



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time | February 4, 2018

You Are Not Alone

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Illness, depression, and misfortune can make us feel alone and afraid. We wonder whether anyone can understand what we're going through or help us.

The first five chapters of Mark's Gospel give us several healing stories in which Jesus, by touch or word, restores individuals to wholeness. He casts out demons. He cures the sick, like Simon's mother-in-law. The stories confirm what our faith tells us—that God's healing power is for all people and that good news lifts us and gives us joy.

But for those touched by the loneliness of infirmity of mind, body, or spirit, the stories alone might not be enough. Instead, the fervent prayer of the psalmist might be our grace: "The LORD ...[heals] the brokenhearted" (Psalm 147:2–3). Or, our peace might rest in the simple knowledge of two often-overlooked lines from the Gospels: "They brought him many who were possessed by demons" (Matthew 8:16), and, "The whole town was gathered at the door" (Mark 1:33).

Simply put, everyone came, and no one was alone. No matter what our condition, we are not alone. Christ is there in our pain and suffering to give us the grace to endure. We're not always cured by human standards, but Christ helps us find wholeness no matter what we suffer—and in him we find our peace and our joy.

Isaiah told us that the name given to the Messiah was Emmanuel, which means "God with us."

In Christ, we see the evidence that God's promise has come true. +

***"The LORD...[heals]
the brokenhearted."***

Psalm 147:2–3

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus sends his disciples out to all nations....We too were part of all those people of two thousand years ago. Jesus did not provide a short list of who is, or is not, worthy of receiving his message and his presence. Instead, he always embraced life as he saw it.

—Canonization of Fr. Junípero Serra,
September 23, 2015



Sunday Readings

Job 7:1–4, 6–7

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope.

1 Corinthians 9:16–19, 22–23

I have become all things to all, to save at least some.

Mark 1:29–39

[Jesus said,] "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When you look around, what needs for the gospel of love do you see?
- Which of these needs can you fill as Jesus' apostle?



Transforming Our Pain Into Sacred Wounds

By Richard Rohr, OFM

All religion is about transforming pain and what to do with that pain—the absurd, tragic, unjust experiences that make up our lives. The hurts, disappointments, and betrayals; the burdens of sinfulness and brokenness pile up throughout life. We must find a way to make our pain into sacred wounds. We must find a way to give meaning to our hurts and find God in that suffering. Our faith is a gift that helps us deal with life's tragedies.

Throughout history, literature has idealized people at the top: presidents and leaders who hold power and control the system. But biblical revelation turns history upside down with empathy for victims. It idealizes the bottom. It says that true power is not focused at the top. Then Jesus comes to epitomize that message by becoming poor, naked, and expelled—the one who teaches us that the way down is really the way up.

Our lesson is that we need to stop looking for meaning at the top and, instead, go to the edges and the bottom where we find those excluded and expelled. By his life and teaching, Jesus reminds us that we have to be rejected. We have to experience being on the outside before we have something to say.

***By his life and teaching, Jesus reminds us
that we have to be rejected.***

This is the gift of biblical revelation. It's why we're the only religion that worships the victim, the one considered the problem by religious authorities.

God of Surprises

When Christians call Jesus the Lord of history—this bleeding, naked, crucified man—we are turning history around! We may not realize how scandalous and silly this seems to others. But when you think about it, the crucified Jesus is an unlikely candidate for God.

But this is the very Jesus who, through his teaching and life, reminds us to be careful where we look for God. Expect to find God in unexpected places, he tells us. And so it is in all of history: It has been the excluded ones and people at the bottom who have the privileged viewpoint. Why? Because it is from that position that we meet God, that we understand the illusion and lies of a system built on power, prestige, possessions. But until all that is taken from us, we don't know that. Until then we are simply playing the game, enjoying the fruits of the system.

Recall how Jesus sends his disciples to preach from a position of vulnerability. "Go out, take nothing for your journey," he tells them. Why? Because he knows they're going to fail and look like fools. They have to or they won't have a message to deliver.

Hard Truths

It's an initiation of sorts: Jesus sends his disciples into situations where people are going to laugh at them and consider them nobodies. Only when you are a nobody will you understand what it means to be somebody. That is when you will find your life on new ground. We call it the reign of God.

The Bible begins with a fall for a reason. The story of Adam and Eve is a microcosm of what will happen in every life. You and I will fall. Somewhere we will experience our own absurdity, our utter brokenness. This reality isn't something to hold off; it's a necessary, tragic, and beautiful part of the journey.

The answer to our pain is the Jesus who was rejected, betrayed, and abandoned; then hanged on a cross, bleeding and naked. The answer to our pain is the risen Christ, who reminds us that through pain we have new life. +



Lord, you hear the cry of the poor. Hear my cry for inner peace and happiness.

*From Peaceful Meditations for
Every Day in Ordinary Time,*

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS *February 5-10*

Mon. St. Agatha:
1 Kgs 8:1-7, 9-13 / Mk 6:53-56

Tue. St. Paul Miki and Companions:
1 Kgs 8:22-23, 27-30 / Mk 7:1-13

Wed. Weekday:
1 Kgs 10:1-10 / Mk 7:14-23

Thu. Weekday:
1 Kgs 11:4-13 / Mk 7:24-30

Fri. Weekday:
1 Kgs 11:29-32; 12:19 / Mk 7:31-37

Sat. St. Scholastica: 1 Kgs 12:26-32;
13:33-34 / Mk 8:1-10