



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
September 6, 2020

Correcting Lovingly

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Today's readings are about fraternal correction. We are responsible for our brother's good, and God expects us to help him. This means being a good example and holding him or her to a gospel standard. If that means a hard dose of the truth, so be it, as long as that truth is given in love.

Ezekiel was a prophet who knew how to preach fire and brimstone, but he could also be tender and compassionate. He prophesied both about the destruction of Israel and how Yahweh would turn their hearts of stone into flesh. In Michelangelo's fresco *The Prophet Ezekiel* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the strength of this

rugged prophet is evident. That Ezekiel is turned to listen to a cherub says a lot about his humility as well.

God told Ezekiel that if he didn't preach to the wicked, God would hold him responsible for their deaths. However, if he did preach and the wicked still didn't heed him, Ezekiel would be safe. The moral is, when God asks us to preach, take it seriously!

Jesus tells us if our brother sins against us, we should confront him in the presence of two witnesses. He even encourages us to bring the Church in as judge if a dispute between believers isn't resolved. However, this should always be done with love.

As humble Christians, we should accept corrections when they are done correctly. No one likes to be told he or she is wrong, but if we are we should rejoice in the truth, even if it hurts. And we should thank those who love us enough to correct us. +

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 33:7-9

I have appointed you as a sentinel for the house of Israel.

Romans 13:8-10

The commandments...are summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 18:15-20

[Jesus said,] "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

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A Word from Pope Francis

It is vital that the Church today go out to proclaim the Gospel to all, in all places, on all occasions, without delay, reluctance, or fear. We do so in obedience to the Lord's missionary mandate, certain of his presence among us until the end of the world.

Address to United Bible Societies,
October 5, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I find the idea of charitable correction uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- How willing am I to receive correction from my peers? My spouse? My child? My boss?

Seeing the Faces of God

By Kathleen M. Basi

Every so often when I read a Gospel story, I stop and say, “Huh?” It seems like some crucial piece of information is missing.

I get one of those inklings when I read the story of the disciples walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. It’s difficult to believe they didn’t recognize him. I mean, come on. These guys knew him; they hung out with him; they got the bonus explanations that the regular crowds didn’t. How could they not recognize him? The only thing I can figure is that maybe, just maybe, Jesus wasn’t wearing the face they knew.

A few years ago, there was a TV show about a teenage girl who kept meeting random strangers who turned out to be God in disguise. There was no rhyme or reason to God’s appearance. He might be a janitor, a rich woman, a pizza-delivery guy, or a mime. Once or twice the main character assumed she was talking to God when she wasn’t. The unpredictability of these appearances taught her to approach every person and situation as if God were present—because he was.

This principle may seem so obvious that it appears ridiculous. However, it’s hard to keep in mind in real life. Most of us want to do God’s will, if we could just figure out what it is. The world’s problems



seem so big—far bigger than we can handle. Most often, we focus on issues, ideas, and philosophies. But issues, ideas, and philosophies are only important because of how they impact people.

All too often, I find myself wandering through life on autopilot, completely unaware of God’s presence in those around me. Middle-class life seems far removed from the “least ones” (Matthew 25:45). We think we don’t cross paths with them, but maybe we do. Recently I learned that the hotel near my house shelters people in crisis. And in the shadow of a viaduct near my old house,

there used to be a tent community.

Every person we encounter has a story to tell and a broken place within that needs healing. Consider the man smoking at the next gas pump, the woman driving like a maniac in a school zone, the rude cashier at the big-box store, the girl showing too much skin at the pool. The people we often regard as irritants and obstacles are actually facets of God’s face.

If we took time to simply be aware—to look these people in the eye and recognize God’s presence in them—we will likely find that the “least ones” are a lot nearer and easier to reach than we ever expected. +

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your gifts of love, mercy, and forgiveness. Help me to share these gifts with those who have hurt me.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 7–12

Monday, Weekday:

1 Cor 5:1–8 / Lk 6:6–11

Tuesday, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

Mary: Mi 5:1–4a or Rom 8:28–30 /

Mt 1:1–16, 18–23 or 1:18–23

Wednesday, St. Peter Claver:

1 Cor 7:25–31 / Lk 6:20–26

Thursday, Weekday:


1 Cor 8:1b–7, 11–13 / Lk 6:27–38

Friday, Weekday:

1 Cor 9:16–19, 22b–27 / Lk 6:39–42

Saturday, Weekday:

1 Cor 10:14–22 / Lk 6:43–49

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