



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 20, 2019

Making the Ordinary Extraordinary

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In the legends of the saints in Ireland, it is said that St. Bridget performed a miracle similar to the one Jesus did at Cana. When three beggars came to the monastery, there was nothing to give them to drink. Bridget invited them in anyway and, seeing only the water used for washing clothes, she prayed to God. The wash water turned into beer, which she served to the guests.

While the account of the wedding feast is not a legend, the similarity

between the two stories highlights the way God works in ordinary things (and sometimes in ordinary people) to make them extraordinary. Jesus turns the water at an everyday wedding into wine of such abundance that it reminds us of Isaiah's vision of the Lord's banquet when all will feast at the table. God worked through Bridget, an ordinary person, to turn the water used for washing clothes into beer to satisfy the thirst of three beggars. Though seemingly without, they had as much as they needed, and the generosity was remembered.

Even now, God takes what is mundane and uses it to show forth his glory and satisfy his people. John's Gospel highlights this activity as the first of the signs that Jesus performed. The legend of Bridget and the stories of those who reflect and share the grace of God in their day-to-day living strengthen our faith and hope that God is active still in the world and will bring us all to glory one day. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 62:1-5

As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord.

John 2:1-11

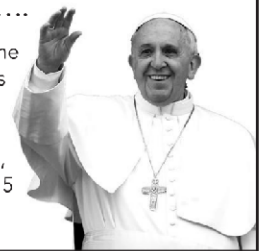
"Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."

God worked through Bridget to turn wash water into beer and satisfy the thirst of three beggars.

A Word from Pope Francis

The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned....

—Address to the
United Nations
General
Assembly,
September 25,
2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Can I think of examples of God working through ordinary people or things to make the extraordinary happen?
- With God's help, how can an ordinary person like me become an extraordinary force for good?

Struggling with Evil

By Richard Rohr, OFM

One of the most difficult biblical themes to explore is how we deal with evil. There is something in our psychology that makes it hard to see, hear, or face evil realistically.

Throughout history, we have viewed the problem of evil similarly: We are forever looking for the enemy and finding him “out there.” Someone else or some other group is almost always the problem, so we feel justified in blaming others. This enables us to live hatefully, even violently, and without guilt. “The hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he is offering worship to God,” says Jesus (John 16:2).

Starting with Cain and Abel, history is an account of who killed whom and who “deserves” to be killed. So much of history is searching for a suitable enemy. In simple terms, he hit me, so I’m free to hit him back. Two millennia after Jesus became history’s forgiving victim we continue to miss his message!

That same dynamic is evident in Leviticus 16, where we read about the scapegoat ritual. On the Day of Atonement, a goat was brought to the Holy of Holies where the priest would lay hands on the animal. All of the sins and failures of the people were ceremoniously laid on the goat, and



they would drive the goat into the desert. Through that ingenious liturgical rite the people distanced themselves from sins by finding an easy target on which to project them. Liturgically, it worked! In fact, it works so well we’ve never stopped creating scapegoats.

Playing Mind Games

We convince ourselves that we’re righteous: Our hatred is moral because the stakes are so high when our country, people, way of life, or religious beliefs are under siege. Finding and dealing with evil “out there” holds us together as a nation as we define ourselves by what we are against.

Jesus shows us another way. Many of his healings are really efforts to reintegrate persons into the community. There’s no room for scapegoating in his teaching. He doesn’t expel sinners but forgives them. He even commands that we love our enemies. There’s no “contaminating element” to expel in Jesus’ teaching. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the opposite of scapegoating, punishing, and excluding the supposed enemy. The great conversion occurs when we see that we’re our own worst enemies.

Saint Paul is another model. He’s a

converted persecutor and accuser who once gloried in his identity as a hater of Christians. No one was “holier” than Saul, the dutiful Pharisee, until the scales fell from his eyes on the road to Damascus. There, for the first time, he recognized that he had become hate in the name of love, evil in the name of goodness.

Seeing with New Eyes

Few of us are likely to see ourselves in the extremes of St. Paul, but through God’s grace, we too can begin to see with new eyes. We can choose the path of transformation that Jesus call us to, rather than take the more comfortable outlet of projecting evil onto others.

Jesus calls us to be reconcilers: to deal with evil by holding it with grace rather than hating it; to be people who cannot hate anymore; to refuse to allow ourselves to be pulled onto one side of every dilemma.

The gospel is destabilizing. It calls us to nonviolence and wisdom. It calls us to see God in every circumstance and person—perhaps most of all in those we’re tempted to reject, fear, or attack. +

PRAYER

Lord, send your Spirit and empower me to use my gifts and talents for the common good of all people.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 21-26

Monday, St. Agnes:
Heb 5:1–10 / Mk 2:18–22


Tuesday, Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:
Heb 6:10–20 / Mk 2:23–28

Wednesday, Weekday:
Heb 7:1–3, 15–17 / Mk 3:1–6

Thursday, St. Francis de Sales:
Heb 7:25—8:6 / Mk 3:7–12

Friday, Conversion of St. Paul:
Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 / Mk 16:15–18

Saturday, Sts. Timothy and Titus:
2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 3:20–21

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