



Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 9, 2017

A Simple Life

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When my children were young, we went for a walk around the neighborhood. On one street we encountered two girls, about five and six years old. The elder child had her arm around the younger and was talking convincingly. "I'll tell you how it goes," she said. "I'll tell you what to do, and you do it." The five-year-old, all eyes, nodded her head at the wisdom of these words.

I don't advocate that one person should tell another what to do, but I know I was smiling, because I thought,

"It would be nice if the world was so simple."

Our readings today present the deceptively simple solution to the demands and the temptations of the world. It is as though God is saying, "I will tell you how it goes."

In the face of war and devastation, Zechariah shows us the God of peace, who rides a donkey and whose justice lasts forever.

In the face of hunger, anger, and oppression, the psalmist prays to God, who is slow to anger and abounds in mercy, who raises up the fallen and satisfies the desire of every living thing, and whose reign lasts forever.

In the face of death of body and spirit, Paul talks about the life that can be ours if we but open ourselves to the Spirit of God.

And Jesus, seeing that we are burdened by temptations, the expectations of others, the laws that oppress rather than help us live, invites us to become like children, to take off the heavy yoke that binds and put on the yoke of Christ which gives life. Is he telling us what to do? Yes. All that's left is for us to do it. †

*Wouldn't life be great
if we just obeyed Jesus?*

A Word From Pope Francis

God has hidden [the mysteries of his Kingdom, the manifestation of divine lordship in Jesus and the victory over Satan] from those who are all too full of themselves and who claim to know everything already.....

One can easily think of some of Jesus' contemporaries whom he repeatedly admonished, but the danger is one that always exists and concerns us, too. The "little ones," for their part, are the humble, the simple, the poor, the marginalized, those without voice, those weary and burdened, whom Jesus pronounced "blessed."

—World Mission Day,
June 8, 2014



Sunday Readings

Zechariah 9:9-10

Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Romans 8:9, 11-13

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Matthew 11:25-30

[Jesus said,] "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How can I yoke myself to Jesus, my Lord and king?
- What burdens, stressors, or disappointments can I hand over to God this week?



Staying God's Course Amidst Sin

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

"Behold I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves, so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

Jesus was a realist. The world, although charged with the grandeur of God, is also an environment scarred by sin and the misuse of the gift of freedom. For centuries Christian writers spoke of life as a warfare, a battle unto death. So Jesus gives two pieces of advice to the disciples, to us: Be shrewd! Be simple! To ground these characteristics in his followers' imagination, Jesus points out the cunning of serpents and the simplicity of doves. These metaphors contain a wealth of wisdom.

Be shrewd! When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about the payment of taxes, they received an answer that foiled their plot to incriminate him. The wolves were after the innocent Lamb. Jesus fended off their designs by distinguishing one's double obligation to God and to the city of man. Jesus answered a question with a question, thereby confusing his opponents. Jesus himself was shrewd—in the ways of the kingdom.

Shrewd, too, was Oskar Schindler (1908–1974), a German industrialist who helped save more than a thousand Jews from Hitler's death camps. Living in a culture of hatred and death, Schindler used his intelligence, material resources, and the God-given grace of compassion to thwart time and time again the work

of the Nazis. Perhaps our passage, "I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves" was engraved on his heart.

Be simple! In contrast to serpents that are bound to the earth and depend upon deception for their survival, doves have as their realm the spaciousness of the sky and the gift of flight. Although their simplicity may hold more complexity than we are aware of, the image of simplicity captures the quality of single-mindedness. Doves live in total dependency upon divine providence, as do we all. We, as human beings, can live with an awareness that we are radically poor and, therefore, everything is a gift. Consciousness of our innate poverty tends to simplify life.

All About Love

In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau's classic, he cries: "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! Let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your account on your thumbnail....Simplify, simplify."

Whether or not Thoreau had Matthew's passage in mind, the advice here is similar to that of Jesus. There is one thing that is necessary. Martha thought it was hospitality; Mary opted for contemplation. Martha waited on table to express her love; Mary gazed upon the face of Jesus and knew that love simplified everything.

As disciples of the Lord we are sent. Through baptism we have been given a mission to invite others to know, love, and imitate the life of Jesus. But we are sent

into a world filled with forces contrary to gospel values. We work and live in an ambiguous culture, one of death, blatant consumerism, violence, and injustice that violates human dignity. We need a shrewdness that is first cousin to prudence if our ministry in such an environment is to succeed.

Sense of Direction

We are sent but not alone. The Spirit is given to us and is the principal agent of our discipleship. God's Spirit is simple, for God is love. Here is the cornerstone that supports and sustains our Christian community and ministry. It is the Spirit that unifies all of our activities so that they lead to the glory of God.

Jesus is Lord and the true vine feeding us life and love. Prayer keeps us united to him. We are to bear fruit through service and witness. And, in all this, we give glory to God. Nothing can be simpler, nothing can be shrewder. †

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PRAYER

Lord, you give rest to the weary of heart. Help me create space in my life to rest in your presence.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 10–15

Mon. Weekday:
Gn 28:10–22a / Mt 9:18–26


Tue. St. Benedict:
Gn 32:23–33 / Mt 9:32–38

Wed. Weekday: Gn 41:55–57; 42:5–7a,
17–24a / Mt 10:1–7

Thu. Weekday: Gn 44:18–21, 23b–29;
45:1–5 / Mt 10:7–15

Fri. St. Kateri Tekakwitha:
Gn 46:1–7, 28–30 / Mt 10:16–23

Sat. St. Bonaventure:
Gn 49:29–32; 50:15–26a / Mt 10:24–33

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