



# Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 7, 2019

## Becoming Lambs Among Wolves

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Our nation was founded on the principle of religious freedom. For the most part, we can worship as we like, believe as we like, and enjoy the security that comes from knowing we will not be punished, abused, or discriminated against for our faith. That has not always been the case for all Christians, both throughout history and recently in several countries. Through the media we learn of ongoing killings and oppression inflicted on those who publicly claim to be Christian.

Jesus sent his disciples to preach the good news “like lambs among wolves.” Anyone who knows this simile knows how terrible it is—they will stand out, become the first targets, and easy prey. But Jesus doesn’t tell them to fight back or disguise themselves. Rather, he tells them to give witness at the kitchen table and eat what’s put in front of them. In effect, Jesus tells them to get at the heart of people’s lives and to wish them peace. Even if their peace is not returned, the disciples are not to let that weigh them down. “Shake the dust from your feet” and move on, Jesus says in Matthew 10:14.

Preaching the gospel is the mission of a disciple, no matter where or when he or she lives. Today, in honor of those who have given their lives in service of the gospel, share with one or two people the good news of what God has done in your life. Listen to them. Invite them to come to church. Offer to pray with them. Just for today, be the sheep that everyone sees. You never know who might join the flock. +

### Sunday Readings

#### Isaiah 66:10–14c

For thus says the LORD: I will spread prosperity over [Jerusalem] like a river, like an overflowing torrent.

#### Galatians 6:14–18

From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

#### Luke 10:1–12, 17–20 or Luke 10:1–9

[Jesus] said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few.”

*Share with one or two people  
the good news of what God  
has done in your life.*

## A Word from Pope Francis

Today gratuitousness is often not part of daily life where everything is bought and sold. Everything is calculated and measured. Almsgiving helps us to experience giving freely, which leads to freedom from the obsession of possessing, from the fear of losing what we have.

—Blessing of ashes, March 5, 2014



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Rather than just trading small talk, do I work to get at the heart of people’s lives?
- Who might I invite to come to church?

# Staying on the Right Path

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

*“Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3).*

Jesus was a realist. The world, although charged with God’s grandeur, is also an environment scarred by sin and misused freedom.

For centuries Christian writers spoke of life as warfare, a battle unto death. So Jesus gives two pieces of advice to the disciples, to us: Be shrewd! Be simple! To ground these characteristics in his followers’ imagination, Jesus points out the cunning of serpents and the simplicity of doves. This symbolism contains a wealth of wisdom.

Be shrewd! When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about the payment of taxes, they received an answer that foiled their plot to incriminate him. The wolves were after the innocent Lamb. Jesus fended off their designs by distinguishing one’s double obligation to God and to the city of man. Jesus answered a question with a question, thereby confusing his opponents. Jesus himself was shrewd—in the ways of the kingdom.

Shrewd, too, was Oskar Schindler (1908–1974), a German industrialist who helped save more than a thousand Jews from Hitler’s death camps. Living in a culture of hatred and death, Schindler used his intelligence, material resources,



and the God-given grace of compassion to thwart time and time again the work of the Nazis. Perhaps our passage, “I am sending you like lambs among wolves” was engraved on his heart.

Be simple! In contrast to serpents that are earthbound and dependent upon

deception for their survival, doves have as their realm the spaciousness of the sky and the gift of flight. Although their simplicity may hold more complexity than we know, the image of simplicity captures the quality of single-mindedness. Doves live in total dependency upon divine providence, as do we all. We, as human beings, can live with awareness that we are radically poor and, therefore, everything is a gift. Consciousness of our innate poverty tends to simplify life.

## All About Love

In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau’s classic, he cries: “Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million, count half a dozen, and keep your account on your thumbnail.”

Whether or not Thoreau had Matthew’s passage in mind, the advice here is similar to Jesus’. There is one thing that is necessary. Martha thought it was hospitality; Mary opted for contemplation. Martha waited on table to express her

love; Mary gazed upon the face of Jesus and knew that love simplified everything.

As disciples of the Lord we are sent. Through baptism we have been given a mission to invite others to know, love, and imitate the life of Jesus. But we are sent into a world filled with forces contrary to gospel values. We work and live in an ambiguous culture, one of death, blatant consumerism, violence, and injustice that violates human dignity. We need a shrewdness that is first cousin to prudence if our ministry in such an environment is to succeed.

## Sense of Direction

We are sent but not alone. The Spirit is given to us and is the principal agent of our discipleship. God’s Spirit is simple, for God is love. Here is the cornerstone that supports and sustains our Christian community and ministry. It is the Spirit that unifies all of our activities so that they lead to the glory of God.

Jesus is Lord and the true vine feeding us life and love. Prayer keeps us united to him. We are to bear fruit through service and witness. And, in all this, we give glory to God. Nothing can be simpler—or shrewder. +



*Lord, your love protects us in times of trouble. Strengthen my faith that I may be a source of strength to others.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

July 8–13

**Monday, Weekday:** Gn 28:10–22a / Mt 9:18–26

**Tuesday, Weekday:** Gn 32:23–33 / Mt 9:32–38

**Wednesday, Weekday:** Gn 41:55–57; 42:5–7a, 17–24a / Mt 10:1–7

**Thursday, St. Benedict:** Gn 44:18–21, 23b–29; 45:1–5 / Mt 10:7–15

**Friday, Weekday:** Gn 46:1–7, 28–30 / Mt 10:16–23

**Saturday, Weekday:** Gn 49:29–32; 50:15–26a / Mt 10:24–33



# Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 14, 2019

## Seeing God in Every Person

By Mary Katharine Deeley

The scholar of the law had the right answer but the wrong question. *Love God with all your heart* is the great Jewish law, and *love your neighbor as yourself* was part of the Holiness Code of Leviticus. But he asked, “Who is my neighbor?” as though neighborliness was determined by a specific set of rules or restrictions: *My neighbor is the person who lives next door, attends my child’s school, or works in my field.*

We, too, may think we’ll help a neighbor, but a *stranger*—an outsider, a foreigner, someone who simply isn’t

“like me”—may be a different matter. For many, there are a few exceptions: When natural disasters strike, for instance, people reach out to help. They clear debris, send money, food, and supplies, and try to comfort the victims. In such circumstances, they are all neighbors.

Jesus turns the scholar’s question around: “[Who] was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” This change put the responsibility of being a neighbor on us. The answer becomes, *I am a neighbor to everyone I meet*, whether stranger or friend, black or white, Christian or atheist, gay or straight, native or immigrant. Being a neighbor and loving neighbors are part and parcel of loving God and following Christ. Once I realize that, I must acknowledge two connected truths: God sees me as I am, loves me, and calls me neighbor; and the only conceivable response to that love is to see God in every person and to love all people in return. +

***Being a neighbor and loving neighbors are part and parcel of loving God and following Christ.***

## Sunday Readings

### Deuteronomy 30:10–14

[Moses said,] “No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.”

### Colossians 1:15–20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

### Luke 10:25–37

[Jesus said,] “A Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight.”

## A Word from Pope Francis

You must become a Samaritan. And then also become like the innkeeper at the end of the parable to whom the Samaritan entrusts the person who is suffering. Who is this innkeeper? It is the Church, the Christian community, people of compassion and solidarity, social organizations. It is us, it is you.

—World Meeting of Popular Movements, February 10, 2017



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Can I work toward being a neighbor to everyone I meet?
- At church, can I reach out and welcome those who are not like me?

# Is It OK to Be Rich?

By Alice Camille

What's so bad about being rich? Is it a sin, after all, to work hard and reap the rewards of your labor?

The Bible tells us that God hears the cry of the poor, and the Church teaches that God has a preferential option for the poor. This implies we ought to be looking out for the poor as well. So does this mean that God doesn't hear the cry of the well-to-do and God has it in for the SUV-driving crowd?

Lots of ancient morality stories deal with the disparity between rich and poor, and some of these tales fall into the category of "next-life reversals." We can see the basic outline of these stories in the parable Jesus tells of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:19–31). Remember this one?

The rich man, called Dives by tradition (*dives* is Latin for "rich"), dines sumptuously every day, while Lazarus desires but does not get even the crumbs that fall from the rich guy's table. Instead, he sits outside, his running sores licked by dogs. But it gets better for our hero Lazarus. In the next life, he gets to lie in the bosom of Abraham in heaven, while the rich fellow groans in the torments of the netherworld. Not quite the end of the story, but that's enough for now.

Why does the rich man get the netherworld, while Lazarus gets



paradise? There is no hint in the story that Dives is a bad man or, for that matter, that Lazarus is a good one. So we are nearly led to believe that being rich is the sin of the first man and being poor is the virtue of the second. But that's not right, either. So what are we to understand from this story?

## Seeking the Full Story

Perhaps we want more details to fill in the blanks about these characters. Was the rich man aware of Lazarus at his door? Did he know about his hunger, the sores, the dog situation, and did he choose to do nothing about it? And how about Lazarus? How did he get to be in this awful predicament, and did he do anything to contribute to his striking lack of success?

We begin to imagine that Dives must have made a big mistake (something we might avoid with a little forethought); say, he forgot to give to the Bishop's Annual Appeal or the United Way. And seeing Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham at the end, we presume that he ended up on skid row, not because he was lazy, did poorly on his SATs, or had a drinking problem, but because he got laid off in a failing economy. What we want, in short, is evidence that the rich guy was a bad guy and the poor man a victim of injustice.

But the parable tells us none of that. What we do know is that the rich man had a great life and Lazarus had a lousy time of it, and that after they died, their fortunes were reversed.

## Final Lessons

Unlike many afterlife reversal stories from antiquity, however, Lazarus does not jeer at the rich man's fate from where he now sits in heaven, a sign perhaps of his good hearted. He never wanted to break into the rich man's house and take his stuff, either; he just wanted the crumbs.

And we catch a glimpse of the rich man's soul when he does not protest his final state but asks only to warn his brothers, still guilty of the same choices he made. This in itself may be an admission of his negligence. Dives acknowledges that his brothers remain blissfully unrepentant in their self-serving lifestyle.

The bottom line would seem to be that those whose needs are well-met (and then some) must have great compassion. No excuses. Suffering is all around us. So, pick a cause, any cause: But be compassionate! It's no sin to be rich, but it's a fatal error not to share. +

## PRAYER

*Lord, you are near to the brokenhearted. Help me be a good neighbor to all people.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

July 15–20

**Monday, St. Bonaventure:** Ex 1:8–14, 22 / Mt 10:34–11:1

**Tuesday, Weekday:** Ex 2:1–15a / Mt 11:20–24

**Wednesday, Weekday:** Ex 3:1–6, 9–12 / Mt 11:25–27

**Thursday, Weekday:** Ex 3:13–20 / Mt 11:28–30

**Friday, Weekday:** Ex 11:10–12:14 / Mt 12:1–8

**Saturday, Weekday:** Ex 12:37–42 / Mt 12:14–21

Bringing Home  
the **Word** 

July 14, 2019

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# Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 21, 2019

## Choosing “the Better Part”

By Mary Katharine Deeley

During the holidays, my husband and I invite relatives, friends, and students who can't return home to share our meal and find welcome in a special time. We enjoy cooking for a crowd, and our guests often bring something to share, adding to the bounty. Beforehand, we clean and dust, making sure the house is presentable. Our preparations are anything but relaxed. On the day itself, my husband usually cooks the meal while I offer drinks and conversation. The event couldn't succeed without either of our roles.

In the first reading, Abraham put wife Sarah and the servants to work to provide the feast while he waited on the guests. To his (and his wife's) surprise, the strangers asked where Sarah was and promised her a son. In this moment, we see that Abraham isn't the only important person in the story. God's blessing came mainly to the one in the kitchen, in the background.

When Jesus visits the sisters of Bethany, Martha remains in the kitchen like Sarah. In her anxiety, did she believe God's favor would come only to those who toil? Jesus reminds her there also is blessing in sitting with the guest; he even calls this “the better part.”

There is pride and vanity in assuming we can achieve favor and blessing through our works. When we start to think we know where, when, how, and to whom God will come, it's good to return to the word, which reminds us that favor and blessing come according to God's choosing and often to our surprise. +

*There is pride and vanity  
in assuming we can achieve  
favor and blessing through  
our works.*

## Sunday Readings

### Genesis 18:1–10a

One of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.”

### Colossians 1:24–28

It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom.

### Luke 10:38–42

The Lord said to her in reply, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing.”

## A Word from Pope Francis

When elderly couples, celebrating fifty years together, come to audiences of Mass here, I ask them: “Who supported whom?” This is beautiful! Everyone looks at each other, the look at me and say: “Both!” This is a beautiful witness!

—Address to engaged couples at St. Peter's Basilica, February 14, 2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Do I focus on daily tasks at the expense of ignoring what makes life truly meaningful?
- When I speak to someone, do I give him or her my full attention, or does my mind wander to the next thing?

# Marriage in the Middle

By Susan Hines-Brigger

Recently my husband and I went on a date ...to the grocery store... without our four kids. Exciting, right? For us, it was. It was wonderful and exciting because it was the closest thing we've had to a date night in a long time. Welcome to the second stage of marriage.



put tough flesh on our vows.

We would commiserate with friends—many of whom found themselves in the same situation—about things like nearly nonexistent sex lives, financial struggles, house repairs, and a complete lack of a social life.

Twenty years ago, Mark and I stood before our family and friends and promised to love, honor, and cherish one another in good times and bad, in sickness and health. Now, looking back, I can confidently say we had no idea what those vows actually meant.

In the first years of our marriage, we managed to adapt to life with one another and our quirks. But then our first child, Maddie, came along and everything changed. I'm often reminded of a quote from my favorite movie, *Hope Floats*: "Beginnings are scary, endings are usually sad, but it's the middle that counts the most."

Suddenly life in this middle stage of marriage meant we were faced with a new set of challenges. Lack of sleep, different parenting styles, hectic schedules, and career goals seemed to push our relationship to the edge. Time together as a couple took a back seat. We became aware that these are the years when the rubber meets the road when it comes to marriage. It's the time when we

The subsequent births of our next three children over the next ten years brought more and new challenges to our marriage—and meant less time for us grownups to spend together. My role as bad cop to Mark's good cop has caused more than its share of arguments. But we ride out the ebbs and flows, knowing full well that we are in this for the long haul. That's not to say it's always easy, though.

It's easy to see how so many couples drift apart during this stage. Adding to the challenge is what seems to be a lack of support for those couples in the second stage of their marriage journey. Suddenly, the support systems that help couples get to the altar fade away.

## A Change in Perspective

Relationships will change from day to day, month to month, year to year. But for all its challenges, life in this stage of marriage can also be exciting and filled with blessings and adventures. Traveling that journey with your spouse has the

potential to bring you closer if you work together.

So, yes, date nights might now consist of a rented movie after the kids have gone to bed or Friday night at the grocery. And while lunch dates have replaced dinner dates, the important thing is that we're together. And now that Maddie is of babysitting age, we are slowly starting to rediscover date nights and more time alone—thus the exciting grocery store adventure. It's not much, but we'll take what we can get.

The most important thing is to stay connected, remembering that we are on the same team. That is as true in this stage of marriage as it was in the beginning and will continue to be into the next stage. Sometimes the best you can do is grocery shopping on a Friday night.

Before we know it, our kids will be grown and our marriage will move into a new phase. Who knows what's in store for us? Whatever it is, though, I'm sure that Mark and I are up for the challenge. +

## PRAYER

*Lord, you teach us to love and welcome strangers. Remove the fear that keeps me from accepting and loving people with backgrounds different from mine.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

July 22–27

**Monday, St. Mary Magdalene:** Sgs 3:1–4b or 2 Cor 5:14–17 / Jn 20:1–2, 11–18

**Tuesday, Weekday:** Ex 14:21–15:1 / Mt 12:46–50

**Wednesday, Weekday:** Ex 16:1–5, 9–15 / Mt 13:1–9

**Thursday, St. James:** 2 Cor 4:7–15 / Mt 20:20–28

**Friday, Sts. Joachim and Anne:** Ex 20:1–17 / Mt 13:18–23

**Saturday, Weekday:** Ex 24:3–8 / Mt 13:24–30



# Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 28, 2019

## The Five Prayers

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I tell my students there are five prayers: Please; Thank you; I'm sorry; Wow; and Yes, I will. The words change but, in essence, every prayer implies one or more of these attitudes: petition, thanksgiving, contrition, praise, and obedience. In his book *Man's Quest for God*, Abraham Joshua Heschel says prayer is "the invitation to God to intervene in our lives." God does—sometimes to our surprise, sometimes in ways we can't imagine, but always in a way that changes us.

### Sunday Readings

#### Genesis 18:20–32

The LORD replied: If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.

#### Colossians 2:12–14

You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God.

#### Luke 11:1–13

[Jesus said,] "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Jesus knew this when he taught his disciples the Our Father. In it, we hear words of praise and petition. We hear contrition: "Forgive us...as we forgive..." (11:4). We hear obedience: "thy kingdom come..." and "thy will be done..." (Luke 11:2; Matthew 6:10). Jesus goes on to say that when we pray, God will send his Spirit to guide us and give us what we need: "our daily bread..." (11:3). No wonder the Lord's Prayer is a model prayer for everyone.

In our prayer, we have to remember that there is often a difference between what we need and what we desire. In the movie *Shadowlands*, C. S. Lewis is depicted reflecting on the nature of prayer as his wife is dying. Asked why he prayed, he responds, "I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God; it changes me." That's the power of the Spirit—to change our hearts until all our prayers become wow (praise) and yes (obedience). +

*"I pray because  
I can't help myself.  
I pray because  
I'm helpless."*

## A Word from Pope Francis

Media can help us to feel closer to one another, creating a sense of the unity of the human family, which can in turn inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure a more dignified life for all. Good communication helps us to grow closer, to know one another better and, ultimately, to grow in unity.

—World Communications Day,  
June 1, 2014



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- In addition to asking God for things, do I remember to offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving?
- Can I make time to pray more often than I do now?

# Becoming Catholic: Chrysteile's Journey

By Jamie Taylor and  
Chrysteile Murphy

Chrysteile Murphy's journey to the Catholic Church underscores the unique nature of each individual's quest for God.

Chrysteile's parents, sixties free spirits, felt she should decide about God herself. In her search for God, she explored many different faiths. None answered her questions. Some just added to her confusion.

Chrysteile's initial exposure to Catholicism was negative. An acquaintance's ill-formed understanding of the sacrament of reconciliation—"do anything you want to and go to confession"—didn't sit well with her. Questions remained—all of which would be answered when she walked through the doors of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Tampa.

Chrysteile's deep yearning to learn all she could about God and Christ found a home in this beautiful church with welcoming priests and loving parishioners. Her parish experience differed from anything she'd been told about Christianity. Yet she craved more.

## Dirty Hair, Clean Soul

One Sunday during Mass, it was announced that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) would start soon. With sweet anticipation, Chrysteile



came each week to hear the topic of discussion and be enriched by it.

Chrysteile had an awakening during the RCIA process at Sacred Heart. She and her fellow candidates and catechumens learned Church history and the richness of the sacraments. At the Easter Vigil, Chrysteile

experienced the greatest joy in her spiritual life: Her own baptism.

Chrysteile still recalls the immense anticipation and, all at once, a great peace. The water was cold, but that was irrelevant to her. God's redemptive love flowed over Chrysteile, and she was washed clean of sin.

"When Fr. George anointed us with the chrism oil, confirmed us, and we were sealed with the Holy Spirit, I was humbled," Chrysteile recalled. "No words can describe the emotions that fill you up during this entire process." She didn't wash her hair for four days! The fragrance of the chrism oil reminded her of this experience, so she held onto it as long as possible.

Belonging to the Catholic Church was an important choice for Chrysteile. Her faith in God and Christ took root and flourished there. "There is nothing like coming together as one body in Christ at Mass on Sunday and to experience the great love that is the Eucharist," she said.

## Come and See

Chrysteile jumped right in to her parish's activities. She's a eucharistic minister, a member of the Young Adults Group, and helps lead the Lost and Found Ministry for feeding the homeless in the area.

The priests at her parish always stress the importance of using one's time and talents for bringing about the kingdom of God. Chrysteile loves to cook and has found a special way to use this gift to feed the hungry. Every other Saturday, a group of parishioners prepares a hot meal for more than 150 people.

"Everything that God has promised to us is present in the Eucharist: God's most precious gift," Chrysteile said. "Coming to the Catholic Church and this glorious faith is the most humbling, rewarding, and life-changing thing you could ever do for yourself." Chrysteile believes that, for those who are curious about the faith, if you're willing to open your heart, you will find what she has found in abundance. +



*Lord, you came to offer God's forgiveness to all people. Help me forgive my brothers and sisters from the heart.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

July 29–August 3

**Monday, St. Martha:** Ex 32:15–24, 30–34 / Jn 11:19–27 or Lk 10:38–42

**Tuesday, Weekday:** Ex 33:7–11; 34:5b–9, 28 / Mt 13:36–43

**Wednesday, St. Ignatius of Loyola:** Ex 34:29–35 / Mt 13:44–46

**Thursday, St. Alphonsus Liguori:** Ex 40:16–21, 34–38 / Mt 13:47–53

**Friday, Weekday:** Lv 23:1, 4–11, 15–16, 27, 34b–37 / Mt 13:54–58

**Saturday, Weekday:** Lv 25:1, 8–17 / Mt 14:1–12