



Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

July 5, 2020

Childlike Faith

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Humble souls have a special ability to see things. We exclaim, “Out of the mouth of babes” when kids say the darnedest (and most profound) things (Matthew 21:16 and Psalm 8:2–3). What their uncluttered minds can catch and express with blatant honesty can be refreshing and funny.

Jesus enjoys this simplicity as well. He rejoices because, while “the wise and the learned” have rejected his preaching and mighty deeds, the childlike have embraced them. They are not afraid of the implications; they simply are amazed, impressed, and accept that no one but

God could do such things. Perhaps this is why artists often depict angels like little children!

Jesus can speak of heavenly mysteries because he is the Son. The Father and he are one and share in the fullness of knowledge. Christ sits in glory surrounded by cherubs and angels, yet comes down to reveal what the Father has given him. Let’s embrace all of his revealed word with childlike faith and not just pick and choose what suits us.

Another characteristic of little children is unending energy. It comes partly from their age but also endures because they don’t waste energy worrying or thinking about things they cannot control. They don’t plan, project, or prioritize. They live in the grace of the present. We will find that as we live simply and give our burdens to Jesus, we live more rested, peaceful lives. Let’s take on his childlike humility, which makes the burdensome easy and light. +

While “the wise and the learned” reject Jesus’ preaching and mighty deeds, the childlike embrace them.

A Word from Pope Francis

To do good...that is what God wants. He, who became small for our sake, asks us to offer something for the least of his brothers and sisters. Who are they? They are those who have nothing to give in return, the needy, the hungry, the stranger, the prisoner, the poor.

—Homily, January 6, 2018



Sunday Readings

Zechariah 9:9–10

Behold: your king is coming to you
....Humble, and riding on a donkey.

Romans 8:9, 11–13

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 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?

Can We Be Saints of the Sandwich Generation?

By Gloria Hutchinson

When my mother died, she left behind an “orphan.” He was eighty and beginning to lose his way. Pop needed parenting, and we were the candidates. The Fourth Commandment loomed large as we faced honoring our father while supporting our son in college, continuing our full-time jobs, and regularly traveling across three states to provide Pop’s care.

I can empathize with “the sandwich generation.” It’s an apt label for the adult children who are getting squeezed between elderly parents and at-home children. Millions of Americans are currently attempting to manage their parents’ needs while supporting their children.

As Catholics, we don’t have to wonder what is expected of us. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says this about the responsibilities of grown children to their parents: “As much as they can, they must give them material and moral support in old age and in times of illness, loneliness, or distress” (CCC 2218). Notice the wisdom of “as much as they can.” My husband, our son, and I struggled to do our best in providing for Pop as his dementia worsened. I repeatedly had to consult my conscience in deciding how



much we could do, and how much had to be done by paid surrogates.

Lack of support is a common complaint of the sandwich generation in whom resentment may rise like bread dough. We need help. What we often get are critical questions from the sidelines about what is being done for “poor Mom” or “poor

Dad.” We need rest. What we often get are desperate late-night calls from worried elders and cancellations from caregivers who need time off.

Sustaining the Sandwich People

Some parishes have already recognized the sandwich generation as fertile ground for pastoral care. Those who are parenting their children *and* nursing their parents can be bowled over by multiple expectations from young and old alike. The wise, compassionate Christian community offers educational workshops on elder care and provides respite care and spiritual support groups to sustain the sandwich people.

The wise also recognize the daily lives of this caregiver group as a graduate school for saints-in-progress. Having been nourished as children by our parents’ love, we now gladly take up the vocation of shepherding them as their needs require.

We welcome the opportunity to

embody Sirach’s proverb: “With your whole heart honor your father; your mother’s birth pangs do not forget” (7:27). We redouble our commitment when we hear, “Do not cast me aside in my old age; / as my strength fails, do not forsake me” (Psalm 71:9).

As we accompanied my father through the inevitable stages of semi-independent living, at-home care and, finally, a skilled nursing facility, we grew closer to him in his weakness than we ever had in his strength. I never would have survived the twelve-year journey with my sanity intact had I not been refreshed by God’s grace. A primary channel of that grace was the guidance and companionship of the saints. For example, when I muttered angrily about those who seemed to care so little for Pop, Francis of Assisi calmly noted, “Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor vexation.” Or, when I became depressed over my lack of time for spiritual reading, Charles Borromeo pragmatically advised, “Do not give yourself so completely that you have nothing left for yourself.”

For us “saints-in-training,” the advice of the saints will see us through the sandwich generation and to that final banqueting table where the banner over us, our parents, and our children will be love. +


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 6–11

Monday, Weekday:
Hos 2:16, 17b–18, 21–22 / Mt 9:18–26

Tuesday, Weekday:
Hos 8:4–7, 11–13 / Mt 9:32–38

Wednesday, Weekday:
Hos 10:1–3, 7–8, 12 / Mt 10:1–7

Thursday, Weekday:
Hos 11:1–4, 8e–9 / Mt 10:7–15

Friday, Weekday:
Hos 14:2–10 / Mt 10:16–23

Saturday, St. Benedict:
Is 6:1–8 / Mt 10:24–33

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Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
July 12, 2020

The Eye of God

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The Book of Romans meditates on a truth we sometimes neglect but that has inspired many artists. Creation longs to share in the freedom of God's kingdom. Sin has affected nature, so salvation will also set it free from corruption. What would a glorified planet look like? Charles Burchfield, a nature painter, tried to imagine just that.

He painted thousands of scenes from his bedroom in Salem, OH. He became obsessed with dramatizing landscapes and was known to sketch as he walked to and from school. His love and meditations didn't keep him

from entering the army, but given his gifts, he was assigned to the camouflage unit, using his skills to paint tanks and drapery. Some of his designs are still used today.

What Burchfield discovered was that a pristine nature scene was a divine image. The forms, the colors, the patterns were all created by God and guided by his providence. By painting these scenes, one was truly touching the hand of God and entering into his mind. His painting *Eye of God in the Woods* illustrates the eye of God in a sun that pierces through the trees of a snowy forest with a rolling brook.

God speaks in nature motifs. Scripture is full of them. Jesus also used nature as a model for his teachings: seeds sown in different soils, clouds predicting rain, a sparrow, a catch of fish.

Nature is a glorious soil from which inspiration can sprout. This week, meditate and marvel at the beauty of creation and, like Jesus, take lessons from it for your spiritual life. +

***Jesus used nature
for teaching: seeds sown
in different soils,
clouds predicting rain,
a catch of fish.***

A Word from Pope Francis

Every worker...should have the right to decent remuneration, to social security, and to a pension. Among you here are... workers in grassroots jobs who are excluded from labor rights, who are denied the possibility of unionizing, whose income is neither adequate nor stable. Today I...join my voice to yours and support you in your struggle.

—World meeting of popular movements, October 28, 2014



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 55:10-11

So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me.

Romans 8:18-23

Hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

[Jesus said,] "Whoever has ears ought to hear."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I spend time outdoors enjoying nature?
- What messages from God can I find in the natural world today?

Finding Meaning in Our Pain

By Richard Rohr, OFM

All religion is about transforming pain and what to do with that pain—the absurd, tragic, unjust experiences that make up our lives. The hurts, disappointments, and betrayals; the burdens of sinfulness and brokenness pile up throughout life. We must find a way to make our pain into sacred wounds. We must find a way to give meaning to our hurts and find God in that suffering. Our faith is a gift that helps us deal with life's tragedies.

Throughout history, literature has idealized people at the top: presidents and leaders who hold power and control the system. But biblical revelation turns history upside down with empathy for victims. It idealizes the bottom. It says that true power is not focused at the top. Then Jesus comes to epitomize that message by becoming poor, naked, and expelled—the one who teaches us that the way down is really the way up.

Our lesson is that we need to stop looking for meaning at the top and, instead, go to the edges and the bottom where we find those excluded and expelled. By his life and teaching, Jesus reminds us that we have to be rejected. We have to experience being on the outside before we have something to say.

This is the gift of biblical revelation. It's why we're the only religion that worships the victim, the one considered the problem by religious authorities.

God of Surprises

When Christians call Jesus the Lord of history—this bleeding, naked, crucified man—we are turning history around! We may not realize how scandalous and silly this seems to others. But when you think about it, the crucified Jesus is an unlikely candidate for God.

But this is the very Jesus who, through his teaching and life, reminds us to be careful where we look for God. Expect to find God in unexpected places, he tells us. And so it is in all of history: It has been the excluded ones and people at the bottom who have the privileged viewpoint. Why? Because it is from that position that we meet God, that we understand the illusion and lies of a system built on power, prestige, possessions. But until all that is taken from us, we don't know that. Until then we are simply playing the game, enjoying the fruits of the system.

Recall how Jesus sends his disciples to preach from a position of vulnerability. "Go out, take nothing for your journey,"



he tells them. Why? Because he knows they're going to fail and look like fools. They have to or they won't have a message to deliver.

Hard Truths

It's an initiation of sorts: Jesus sends his disciples into situations where people are going to laugh at them and consider them nobodies. Only when you are a nobody will you understand what it means to be somebody. That is when you will find your life on new ground. We call it the reign of God.

The Bible begins with a fall for a reason. The story of Adam and Eve is a microcosm of what will happen in every life. You and I will fall. Somewhere we will experience our own absurdity, our utter brokenness. This reality isn't something to hold off; it's a necessary, tragic, and beautiful part of the journey.

The answer to our pain is the Jesus who was rejected, betrayed, and abandoned; then hanged on a cross, bleeding and naked. The answer to our pain is the risen Christ, who reminds us that through pain we have new life. +



Lord, you completed God's work on earth. Help me know and accomplish God's will.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 13–18

Monday, Weekday:

Is 1:10–17 / Mt 10:34–11:1

Tuesday, St. Kateri Tekakwitha:

Is 7:1–9 / Mt 11:20–24

Wednesday, St. Bonaventure:

Is 10:5–7, 13b–16 / Mt 11:25–27

Thursday, Weekday:

Is 26:7–9, 12, 16–19 / Mt 11:28–30

Friday, Weekday:

Is 38:1–6, 21–22, 7–8 / Mt 12:1–8

Saturday, Weekday:

Mi 2:1–5 / Mt 12:14–21

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Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

July 19, 2020

A Show of Mercy

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

One of the most important signs of true strength is the ability to show mercy. The Roman emperors understood this and were praised when they showed clemency toward a criminal. The one who has the power to condemn also has power to forgive.

The artist Ippolito Scarsellino—in his painting *Virgin and Angels Imploring Christ Not to Punish Lust, Avarice and Pride*—depicts this mercy, as it applies to Jesus, in classic allegorical fashion. Mary and the angels are shown pleading with Jesus to hold back his wrath against lust,

avarice, and pride. Jesus is rearing back to launch arrows upon them, yet Mary begs him to withhold his judgment.

The Book of Wisdom praises God, for he is “master of might,” but governs with lenience (12:18). The fact is, he would be fully justified to reprimand every vice of his creatures, yet he chooses mercy. What a wonderful lesson for all persons in authority!

It’s enough to just look at the Gospel. The weeds are not immediately torn out or burned out of consideration of the wheat. Both are allowed to grow and develop to maturity to ensure the harvest. Permitting the good to struggle with evil allows the good to grow in perfection. It also gives the bad a chance to convert.

God gives every grace to those who love him so that we may not succumb to the challenges around us. His mercy gives the sinner every possible chance to repent and be saved. This is the heart we must have for one another and why we should never gloat about our goodness or despair of our weaknesses. While there is life, there is hope. +

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 12:13, 16–19

Your might is the source of righteousness; / your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all.

Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit...comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.

Matthew 13:24-43 or 13:24-30

[Jesus said,] At harvest time I will say to the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

*God would be fully justified
to reprimand every
vice of his creatures,
yet he chooses mercy.*

A Word from Pope Francis

There are no unemployed people in the kingdom of God. Everyone is called to do their part; and there will be a reward from divine justice for everyone in the end...the salvation that Jesus Christ acquired for us with his death and resurrection, a salvation which is not deserved, but donated.

—Angelus, September 24, 2017



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- Do I more readily imitate God’s judgment, justice, or mercy?
- How can I practice all three?

Spiritual or Religious? Why Not Both

By Jim and Susan Vogt

Are you religious, spiritual, both, or neither? Does it matter? Many young adults these days are distancing themselves from the Catholic Church, claiming they're spiritual but not religious. To understand this, we talked with several twenty-somethings. Here's one conversation.

Q: Jeff, what's your take on this "spiritual vs. religious" debate?

A: Many of my friends would say they're spiritual but not religious. Most of them grew up Catholic, went to church on Sundays and to Catholic school. Now that they're on their own, making time for organized religion isn't a priority. Many do volunteer work, but going to church isn't on their radar.

Q: What about you? You go to Mass with your family on Christmas, Easter, and special occasions. Do you still consider yourself Catholic?

A: Yes, I'm Catholic. I believe what Christ taught, and the essential ideals of the Church make sense. I filter some Church stuff through the lens of common sense, though. The Catholic Church often seems archaic to me—all that medieval pageantry. The sexual abuse scandal doesn't help. I buy "love your neighbor as

yourself," but I get fed up with rules like only unmarried men should be priests and restrictions about marriage and Communion. I figure those are human rules—not the essence of Catholicism.



Q: So if you agree with the heart of Catholicism, are you a practicing Catholic? Do you attend weekly Mass?

A: I attend, but not weekly. That's not where my social network gets together. I've already got a good group

of friends, and I wouldn't see any of them at Mass.

Q: Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He was giving us a way to stay close to him on a regular basis.

A: You have a point. Maybe I'm spiritual but not religious. It's just that I believe in a loving God and don't think God is going to send me to hell if I lead a good life but don't go to Mass every Sunday.

This conversation may be disconcerting to practicing Catholics. What we hold dear isn't part of the culture of many young adults—even thoughtful, idealistic ones. Their reasons might sound superficial or immature to us. Can you and I do anything that will make a difference?

▪ **Challenge your own faith.** Often the path to a deeper faith comes through the

powerful experience of meeting Jesus on the margins of society. Like the Good Samaritan, we can move beyond our comfort levels and see the face of Christ in those who are ignored or hurting.

- **Challenge the faith of young adults.** Young adults are especially ripe for discovering the face of God through powerful spiritual and human experiences. Help your parish design opportunities for volunteering their talents to lend a hand to those in need.
- **Use crises.** Nobody seeks a tragedy, but in time, enough naturally come our way. Recognize hardship as an unwelcome time of potential grace. It's often through crisis that God breaks into our lives.
- **Prepare teens.** While teens are still living at home, prepare them for the day when it will be up to them to shake off the inertia of society to seek God's presence in community. They'll have to decide what's important in life. Make sure they know the Church is open to them.
- **Recognize the importance of friends.** Parishes must be creative about connecting younger adults with networks of friends who care about each other and about gathering in Jesus' presence.

Religious or spiritual? For Catholics, this is the wrong question. We should be both. +

PRAYER

Lord, you revealed the power of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Help me plant the seeds of love, compassion, and peace in the hearts of all people.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 20–25

Monday, Weekday:

Mi 6:1–4, 6–8 / Mt 12:38–42

Tuesday, Weekday:

Mi 7:14–15, 18–20 / Mt 12:46–50

Wednesday, St. Mary Magdalene:

Sg 3:1–4b or 2 Cor 5:14–17 / Jn 20:1–2, 11–18

Thursday, Weekday:

Jer 2:1–3, 7–8, 12–13 / Mt 13:10–17

Friday, Weekday:

Jer 3:14–17 / Mt 13:18–23

Saturday, St. James:

2 Cor 4:7–15 / Mt 20:20–28

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Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

July 26, 2020

Rags to Riches

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The richly decorated portrait *The Vision of Saint Helena* by Paolo Veronese is immediately impressive. Helena, a woman of humble origins, became the wife of Constantius Chlorus (Rome's emperor from 293–306). An innkeeper's daughter in an outback town, her beauty caught the eye of the most powerful man on earth. She went from rags to riches.

In the painting she wears lush, Eastern fabrics with woven prints and royal colors. The gold and blue details of her dress and the velour of her crimson cape broached under her chin denote

the wealth her position afforded. She rests on a high-back leather throne; an elegant textile wall covering provides a background from floor to ceiling.

The softly flowing fabrics and her serene posture exude calm and focus our attention on her tranquil face and spirit of contemplation. No matter the power, wealth, and beauty of the world surrounding her, Helena has forsaken all to pursue the true treasure she possesses as a Christian and values more than the rest. Helena traveled from Rome to Jerusalem to bring back the relics of Christ's passion. These reminders of Jesus' love for sinners became the most important treasures of Christendom.

Veronese wants to convince us that through prayer we come to understand our treasure is not found in wealth but in the glorious vestment of baptismal faith. As adopted sons and daughters of the king, we become like St. Helena: poor commoners raised to royalty! Thank God for his gift of life in Christ and allow your heart to follow the inspirations he shares with you. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 3:5, 7–12

Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil.

Romans 8:28–30

We know that all things work for good for those who love God.

Matthew 13:44–52 or 13:44–46

[Jesus said,] "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

*We come to understand
our treasure is not found in
wealth, but in the glorious
vestment of baptismal faith.*

A Word from Pope Francis

How nice it is to feel that our school, or the places where we gather, are a second home....School then ends up being one big family. A family where, together with our mothers and fathers, our grandparents, our teachers and friends, we learn to help one another, to share our good qualities, to give the best of ourselves.

—Our Lady Queen of Angels School,
Harlem, NY, September 25, 2015



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- What are you searching for? Will you make sacrifices for it?
- Do riches have a stronger hold on you than God?



Belonging to God

By Kathy Coffey

The First Commandment: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall not have other gods beside me” (Exodus 20:2–3).

Newspapers carried the story of a father who was boating with his son and the boy’s friend. When a strong, unexpected current carried the children overboard, the dad rescued them both. But after dragging them to safety, he could not save himself and drowned.

We can speculate about the gratitude the son, his friend, and their families will carry throughout their lives. Every breath they take is, in some sense, a gift of and a tribute to the heroic father who saved them. When people do us a big favor, we can rarely repay them. We breathe gratitude and cannot say thanks enough.

The extreme thankfulness that recipients must feel gives us a clue about the First Commandment. When we read about God freeing the Hebrews from Egypt, it’s hard to relate. Few of us know slavery firsthand. Hearing about people who are slaves today, many of them children, we’re appalled. We can only imagine what it means when someone unlocks the prison door and says, “You’re

free.” To forget such a liberator would be the worst ingratitude.

Awareness, Gratitude

After a gift like the one the Hebrew people received, how could they ignore God? How could they even think of worshipping anyone or anything else?

Before we get too high and mighty, scorning those ungrateful Jews, we should look at the ways God has freed us. Our situation may not be as obvious as imprisonment, but there are other, subtler forms of slavery. Some are caught in addictions to gambling, smoking, drugs, or alcohol. Others are trapped in unhealthy habits, fears, or relationships. From all of these, God is the ultimate liberator, freeing us in ways that surpass what we can do for ourselves.

Whatever our particular circumstances, God has freed us from something. And how gratefully do we respond? We probably need a reminder to put God first as badly as the Hebrews did.

If we say we belong to God completely and wholeheartedly, how do we show it? Do we set aside time each day to reflect on God’s ongoing action in our lives? (For harried commuters this can be done at stop signs.) Do we fall asleep naming the ways God was present in our days and the blessings he brought? If we take this commandment seriously, it will be reflected in our calendars and checkbooks. How do we spend our time and money?

Learning from Jesus

If we really want to know what this commandment means, we should look at the way it operates in Jesus’ life. He is passionately caught up in the love of his Father; his primary goal is pleasing God. Inspired and heartened by God, he responds constantly to God’s initiatives. Prayer punctuates his life; he often withdraws to renew his delight in God and be strengthened by their time together. During this time, he must experience God’s love, listen for God’s guidance, imagine God’s face.

Jesus shows us what it means to belong to God. During his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, every human instinct rebels against the course ahead, but he holds fast to whatever the Father asks. If we can share in his all-consuming love, it places us in the house of God at all times. As Jesus’ joy and compassion shows us, that’s a far better place to live than the house of slavery. +



Lord, you reveal the kingdom of heaven on earth. Help me be more aware of God’s presence.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 27–August 1

Monday, Weekday:

Jer 13:1-11 / Mt 13:31-35

Tuesday, Weekday:

Jer 14:17-22 / Mt 13:36-43

Wednesday, St. Martha: Jer 15:10,

16–21 / Jn 11:19–27 or Lk 10:38–42

Thursday, Weekday:

Jer 18:1–6 / Mt 13:47–53

Friday, St. Ignatius of Loyola:

Jer 26:1–9 / Mt 13:54–58

Saturday, St. Alphonsus Liguori:

Jer 26:11–16, 24 / Mt 14:1–12

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