



Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter | May 6, 2018

Overcoming Our Prejudices

By Mary Katharine Deeley

It's not often we're caught in our prejudices. My moment of reckoning came with the birth of my second daughter. My hospital roommate was a teenager giving birth to her third child. My husband and I were having trouble making ends meet, and even with insurance we'd still have hospital bills to pay.

I resented the free care my roommate was receiving. *Why can't you be more responsible?* I thought. *Because of people like you, my hospital bills are higher.*

Reflecting back, I'm ashamed of my attitude. I held the assumption that I had

a "right" to this fine hospital because I was working, could pay bills, and had insurance. Would I deny my roommate's child the level of care I wanted for my own?

The early Church wrestled with that type of question. Should Gentiles be admitted to the Christian community? They were considered unclean, and any Jew who touched them or ate with them would be made unclean.

In the encounter with Cornelius, Peter comes to realize that there is no clean or unclean when it comes to people. God shows no partiality. The Holy Spirit makes a convincing argument to the believers by falling on the Gentiles even before they're baptized.

We often decide, out loud or in our thoughts, who is worthy of our care or God's. But Jesus commanded us to love one another and to dwell in love, because God is love.

It's our prejudice that gets in the way. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 10:25–26, 34–35, 44–48

[Peter said,] "God shows no partiality...Whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him."

1 John 4:7–10

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God.

John 15:9–17

[Jesus said,] "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

***Jesus commands us
to love each other.
It's not a request.***

A Word From Pope Francis

Therefore, this Word of God calls us to love one another, even if we do not always understand each other, and do not always get along....It is then that Christian love is seen. A love which manifests even if there are differences of opinion or character. Love is greater than these differences!

—Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 10, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I help or love someone who disagrees with me or doesn't believe what I believe?
- What do I do when I catch myself being prejudiced?



Discrimination: Not Just a Black-and-White Issue

By Jim and Susan Vogt

We were walking down the street when some children approached us to ask a question. This is not unusual unless you know the context: We were visiting Mali in West Africa and were the only white people in the village.

People in ethnic and racial minorities frequently have this experience when they venture out of our largely segregated neighborhoods. So what does being in a majority or minority have to do with one's faith? Generally it has to do with being privileged or oppressed. Jesus was always on the side of the underdog or, to be more scriptural, the "undersheep": "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?" (Matthew 18:12).

Discrimination is immoral because it is grounded in inequities. "Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of the family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father" (*Brothers and Sisters to Us*, a pastoral letter on racism by Catholic bishops, 1979).

Although being part of an oppressed minority is often based on race or ethnicity, it also applies to class, education, or disability. The common denominator is that the majority has privilege and power while the minority

is disadvantaged from the start. This usually means inferior schools, rougher neighborhoods, health problems, and families caught in the cycle of poverty.

Those in the dominant culture may agree these social problems are unfortunate and may volunteer to help in their spare time, but the issues probably don't impact their everyday lives. Most of us live in neighborhoods where people look and act like us. Our friendship circles feel comfortable. While there's nothing wrong with that, it can be a narrow experience of life. Living with only like-minded people can stunt our worldviews and keep us from investing in the lives of those who don't look like us.

We believe most Catholics aren't overtly racist. But just as there are degrees of skin color, there are degrees of accepting those of different backgrounds. If you're part of the majority culture, it's often hard to recognize subtle prejudice, like moving to the other side of the street when a group from another race approaches, or preferring merchants who look like you.

Christianity calls us to more than *not* being racist or prejudiced; we must take positive steps to create an environment in which all people are respected. You don't have to sell your home and move to a low-income neighborhood to prove you're broad-minded. There are other proactive ways to build bridges:

- **What's on your walls, stovetop, or music library?** Try displaying art from other cultures and listening to music from other ethnicities. Serve food from various countries. You might find a new favorite dish.
- **When have you had a person of a different culture to dinner?** If you don't know anyone well enough to invite to dinner, make it a goal to get to know at least one person from another cultural group.
- **Have all your friends gone to college?** Don't let educational prejudice blind you to the worth of others. Chat with people you might normally ignore. You might learn something.

Look at all the colors in God's dazzling rainbow. It can make us more understanding and help us see our fellow humans as God sees us—children made in the image of God. +

PRAYER

Risen Lord, you command us to love one another. Help me to show your love to all people.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 7-12, 2018

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:11-15 / Jn 15:26-16:4a

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:22-34 / Jn 16:5-11

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 17:15, 22-18:1 / Jn 16:12-15

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:1-8 / Jn 16:16-20

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:9-18 / Jn 16:20-23

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:23-28 / Jn 16:23b-28