



Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 1, 2018

Saved by Faith Alone

By Mary Katharine Deeley

A fourth-century legend from Catholics in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire tells us the name of the woman in today's Gospel is Beronike. A woman of great faith, she knew that the law considered her unclean because she had a flow of blood and no one could touch her. When she saw Jesus, she didn't ask him to touch or even speak to her. She didn't want him to feel what she felt—outcast and isolated. She simply believed that touching his garment would bring her relief.

A couple of weeks ago, St. Paul told us that we walk by faith, not by sight. Faith was all this woman had to go on; everything else had failed. What she heard about Jesus stirred something in her soul, and she followed her convictions. She wasn't disappointed. The power of Christ, who heals us of whatever wounds us deeply, went out immediately to her who dared to hope. When he called out to see who touched him, her fear didn't keep her away. She was saved by faith alone.

Being saved doesn't always mean miraculous cures, but it does involve standing before Christ as we are—bleeding, broken, sinful—and trusting that he is our answer. We don't know for sure what happened to the woman. But her legend continued.

When Jesus carried his cross to his crucifixion, a woman stepped out to stop the flow of blood and sweat streaking his face. We know her by the Latin translation of Beronike—Veronica—which carries with it an additional meaning: “true icon,” in reference to the facial image that Jesus left on her cloth. +

Faith was all this woman had to go on; everything else had failed.

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 1:13–15; 2:23–24

God formed us to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made us.

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13–15

He became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Mark 5:21–43 or 5:21–24, 35b–43

[Jesus] took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise!”

A Word From Pope Francis

Countless people suffer trials and injustice, and live in anxiety. Our hearts need anointing with God's consolation, which does not take away our problems, but gives us the power to love, to peacefully bear pain. Receiving and bringing God's consolation: this mission of the Church is urgent.

—Homily in Tbilisi, Georgia,
October 1, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How can I better embrace the challenging moments in my life rather than rebel or run from them?
- How can I better accept and let go of those things that cause me pain?



The Power of the Meek

By Donald Senior, CP

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land (Matthew 5:5).

As a boy I remember seeing the ad about the “weakling” shamed by a bully who kicks beach sand in his face, then walks off with his girlfriend. Only when the weakling decides to lift weights to build muscles is he ready to bop the bully on the chin and reclaim his “prize.” The meek inherit the earth? No way!

Few of the beatitudes confront our cultural values so directly. In today’s geopolitics, the land belongs to the strong, not the meek. In the Bible, the same equation played out daily: Both sides believe that the only language their opponent understands is force.

What can Jesus mean in the third beatitude of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount? The Greek word translated as “meek” is *praus*, and its meaning is not meekness in the sense of unassertiveness—as the English term can imply—but as powerlessness or defenselessness. When one sees tattered lines of Syrian refugees or staring eyes of starving African children, their plight is not one of being “meek” in the sense of shy or retiring, but of being without power or resources and, therefore, terribly vulnerable. By extension, the word can also move beyond the level of one’s social condition and refer to a lack of pretense or arrogance, a gentleness and authentic humility that comes from

understanding that ultimately one’s life and power depend upon God.

Biblical Vision

Jesus’ beatitude is a quotation from Psalm 37:11: “But the poor will inherit the earth, will delight in great prosperity,” and taps into a strong biblical vision. Because the Israelites were people of the land, their dreams for peace often included longing for a time when the land’s bounty would not be destroyed and all could live together peacefully.

Particularly beautiful is the vision of the future in Isaiah: “They shall build houses and live in them, they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit; They shall not build and others live there; they shall not plant and others eat. As the years of a tree, so the years of my people; and my chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (65:21–22).

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus also envisions a kingdom of God where peace and justice abound, where God’s children have a place of security and joy. This is the powerful dream Jesus summons up early in his ministry. Blessed are the meek, the powerless, the downtrodden, because in God’s reign they will not remain disenfranchised but will inherit the land. The Gospel’s vision of a just future that reverses oppression now

extends beyond Israel to the whole earth, encompassing all those whose lives and hopes are threatened and who have no resource to lean on other than God’s providence.

Embraced by Jesus

What is remarkable in the Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus himself throws his lot with people like this. He describes himself as “meek and humble of heart” (11:29) and the evangelist cites the words of the prophet Zechariah, emphasizing the paradox of Jesus the king entering Jerusalem on a donkey. “Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass...” (Matthew 21:5, citing Zechariah 9:9). Jesus’ mission is to identify with the least (21:35–46), to teach and heal that they might have justice, and to exemplify the virtues of gentleness and humility that the Spirit of God instills.

Without fail, Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount summons us to take stock of our values from God’s point of view. +

PRAYER

Lord, you promise eternal life
to all who believe in you.
Give me the courage to be
an advocate for life.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 2-7, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Am 2:6–10, 13–16 / Mt 8:18–22

Tuesday, St. Thomas:
Eph 2:19–22 / Jn 20:24–29

Wednesday, Weekday:
Am 5:14–15, 21–24 / Mt 8:28–34

Thursday, Weekday:
Am 7:10–17 / Mt 9:1–8

Friday, Weekday:
Am 8:4–6, 9–12 / Mt 9:9–13

Saturday, Weekday:
Am 9:11–15 / Mt 9:14–17

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Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 8, 2018

Overcoming Our Stubbornness

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My mother always thought I was a little bit stubborn. “Not stubborn,” I said, “but sometimes, I think things should be done a different way.” What I usually meant by that was that things should be done my way. “I know,” she said, “stubborn.” I recalled that conversation when my daughters reached the same age that I was when I thought my mother was dumb and didn’t know anything and my desire was to do always what I thought best. They have since conceded that I might know a little, just as I gave my mother that same credit

as I got older. We all have our periods of stubbornness. Sometimes we are right; sometimes we can be persuaded differently, and sometimes we have to persist until our mistakes become evident even to us, even if that means we suffer the consequences of our folly.

The people of Nazareth were astonished at Jesus’ teaching and wisdom. Their stubborn refusal to believe in him grew out of their familiarity. “We know him and his family,” they thought. “He can’t possibly have this power.” Stubbornness is a hard thing to overcome. Mark records that Jesus was amazed at their refusal to believe. Their very refusal made it difficult for him to perform mighty deeds (a phrase used of God in the Old Testament), and so he did what he could: He healed a few sick people. Some of us still have a stubborn streak. Has that ever interfered in our recognition of God’s power? Do we hang on to our belief that our way is best even if that hurts us? Reflect on that. +

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 2:2–5

Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites.

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ.

Mark 6:1–6

Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary? ...He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Stubbornness is a hard thing to overcome.

Mark records that Jesus was amazed at people’s refusal to believe.

A Word From Pope Francis

Some of you might ask me: “Don’t you ever have doubts?” I have many....Of course, everyone has doubts at times! Doubts which touch the faith, in a positive way, are a sign that we want to know better and more fully God, Jesus, and the mystery of his love for us.

—General Audience,
November 23, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Does my familiarity with Jesus lead me to routine and lack of faith?
- What ways have I seen Jesus work and answer prayers?



To Serve as Jesus Did

By Kathy Coffey

[Jesus said,] "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Who in his right mind really wants to be a servant? Uneasily, we picture a butler in a British movie holding a tuxedo jacket for a wealthy, pampered boss. Is *this* what Jesus asks?

Perhaps our aversion to servanthood springs from the spunky independence of Americans. Descendants of bold pioneers who broke away from an entrenched system of servitude, we stoop to no one. We serve no master!

Maybe we need to wrestle with what Jesus' words mean today. Like conversing with a friend, we pose objections and he expands upon his original idea:

We might protest that we dread feeling vulnerable. When our livelihood, our schedule, and our work depends on the whim of another, we feel diminished. We're used to being independent adults—staying in charge, controlling our lives, setting our agendas. Then Jesus, with his startling one-liners and his heartbreaking humility, challenges us to rethink those easy assumptions.

He might gently point out that, bluster aside, we *do* serve others most days. Even the millionaire dad might chauffeur his kids to soccer games; the mom with the advanced degree still cooks the family breakfast—at least occasionally. Every time we fold laundry, weed the garden, or check homework, we are serving someone.

Quiet, Simple Sanctity

Jesus might remind us how our tradition has always honored quiet, ordinary service. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of the lay brother Alphonsus Rodríguez, contrasting the glorious deeds of warriors or martyrs with the simple dailiness of Alphonsus' job: Today we'd call it being a receptionist at a Jesuit institution. Years of upheavals passed while, uneventfully, "Alfonso watched the door."

Yet his name is preceded by a revered abbreviation: "St." The fact that Alphonsus achieved sainthood with little drama is good news for us. Perhaps we don't need to found religious orders, travel to remote missions, or perform great exploits, either. Perhaps sanctity is as close as the kitchen door, the math homework, the soup shared in kindness, the clean laundry, the offer of friendship.

As our imagined dialogue continues, Jesus gives not only his words, but also his life to help us understand. He directly experienced what he describes: total vulnerability. He who could have come into our world as a political ruler, military general, or respected scholar comes as a defenseless child. We all begin as infants, so perhaps that's not extraordinary. Then the surprise: He grows not into adult power but into

servanthood. He who made the universe washes feet, serves meals, and does "women's work."

Servants and Friends

Jesus' example of the great one becoming a servant begins radical reform of a social order built on superiority/inferiority, domination/subordination. He replaces that rickety social ladder with a paradigm where *all* serve each other. In Jesus' community, the distinctions are irrelevant because all belong to one mystical body.

God, then, is not distant dictator, but intimate friend. Furthermore, God not only befriends, but also serves. Any stigma attaching to serving is removed because it is done lovingly.

Through his words, actions, and vision, Jesus shows us that human life can sometimes seem as defenseless as a servant at the whim of an arbitrary master. But here's the difference: Our childlike vulnerability places us squarely in the hands of a compassionate God who never abandons and keeps us wholly secure. Our every breath depends on a creator who desires only good for us, loving us for all eternity. That is, indeed, a mercy. +

PRAYER

Lord, you accept everyone with unconditional love. Help me overcome my fear of others so I can love and accept them as you do.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 9–14, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Hos 2:16, 17b–18, 21–22 / Mt 9:18–26


Tuesday, Weekday:
Hos 8:4–7, 11–13 / Mt 9:32–38

Wednesday, St. Benedict:
Hos 10:1–3, 7–8, 12 / Mt 10:1–7

Thursday, Weekday:
Hos 11:1–4, 8e–9 / Mt 10:7–15

Friday, Weekday:
Hos 14:2–10 / Mt 10:16–23

Saturday, Weekday:
Is 6:1–8 / Mt 10:24–33

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