:  
Ez 9:1–7; 10:18–22 / Mt 18:15–20

**Thursday**, Weekday:  
Ez 12:1–12 / Mt 18:21–19:1

**Friday**, St. Maximilian Kolbe:  
Ez 16:1–15, 60, 63 or 16:59–63 / Mt 19:3–12

**Saturday**, Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary:  
Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab / 1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56





# Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 16, 2020

## A Chosen People, a Common Ancestry

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Today's readings have a common theme: how Jesus' words to his Jewish brothers and sisters influence our faith.

The Catholic Church's relationship with our Jewish brothers and sisters has been strengthened dramatically over the last years. This is thanks in large part to Vatican II's Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), particularly Judaism.

Our deep connection with Judaism is rooted in the fact that God offered the Old Covenant to these Chosen People.

We are also indebted to them because their history and culture formed the lives of the people of God and the Holy Family, from which the early Church sprung.

Christianity's firm belief that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah is the reason our Church is like a shoot sprung from the root of Jesse. This difference was something Paul's Letter to the Romans dealt with directly—the need for all, both Jews and Gentiles, to accept Jesus.

The key element to this acceptance is the faith shown in the Gospels. Jesus reaches out to his fellow members of the house of Judah yet also recognizes that a Canaanite (Gentile) woman has faith that leads to salvation. This has key implications for both insiders and outsiders: One can no longer claim salvation by a bloodline or nationality but only by one's acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God and active participation in his body, the Church. Jesus broadens the welcome and opens God's house to all people. +

***St. Paul states the need for all—Jews and Gentiles—to accept Jesus.***

### A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus shows a particular predilection for those who are wounded in body and in spirit: the poor, the sinners, the possessed, the sick, the marginalized. Thus, he reveals himself as a doctor both of souls and of bodies, the good Samaritan of man. He is the true Savior: Jesus saves, Jesus cures, Jesus heals.

Angelus, February 8, 2015



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can you become more united with your ancestors in faith?
- How can you strengthen ties with your Christ family?

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

Them I will bring to my holy mountain / and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

### Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

### Matthew 15:21–28

[Jesus] said..., "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

# The Seventh Commandment and Hidden Forms of Theft

By Kathy Coffey

**"You shall not steal."**

Exodus 20:15

We might think, "Whew! Got off easy on that one!" We law-abiding sorts don't pilfer office supplies, skim from the collection plate, shoplift, or rob banks. At last, this

is one commandment we're handily observing, right?

Right—if we stick to the letter of the law. But the commandments are demanding, calling us beyond superficial observance. There are more forms of stealing than we might recognize. Let's look first at homegrown forms, then at the larger picture of social justice.

For example, we rob our families of hours together when we work overtime at jobs to buy more than necessities.

The Church has long taught that people created by God are too precious to be merely a means of profit. Our birthright gifts as God's children include dignity, security, the divine, transcendent love. So why do we hoard lesser things?

We steal a person's enthusiasm with negative comments. We quash plans that sound naïve to us, quell a child's creativity, stifle the initiative of a new employee. Unfounded fears can block imaginative solutions and worse—the inspiration of the Spirit.



Two forms of theft steal from the present: anxiety over the future or mulling about the past. Both rob the current moment of grace and potential.

## It's Not Just About Us

The items in closets that don't fit or aren't worn—these too are stolen from those who could be using them, who might

actually be thrilled to have them. As St. Basil reminds us: "The coat in your closet belongs to the naked. The shoes rotting in your basement belong to the barefoot."

Our property and talents belong to us but were given by God for the benefit of others. Here again, our model is Christ, who "became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

A look through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reveals social dimensions of this commandment, condemning: the payment of unjust wages, bribes to legislators, breaking a contract, and "work poorly done." Plus, discrimination against minorities, women, and immigrants—denying them job access—violates the Seventh Commandment.

How Las Vegas must tremble to hear the words, "The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement" (CCC 2413). We may cringe at the busloads of people pumping their savings into slot machines.

So, too, people who lavish more money and attention on pets than some children receive aren't exercising proper stewardship: "One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons" (CCC 2418).

On a global scale, the arms race plunders the planet's resources, substituting weapons for basic needs. President Dwight D. Eisenhower prophetically warned in his 1961 farewell address that the military-industrial complex could sap our country's riches.

## Paying Back

To conclude on a bright note, many people are making efforts at reparation. Corporate pollution may steal clean water and air, but it's heartening to think of the youth group at St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Richmond, VA. The kids sponsored a fast from every liquid but tap water and donated the money they would've spent to a project providing clean water in Nicaragua.

As Helen Keller said, "The world is full of suffering. It is full also of the overcoming of it." Those who repay the thefts occurring in homes and society honor the Seventh Commandment brilliantly. +

## PRAYER

*Lord, you offered the healing love and compassion of God to the sick and poor. Help me be an instrument of God's 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

August 17–22

**Monday, Weekday:**  
Ez 24:15–24 / Mt 19:16–22  
**Tuesday, Weekday:**  
Ez 28:1–10 / Mt 19:23–30  
**Wednesday, Weekday:**  
Ez 34:1–11 / Mt 20:1–16

**Thursday, St. Bernard:**  
Ez 36:23–28 / Mt 22:1–14  
**Friday, St. Pius X:**  
Ez 37:1–14 / Mt 22:34–40  
**Saturday, Queenship of Blessed Virgin Mary:**  
Ez 43:1–7ab / Mt 23:1–12



# Bringing Home the Word +

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 23, 2020

## Upon this Rock

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Saint Peter's Basilica is built on the tomb of Peter, which literally serves as the rock on which the Church is built. Peter states his faith, acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, in the name of the other apostles. In reply, the Lord reveals his intended mission for Peter: to become the visible foundation of the Church.

This account also tells us that Peter's act of faith did not come through "flesh and blood," that is, through his human abilities, but through a particular revelation from God. By contrast, right afterward, as Jesus foretells his passion, death, and resurrection, Peter "began to rebuke him," denying that this would

ever happen (Matthew 16:22). Jesus scolds him in return.

Peter shows his human weakness and what he is: a stone along the path on which men can stumble. In this scene, the drama of each soul and the history of the papacy and Church itself are anticipated. There is the joint presence of divine assistance, by which the papacy constitutes the Church's foundation throughout history, and human weakness, which is also evident through the centuries and can be transformed only through abandonment to God's action.

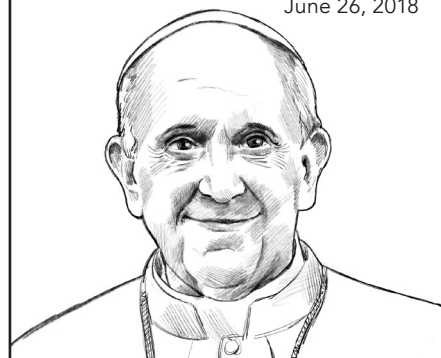
In today's Gospel, Jesus clearly promises the forces of evil will not prevail. Prophets such as Jeremiah (1:18–19) were threatened only by human enemies, whereas Peter will have to be defended from a supernatural evil. Jeremiah receives a promise that affects him as a person and his prophetic ministry; Peter receives assurances concerning the future of the Church and the new community founded by Christ "upon this rock." +

***The Lord reveals his intended mission for Peter: to become the visible foundation of the Church.***

## A Word from Pope Francis

The acceptance of our body as a gift from God is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father...Thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy an absolute power over creation.

Address to Pontifical Academy for Life, June 26, 2018



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### ONE QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

- How willing are you to let the pope, Peter's successor, confirm your faith today?
- What are you doing to ensure your faith is built on a solid foundation?

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 22:19–23

What he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, no one will open.

### Romans 11:33–36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever.

### Matthew 16:13–20

[Jesus said,] "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

# Want to Be in that Number?

By Kathleen M. Basi

When I was a child, I had a book about saints that I loved. It was filled with color pictures and heroic, larger-than-life stories. I spent hours trying to decide whether I liked Catherine of Siena or Catherine of Alexandria better. I felt as if I ought to like Siena better for cutting her hair off and being a nun and all, but Alexandria's picture was prettier.

It was years before I realized most of these people weren't the golden-haired northern Europeans portrayed in my book.

It was later still before I realized that by focusing on legends and miracles, I had turned sainthood into something reserved for a select few—something far beyond the reach of an ordinary mortal like me.

These days, I prefer to think of the saints as real people, flawed and fragile, representing every country and culture on earth. Yet for all their diversity, each of them sought exactly what I seek: discernment and courage to walk in the footsteps of Christ in a way that is authentic both to his example and to the time and place in which I live.

Now, my favorite stories speak not of miracles, but of extraordinary courage in ordinary situations—like Elizabeth Ann Seton, who, as an impoverished widow, founded the first parochial school in this country, along with a new order of religious—all while raising her own children.



They speak of deeply practical courage in extraordinary circumstances—like Maximilian Kolbe, who willingly starved to death in place of a fellow concentration-camp prisoner in Auschwitz. In my opinion, that would be even harder than volunteering for a firing squad, where at least the end would come quickly.

And then there are figures with checkered pasts, like Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton—those who don't have feast days in the Church calendar but whose words and actions have reverberated like earthquakes, reshaping the foundation of my faith.

Real people. Real lives. People stumbling through their world in all its messiness, trying to find the path to holiness amid chaos and to identify their

individual purpose for why God placed them on this earth. Those people give me hope. If they managed to find their purpose, maybe I can, too.

It's no longer enough for me to read a paragraph or two about the legendary exploits of those with "Saint" in front of their names. I want to know how the real people behind those legends lived. How they learned to mirror God while surrounded by cranky kids and clueless coworkers and spouses who insist on using dish towels to wipe dirty mouths. Because that is the path I need illuminated. +

***Real people. Real lives.  
The saints stumbled through  
their world trying to find  
holiness amid chaos,  
just like we do.***

## PRAYER

***Lord, you entrusted the keys  
of the kingdom of heaven  
to your people. Help me be your  
wise and responsible servant.***

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 24–29

**Monday**, St. Bartholomew:  
Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51


**Tuesday**, Weekday:  
2 Thes 2:1–3a, 14–17 / Mt 23:23–26

**Wednesday**, Weekday:  
2 Thes 3:6–10, 16–18 / Mt 23:27–32

**Thursday**, St. Monica:  
1 Cor 1:1–9 / Mt 24:42–51

**Friday**, St. Augustine:  
1 Cor 1:17–25 / Mt 25:1–13

**Saturday**, St. John the Baptist:  
1 Cor 1:26–31 / Mk 6:17–29

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August 23, 2020

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# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 30, 2020

## The Salvation He Offers

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Once Peter is called “the rock” for his faith, he turns and dissuades Jesus from the cross. Jesus responds sternly: “Get behind me, Satan!”

Jesus reveals two important things here. First, that Satan exists. Satan is very interested in going unnoticed, yet Jesus calls him out and makes Peter (and us) aware. The Bible is full of references to the devil. Popular culture also has focused on evil spirits—fascinated as it is with the occult, vampires, and the like. It seems to bear evil out more (and profit more from it) than some Catholics in the pews!

The second truth is that Satan

can influence our thinking. I’m not referring to diabolical possession, which is a reality, but the more common temptations to lower our aspirations and to conform our thinking to a faithless perspective.

The painting *Satan Before the Lord* by Corrado Giaquinto, which depicts Satan asking and receiving permission to tempt Job, focuses on this reality of evil. Satan knows our hearts and finds just the right strategy to lead us away from God. It usually involves one of the vices (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, or pride). Just like when Satan tempts Peter, he wants us to reject the demands of the cross, for he knows the cross is the instrument of his demise.

When God permits temptations to assail us or the effects of evil to touch our lives, we should respond humbly, as Job and Peter did. If God permits evil, it is only because he trusts us to love him sincerely—not just for the blessings he sends, but because of the salvation he offers. +

***Satan knows our hearts and finds just the right strategy to lead us away from God.***

## Sunday Readings

### Jeremiah 20:7–9

All day long I am an object of laughter; / everyone mocks me.

### Romans 12:1–2

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God.

### Matthew 16:21–27

[Jesus said,] “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

## A Word from Pope Francis

Homes for the elderly... should be the “sanctuaries” of humanity where one who is old and weak is cared for and protected....It is so good to go visit an elderly person! Look at our children: sometimes we see them listless and sad; they go visit an elderly person and become joyful!

Meeting with the elderly,  
September 28, 2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How are you tempted by the enemy of your soul?
- Are you ever convinced you aren’t being tempted at all?

# Service: Our Path to Joy

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

Jesus taught by word and deed. In his Sermon on the Mount he delivers words that point to the path of happiness. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the peacemakers, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful. The Beatitudes sketch out in exquisite detail the Christian map for happiness.

In the Gospel of John we are given a humble, simple, hospitable deed of washing feet. After he is finished, Jesus—knowing that the disciples lacked full understanding—urges them into action: “Blessed are you if you do it” [washing of feet and Jesus’ other teachings] (13:17b).

We have here a highly pragmatic path to happiness. In doing the loving thing and reaching out to others in service, we participate in the inner life of Jesus. By doing what Jesus did, we enter into a blessed way of life.

Conventional wisdom finds this absurd. The cultural messages we get would have us believe that happiness lies in “doing it my way.” We’re often told, “You only go around once, so grab as much as you can get,” and, “The one who dies with the most toys wins.” Biblical wisdom proclaims that blessedness lies in surrendering to God’s will, in service to others, in washing another’s feet.

How do we do this? We wash one another’s feet by stopping to help a



stranded motorist or holding the hand of a dying person. We wash one another’s feet when we attempt to change unjust systems, when we strive to end world hunger, when social justice and the gospel become our priority. The happiness and blessedness that Jesus proposes is not living

well, feeling good, or staying in our comfort zones. This gospel living is risky business.

## Missing the Point

It is consoling to see that the disciples often struggled to understand what Jesus was about. Peter saw suffering as inappropriate to Jesus’ life. James and John would have God send down fire upon an inhospitable Samaritan town. Thomas didn’t believe reports that Jesus had risen. We should not be surprised if we, too, find it difficult to equate blessedness with a life of service. Every day we should pray for two things: the knowledge to understand Jesus’ teaching, and the courage to put it into action.

If we are to become disciples, we can’t just give a portion of our time, talent, and treasure to God. The cost of discipleship involves the giving of self. Since we are made in the likeness of a self-giving God, our vocation is to strive in grace to image the God who made us.

One simple, concrete expression of this self-giving love that leads to blessedness is the washing of feet. It is a symbol of a large reality, God’s kingdom: being totally for others, whatever their needs. In serving one another, we serve the Lord and become like Jesus.

## Bountiful Byproducts

Those who serve as Jesus did experience an indescribable joy because through that service—be it the washing of feet, the giving of a cup of cold water, a word of affection—we are bonded to Christ and the community. In that bonding lies happiness, and from it flows two byproducts: joy and peace.

**Concluding prayer:** Lord, sometimes we just don’t get it. Help us to understand that by caring for others we further your kingdom. Do not let us pursue a false blessedness through a life of self-seeking. Rather, draw us into your life and ministry. Therein we will do your will and know your peace. +

## PRAYER

*Lord, your resurrection conquered sin and death. Give me the strength to overcome pride so I can become a humble servant of your love and peace.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 31–September 5

**Monday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 2:1–5 / Lk 4:16–30

**Tuesday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 2:10b–16 / Lk 4:31–37

**Wednesday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 3:1–9 / Lk 4:38–44

**Thursday, St. Gregory the Great:**  
1 Cor 3:18–23 / Lk 5:1–11

**Friday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 4:1–5 / Lk 5:33–39

**Saturday, Weekday:**  
1 Cor 4:6b–15 / Lk 6:1–5

Bringing Home  
the Word 

August 30, 2020

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