



Bringing Home the Word

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 5, 2018

True Bread from Heaven

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Where does food come from? In an effort to teach our children that food didn't come from grocery stores, my husband and I helped them plant tomatoes, cucumbers, and green beans in our back yard. The yield was small, but the reward was great as they tasted the work of their hands. We had somewhat more difficulty explaining the source of our protein, though they did learn how to fish. We cooked what they caught. I think they grew to appreciate

the hard work it took to put food on the table. We also learned the importance of sharing what we had by cooking for others and collecting canned goods for our local pantry.

The Israelites in the desert also wondered where food was going to come from. The desert they wandered through was a far cry from Egypt. They forgot their enslavement and remembered only the food that they had, which seemed like a banquet compared to what the desert provided. There was nothing to plant and no place to plant it. The Israelites had to rely solely on God, but God did not disappoint. First he sent quail, then a miraculous bread that was as much as they needed. It was a lesson in faith we all need to learn.

As city dwellers, we have grown to rely on the farmers, butchers, and fishermen who supply our daily food. As Christians, we again must rely solely on God for our spiritual nourishment. He sent us his Son, Jesus, who is the true bread from heaven. If we come to him, we will never hunger. +

The Israelites had to rely solely on God, but God did not disappoint.

A Word From Pope Francis

Although there are many reasons to be discouraged, amid many prophets of destruction and condemnation, and so many negative and despairing voices, may you be a positive force, salt and light for this society....May you be sowers of hope, builders of bridges, and agents of dialogue and harmony.

—Meeting with priests, religious, and seminarians, April 29, 2017



Sunday Readings

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

[The Lord said,] in the morning you will have your fill of bread, and then you will know that I, the LORD, am your God.

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

You should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires.

John 6:24-35

[Jesus said,] "You are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Is my faith strong enough to believe God will provide everything I need?
- Do I place as much importance on my spiritual nourishment as I do on physical food?



Living Large

By Kathy Coffey

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” (Matthew 6:25).

When Jesus tells us not to worry about food or clothes, he cuts close to home. In their book *Sleeping With Bread*, Dennis, Matthew, and Sheila Linn describe the psychic importance of food.

Children traumatized by bombings in Holland during World War II escaped to refuges, but had trouble sleeping at night. The staff caring for them finally discovered a solution: The children were given a small loaf of bread on going to bed. Holding it in their hands, they could sleep. The subconscious message was clear: I ate yesterday and today. I will eat tomorrow. I am secure now, and I can sleep.

In the Christian tradition, the meal has profound significance. When he wants us to remember him, Jesus asks us to consume bread and wine. He refers to himself as the nurturing bread of life. Similarly, the Bible exalts the symbolic significance of clothing. Isaiah describes God clothing us with garments of salvation (61:10).

Perhaps Jesus deliberately chooses two things that are important—not just physically but spiritually. We live in a throwaway era: diapers, razors, and pens are disposable.

Getting to the Heart of It

We grow careless about many things, but at some level we still cherish food and clothing. Some of us spend considerable time planning nourishing meals. Likewise, a key question for many women before a big event is “what to wear?” So it’s tempting to ask Jesus: “Couldn’t you just tell us to worry less about obvious consumerism?” If he’d tell us not to worry about our Porsche, this would be easier to swallow.

Exactly. Jesus uses vital things to prove that life is more than even these. We all remember letting go—when the dinner burned, but we laughed, improvised another menu, and had fun. There is more to enjoying a wedding than what we wear. And at our most vulnerable times, for birth or making love, we wear nothing at all.

Pyramid Model

Perhaps Jesus is showing us a hierarchy. At the top of the pyramid is our relationship with God, enjoying the surprises God sends when we quit trying to control our lives. Next comes our relationship with others. When we think of those dear to us, we remember their kindness or their humor—but rarely their wardrobes. Then we might

consider God’s creation. Appreciating the sanctuary that surrounds us, we become caught up in the majesty of an oak, the shadings of the sea, or the roar of a waterfall. Indeed, all of these rank higher on the pyramid than food or clothes.

Perhaps Jesus is speaking from the exasperation we feel when a friend seems stuck in detail. “C’mon!” we want to say. “There’s more to life than your work deadline, your diet, or your chores. Focus on the bigger question: Am I loving God and the people placed in my path?”

It may not be food or clothing, but we all have something blocking our path to God. Are we reluctant to let go of our cherished ideas and be broadened by another’s? Do we monitor our calendar apps, never allowing an interruption in our schedules? Do we fear change, risk, or speaking out?

If so, then Jesus invites us to fuller life. “C’mon!” he says. “Let me show you what I have in mind—so much grander and better than your narrow niche, your comfy routine. Follow me to larger life.” +



Lord, you are the bread of love, compassion, and peace. Strengthen me with this bread so I can serve others.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 6–11 2018

Monday, Transfiguration of the Lord:
Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 / 2 Pt 1:16–19 / Mk 9:2–10
Tuesday, Weekday: Jer 30:1–2, 12–15, 18–22 /
Mt 14:22–36 or Mt 15:1–2, 10–14
Wednesday, St. Dominic:
Jer 31:1–7 / Mt 15:21–2

Thursday, Weekday:
Jer 31:31–34 / Mt 16:13–23
Friday, St. Lawrence:
2 Cor 9:6–10 / Jn 12:24–26
Saturday, St. Clare:
Hb 1:12–2:4 / Mt 17:14–20



Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 12, 2018

Stop Murmuring and Go to God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a clear memory of leaning over to the classmate in the next row and complaining about an assignment we had just been given. I wasn't the only one. Throughout the classroom, pairs of heads came together in a wave of rolling eyes and muttered remarks. I suppose we thought it went unnoticed. "Is there anything you would like to share with the rest of the class?" the teacher asked. "No, thank you," was the general response. We were a little embarrassed at having been found out.

That long-ago recollection surfaced as I read that the crowd "murmured" when Jesus said that he was the bread that came down from heaven. The word is also used of the Israelites who "murmured" about their hunger in the desert. Jesus calls them out by answering the question they thought he didn't hear. When he explains that he is greater than the manna that kept them alive in the desert, they can't believe their ears. They couldn't see that Jesus was far more than they understood him to be and they did not have faith in him because of that.

Has there ever been a time when you have murmured to yourself or someone else about God? Maybe God called you to ministry and you didn't believe him. Maybe he asked you to give up something and you complained like I did in that class of years past. Maybe you think God has been unfair to you. Save you breath; God hears you. Instead, go to him. Pour out your questions and fears and, with an open and willing heart, listen to the promise of life he alone can give you. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 19:4-8

[Elijah] prayed for death: "Enough, LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us.

John 6:41-51

[Jesus said,] "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Have you ever murmured to yourself or someone about God? Stop. Go to him.

A Word From Pope Francis

In Jesus his Son, God has come down among us. He took flesh and showed his solidarity with humanity in all things but sin.... He saw and embraced all of creation. But he did more than just see; he touched people's lives, he spoke to them, helped them and showed kindness to those in need.

—World Day of Peace, January 1, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Rather than murmur, do I accept what God has in mind for me?
- Do I regularly pour out my questions and fears to God?



We're All on the Same Team

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Being Catholic is a team effort. God's dreams for the world are too great for any of us to accomplish on our own. But we don't have to do it alone. We have the support of the saints.

When we use the title *saint* we usually think of men and women of exceptional holiness. But being a saint isn't the exception; it's the rule. We are *all* called to be saints. As members of Christ's body we are in communion with the other members of that body, living and dead; we participate in the communion of saints. Sainthood (holiness) is the essential element of Catholic identity!

The saints, living and dead, offer us encouragement and support. We celebrate each Eucharist in union with the local Church—the living saints—and in union with Mary, Joseph her husband, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, and John. We celebrate in the fellowship of Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, and Cecelia “on whose constant intercession we rely for help.” Saints of the present and past surround us. They intercede for us, praying to God on our behalf.

God's message of “I love you” has been heard in every age and country. Throughout the liturgical year we celebrate the memory of saints from

every continent and era to show how God has been at work in human lives. This great diversity reminds us that while Jesus' invitation to “follow me” remains constant, each of us must work out the details of how the Holy Spirit is active in the circumstances of our particular situations.

God's Instruments

When we celebrate the feasts of the saints, we are often amazed by their extraordinary achievements and sacrifices. But in recalling their memory we don't celebrate what *they* accomplished. Rather we rejoice at the wonderful things *God* accomplished through them. Our attention and prayers are always directed to God. It is God's strengths and gifts that we see reflected in the lives of these holy people.

We learn this Catholic focus on God from the greatest example of God's holiness shining forth in humanity: Mary. Jesus' mother proclaims, “My soul magnifies *the Lord*, and my spirit rejoices *in God*.” If anyone could brag about having done wonderful things for God, it would be Mary. But she has us look to the Mighty One who “has done great things for me.”

Mary, Our Model

Like Mary, we bear Christ in our bodies through baptism and Eucharist. We bring forth Christ to the world by our word and example. Mary's virginity points us to single-minded devotion to the will of God. Her sinlessness is a model for the Church, a reminder that we are to be God's holy people, God's saints. Mary's assumption into heaven foretells our own destiny as Church. Where she is, we one day hope to be.

In Mary we see a perfect example of how God acts. It is as though God depends on our cooperation for the salvation of the world. God waited for Mary's consent, Mary's “let it be with me according to your word,” to take flesh and come among us. Mary is the model of all holiness, for the essence of holiness is saying yes to God's will as we hear and understand it.

The communion of saints is integral to our Catholic identity. Being Catholic is a team effort. With Mary and all the saints on our team, we can be certain that God's dreams for the world will ultimately be accomplished. +

PRAYER

Lord, you give us your Spirit to renew the earth. Instill in my heart the spirit of love, compassion, forgiveness, and peace, that I may be a source of healing.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 13–18, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Ez 1:2–5, 24–28c / Mt 17:22–27

Tuesday, St. Maximilian Kolbe:
Ez 2:8–3:4 / Mt 18:1–5, 10, 12–14

Wednesday, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab / 1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56

Thursday, Weekday:
Ez 12:1–12 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Friday, Weekday: Ez 16:1–15, 60, 63
or Ez 16:59–63 / Mt 19:3–12

Saturday, Weekday:
Ez 18:1–10, 13b, 30–32 / Mt 19:13–15



Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 19, 2018

Christ, Our Spiritual Food

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a clear memory of leaning over to the classmate in the next row and complaining about an assignment we had just been given. I wasn't the only one. Throughout the classroom, pairs of heads came together in a wave of rolling eyes and muttered remarks. I suppose we thought it went unnoticed. "Is there anything you would like to share with the rest of the class?" the teacher asked. "No, thank you," was the general response. We were a little embarrassed at having been found out.

That long-ago recollection surfaced as I read that the crowd "murmured" when Jesus said that he was the bread that came down from heaven. The word is also used of the Israelites who "murmured" about their hunger in the desert. Jesus calls them out by answering the question they thought he didn't hear. When he explains that he is greater than the manna that kept them alive in the desert, they can't believe their ears. They couldn't see that Jesus was far more than they understood him to be and they did not have faith in him because of that.

Has there ever been a time when you have murmured to yourself or someone else about God? Maybe God called you to ministry and you didn't believe him. Maybe he asked you to give up something and you complained like I did in that class of years past. Maybe you think God has been unfair to you. Save you breath; God hears you. Instead, go to him. Pour out your questions and fears and, with an open and willing heart, listen to the promise of life he alone can give you. +

Sunday Readings

Proverbs 9:1-6

[Wisdom says,] "To any who lack sense I say, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed!"

Ephesians 5:15-20

Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.

John 6:51-58

[Jesus said,] I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever.

No famine, sword, or persecution can touch our spiritual food, Christ.

A Word From Pope Francis

Amid the din of so many voices, the Lord asks us to distinguish between what is from him and what is from the false spirit...to distinguish the word of wisdom that God speaks to us each day from the shouting of those who seek in God's name to frighten, to nourish division and fear.

—Jubilee for socially excluded people, November 13, 2016



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- Do I regularly attend Mass to receive Christ, our spiritual food?
- Do I share Christ's message of love with others?



Respecting All Life

By John Feister

“You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

I’ve stood as an adult at life’s portals several times: once each at the birth of my sons, watching, encouraging, witnessing; again at the bedside of my mother as she passed into life hereafter. All were transition times: My sons surely were alive well before their birthdays; most parents can tell you that there are plenty of signs of life from the outset. At the other portal, I witnessed my mother’s passing with awe as she continued her journey to life everlasting.

When I consider those times, I am reminded of Jesus’ words in John’s Gospel: “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (10:10). That positive promise of life is how I approach the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not kill.” It is certainly a prohibition, but like the other commandments, it is a command that we live to the fullest the life that God gives us.

We have a sad history of ignoring the promise of life from the earliest times—the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:8–12) tells us that. But one could argue that respect for life never has been a more urgent issue than it is today. In his encyclical *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)*, St. John Paul II named our culture’s lack of respect for life as one of the signs of our times.

When we talk of living abundantly,

the deepest meaning of “You shall not kill,” we’re talking about birth and natural death, but we’re talking about much more. We’re talking about openly and actively opposing abortion, but also talking about fighting those other things that take life away.

Global Solidarity

Anyone who has worked in the Third World or among the poor in our United States has witnessed how poverty takes away life and how our culture can strip human dignity, that is, take away respect for life by allowing or even causing poverty.

Being prolife, that is, against death, includes standing in solidarity with those who are powerless, from “womb to tomb.” It is among the brightest witnesses of the Church that acts of solidarity are everywhere in the good works of people building houses, working at soup kitchens, staffing pregnancy centers, opposing the death penalty, and advocating just laws, for example. All of these honor the Fifth Commandment.

The “culture of death” as John Paul called it, dishonors God. Taking of life medically by euthanasia, for example, puts us in the driver’s seat reserved for God. God’s command, “You shall not kill,” also gives us a grave responsibility

to avoid war. Catholics believe, of course, that there are times of legitimate self-defense, when killing is unavoidable and ethical. But nations, including our own, often cut a broader swath, resorting to war when war is unjustified.

Words of Life

It is the teachers of the Church, the bishops, who have framed the challenge of the Fifth Commandment so effectively. An American, the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, introduced the concept of “a consistent ethic of life” as a way to tie together all of the life issues that challenge us today.

Jesus taught us that all of the commandments are about being in right relationship with God and neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40). In an age where we can assert all manner of new and wonderful creativity and control over creation, the Fifth Commandment reminds us of the only true author: It is God, the giver of life, who calls us to have life, and have it more abundantly. +



Lord, you reveal the wisdom of God in the hearts of all people. Help me teach others by example the wisdom of your love, forgiveness, and peace.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 20–25, 2018

Monday, St. Bernard:
Ez 24:15–23 / Mt 19:16–22

Tuesday, St. Pius X:
Ez 28:1–10 / Mt 19:23–30

Wednesday, Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Ez 34:1–11 / Mt 20:1–16

Thursday, Weekday:
Ez 36:23–28 / Mt 22:1–14

Friday, St. Bartholomew:
Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

Saturday, Weekday:
Ez 43:1–7ab / Mt 23:1–12



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 26, 2018

Nowhere to Go, but With Jesus

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When confronted with a new idea or a new way of doing things, many of us hesitate. There is often a bit of fear in trying something new, and changing the way we do things is sometimes uncomfortable. I remember when we moved from an apartment to a new house. I was very unsettled for several days until a new routine could be established and the many boxes were out of the way. It was a change, and I didn't like it at first. Now I can't imagine that we would have raised our family anywhere else.

The many disciples who were following Jesus listened intently as he talked to them about living bread, and eating and drinking his flesh and blood. That new way of thinking was as unsettling as our new house had been—maybe more so. The apostles who were closest to him even admitted that it was a hard saying to accept, and John records that many followers left him and “returned to their former way of life.” But the apostles were willing to wrestle with it not because they were so wise, smart, or understanding, but because they believed that Jesus was the Holy One of God and that compelled them to follow him even to death. They had nowhere else to go; Jesus alone could give them what they craved: eternal life.

I've often wondered what I might have said had Jesus asked me if I also wanted to go away. I hope I could have overcome my fear long enough to recognize Jesus for who he was and for the gift he was bringing me. +

Sunday Readings

Joshua 24:1–2a, 15–17, 18b

[Joshua said,] “Choose today whom you will serve....

As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Ephesians 5:21–32 or 5:2a, 25–32

“For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

John 6:60–69

Simon Peter answered [Jesus], “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

*The apostles had
nowhere else to go;
Jesus alone could give
them what they craved:
eternal life.*

A Word From Pope Francis

The living legacy of martyrs gives us peace and unity today. They teach us that, with the power of love, with meekness, one can fight against arrogance, violence and war, and one can bring about peace with patience...O Lord, make us worthy witnesses to the gospel and to your love.

—Homily remembering martyrs of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries,

April 22, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Following Jesus can be difficult. Do I have the conviction to follow him anyway?
- What do my words and actions say about me?



Embracing Sacred Time

By Richard Rohr, OFM

According to the psychologist Carl Jung, all humans need to confront the same question: Are we related to something infinite or not? Are we part of an enchanted universe or traveling in a desperate, private search for meaning?

Biblical revelation offers us the answer to this essential human question: Yes, we are part of something infinite—and wonderfully so!

Not only that, but we cannot know the meaning of our lives until we see that each life is but a thread in a much larger tapestry. Only within this context can each of us find our own private meaning.

Throughout history, religions have held that the way we know God is by finding him in spiritual places, following rituals, engaging in correct behavior. We have been told: Do all those things right and you will “get” God. Typically that is where religion has started—with the notion that if we answer correctly, then God will like us and we will meet God

Biblical revelation, however, takes us to a new level by telling us that we come to the real through the actual, through what is. So it’s not about finding God only in sacred places. The Bible transforms sacred place to sacred time. Time is transformed and experienced altogether

differently because, suddenly, God is available in all of time. That is why Jesus says the temple must fall—to lessen the importance of sacred places.

Now we understand that God is manifest in the ordinary, actual, and daily rather than only in the spiritual and special. This contrasts from what so many of us learned! There is no need to travel somewhere set apart to “be spiritual.” Amazingly, God is in the actual, real world.

Meeting God Daily

We are already spiritual beings. We just don’t know it! And the task of biblical revelation is to teach us how to be human, present, and to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. That is the whole miracle of biblical revelation: Think of the wars and adulteries, the marriages and festivals that make up much of the Bible—the ordinary events of life.

Perhaps that is why so many of us, Catholics in particular, didn’t like to read the Bible for so long. It wasn’t spiritual enough, special enough. In truth, it was like our lives, but we didn’t see the good news in that. But it is indeed good news that we meet God in the eventful world.

Lessons From Life

This lesson is most evident in the lives of the Jews, who were always situated in the bloody middle of history. We see it in their forty-year journey in the desert and again in their exile. The Jews let God come into their reality. They possessed a rare power to stand their ground before negative realities with God alone. They stood naked before their enemies, always trusting in God. How daring that was!

Our challenge today is to take these new awarenesses to heart. It will mean letting go of our certitude that God is to be found only in designated places and moments and, instead, surrendering to the scary mystery of God. It means allowing ourselves to be transformed. If we approach the Bible correctly, it leaves us humble and vulnerable. We need to let go of our answers and explanations and, instead, become blank slates before God, eager to listen to what God has to say.

Our reward will be a God who continually unfolds before us throughout the hours of our lives, the God who is ever with us. +

PRAYER

Lord, you reveal the wisdom of God in the hearts of all people. Help me teach others by example the wisdom of your love, forgiveness, and peace.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 27–
September 1, 2018

Monday, St. Monica:
2 Thes 1:1–5, 11–12 / Mt 23:13–22

Tuesday, St. Augustine:
2 Thes 2:1–3a, 14–17 / Mt 23:23–26

Wednesday, Passion of St. John the Baptist:
2 Thes 3:6–10, 16–18 / Mk 6:17–29

Thursday, Weekday:
1 Cor 1:1–9 / Mt 24:42–51

Friday, Weekday:
1 Cor 1:17–25 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, Weekday:
1 Cor 1:26–31 / Mt 25:14–30