



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 27, 2017

Get Ready for Change

By Mary Katharine Deeley

The last long days of summer are always a paradox. We anticipate the break in the summer heat and look for the crisp, cool air that refreshes us.

Children play outside as though they can't get enough of summer even as they get new school supplies and look forward to seeing their friends. Everywhere is a sense of change. Something is about to happen, and we won't be the same.

I wonder whether Peter felt the same way. He and the disciples had seen Jesus heal, cast out demons, and teach the ways of God. But did Peter and the disciples

really know what they were getting into or who they were following? Students are often tested at the end of summer vacation to see what they've learned and retained. Did the disciples have any sense that this might happen to them? Change is in the air and, ready or not, the lessons of the past are about to be put to the test.

"Who do you say that I am?" Jesus asked. Peter's answer shows he's been paying attention. He names Jesus for who he truly is—the Messiah.

Peter gets more than he bargained for. His name is changed, his life is changed, and he finds himself at the head of the class. Maybe he longed for the time he could fish all day, but now he's headed toward Jerusalem on the path that brings him face to face with the living God.

Vacation is almost over for us now as well, and school will soon begin. What have we learned from our encounters with God this summer?

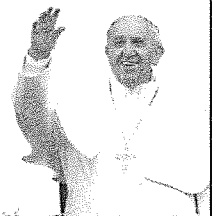
Are we open, as Peter was, to be really changed by him? †

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A Word From Pope Francis

Peter knocks at the door. Behold! There is joy, there is fear... "Do we open, do we not?"...Fear paralyzes us, it always paralyzes us; it makes us close in on ourselves, closed to God's surprises. This detail speaks to us of a constant temptation for the Church, that of closing in on herself in the face of danger. But we also see the small openings through which God can work....Prayer enables grace to open a way out from closure to openness, from fear to courage, from sadness to joy...from division to unity.

—Mass and blessing of sacred pallium for new archbishops, Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29, 2016



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 22:19–23

"I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station."

Romans 11:33–36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Matthew 16:13–20

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How willing are you to let the pope, Peter's successor, confirm your faith today?
- What are you doing to ensure your faith is built on a solid foundation?



Celebrating Our Big Church

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

When I think Catholic, I think big. The Catholic Church is

a big Church: big numbers (over one billion members) spread all over the globe and big buildings—cathedrals and basilicas—with big parking lots.

But before we get carried away with too much of this external bigness, it might be good to remember that the Church was Catholic already at the first Pentecost, before there were any big cathedrals, parking lots, or a billion members. The Church was Catholic even when the disciples could all gather in one house.

Catholic implies big or universal—not just on the outside but big on the inside. Catholic is a mark of the inner nature of the Church. The Church is Catholic because it is all-embracing. The Catholic Church is the sacrament, the outward sign of a God who is Catholic, a God who is all-embracing and wants to share the one eternal banquet with people of every race, language, and way of life.

The Church is Catholic because, like God, it is not limited to one country or culture. In ancient times it was able to move from its Aramaic/Palestinian origins and adopt the language and culture of Greece to preach God's message. It then expressed itself in Syriac

and spread to India and beyond. It expressed itself in Coptic and spread to Egypt and throughout Africa. It adopted Roman customs and Latin language into its rituals. It employed Greek philosophy to explain its beliefs. It used the Roman legal system to organize its hierarchical structure. The Church is Catholic because it can take whatever is good in disparate cultures and embrace it as its own.

A World of Disciples

The Catholic Church is not limited to one interpretation of what it means to be a disciple. When people, moved by the Holy Spirit, decide to live the gospel in a unique way, they don't have to start a new Church. The Catholic Church has room for a Benedict of Nursia, a Francis of Assisi, an Angela Merici, to name a few. There are many ways to live the gospel within the Church. That's what makes it Catholic.

Just think of the diverse groups that may exist within your own parish: Daughters of Isabella, Knights of Columbus, Opus Dei, St. Vincent de Paul Society, for example. It's a big church. It's a *Catholic* Church.

But what happens when our Catholic Church embraces people we don't like or don't agree with. (For example, most Catholic would have difficulties with

at least one of the organizations listed above.) When this big, all-embracing Catholic Church welcomes people who don't think like I do, and when I have to worship with people different from me, I sometimes wonder if it would be better to belong to a little Church where everyone is more alike.

Growing, Becoming

Being Catholic isn't always comfortable. It stretches me to think new, bigger thoughts. Our Church is not the place for narrow minds or one-issue religion. And this has been a problem from day one.

Jesus himself was too Catholic for some of his contemporaries. He dined with the wrong people, cured the wrong people, and made friends with the wrong people. His Catholicity was a scandal because his embrace was so inclusive that he shed his blood for all.

Being Catholic is not only a mark of pride; it is a challenge. Catholic is not only something that the church is. It is something the Church continually strives to *become*. †

When people, moved by the Holy Spirit, decide to live the gospel in a unique way, they don't have to start a new Church.



Lord, you entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven to your people. Help me be your wise and responsible servant. Amen.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 28–September 2

Mon. St. Augustine:
1 Thes 1:1–5, 8b–10 / Mt 23:13–22


Tue. Passion of St. John the Baptist:
1 Thes 2:1–8 / Mk 6:17–29

Wed. Weekday:
1 Thes 2:9–13 / Mt 23:27–32

Thu. Weekday:
1 Thes 3:7–13 / Mt 24:42–51

Fri. Weekday:
1 Thes 4:1–8 / Mt 25:1–13

Sat. Weekday:
1 Thes 4:9–11 / Mt 25:14–30

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