



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

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- 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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