



Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
July 4, 2021

The Pain of Suspicion

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

A bright and luminous painting from 1905 by Maurice Denis shows the Child Jesus in Nazareth, apparently teaching the other children. *Nazareth* highlights the peace, beauty, and joy of those years when Jesus was growing in wisdom and strength right before Mary's eyes.

The little dovelike white ribbons on the heads of the kneeling children indicate the knowledge and spirit Jesus was imparting.

Yet when Jesus returns to Nazareth as an adult, things were quite different. The townspeople were suspicious of

his wisdom as they remember him as the carpenter, son of Joseph and Mary. Those humble roots don't justify the knowledge and power with which he spoke. Perhaps envy or jealousy blinded them and brought Jesus to quote the Old Testament, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house" (Mark 6:4).

Their closed hearts pained Jesus, as he would have most certainly wanted to show all the love and power of God to his fellow Nazoreans. Scripture says Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith.

We can also limit everything Jesus wants to do in and for us with our lack of belief in him and his power. Perhaps those of us who are closest to him through daily prayer and regular sacraments are the least convinced of his power. Dare to let Jesus in and do with you what he wants! +

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 2:2-5

Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me.

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.

Perhaps those who are closest to Jesus through prayer and regular sacraments are the least convinced of his power.

A Word from Pope Francis

[Religious] freedom remains one of America's most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.

—Visit to the White House, September 23, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



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

Are “Those People” Us?

By Kathleen M. Basi

You would think that in a society that prizes knowledge—in a world shaped by the ability to study the microscopic building blocks of the human person—we would have moved beyond defining people by stereotypes. Yet reality indicates otherwise. It’s a sad truth about human nature that we are really good at building walls to divide *us* from *them* and not nearly as good at breaking those walls down.

Forwarded emails, written in inflammatory language, make blanket statements about Muslims, Protestants, Catholics, liberals, and conservatives. Neighbors protest in response to a home being built nearby for underprivileged kids or disabled adults. We make assumptions about people’s character based on the way they dress, their political affiliation, or physical characteristics.

We’d all like to think we’re the exception to such subtle bigotry. We’d like to think we respect the gift of life in whatever form God gives it—disabilities and all—but how many of us answer questions about our unborn children with “as long as the baby’s healthy” or forward emails of poor taste?

We readily admit that “those people” (whoever they may be) are just as important as we are in the eyes of God. But when it comes to making out birthday invitations for our children’s celebrations or expanding our own social



circles, does our gaze automatically slide past certain individuals to people who feel a little more...well...like us?

When we separate people into *us* versus *them*, we give ourselves permission, however unconsciously, to see *them* as *less than*. Jesus asks more from us. In one Gospel story after another, he challenges us to tear down the barriers erected by humanity.

We know that Jesus came for everyone—it’s a tenet of our faith. It’s a lot easier to say those words, though, than to acknowledge that our hearts aren’t opened as wide as Jesus’. Saint Paul urged the Galatians not to consider themselves as Jew or Greek, slave or free,

male or female (see Galatians 3:28). A modern litany might speak to religion, race, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

It’s not easy to overcome our biases. But nobody ever said following Jesus would be easy. In fact, Jesus made it clear that the Christian journey involves dying to oneself. What also must die is our own unacknowledged prejudices. +

We’d all like to think we’re the exception to subtle bigotry.

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 5–10

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, Weekday: 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

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July 4, 2021

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Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

July 11, 2021

Our Tradition of Service

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Blessed Fra Angelico, a fifteenth-century Dominican brother, was also a famous painter—so much so that St. John Paul II made him the patron of painters. His chapel for Pope Nicholas V, dedicated to Deacon St. Lawrence, patron of Rome, still survives in the Vatican.

The emperor reportedly told St. Lawrence to show him the treasures of the Church, and so he brought the poor before the Roman emperor, saying that these are the Church's true treasures. Fra Angelico's wonderful 1449 fresco, *St. Lawrence Giving Alms*, shows Lawrence, who served

in Rome in the third century, giving coins to the poor and lame of the city.

Indeed, for the Church, those most in need are those who most interest us, because they are the ones who most interested Christ. From the very beginning, Jesus sent out his apostles, two by two, to prepare people to receive his preaching. They were to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the gospel of salvation. He did not concentrate his efforts only on the influential, although he didn't avoid them, but rather invested his efforts in forming his apostles in preaching and service.

Christ has entrusted the Church with that same mission, and it continues to fulfill this charge worldwide. No continent or country is without the presence of the Catholic Church, with its missionaries and institutions who care for the materially, intellectually, and spiritually poor. We should be proud to be part of such a worldwide force for good that has served so many for so long. +

For the Church, the neediest are those who most interest us, because they are the ones who most interested Christ.

Sunday Readings

Amos 7:12–15

The LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Ephesians 1:3–14 or 1:3–10

In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace.

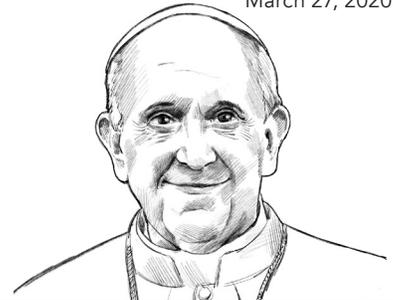
Mark 6:7–13

[Jesus said,] "Whatever place does not welcome you...leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them."

A Word from Pope Francis

Our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people—often forgotten people—who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines...doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers...and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves.

—Extraordinary moment of prayer, March 27, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I participate in the Church's mission of serving the poor?
- What more can I do to educate my children or others in this important aspect?

One World, Two Views

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

I remember watching an elementary-school principal deal with a child who was sent to the office for bad behavior. She asked the youngster, “Do you know what you did?” Tearfully, without hesitation, the child answered, “Yes, I’m bad.” The principal countered saying, “No, you’re not bad. You just did a bad thing.”

For centuries the world has been labeled by Catholics as depraved, horrible, and bad. Men and women in religious life struggled to understand how to view, interact with, and engage the world around them. Why is it that saintly founders such as Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Vincent de Paul, Alphonsus Liguori, Teresa of Ávila, Catherine McAuley, Frances Cabrini and so many others were attracted to the monastery, the convent, and ministry among the economically poor, sick, uneducated, and marginalized? Certainly, it was because Jesus called them by his word and example. But wasn’t it also because of their worldview? Their vocations grew from their understanding of good and evil, that people needed to be saved from the world and that good people were needed to do the saving. Those who saw the world as God-forsaken ran to religious life, fleeing from the world, in the hope of finding salvation for themselves and others.

After the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), however, some men and women entered religious life with a



different understanding. The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) articulated a different worldview and helped redefine our understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world. The world and all that is in it is good, and it is not only worthy of the Church’s attention, but the Church’s embrace. Interaction with the world and all who are in it can offer us an experience of grace and goodness. With Vatican II, it became more and more difficult to clearly define the world as good or evil, and consequently, to understand that people are so unequivocally in need of being

saved from it. The clear line between good and evil as it applies to the world was blurred. And so, one enters religious life not to flee the world but to engage it more fully and experience salvation by living in it.

Two distinct worldviews continue to exist in the Church and in religious life today. Are they simply two paths leading to the same destination? The one you espouse will determine the direction of your life. Condemn the world as evil and run away from it or run toward the world and embrace it in all its goodness? These are not easy questions to answer, that is, unless you remember the time you got sent to the principal’s office. Were you bad? Or did you just do a bad thing? +

When you were reprimanded as a child, were you bad or did you just do a bad thing?

PRAYER

Lord, you offered your life in humble service to humanity. Empower me with your Spirit, that I may be a humble servant of love and compassion to all people.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 12–17

Monday, Weekday:
Ex 1:8–14, 22 / Mt 10:34–11:1

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

Wednesday, St. Kateri Tekakwitha:
Ex 3:1–6, 9–12 / Mt 11:25–27

Thursday, St. Bonaventure:
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

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Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

July 18, 2021

The Source of All Forgiveness

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

In his 1622 painting *The Penitent St. Mary Magdalene*, Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino, portrays Mary Magdalene with shoulders uncovered and disheveled hair. These details remind us of her shameful past without defining her present. Rather, it is her humble, penitent spirit from which her heroic love for Jesus springs. The sinful Mary, who had been forgiven so much, is also one who has loved much.

One angel holds out before her the symbols of the passion to remind Magdalene of the ransom her Beloved paid to set her free from sin. A second

angel pointing to heaven reminds her that these nails no longer bind him. Or as the angel would tell Mary Magdalene in the garden, “He is not here, for he has been raised” (Matthew 28:6).

Many mistakenly conflate Mary Magdalene with the unknown woman from Luke 7:36–50. The woman offers an act of humility by breaking into the dinner party of Simon and sobbing over the feet of Jesus. She bathes his feet with tears of repentance and dries them with her lovely hair. Despite the confusion, we admire this woman’s and Mary’s humility. Neither were too proud to repent.

The painting is called *The Penitent St. Mary Magdalene* because Mary looks purposely like a person kneeling in confession. Speaking with head downcast, she admits her failures. And as in confession, the representative of God sits on the other side encouraging her to consider Jesus’ passion, love, and mercy. The angel in the center reminds Mary to whom she is really confessing. By pointing to heaven, we are all reminded of the source from whom all forgiveness comes. +

*It is Mary Magdalene’s
humble, penitent spirit
from which her heroic love
for Jesus springs.*

A Word from Pope Francis

For leadership there is only one road: service. There is no other way. If you have many qualities—the ability to communicate, etcetera—but you are not a servant, your leadership will fail, it is useless, it has not power to gather [people] together.

—Address to Pontifical Colleges and Residences of Rome, May 12, 2014



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 23:1–6

I will raise up shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear or be terrified; none shall be missing.

Ephesians 2:13–18

Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

Mark 6:30–34

His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I humble enough to admit my faults to myself and others?
- How often do I ask forgiveness from my loved ones and in confession?

“Be Not Afraid”

By Kathleen M. Basi

A director of religious education once told me that as grade-school children begin to process the world, they come to their parents and teachers with questions. We need to answer those questions, she said, because the window isn't open all that long. If you don't answer their questions honestly, sometime around the fourth grade they quit asking questions like:

- How can we say “thou shalt not kill” and fight wars and execute prisoners?
- What does gay mean?
- Why don't so-and-so's parents live together?
- What is contraception?
- Why are those people fighting with the police?
- Why would someone shoot schoolkids?
- What does climate change mean?
- Why do those children have flies around their mouths?

For many adults, answering questions like these is terrifying. We are jaded, embittered, and overwhelmed by the scope of the world's problems. When we try to put into words what we believe, it often seems simplistic—a woefully inadequate answer to reality. Trying to explain God and the world to children brings into sharp relief the inadequacy of our own faith and understanding of both.

We are afraid to scar our children's innocence. We are afraid of being labeled intolerant. We are afraid our kids



will demonstrate their knowledge in inappropriate ways or contexts. We are afraid of having to admit to our kids the many ways we have not lived up to what we profess to believe. We are afraid of being seen as frauds. Most of all, we are afraid of screwing up our kids.

And yet despite it all, we have to answer. Children's views of the world are being formed whether we participate in the process or not. We might as well make sure they get the right formation—the one guided by Christ and his Church.

The tough questions will always be tough, but constantly seeking greater wisdom and understanding for ourselves takes away some of the pressure to “get it right” for our kids in one shot. Instead,

we can approach difficult topics with our children as coseekers in the way of Christ, returning to subjects in greater depth as their understanding grows... and as ours does the same.

Perhaps then, it won't feel so difficult to trust God to give us the words when we need them and the wisdom to know when to respond, “You don't need to know that yet.” Honesty is not easy when the subject matter is difficult. But God whispers to us today the same three words that are woven into the entire narrative of salvation history: “Be not afraid.” +

Parents, it's crucial we use our faith in answering the tough questions of our children.

PRAYER

Lord, you are the Good Shepherd who cares for all people. Help me be a good shepherd of love and compassion.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 19–24

Monday, Weekday:

Ex 14:5–18 / Mt 12:38–42

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

Friday, Weekday:

Ex 20:1–17 / Mt 13:18–23

Saturday, Weekday:

Ex 24:3–8 / Mt 13:24–30

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Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
July 25, 2021

Gifts To Be Shared

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The multiplication of the loaves and fish was a scene commonly sculpted on the tombs of Christians in ancient Rome. These early Christians, an ocean away, not only heard the story but believed it and sealed their lives with it. What powerful message of life and death did they find?

Aside from being a symbol of the Eucharist, the center of early Christian worship then as today, this miracle is a call to generosity. By giving your life to Jesus, he can multiply it and raise it up to new life.

Jesus sees the hunger of the crowd

Sunday Readings

2 Kings 4:42-44

[Elisha said,] "Thus says the LORD: You will eat and have some left over."

Ephesians 4:1-6

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love.

John 6:1-15

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining.

and wants to satisfy them. He asks what provisions they have, and all they can muster is two fish and five loaves. Andrew questions what good that is for so many. Implicit is that it may be better to save what little there is for themselves.

Jesus sees things differently. He gives thanks for the little they have and has the apostles give it away. He knows the Father will multiply this generosity. Rather than look at what they have as a scarcity of goods, he sees them as gifts to share.

This is the radical change of heart that Jesus asks of us. Everything we have is a gift to be shared. When we live in love, and not in selfish fear of how to satisfy ourselves, then God multiplies what little we have and provides everything we need.

When the Gospel declares the apostles had collected twelve baskets of leftovers, the text shouts that God is a God of abundance, not of scarcity. +

The multiplication of the loaves and fish teaches us that everything we have is a gift to be shared.

A Word from Pope Francis

[The Church] is not a fortress but a tent able to enlarge her space and give access to all. Either the Church "goes forth" or she is not a Church; either she is on a journey always widening her space so that everyone can enter, or she is not a Church.

—General Audience, October 23, 2019



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I generous with my time, treasure, and talent?
- Do I multiply what I have by giving it to God and others, allowing him to return it to me twelvefold?

The Power of “I Don’t Know”

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

I would like to know how a text message gets from one cell phone to another. And how does it get there without getting mixed up with other text messages? Where do text messages go after they are deleted? Is there a “text message landfill” somewhere with old texts, emoticons, and selfies? Is text “air space” unlimited? Are billions of text messages responsible for global warming? The more I think about it, the more I am baffled by the whole thing. For me, this is like asking, “How many angels can stand on the head of pin?” It brings me to the point of saying what I never want to admit: *I don’t know!*

The words of philosopher Maimonides are hard to swallow: “Teach thy tongue to say, ‘I do not know,’ and thou shalt progress.” We do anything and everything to get around the words, “I don’t know.” We fake it, avoid it, pretend, tell lies, talk around it, and do anything but say it. Maybe the drive for power or the need for acceptance or the desire to feel safe keep us from admitting this simple fact. It could simply be the feeling that saying, “I don’t know” is an admission of weakness, perhaps stupidity. No one wants to be seen as weak, lacking in experience or intelligence.

What power in just three words! Teachers have based educational techniques, programs, and plans on these words, helping learners understand that education begins when we get past the illusion that we know it all and surrender



to what we don’t know. The truth is that there is a lot we don’t know. In a world where everything appears to have an explanation or can at least be figured out to some extent, there is still so much more about ourselves, others, the world, and God that goes unexplained or is beyond explanation. So much remains a mystery.

When we surrender to the power of “I don’t know,” the unknown becomes accessible to us. Curiosity is awakened. Curiosity can lead to contemplation, contemplation to understanding, and understanding to mystical experience and the transcendent. Admitting and accepting that we don’t know disposes

us to an experience of mystery and the divine. It’s easy to pray to the God we know and can understand, visualize, and imagine, the God we have grown comfortable with. It’s heroic to admit that we don’t know. This simple admission can unlock doors of knowledge and open us to the revelation of God still unknown. +

*This simple admission
can unlock doors
of knowledge and
open us to God.*

PRAYER

*Lord, you are the bread
that satisfies hungry hearts.
Remove the selfishness
from my heart, that I may be
generous to people in need.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 26–31

Monday, Sts. Joachim and Anne:
Ex 32:15–24, 30–34 / Mt 13:31–35

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

Wednesday, Weekday:
Ex 34:29–35 / Mt 13:44–46

Thursday, St. Martha: Ex 40:16–21, 34–38 /
Jn 11:19–27 or Lk 10:38–42

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

Saturday, St. Ignatius of Loyola:
Lv 25:1, 8–17 / Mt 14:1–12

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