



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
September 22, 2019

How Do We Treat the Poor?

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When Pope Francis was elected, Catholics were inspired by his humility and simplicity. When he bowed before the people in St. Peter's Square and asked for their prayers, the little crowd gathered around the TV in the basement of the Catholic Center was moved to tears. When he announced that he would continue living in the guesthouse rather than the papal apartments and eat in the cafeteria, we cheered. But Pope Francis also challenged us. He wanted us to examine how we treated the poor and marginalized of the world. In his

encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he confronted us with the understanding that our misuse of the environment impacted the poor first of all and that we could no longer continue to consume our natural resources in a reckless and greedy fashion.

The prophet Amos has some harsh words for those who exploit the poor. In the Old Testament, care for the widow, orphan, and stranger—the poorest of the poor—were among the most righteous things a person could do. Many prophets pointed to the failure to do so as a sign that the people had turned from the Lord and, in their sin, cared only for themselves. More recent figures who also have indicated that the measure of a society is the way they treat their poorest members include Ghandi, St. John Paul II, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Christ commanded us to love one another. Surely this includes seeing that all have the basic necessities of life, even if that means we don't get everything we want. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

The level of progress in a society is measured by its capacity to safeguard life.... Death from malnutrition is an attack on life. Terrorism, war, violence; so is euthanasia. Loving life means always taking care of the other, wanting the best for him, cultivating and respecting her transcendent dignity.

—Address to Science and Life Association, May 30, 2015



Sunday Readings

Amos 8:4–7

The LORD has sworn: ...Never will I forget a thing [the evildoers] have done!

1 Timothy 2:1–8

There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human.

Luke 16:1–13 or 16:10–13

[Jesus said,] "The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- "No servant can serve two masters." What are some of the "masters" in my life?
- Do I gloss over small misdeeds and white lies instead of being "trustworthy in very small matters"?

Exploring Our Roots

By Richard Rohr, OFM

How often have we heard or read the words over the years: “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). We’re created in God’s image. In other words, our family of origin is divine.

Perhaps we’ve heard those words so often that we don’t receive an existential shock anymore. Beginning with the opening lines of the Old Testament, God tells us that we are fundamentally good and that we have a foundational identity with God. This is nothing less than extraordinary!

To put it differently, God extends an invitation to us. God seeks to give away God, but it is with great difficulty! You would think the invitation would be readily accepted, but not so. One of the common responses to God’s offering of self is, “Lord, I am not worthy.” It may sound humble, even respectful. But it can also be the way we avoid God’s call.

Not so the young virgin from Nazareth. When the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she is to be the Mother of God, this humble teenager from a backwater town doesn’t run away from God by protesting unworthiness. No, Mary just wants to understand how she can bear a son under such unlikely circumstances. Once she realizes how God plans to work through



her, her openness to the invitation is extraordinary. She becomes the archetype of receptivity. Mary is the one perfect vessel who knows how to say an unquestioning yes to God’s invitation.

Trusting God’s Goodness

Most of us don’t accept God’s invitations so readily. Unlike Mary, we question our unworthiness, refusing to believe that God is speaking to us. Meanwhile, God is trying to tell us that there is nothing we need to earn, nothing we can attain or accomplish, nothing to work up to. We’ve already “got it” by being a part of the family of God. Our relationship with God is about awakening rather than accomplishing, realizing rather than performing. Trust is the issue, and that becomes the biblical concept of faith. It’s all about confidence that God could love us enough. It’s all about confidence in God’s goodness.

This sense of being inadequate, of not being enough is what I call Original Shame, rather than the familiar Original Sin. As God’s creatures we’re a mixed blessing. We’re filled with contradictions and mystery, darkness and light. But God, who has taken the risk of creating freedom inside us, is always gracious. God persists in loving us—mixed blessings that we are—in all our unworthiness.

New Kind of Fame

What is God seeking from us? God isn’t looking for servants, slaves, or workers, for contestants to play the game or jump through hoops. God is simply looking for images that can bear the mystery of the glory and the darkness of life. God invites us, his creatures, to a relationship of love. What God wants are icons who will communicate who God is, what God is about.

Once we accept and believe that we’re made in God’s image, we have found our identity. We don’t have to be so preoccupied with roles and titles, with clothing, cars, and all the things the world holds up as ideals. We don’t need material things to assure us that we’re special.

We know we’re radically significant by being children of the Lord. We have less need to be visible or showy, to make a name for ourselves, to take our place in history. We no longer need our fifteen minutes of fame—because we know we’re famous! Our family of origin is divine. You don’t get much better than that. +



Lord, I am grateful for the gift of life. Help me to be a wise and responsible person in the world.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 23–28

Monday, St. Pius of Pietrelcina:

Ezr 1:1–6 / Lk 8:16–18

Tuesday, Weekday:

Ezr 6:7–8, 12b, 14–20 / Lk 8:19–21

Wednesday, Weekday:

Ezr 9:5–9 / Lk 9:1–6

Thursday, Weekday:

Hg 1:1–8 / Lk 9:7–9

Friday, St. Vincent de Paul:

Hg 2:1–9 / Lk 9:18–22

Saturday, Weekday:

Zec 2:5–9, 14–15a / Lk 9:43b–45