



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 6, 2019

Kindling the Faith

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a little jar of mustard seeds on the bookcase in my office. They were given to me as a going-away present by a priest I knew, a little reminder to keep the faith. Every time I hear the Gospel about the mustard seed, I am reminded of him. He was a mentor and friend, one of the many people who have inspired my faith from young adulthood until now. He is also the example of what I hope to be for the students I teach. The faith that we explore is a rich inheritance, indeed, and I can only hope to influence my students as much as he influenced me.

Being a faith-filled person isn't for cowards. As Paul tells Timothy, God gave us gifts of power and love to be able to stand against evil and to love those who seem unlovable. God called us to a holy life, which means that we occasionally have to turn away from what the world has to offer and embrace a different way of living. Christ's disciples are called to help make the world holy through word and example, by inviting others to know Christ and acting in such a way that knowing Christ seems the only possible response. Finally, God gave us the Holy Spirit, who makes it possible for us to live lives that are worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

"Stir into flame the gift of God," Paul exhorts (2 Timothy 1:6). Fire is the perfect metaphor. It lights our way and gives us warmth. It also purifies us for the work ahead. Who inspired you in your faith? How will you become a better disciple today because of them? +

Sunday Readings

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

How long, O LORD, must I cry for help and you do not listen?

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord...but bear your share of hardship for the gospel.

Luke 17:5-10

[Jesus said,] "Is [the master] grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you."

A Word from Pope Francis

Perhaps you will be challenged by [our immigrants'] diversity. But know that they also possess resources meant to be shared. So do not be afraid to welcome them. Offer them the warmth of the love of Christ....I am certain that, as so often in the past, these people will enrich America and its Church.

—Meeting with
United States
bishops,
September
23, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Have you thanked those who have mentored you in your faith?
- Are you ever embarrassed to express your Christian beliefs? Why?

Who, Me? Evangelize?

By Kathy Coffey

Nick is paralyzed, and I desperately want to help him get better. But how? I've heard rumors of a healer. He is powerful but surrounded by crowds. I talk with three other friends. How could we even get close?

I start to see that what Nick needs isn't the strongest stretcher-bearer, but one who understands his sickness. We check the house where the healer is staying. I notice an opening in the roof. What if...?

Readers of Mark 2:1–12 or Luke 5:18–26 know how the story ends. The four friends who lower the paralytic through the roof into Jesus' astonished face may have chosen an unconventional route, but they bring their friend to Jesus. He responds generously, "When Jesus saw their faith," he cured their friend and forgave his sins (Mark 2:5).

We're like Nick's friend because we also ask: Who, me? We may also reach the same insight: I don't need all the answers. I simply need to share the struggle. An ordinary act of kindness might bring someone to Jesus. And that's my goal.

The Mission

Saint Paul VI declared: "The task of evangelizing all people constitutes the



essential mission of the Church.... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize" (On Evangelization in the Modern World [*Evangelii Nuntiandi*], 14).

There's no doubt about the importance of this mission. The Church

doesn't exist for the sake of pastoral councils, schools, choirs, publications, hospitals, or religious orders—wonderful as those may be. We exist to bring the good news to those hungering for a positive message with eternal consequences.

The Model

How does that call affect us personally? Most of us aren't going to ring doorbells, trying to persuade unwilling listeners that we have a corner on the truth. Instead, we follow the model of Jesus, who amazed his listeners by "the gracious words that came from his mouth" (Luke 4:22). Clearly, he wasn't judging or hammering away at a point. The "job description" of Christians isn't to be dour, cantankerous, or punitive, but to be a people who "announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

We do that primarily by example of

how we live: with confidence, reverence, and compassion. Are we convinced that we have good news to share? Or are we focused on our troubles, fears, and negativity? For the ordinary person, what form might evangelization take?

A Personal Niche

Some are called to foreign missions but most respond to the call at home. Dire conditions in Africa can seem more appealing at times than dealing with a stubborn toddler, patiently helping a needy friend, or caring for an elderly parent. But the Second Vatican Council called laypeople to do their work well in the world—whether as parents, plumbers, attorneys, or farmers.

Opportunities arise naturally; we don't need to look far. It may mean sending a birthday card, eating a meal with a lonely friend, driving the children's carpool yet again, remembering and celebrating others' milestones, attending a funeral, visiting a hospital or retirement center, or volunteering through your parish.

To be effective, we match our talents to others' needs. The days are past when people did work they weren't suited for or a ministry they loathed "for the glory of God." It's far better to honor and use the gifts God gave us! +

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your gentle voice of love. Help me to speak with love and peace everywhere I go.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 7–12

Monday, Our Lady of the Rosary:
Jon 1:1—2:1–2, 11 / Lk 10:25–37


Tuesday, Weekday:
Jon 3:1–10 / Lk 10:38–42

Wednesday, Weekday:
Jon 4:1–11 / Lk 11:1–4

Thursday, Weekday:
Mal 3:13–20b / Lk 11:5–13

Friday, Weekday:
Jl 1:13–15; 2:1–2 / Lk 11:15–26

Saturday, Weekday:
Jl 4:12–21 / Lk 11:27–28

Bringing Home
the **Word** 
October 6, 2019

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 13, 2019

Healed by Jesus

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When my daughter was seven, she cut her thumb badly while trying to make a fruit salad. When she cried out for me, I quickly dressed her younger sister and we went to the hospital for stitches. She was in pain and crying when the doctor injected the anesthetic into the hand to numb the pain. With a firm, but quiet voice he looked at her and said, “Katy, does it still hurt?” She stopped all at once and said with a voice of wonder, “No.” He proceeded to stitch up the thumb and congratulated her on being brave. She thanked him and then talked about him for the rest of the day.

I still remember the surprised look when she finally realized her thumb no longer hurt. She didn’t know that the anesthetic had taken effect because she expected to still be in pain.

The ten lepers who met Jesus knew they couldn’t approach anyone and they had undoubtedly called out to others to help them. When Jesus told them to show themselves to the priests, they went their way not expecting to be cured and still deep in their isolation. Some inner voice made one leper suddenly aware that he had been made clean. He stopped, full of wonder. The priest would still have to inspect him before he could return to his community, but his desire to look at Jesus one more time and give thanks for his mercy had to come first. We don’t know what made him so mindful of his healing, but his response inspires us. How has Jesus touched and healed you? How will you thank him, and who will you tell? +

We don’t know what made the leper so mindful of his healing, but his response inspires us.

Sunday Readings

2 Kings 5:14–17

[Naaman’s] flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

2 Timothy 2:8–13

If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Luke 17:11–19

[Jesus said,] “Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?...Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.”

A Word from Pope Francis

Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.

—The Joy of the Gospel
(*Evangelii Gaudium*),
November 24, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Jesus healed foreigners and his Chosen People alike. Do we also show compassion to those unlike us?
- When was the last time you were healed through the sacrament of penance?

Peace: Possibility or Pipe Dream?

By Jim and Susan Vogt

“Peace be with you,” we say glibly each week at Mass. As with many memorized responses, it can become a stale phrase that doesn’t connect to our everyday lives. Consider the following:

- “My coworker’s whining drives me crazy. She’s always complaining, criticizing my work or making snide remarks.”
- “If you don’t stop playing that video game, I’m throwing it out and canceling your cell phone plan. It’s like you’re addicted.”
- “Yes, we need a new jail, but not in my back yard! I pay good money to live in a safe neighborhood. Put it in the inner city where it belongs.”

Peace at Home

We used to lament that governments and peoples across the world couldn’t get along. Why can’t they be reasonable and negotiate their differences? Why can’t they share our planet’s resources in peace? There’s enough to go around if we don’t get greedy.

But then we had children and saw how easily they could push our buttons and rouse our anger. We now understand that global strife has its roots in the same emotional dynamics of any family, even within the psyche of individuals, as we



deal with people who annoy, offend, and hurt us. The goal, of course, is to become more peaceable persons, families, and communities, but it’s not as easy as just saying at Mass, “Peace be with you.”

To live the words of the Mass, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,” we must be willing to

learn peacemaking skills. Some come by these naturally—their families modeled healthy conflict resolution or they’re naturally easygoing. For the rest of us, it’s a struggle to balance our wants against the common good, let go of the need to have our way, and learn some practical skills.

Five “Cs” of Conflict Resolution

Here are some strategies for resolving conflicts nonviolently:

1. Communicate: Instead of attacking with a “you” statement (“You make me so angry when you forget to call”), first identify your own feelings and express them in an “I” statement (“I feel frustrated when you don’t call to tell me you’ll be late”).

2. Concede: There are occasions when a mature adult says, “This seems more important to you than to me. I’m willing to let you have your way.” Consider that conceding might save both parties stress and heartache.

3. Compromise: The most common skill for conflict resolution involves finding a solution between two positions: “I’ll let you watch your TV program today if I can choose tomorrow.”

4. Chance: Sometimes nobody wants to budge in a dispute. If the disagreement is between children or the decision isn’t grave, try settling it by chance—toss a coin or pick a number.

5. Create: A helpful strategy is seeking a “win-win” solution. This takes creativity as all parties let go of their original desires and brainstorm alternatives that meet everyone’s needs. Instead of fighting over the TV, play basketball.

The price of peace is neither cheap nor quick. It takes courage and selflessness to move beyond our own will to seek the common good. It often means giving up personal power and control to consider how we need to change. Sometimes the peacemaker may be taken advantage of or hurt, but what is the alternative—hurting others?

Think of one person you can’t stand. Now, think of one positive or redeeming trait of that person. If you can’t do it, then how can we expect communities and countries to move past anger to love? +



Lord, I am grateful for your healing presence. Help me recognize your presence in my life with praise and gratitude.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 14–19

Monday, Weekday:

Rom 1:1–7 / Lk 11:29–32

Tuesday, St. Teresa of Ávila:

Rom 1:16–25 / Lk 11:37–41

Wednesday, Weekday:

Rom 2:1–11 / Lk 11:42–46

Thursday, St. Ignatius of Antioch:

Rom 3:21–30 / Lk 11:47–54

Friday, St. Luke:

2 Tm 4:10–17b / Lk 10:1–9

Saturday, Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues:

Rom 4:13, 16–18 / Lk 12:8–12



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
October 20, 2019

Keeping the Faith in a Land of Choices

By Mary Katharine Deeley

“Remain faithful to what you have learned and believe.” This was a favorite motto of a former director of the Catholic center where I work. Students who had just entered college and graduating seniors heard many reflections and homilies on this phrase because he felt it was one of the best pieces of advice he could give them. And so it is for us. The world is a complex place. Our choices are many, from the trivial (What breakfast cereal should I buy?) to the vitally important (How do I uphold the

dignity of every human person?). We see great beauty in creation and great evil in its wanton destruction for profit. There are those who think so little of human life that they bomb public places in order to destroy their enemies and those who think so much of life that they run into burning buildings or minister to the poorest and least.

In some cases, our path is crystal clear. In other cases, competing goods push and pull us in different directions. How do we make up our minds? This is where the teaching of Jesus and the Church, our prayer, and our conscience come together. Being faithful to what we believe gives us the foundation for good decisions in complex situations. It makes it possible for us to pass on the faith to the next generation and to the world. Doing this hard work is not always convenient. But this good news is what the world needs and is our path and guide as well. +

Sunday Readings

Exodus 17:8–13

As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight.

2 Timothy 3:14—4:2

Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.

Luke 18:1–8

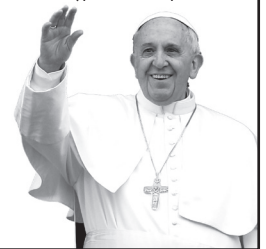
[Jesus said,] “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

*Sometimes our path is
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different directions.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God’s hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, creation is projected toward divinization, toward the holy wedding feast, toward unification with the Creator himself.

—On Care for Our Common Home
(*Laudato si’*), June 18, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When faced with difficult decisions, do I pray for God’s guidance?
- Is remaining faithful to my Catholic beliefs a guiding principle for me?

Was Jesus a Tree Hugger? Ecology and Faith

By Jim and
Susan Vogt

Climate change is a hot topic these days, but what does it have to do with faith? “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth....God looked at

everything he had made, and found it very good” (Genesis 1:28, 31). “The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it” (Genesis 2:15).

How are we to cultivate and take care of the earth? Scripture can't mean that everyone must become farmers! It means, however, that we all have a responsibility to care for the earth. This is easy to agree to in theory. After all, it feels wholesome to commit to caring for the earth. Being good stewards of creation is holy, natural, and reasonable—but not as easy as it sounds. Consider the following:

Many scientists identify using automobiles as the single most environment-damaging consumer behavior, so Jim urged Susan to take the bus to work. He often rode it himself. After all, we live on a bus line, and it would be “good for Susan's soul.” Jim explained that Susan could use the time to read, meditate, and commune with those who lack transportation choices.



But this quadrupled a twenty-minute commute, once transfers and waiting were factored in.

Vegetable gardening is good stewardship. It provides fresh healthy food, saves money and trips to the store, and can be satisfying to the spirit, not to mention good exercise. (Assuming

you don't overdo it and have to go to a chiropractor afterward, as Susan once did.) But what about those pesky critters that can delete the fruits of our hard work more quickly than we can delete spam? Should we use pesticides on crops, poison the moles, or spend extra on organic remedies? What if our kids won't eat the apples because they don't look as pretty as the ones in the store?

There are plenty of other conundrums for conscientious Christians who want to honor God's creation by preserving and protecting it. In the end, many of us tire of the complexity and mixed messages, throw up our hands, and murmur, “What difference will it make to the environment if I recycle a few soda cans each week?”

What each of us does, however, *can* make a difference. First, we must take personal responsibility for our actions. Whether it's refraining from lying, caring for those in need, or respecting the environment, our own actions are

the ones we control. We must start by responding consistently to God's call to be faithful stewards of creation. In addition, there is the dimension of witness. Who knows when someone might see our small efforts at recycling and decide to do something similar?

Then there is the reality that, as members of the human community, we are not isolated beings dependent only on ourselves. Instead of “*What difference will my action make?*” we might ask, “*What if everyone took my action?*” What if all people just threw their soda cans into the trash? What if all people recycled them? The “everyone” test can often help us judge more clearly.

Perhaps we can revisit the maxim “What would Jesus do?” and ask, “Was Jesus an environmentalist?” Well, he did walk a lot, ate organic and local, and didn't depend on electricity. But he didn't have a choice. We do. Jesus sent us the Spirit to breathe new life into our troubled souls and world. Let us not pollute the gift of creation lest it die on our watch—or on that of our children's children. +

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful that you listen to me. Make my whole life a prayer of thanksgiving in honor of your goodness and love.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 21–26

Monday, Weekday:
Rom 4:20–25 / Lk 12:13–21


Tuesday, Weekday:
Rom 5:12, 15b, 17–19, 20b–21 /
Lk 12:35–38

Wednesday, Weekday:
Rom 6:12–18 / Lk 12:39–48

Thursday, Weekday:
Rom 6:19–23 / Lk 12:49–53

Friday, Weekday:
Rom 7:18–25a / Lk 12:54–59

Saturday, Weekday:
Rom 8:1–11 / Lk 13:1–9

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Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
October 27, 2019

Fighting to be Right

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Why are we so often and easily convinced that our own positions and opinions are right? When faced with conflict and opposition, we can be tempted to shout down or coerce the people on the other side. In politics and religion, heated and controversial debates lead some to accuse others of being unpatriotic, uncaring, ignorant, and even un-Christian. Regardless of our behavior, being convinced that we are 100 percent correct comes at a price. Rory Vaden, an author, speaker, and self-discipline strategist, writes: “If I already ‘know’ what’s true, I don’t need to

entertain the idea of another perspective. ...Many of us hold on to beliefs, even about our own lives, that aren’t accurate. ...Yes, we want to be proven ‘right,’ even if what we’re right about keeps us from growth and change.”

When we eliminate dialogue, we alienate ourselves. We never discover what other people know, additional (or better) solutions, and the full truth. The Pharisee in today’s parable believes that talking with the tax collector would be beneath him, even meaningless: The tax collector is a sinner, while he is a righteous man whose works prove his worth. In his self-absorbed superiority he cannot see his lack of compassion or find humility before God. He forgets the many declarations in Scripture that God hears the cries of the poor, weak, and oppressed. This week, let us listen to these least ones and become one with them. +

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Sunday Readings

Sirach 35:12–14, 16–18

[The Lord] shows no partiality to the weak but hears the grievance of the oppressed.

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom.

Luke 18:9–14

[Jesus said,] “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

A Word from Pope Francis

Sadly, we are witnessing a presentation of religion and religious values in a fundamentalist way, which is used to justify the spread of hatred, discrimination, and violence. The justification of such crimes on the basis of religious ideas is unacceptable, for “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

—Joint declaration with the pope of the
Armenian Apostolic Church,
June 26, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- In disagreements with others, do I feel the need to win or be “right”?
- When dealing with others do I try to put myself “in the other person’s shoes”?

Exercise, Sports, and Spirituality

By B. G. Kelley

“Why’d you do that?” I asked my wife. In a five-mile race, she’d slowed in the last mile, allowing a friend to beat her. “It meant more to her to get there first,” she said.

Wholesome spirituality must include the body to help us move toward a holistic union with God. Physical play—running, biking, swimming, or dancing—is tied to the human spirit.

If we put physical play and exercise in a spiritual dimension, it will help us accept absolute concepts—winning and losing, discipline, hard work—and understand life better. It will reveal character and grace; enlist intelligence and challenge; and teach respect for limits and laws.

Play nourishes the soul, making time wonderfully irrelevant, allowing us to escape from temporal struggles—bills, workplace stress, environmental desecration, and crime.

Play allows us to escape into our souls, reflect, and awaken innocence that often gets lost in adulthood. It keeps our lives from becoming merely about pleasure, power, and wealth.

Embracing the Journey

One autumn day long ago, I looked for my name on the locker room door at my high school. It wasn’t there. I’d failed to



make the basketball team.

Fr. Walter Conway noticed my dejected look when I shuffled into Latin class. “What’s wrong, son?” he asked. “I got cut from the basketball team,” I replied. He pulled me aside. “Son, you’re going to have to accept suffering and challenge as part of the search for fulfillment,”

he said. “Accept the suffering, then accept the challenge, and pray that God will show you the way to do something that will earn you a spot on the team next year.” Those words stuck in my psyche like a first kiss sticks to your lips.

I made a decision: I would fuse the physical and spiritual. I prayed while running four miles a day. By the following fall, when basketball tryouts came around, I’d be both physically and spiritually fit. I worked on my ball-handling and shooting, too.

I ran in Fairmount Park, a piece of paradise in Philadelphia. The autumn leaves along the Schuylkill River had turned to carrot orange, saffron gold, and scarlet red. The sun shimmered on the water. The air was crisp as celery. God provided this refuge for me. I even ran in the winter when it was so cold that icicles formed on my eyebrows. (I guess that was part of the suffering!)

When spring arrived, so did blossoming cherry trees, gentle breezes

off the water, and the rhythmic slicing of scullers’ oars, keeping time with my rhythms of prayer.

Summer came with its intense heat. (Again, the suffering!) But I kept reflecting on my Latin teacher’s words: “Accept suffering and challenge as part of the search for fulfillment.”

In autumn, I once again stood before the locker room door, reading the names of those who’d made the basketball team. My name was there! I’d arrived at my physical and spiritual destination, but the journey was as important as the arrival.

My physical-spiritual journey continued: I became a starter and exceeded my dreams by earning All-League honors and leading our division in scoring. More importantly—at least to my pop—basketball led to a college scholarship.

Know this: Exercise isn’t simply an investment in one’s health. Sure, it enriches muscle strength, bone density, and brain function—those factors that steadily decline with age. But sports and exercise can help us stay connected to God and the world. This can lead to a physical and spiritual ripening rather than a rotting, making us complete human beings. +



Lord, I am grateful you are close to the brokenhearted. In my brokenness I call on you. Have mercy on me, a sinner, small and precious in your eyes.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 28—
November 2

Monday, Sts. Simon and Jude:
Eph 2:19–22 / Lk 6:12–16

Tuesday, Weekday:
Rom 8:18–25 / Lk 13:18–21

Wednesday, Weekday:
Rom 8:26–30 / Lk 13:22–30

Thursday, Weekday:
Rom 8:31b–39 / Lk 13:31–35

Friday, All Saints:
Rv 7:2–4, 9–14 / 1 Jn 3:1–3 / Mt 5:1–12a

Saturday, All the Faithful Departed (All Souls):
Wis 3:1–9 / Rom 5:5–11 / Jn 6:37–40