



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time | September 30, 2018

We Are All Part of the Mission of Christ

By Mary Katharine Deeley

One of the great religious scandals is the multiplication of Christian denominations. Fueled partly by arguments about structure, Scripture, theology, and emphasis on individual autonomy (“I don’t like what you’re doing, so I’ll start my own church”), the number has risen over the last few centuries into the hundreds. We can be certain this isn’t what Jesus intended. His frequent prayer was “that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and

I in you” (John 17:21). But Jesus knew the human temptation to exclude those whom we do not like or understand. The call for oneness can be distorted into the call for exclusiveness, with a select few deciding who’s in and who’s out, depending on criteria they alone decide.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus reminds the disciples that they are not the sole recipients of spiritual gifts or divine grace. Perhaps remembering the account in Numbers, Jesus gently points out that those who preach, heal, or cast out demons in his name are not doing wrong simply because they are not part of the twelve. They, too, can be part of Christ’s mission. Jesus reminds them (and us) of the catholic (universal) nature of the body of Christ. I think this prepared them for the spread of Christianity.

As Catholics, we’re diverse. Unique. We’re also united to many Christians through our common, Trinitarian baptism. And so we pray for the day that all people will be one in the fullness of Christ’s power and truth. +

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A Word From Pope Francis

Every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, ...And every elderly person, even if he is ill or at the end of his days, bears the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded, as the “culture of waste” suggests! They cannot be thrown away!

—Address to International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, September 20, 2013



Sunday Readings

Numbers 11:25–29

[Eldad and Medad] had remained in the camp, yet the spirit came to rest on them also.

James 5:1–6

You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of [your own] slaughter.

Mark 9:38–43, 45, 47–48

[Jesus said,] “It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I welcome Catholics from other cultures and traditions, even those very different from my own?
- Do I accept that other Christian denominations can also be part of Christ’s mission?



Being Catholic Matters

By Karen Sue Smith

In the comedy *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, the main character, a woman named Toula, spends most of the film showing her boyfriend-turned-fiancé what it means to be Greek. The movie producers liked the script but tried to persuade writer Nia Vardalos to change the ethnicity; otherwise, they predicted, it wouldn't sell.

She insisted on being who she was—and the movie was a hit. Her film resonated with viewers across ethnic lines. They understood that being Polish, Hispanic, or Japanese isn't about the language, foods, ways of celebrating, or worshiping. Ethnicity is a self-reflecting pair of glasses through which families see themselves and relate to their neighbors.

Being Catholic is also a self-reflecting lens through which we understand ourselves and interpret our world. For most Catholics, the faith provides a childhood home. For some, it is a home chosen in adulthood.

Being Catholic means developing a set of attitudes so that we *want* to follow Christ, be good, help the needy, correct injustice, pardon sinners. It gives us values that help us discern right from wrong, our life's purpose, whom to marry, and how to raise children. We learn how to worship publicly, how to thank God at home, and how to mark the stages of our lives (in baptism,

Communion, vows). With ritual we anoint our sick and bury our dead.

Universal Language

Being Catholic means sharing beliefs, practices, behaviors, attitudes, and languages with others around the globe.

Understanding how enormous and embracing it is to be Catholic takes us a long way toward seeing how much our faith actually affects us. The reason Toula and her family explain, model, and welcome the non-Greek fiancé into their world is that being Greek is key to his understanding Toula. How else can he know her? And if he doesn't know her, can he truly love her? If ethnicity is this important, how much more important is faith!

Being Catholic doesn't mean, of course, that every Catholic follows every precept without fail, marries only other Catholics or enters every time the church door is open. It does mean that if we vary from the norm (for example, if we marry a Lutheran), we stay connected to the Catholic family.

It should be obvious that passing on the faith is essential for any serious Catholic parent. How else can all these values and practices be instilled? Even if a child later rejects the faith, parents will have given that son or daughter important beliefs and actions, and a community in which to grow.

Passing It On

Can one still be a good person without being Catholic? Certainly. We Catholics don't see ourselves as the only good people in the world! Can one still be a good person without being Greek? What if one *is* Catholic? Can "being Catholic" help me become a better person than I would have been otherwise?

Turn the question around. For a Catholic not to *be* Catholic, not to discover its riches, not to be part of the community, leaves an important set of blanks. Without being Catholic, how do I mark the milestones of my life? How do I anoint my sick loved ones? What community holds me accountable, supports me? How do I teach my children the meaning of their lives?

In his day Jesus knew that few would be silly enough to light a lamp and stick it under a basket. Likewise, today few people would refuse ownership of a home they inherited when they could live there, raise their family there, grow old there, and pass it to their heirs. +



Lord, I am grateful for your all-embracing love. Open my eyes to see you in everyone I meet.

Open my heart to welcome all of your people.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 1-6

Monday, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus:
Jb 1:6-22 / Lk 9:46-50

Tuesday, Holy Guardian Angels:
Jb 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23 / Mt 18:1-5, 10

Wednesday, Weekday:
Jb 9:1-12, 14-16 / Lk 9:57-62

Thursday, St. Francis of Assisi:
Jb 19:21-27 / Lk 10:1-12

Friday, Weekday:
Jb 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5 / Lk 10:13-16

Saturday, Weekday:
Jb 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17 / Lk 10:17-24