



Bringing Home the Word



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 5, 2017

Solidarity

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When my daughter got her first job after college, I handed her a copy of Isaiah 57 so she would always remember she was blessed to have work and that she had a responsibility to care for those who were not as fortunate as she. Without a word, she took the piece of paper, folded it, and put it in her wallet. Years later, she still hasn't forgotten. When she was looking for a position as a lawyer, she sought a firm that would take clients regardless of their ability to pay and that counted

hours of volunteer legal counsel (*pro bono*) in calculating her work hours. I was so proud. It reminded me that honoring our solidarity with the poor is a lifelong discipline.

We've been taught that calling attention to ourselves is a little suspect. Our parents and good friends can call attention to our achievements, but we can't. And yet today's readings include the part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that calls us "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

This isn't the kind of thing we're supposed to hide. But Jesus doesn't mean we should brag or be prideful. Rather, we're to do what Isaiah tells us and honor God by caring for the least among us. We're to follow Paul's example and strive only to "know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The example of our lives should be such that those who see us will know God is working through his people. Our love and service to others is not for our glory, but for God's. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 58:7-10

"If you remove the yoke from among you, the accusing finger, and malicious speech...then your light shall rise in the darkness."

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

"I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling... so that your faith might rest... on the power of God."

Matthew 5:13-16

"A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden...Just so, your light must shine before others."

*Jesus says you are
"the salt of the earth."*

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus was not indecisive; he was not indifferent. He made a decision and followed it through until the end. He decided to become man and as a man to become a servant until his death on the cross. This is the way of love, there is no other. Therefore we see that love is not simply social assistance and not in the least social assistance to reassure consciences. No, that is not love, that is business, those are transactions. Love is free. Charity, love is life choice, it is a way of being...a path of humility and of solidarity.

—Meeting with the poor and prison inmates, pastoral visit to Caligari, September 22, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How do you let God's light shine through you?
- How can you use that light to help those around you?



Human Dignity, Rights, and Responsibilities

By Marie D. Hoff, PhD

Because we believe in community, the Church takes a distinctive approach to human rights by stressing a balance between rights and responsibilities. We have a duty to respect and exercise our own rights in a positive way. Reciprocally, we have a duty to defend and foster the full attainment of human rights by other people.

Our right to bodily respect and integrity means we have a duty to treat our own bodies with dignity. We should assert ourselves in a nonviolent manner if others violate our dignity through abusive or exploitative behavior. We

are also bound to help ensure other people's bodily rights are respected. Our right to participate in political decision-making is accompanied by our duty to vote and practice other forms of civic engagement within our personal capabilities and skills. We have a duty to support and promote the participation rights of others, especially those most disadvantaged or powerless.

Our economic rights to work and fair wages or profits are balanced by our duty to work to produce goods or services of genuine value for others and to use our gifts to make a positive contribution to

society. Our duties to others also include supporting laws that set fair wages and taxes, as well as educational and training opportunities that enable everyone to contribute to society through useful work.

Supporting others' rights may require being supportive of taxation for improved school systems or special job programs. Respecting human dignity requires more than merely being able to say, "Well, I didn't get drunk, steal, or yell at anyone today, so I must be a pretty decent person." We must exercise our own rights and responsibilities in proactive ways and join with others to ensure that human beings everywhere have their human rights and needs met so that all people can become the fully developed person in body, mind, and soul God meant them to be. In this way, we are going to God together. †

Source: *Happy the People*, © 2013, Liguori Publications

An Experience of Race and Faith

By Andrew Lyke

In the mid-1990s, my parish conducted a program to help facilitate talks among parishioners about race and racism. In the beginning, a tentativeness in our discussion undermined honest dialogue. A young man broke the ice by stating that because of his background, he feared he might say something that would offend me. I sensed others in the small group felt similarly. As the only person of color in my small group, I was concerned that sharing painful memories might bring to the surface the underlying anger in me, shutting down civil discourse.

I thought about other situations in which honest conversation can be difficult: family discussions with my wife, my children, my siblings; tough exchanges with my friends. What helps me address issues honestly in those situations is the knowledge that no matter what happens, our relationship will remain intact. The lesson here is that our relationships can't be on the chopping block if we are to have honest dialogue. I blurted out that no matter what anyone said, even if it was offensive, I would stay. We all made a commitment to the group.

While this didn't eliminate the apprehension, it did give helpful boundaries to our discussion. In short, we loved one

another. It was love given out of concern for others. Only then were we free enough to have honest discussion. †

Source: *Liguorian*, February 2011, © Liguori Publications

PRAYER

Lord, you have blessed the world with goodness and love. Help me use my gifts and talents in accordance with your will.


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

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 6–11

Mon. St. Paul Miki and Companions:
Gn 1:1–19 / Mk 6:53–56
Tues. Weekday: Gn 1:20–2:4a /
Mk 7:1–13
Wed. Weekday: Gn 2:4b–9, 15–17 /
Mk 7:14–23

Thurs. Weekday:
Gn 2:18–25 / Mk 7:24–30
Fri. St. Scholastica:
Gn 3:1–8 / Mk 7:31–37
Sat. Weekday:
Gn 3:9–24 / Mk 8:1–10

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