



Bringing Home the Word

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

August 4, 2019

Building Bigger Barns

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I love to buy storage materials. My heart longs for the matching bins and boxes that claim to organize all the stuff in my house. *If I just get the right-sized box, I think, I will be able to keep everything I have and make room for more.* If Jesus were telling Sunday's Gospel parable today, perhaps the rich man wouldn't (just) be building bigger barns; he might be installing a better organization system.

The problem with a consumer society is that it tempts us to buy and collect far more than we need. We sometimes

think we must have the latest phone, appliances, or fashions even as our existing toys and clothes vie for space in our closets and drawers. We rush to recycle in order to take advantage of sales and hardly pause to wonder, "Do I really need this?" We rarely, if ever, reflect on the truism, "You can't have everything—what would you do with it?"

If we give in to the temptation to acquire more things, to build bigger barns, we may find ourselves held captive by material goods—counting them, managing and maintaining them, or protecting and paying them off. Perhaps our time and energy would be better spent making sure that others have enough to eat and a place to sleep—in other words, being the image of the generous and loving God who "bestow[s] on the world all that is good" (Eucharistic Prayer III and IV). Today let us let go, clear away the clutter, and embrace the simplicity and freedom of loving in truth and fullness. +

Sunday Readings

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21–23

For what profit comes to mortals from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which they toil under the sun?

Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11

Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Luke 12:13–21

[Jesus said,] "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

If we give in to the temptation to acquire more, to build bigger barns, we may become captive to material goods.

A Word from Pope Francis

To set aside a moment of silence each day to be with God is to "keep" our soul; it is to "keep" our freedom from being corroded by the banality of consumerism, the blare of commercials, the stream of empty words, and the overpowering waves of empty chatter and loud shouting.

—World Day of Peace, January 1, 2018



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

ONE QUESTION
REFLECTION

- What am I working for?
- Where is my heart?
- How might I exchange "bigger barns" for a life of simplicity?

Living Simply in This Material World

By Jim and Susan Vogt

Bottled water, home computers, and cell phones. Today, people take for granted these things that can make life easier. However, with more choices and conveniences also come complexities and moral dilemmas. *How can things so helpful be bad, we ask?*

Bottled water was once a traveler's safeguard against impure water. But tap water in US municipalities meets higher standards, and eliminates the waste of throwaways. Sure, water is an improvement over soda to quench a thirst, but is it so difficult to put tap water into a reusable container?

Home computers—love 'em when they work, curse 'em when they crash or introduce a virus. And that doesn't include separating beneficial content from pornography or marketing scams that computers bring into our homes.

Yes, a cell phone is a wonderful safety device when the car breaks down. Yes, it helps family members keep in touch. And yes, it causes motor vehicle accidents, distracts from face-to-face conversations, and annoys bystanders.

How did we function without technological conveniences? In some ways better and in others worse. Certainly a lot of paper was used on snail mail, and before cell phones parents couldn't always find their teenagers.



The point is not that we should discard all conveniences but that we should use modern technology wisely and not buy just because we can.

Guard Against Greed

These are subjective, thorny lifestyle decisions. Although Jesus isn't posted at the checkout

lane prompting us on the morality of our purchases, he does speak to us through Scripture. He said, "Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:26). And don't forget that disturbing passage about the rich man whom Jesus told, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor" (Matthew 19:21).

How do we take these challenges? To say they are only metaphors that are unrealistic for today seems intellectually dishonest. Likewise, to quit our jobs, sell our possessions, and move to Haiti seems irresponsible. After all, we might have a family to support, a job that benefits society, and people who depend on us.

Living Simply

We propose focusing on the spirit of Jesus' words and keeping close enough to the poor to let them check our conscience for rationalization.

Travel light through life. Free your household of unnecessary possessions. We asked ourselves whether we really needed cable TV, two cars, three cell phones, and four computers. We didn't. It's good for our souls, psyches, and pocketbooks to live with less.

Evaluate the impact of purchases on God's creation. How much of the earth's resources are used in overpackaging? A hybrid car may cost more but puts less stress on the earth's resources. Driving less is even better, and walking makes gym memberships less necessary.

Resist advertising. Realize that the goal of marketing is to persuade us to spend our way to happiness. Remember the birds in the sky? True happiness comes from the contentment of a life well-lived in harmony with God's design, not by accumulating goods.

Recover values like frugality. Frugality comes naturally to some, but not others. To paraphrase Jesus' words to the rich man, consider that what we own is probably more than we need. Take steps to let go. +



Lord, you are the source and foundation of life. Help me grow rich in love and forgiveness as I share what I have with others.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 5–10

Monday, Weekday: Nm 11:4b–15 / Mt 14:13–21

Tuesday, Transfiguration of the Lord: Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 / 2 Pt 1:16–19 / Lk 9:28b–36

Wednesday, Weekday: Nm 13:1–2, 25–14:1, 26a–29a, 34–35 / Mt 15:21–28

Thursday, St. Dominic: Nm 20:1–13 / Mt 16:13–23

Friday, Weekday: Dt 4:32–40 / Mt 16:24–28

Saturday, St. Lawrence: 2 Cor 9:6–10 / Jn 12:24–26

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Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

August 11, 2019

Faith: Our Way of Knowing God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Every week at Mass we remind ourselves of the mystery of our faith—that by his death and resurrection Jesus set us free, and he will come again in glory. How do we know this? Could we convince someone this is true? If “true” means factual evidence backed up by science, we won’t be able to prove this to anyone. But God gives us a different way of knowing. It comes from the revelation of God in creation, Scripture, and Christ. Our faith, a gift from God, is the ability to recognize the truth of the mysteries we proclaim.

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 18:6–9

The expectation of your people was the salvation of the righteous and the destruction of their foes.

**Hebrews 11:1–2, 8–19 or
Hebrews 11:1–2, 8–12**

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.

**Luke 12:32–48 or
Luke 12:35–40**

[Jesus said,] “Sell your belongings and give alms....For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”

In the reading from Hebrews, the author praises Abraham’s faith, which led him to obey the God he did not know and the tradition he handed on. Abraham wasn’t worried about proving that God spoke to him; he lived it. In the same way, Jesus calls his disciples to be ready and waiting for the Lord’s return.

We can’t convince everyone that the resurrection and baptism affect salvation, that the consecration is real, or that Jesus will come again. We can, however, point to the life and witness of the Church and show the difference our faith makes in our own lives as we encounter others, work for justice, and spread the gospel. Our obedience, virtue, and good works manifest our faith and reveal the truths entrusted to us. Nowhere is this truer than at the eucharistic table, where we celebrate the mysteries in union with and in joyful expectation of the One who was, who is, and who is to come. +

*We can show
the difference
our faith makes
in our own lives
as we encounter others.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The Assumption of Mary is a great mystery which regards each one of us, it regards our future. Mary, in fact, precedes us on the path walked upon by those who, through their baptism, have bound their life to Jesus, as Mary bound her own life to him.

—Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What difference has my faith made in my life?
- Instead of just professing my faith, do I live it in my actions every day?

Coping with Chronic Illness: A Daily Walk with God

By Susan Hines-
Brigger

When you enter our home, it appears to be a normal family household. But look more closely and you'll see a deeper story. Behind the butter in the refrigerator sits my medicine. On top of a cabinet, by my baking supplies, is the container I put my used needles in after my daily injections.

Welcome to life with a chronic illness. I have multiple sclerosis, an autoimmune disorder affecting the central nervous system. I was diagnosed nine years ago, shortly after the birth of the second of our four children. First, I lost hearing in one ear. Then one side of my face went numb. My vision and balance have been affected, and I temporarily lost all feeling in my right leg. Every day I battle overwhelming fatigue and the fear of this disease's unpredictability.

But life goes on. It has to. Clothes must be laundered, homework has to get done, and there are parties to plan.

Sharing the Burden

When first diagnosed, I felt isolated. No one I knew had MS. I knew little about the disease and didn't feel comfortable calling my doctor's office every time I had a question. Being fiercely independent, I vowed to take this on myself. I didn't



want to burden others, nor did I want to be labeled a complainer.

I scanned the Bible for comforting passages. While many resonated, I wasn't finding the comfort I thought I would. That is, until I stumbled across Romans and began to read: "For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have

the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another" (12:4-5). Suddenly, it hit me: In my search for comfort, I was missing community, a key part of my Catholic faith.

We Are Many Parts

So, as many people do nowadays, I took to Facebook to share my struggle. Before long, an old friend from high school wrote back. She, too, has MS. Within months, another high school friend was diagnosed. A mom at my kids' school doesn't have MS, but she also faces a chronic illness. She wrote to let me know she "gets it."

We pray for one another, supporting each other when we're weak. And though we come from various faith backgrounds, we are a community—formed person by person, story by story. I've come to realize that my friends and family are the living manifestation of St. Teresa of Ávila's words: "Christ has no body now

on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless his people."

The faith community provides a wonderful network of support during times of need. I was reminded of this when the mother of one of my daughter's classmates died suddenly. The parish rallied around the family. For some, that meant making meals, others physically wrapped their arms around the family. Still others offered prayers.

I've experienced those blessings as I deal with MS. Those moments when I feel lowest are when I'm reminded of Christ's presence. Sometimes it's a kind word from a friend, an unexpected visit, or just a momentary sense of calm. Faith is my security blanket. It gives me something to hold onto when I'm frustrated or sad. My faith tells me, "Don't give up. Hang in there. There's hope." +

PRAYER

Lord, you offered your life out of love for humankind. Help me let go of my possessions so I can generously serve others.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 12-17

Monday, Weekday: Dt 10:12-22 / Mt 17:22-27

Tuesday, Weekday: Dt 31:1-8 / Mt 18:1-5, 10, 12-14

Wednesday, St. Maximilian Kolbe: Dt 34:1-12 / Mt 18:15-20

Thursday, Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary: Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab / 1 Cor 15:20-27 / Lk 1:39-56

Friday, Weekday: Jos 24:1-13 / Mt 19:3-12

Saturday, Weekday: Jos 24:14-29 / Mt 19:13-15

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Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

August 18, 2019

Jesus as Disrupter

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I was young, one of my favorite pictures of Jesus was one of him blessing little children. How calm and peaceful Jesus seemed, and his eyes were full of love. In later years, I have been drawn to other images and art of Jesus holding, healing, and granting mercy to his beloved children.

The image of Jesus as a nurturer is so comforting that I tend to forget that Jesus also disturbed the peace, questioned authority, and demanded complete obedience and loyalty.

For first-century Christians, following Jesus often meant leaving family and friends, civil disobedience (not considering Caesar as a god), and reimagining religious traditions.

The Christ who sows division is uncomfortable, but Christians in every century have had to speak out against evil and sin, especially when their culture's or country's practices lead people away from rather than toward God. Even here in the United States, Catholics have found themselves defending the dignity of all human life and economic and social justice for the poor, even when it meant challenging the prevailing attitudes and political climate. It's rarely easy to speak truth to power or popularity, and we have to guard against those who think they are always right or somehow above God. Jesus himself recognized that he would not always be popular, so he lifted up the two great commandments to love God and neighbor as the measure of how we should act even when those actions divide us. +

*It's difficult speaking
truth to power,
yet we must guard
against those who think
they are always right.*

A Word from Pope Francis

I encourage you always to have prophetic courage in rejecting everything that demeans human beings, and all forms of [degrading] exploitation. Continue to show those signs of hospitality and solidarity, great and small, which can light up the lives of children and old people, migrants and refugees, in search of peace.

—Address to Caritas Internationalis,
November 17, 2016



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 38:4–6; 8–10

[King Zedekiah said,] "Take three men with you, and get Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies."

Hebrews 12:1–4

Consider how [Jesus] endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

Luke 12:49–53

[Jesus said,] "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- What is my purpose?
- Am I willing to make a stand for righteousness, even if it makes me unpopular?

The Big Peace of Christ

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

“Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”

—Luke 12:51

Why did Jesus come to earth? What was his mission? Was he sent for unity or division, for life or death, for love or hate? The answer is clear: Jesus came that we might have abundant life (John 10:10). But there is a deep paradox. In Luke’s Gospel—and especially in verse 51’s quote from Jesus—it appears that division, not peace, is Jesus’ real mission.

We should ponder this paradox. The poet T. S. Eliot provides an insight: “Beneath the bleeding hands we feel / The sharp compassion of the healer’s art.” The surgeon cuts away the cancer, a bloody, divisive act indeed. Yet the motive isn’t to inflict pain. Rather, it is to bring healing. No false tenderness allows the healer to withhold the knife; no good parent avoids disciplining his or her child. To bring health and peace, pain is sometimes needed.

So Jesus causes division wherever there is an unhealthy, unholy union. Out of compassion, the Lord separates us from everything that keeps us from the love of the Father. This may appear cruel, but it is in fact an act of divine kindness. Shakespeare’s Hamlet addresses

his mother, the queen, in these words: “I must be cruel only to be kind.”

“Graced” Division

St. John XXIII spoke often about peace—the peace of God’s kingdom. In *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*, he maintains in the encyclical that peace demands four elements: truth, freedom, charity, and justice. Jesus came to inaugurate that

kingdom; he came to express truth, to incarnate love, to foster freedom, and to promote justice. In this mission there would be much division, since people often opted for untruth, indifference, slavery, and injustice.

Everyone must distinguish graced division from divisions that are simply

destructive. The surgeon’s knife separates a diseased organ from the body—a moment of grace. The slave trader separates children from their parents—a horrendous sin. Moses placed before his people a choice of life or death (Deuteronomy 30:19). We are given the same choice: to be agents of life and peace or instruments of death and chaos.

Just before Communion we pray, “Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles, ‘Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.’” So when we read, “Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but

rather division,” we know that Jesus is referring to a false peace, one in which relationships are not harmonious. Jesus will have nothing to do with such unions—he will split them apart for the sake of truth.

Examples of Christ’s Peace

The human condition requires painful choices that sometimes cause division. We need but note the work of the following Christians: Martin Luther King, Jr., in his ministry to secure human rights; Thomas Merton, in his stand against nuclear war; Dorothy Day, who fought against the status quo that kept so many in radical poverty. All of them came to bring division, not peace. These disciples of Christ fought for the big peace: the kingdom of God.

Those great people showed us that God’s word is a two-edged sword. We can be like them. It is a good spiritual exercise for all of us to write out a mission statement. What has God called us to do? Why have we come to this earth? Surely a task we have all been given is to bring peace and right relationships. We can, with God’s help. +



PRAYER

*Lord, you send us your Spirit
to renew the face of the earth.
Filled with your love,
help me make a difference.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 19–24

Monday, Weekday: Jgs 2:11–19 / Mt 19:16–22

Tuesday, St. Bernard: Jgs 6:11–24a / Mt 19:23–30

Wednesday, St. Pius X: Jgs 9:6–15 / Mt 20:1–16

Thursday, Queenship of Blessed Virgin Mary: Jgs 11:29–39a / Mt 22:1–14

Friday, Weekday: Ru 1:1, 3–6, 14b–16, 22 / Mt 22:34–40

Saturday, St. Bartholomew: Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
August 25, 2019

Remembering One's Roots

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Several years ago, a mother dropped her son off at the university's Catholic Center with the words, "Remember where you come from." I recall thinking how profound those words were. They spoke not only of a place but also of an experience of family. She was reminding him of his roots.

In the first years of college, students can easily lose their way. They experiment with different behaviors and identities. They strive to figure out how to manage their responsibilities. Their religious practice may lapse or change.

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 66:18–21

[Thus says the LORD,] "I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; they shall come and see my glory."

Hebrews 12:5–7, 11–13

Do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

Luke 13:22–30

[Jesus said,] "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough."

With a strong foundation, however, most will settle down to the business of becoming Catholic and Christian adults, which happens in small and large steps.

The people in Sunday's parable had changed so much that the master didn't even recognize them: "I do not know where you are from." Maybe they had forgotten themselves or had rejected the promises that the master (who is God) had given them. In any case, Jesus gives them a glimpse of what's behind the narrow gate of salvation—as well as the alternative—and urges them to "strive to enter" it. Our baptism is a personal invitation to this narrow gate. The path of discipleship requires God's grace and a desire to serve. If our lives don't reflect this call, we run the risk of forgetting who we are, where we are from, and what we are promised. Reflect today on your identity as a child of God and hear God say to your heart, "Remember where you come from." +

*Our baptism
is a personal invitation
to enter God's
narrow gate.*

A Word from Pope Francis

In the Old Testament, the requirement to be holy, in the image of God who is holy, included the duty to care for the most vulnerable people, such as the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. Jesus brings this Covenant law to fulfillment; he who unites...divinity and humanity, a single mystery of love.

—Angelus, October 26, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do I follow my baptismal call to serve God and my neighbor?
- Do I take time to remember from where I came—from God?

Three Keys to Forgiveness

By Fr. Paul Boudreau

Forgiveness is hard. The pain of a broken heart, abuse, or betrayal hangs on. Each day we recall that someone we cared about did us wrong. We're supposed to forgive, but where do we start? How can I forgive somebody who cut me so deeply that, years later, I still feel the pain as if it happened yesterday?

Key No. 1: Pray

Janet came to me with a problem. Monica, a coworker, was saying terrible things about her to other coworkers. Every workday, Janet would see Monica and know that she was saying nasty things. Janet wasn't in a position to talk to her boss about this, and Monica wouldn't give her the time of day. She felt helpless and didn't know what to do.

So I suggested that Janet give Monica a blessing whenever she saw her or recalled her cruelties. I said, "Just whisper to yourself: 'God, bless Monica.' It's as easy as saying, 'God, damn Monica.' Just change one word!"

It made a big difference. Janet began saying that simple prayer dozens of times daily, and things started to improve. Gradually Monica lost interest in putting her down.

What happened is that prayer began to heal Janet's own heart. The more she



blessed her tormentor, the more she was able to really mean it. Not only did it heal her heart, it began to heal the distance between her and Monica.

Key No. 2: Be Forgiven

If you really want to forgive, start by being forgiven. A quick run to church for the sacrament

of reconciliation does wonders for the soul. It doesn't have to be much: "Father, I'm carrying bitterness toward someone. I need to be forgiven."

When we consider all that God has forgiven in our lives, it adds up. The deeper we search into the darkness of our own sins, the deeper goes the forgiveness. I look at my history and realize I've been forgiven so much. This ocean of forgiveness in me begins to overflow into the lives of others who need my forgiveness.

Forgiveness, like the Sunday liturgy, is an experience in which we are called to participate fully and actively. When asking for forgiveness becomes a living reality in my life, something that's happening to me continually, I'm on my way to experiencing the healing that forgiving others can bring.

Key No. 3: Profess Forgiveness

Miguel's father was abusive. Growing up, Miguel endured daily onslaughts of

ridicule and humiliation. Once he was older and free from his father, he still carried a load of hurt. His father's words were never far from his thoughts.

Miguel's wife, Lucy, told him that he had to forgive his father. She gave Miguel a pad of sticky notes. On each note she wrote, "I forgive you," and stuck them throughout their house. Miguel took some to work and put them up in his work area.

A thousand times a day, prompted by Lucy's notes, Miguel said, "I forgive you." Over many months, Miguel's harsh feelings for his father began to subside. He never said it directly to his father; the man would not have received it. But Miguel's daily expressions of forgiveness progressed from pretense to reality. In time, he really forgave his father.

It's hard to forgive, but it's harder not to. The toxin of bitterness poisons the heart. Forgiveness heals. From the cross, Jesus forgave his crucifiers. It worked for him. So use these keys and unlock for yourself the healing way of forgiveness. +



Lord, you came to offer the gift of salvation to all people. Help me embrace all people with a loving and compassionate heart.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 26–31

Monday, Weekday: 1 Thes 1:1–5, 8b–10 / Mt 23:13–22

Tuesday, St. Monica: 1 Thes 2:1–8 / Mt 23:23–26

Wednesday, St. Augustine: 1 Thes 2:9–13 / Mt 23:27–32

Thursday, Passion of St. John the Baptist: 1 Thes 3:7–13 / Mk 6:17–29

Friday, Weekday: 1 Thes 4:1–8 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, Weekday: 1 Thes 4:9–11 / Mt 25:14–30

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