



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
January 31, 2021

Progress Isn't Always Easy

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Jesus' miracles and preaching were part of what convinced people that he was the Son of God. He spoke like no other and then backed up his words with amazing and wonderful actions. For example, he confronted evil spirits and cast them out. The people were amazed and saw this as evidence of his divinity, because no one had absolute power over evil—except God himself. This is a power the Church continues to practice today through the ministry of healing and exorcism.

Jesus did not want to see people suffer under the power of Satan but rather wanted them to live full and happy

lives. "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly," Jesus said in John 10:10. This strong desire of Jesus to heal and save drove him to tirelessly preach and do good. And because of this combination of goodness and power in his person, his fame spread. Yet the message he preached was challenging and demanding. Eventually many preferred to silence that good, powerful, but demanding voice.

Today, like Jesus, the Church still longs for nothing less than humanity's complete health and happiness. Yet, at times, the path to that human progress is not the easiest. Like temperamental children are chided by loving parents to eat healthy food rather than just what they like, so the good and powerful voice and actions of the Church are challenged.

We find our full flourishing as human beings and as Catholics by embracing Jesus' words and desires for us. +

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 18:15–20

If a prophet presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded, or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.

1 Corinthians 7:32–35

I should like you to be free of anxieties.

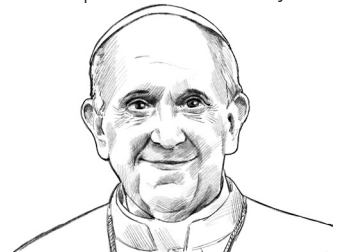
Mark 1:21–28

Jesus...said, "Quiet! Come out of him!"...He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.

A Word from Pope Francis

We must never forget that true power, at any level, is service, whose bright summit is upon the cross.... Although man frequently equates authority with control, dominion, success, for God authority is always synonymous with service, humility, love. It means entering the logic of Jesus who kneels to wash the Apostles' feet.

—Address to International Union of Superiors General, May 8, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Have I ever been tricked into eating spiritually unhealthy "moral junk food"?
- Have I thanked God for times of health and happiness?

Beautiful Diversity

By Kathleen M. Basi

“...Grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ” (from Eucharistic Prayer III).

The term “relativism” gets a lot of attention in Catholic circles these days. The idea of not drawing a distinct line between right and wrong contradicts everything we believe as Christians. It’s a dangerous threat.

But equally dangerous is the opposite: fundamentalism. We are often tempted to view every issue, conflict, and situation in black-and-white, defining right and wrong in circumstances where there is more than one right answer.

The beauty of the Catholic faith is its depth, complexity, and nuance. These characteristics make it possible for a richly diverse collection of humanity to unite under one Creed. But unity doesn’t necessarily require strict uniformity. All too often, we try to apply fundamentalist principles to things that are not critical to the faith and, in so doing, create division instead of unity within the body of Christ.

Perhaps the clearest example is what is sometimes referred to as the “liturgy wars.” Mostly they seem to swirl around music choices. The organ-and-chant crowd insists that guitars and drums are unfit for Catholic worship. Meanwhile, the guitar-and-drum group dismisses centuries of tradition out of hand.



Neither position acknowledges the fact that the diversity of the Church accepts, and indeed needs, both tradition and enculturation.

If you attend Mass in a place where everybody looks basically like you, it’s easy to forget that we are a Church whose members span every race, language, and culture on the planet. Within that rich tapestry springs diversity even more beautiful and complex. Each of us is shaped by our nature and by life experiences too numerous to count. We all have our own job to do in God’s plan, for which we are uniquely qualified by virtue of who we are, what we’ve learned, and what we’ve experienced.

When we consider all this, it should

be obvious that it’s neither necessary nor desirable to try to force the entire body of Christ to walk in the exact same footprints. Yes, there are fundamentals that cannot be compromised. Yes, relativism is a threat we cannot afford to underestimate in our Church and, especially, in our hearts. But so is the opposite extreme. If we truly hope to “become one body, one Spirit in Christ,” as the third Eucharistic Prayer says, we have to embrace not only what unites us, but also what makes us unique. +

***We must create unity,
not division within
the body of Christ.***

PRAYER

*Lord, you created me to live
in the freedom of your love.
Give me the courage to share
your love with all people.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 1–6

Monday, Weekday:

Heb 11:32–40 / Mk 5:1–20

Tuesday, Presentation of the Lord: Mal 3:1–4 /

Heb 2:14–18 / Lk 2:22–40 or 2:22–32

Wednesday, Weekday:

Heb 12:4–7, 11–15 / Mk 6:1–6

Thursday, Weekday:

Heb 12:18–19, 21–24 / Mk 6:7–13

Friday, St. Agatha:

Heb 13:1–8 / Mk 6:14–29

Saturday, St. Paul Miki and Companions:

Heb 13:15–17, 20–21 / Mk 6:30–34

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