



Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 21, 2019

Choosing “the Better Part”

By Mary Katharine Deeley

During the holidays, my husband and I invite relatives, friends, and students who can’t return home to share our meal and find welcome in a special time. We enjoy cooking for a crowd, and our guests often bring something to share, adding to the bounty. Beforehand, we clean and dust, making sure the house is presentable. Our preparations are anything but relaxed. On the day itself, my husband usually cooks the meal while I offer drinks and conversation. The event couldn’t succeed without either of our roles.

In the first reading, Abraham put wife Sarah and the servants to work to provide the feast while he waited on the guests. To his (and his wife’s) surprise, the strangers asked where Sarah was and promised her a son. In this moment, we see that Abraham isn’t the only important person in the story. God’s blessing came mainly to the one in the kitchen, in the background.

When Jesus visits the sisters of Bethany, Martha remains in the kitchen like Sarah. In her anxiety, did she believe God’s favor would come only to those who toil? Jesus reminds her there also is blessing in sitting with the guest; he even calls this “the better part.”

There is pride and vanity in assuming we can achieve favor and blessing through our works. When we start to think we know where, when, how, and to whom God will come, it’s good to return to the word, which reminds us that favor and blessing come according to God’s choosing and often to our surprise. +

Sunday Readings

Genesis 18:1–10a

One of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.”

Colossians 1:24–28

It is he whom we proclaim,

A Word Pope Francis

When elderly couples are celebrating fifty years together, come to the Mass here, I said. “Who supported me? This is beautiful. I look at each one of you and say: you are a beautiful witness.”

—Address to engaged couples, St. Peter’s Basilica, February 14, 2014

REFLECT
QUESTIONS
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REFLECT

Marriage in the Middle

By Susan Hines-Brigger

Recently my husband and I went on a date ...to the grocery store... without our four kids. Exciting, right? For us, it was. It was wonderful and exciting because it was the closest thing we've had to a date night in a long time. Welcome to the second stage of marriage.

Twenty years ago, Mark and I stood before our family and friends and promised to love, honor, and cherish one another in good times and bad, in sickness and health. Now, looking back, I can confidently say we had no idea what those vows actually meant.

In the first years of our marriage, we managed to adapt to life with one another and our quirks. But then our first child, Maddie, came along and everything changed. I'm often reminded of a quote from my favorite movie, *Hope Floats*: "Beginnings are scary, endings are usually sad, but it's the middle that counts the most."

Suddenly life in this middle stage of marriage meant we were faced with a new set of challenges. Lack of sleep, different parenting styles, hectic schedules, and career goals seemed to push our relationship to the edge. Time together as a couple took a back seat. We became aware that these are the years when the rubber meets the road when it comes to marriage. It's the time when we



put tough flesh on our vows.

We would commiserate with friends—many of whom found themselves in the same situation—about things like nearly nonexistent sex lives, financial struggles, house repairs, and a complete lack of a social life.

The subsequent births of our next three children over the next ten years brought more and new challenges to our marriage—and meant less time for us grownups to spend together. My role as bad cop to Mark's good cop has caused more than its share of arguments. But we ride out the ebbs and flows, knowing full well that we are in this for the long haul. That's not to say it's always easy, though.

It's easy to see how so many couples drift apart during this stage. Adding to the challenge is what seems to be a lack of support for those couples in the second stage of their marriage journey. Suddenly, the support systems that help couples get to the altar fade away.

A Change in Perspective

Relationships will change from day to day, month to month, year to year. But for all its challenges, life in this stage of marriage can also be exciting and filled with blessings and adventures. Traveling that journey with your spouse has the

potential to bring you together.

So, yes, date nights of a rented movie after to bed or Friday night. And while lunch dates, dinner dates, the important we're together. And no of babysitting age, we to rediscover date night alone—thus the exciting adventure. It's not much what we can get.

The most important connected, remembering the same team. That is of marriage as it was in will continue to be in. Sometimes the best you shopping on a Friday.

Before we know it, grown and our marriage new phase. Who knows us? Whatever it is, the Mark and I are up for

PRA

*Lord, you teach
welcome stran
the fear that ke
accepting and lov
backgrounds diffe*

—From *Faithful Meditations in Ordinary Time*, Rev. and Mary Ann

**WEEKDAY
READINGS**

Monday, St. Mary Magdalene: Sgs 3:1–4b
or 2 Cor 5:14–17 / Jn 20:1–2, 11–18

Thursday, St. James: 2
Mt 20:20–28