



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time | January 28, 2018

The Authority of Jesus' Word

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When my children were small, I had the power all mothers have to soothe little cuts, scrapes, and bruises with a single kiss. Mother kisses, and the hurt is lessened or disappears altogether.

It worked wonders until the day my daughter burned her hand when she touched a steam pot. With full confidence, she lifted her fingers to be kissed—and then realized they still hurt. Over and over she lifted them to my lips, and over and over I kissed them until I finally admitted we needed to

try something else. Cold water and a washcloth eventually soothed the pain, and the limits of my magic touch were suddenly apparent.

Jesus' power is of a different magnitude. It's evident when he reads and preaches with authority (from the Greek word *exousia*, which means "out of himself"—as opposed to studying or having a title thrust on him). It's even more manifest when he simply rebukes a demon and the demon leaves his human host—not because he wants to, but because he knows true authority when he sees and hears it.

It's no wonder the people are astonished. They've never seen this kind of immediate response. This is no mother's kiss to heal the little hurts of life, no magician pretending to have power he doesn't. This is the Son of God come to cast out evil itself and open the Scriptures so the people can hear God's word in a new and powerful way.

Today, let us turn to him to heal our wounds and make us whole. +

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come to cast out
evil itself.***

A Word From Pope Francis

What an illusion it is when people today shut their eyes in the face of sickness and disability! They fail to understand the real meaning of life...The world does not become better because only apparently "perfect" people live there...but when human solidarity, mutual acceptance, and respect increase.

—Jubilee for the Sick and Persons With Disabilities, June 12, 2016



Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 18:15–20

[Moses said,] "A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you...."

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.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I letting myself be tricked into eating any moral junk food that isn't healthy for my long-term spiritual and moral flourishing?



Why We Need the Church

By Thomas H. Groome

Ever wonder why Catholics emphasize going to church as a way of keeping the Sabbath holy? Of course Protestant Christians are committed to Sunday worship, but we add a note of obligation. For us, participating in Sunday Mass is a privilege but also a serious responsibility. We may not miss Sunday Mass—except for some good reason. And, far more than attending as spectators, we are expected to function as active members in a community.

The sense of Sunday obligation is only one instance of the communal emphasis that is core to Catholicism. Catholic Christian faith is essentially communal; we are disciples in community and a community of disciples. We're convinced that God reaches out to us as community and that we most effectively reach out to God together. So, we may not simply watch Mass on TV or go to a mountaintop for our own religious experience.

It is through Christian community that we access the Scriptures and traditions that forge our identity in faith, to the sacraments that sustain us, to the models of holiness in the saints, to people to pray with us on our journey home to God. Indeed, Catholic spirituality calls us to a personal relationship with God, but through Christian community.

In Our Nature

The Bible highlights the communal nature of faith. Indeed, it seems that God designed our human nature as relational. When God differentiated the lonely Adam into male and female, he made them “companions” to each other. Then, beginning with God’s call of Abraham and Sarah to parent a people, Hebrew faith is lived as community.

Likewise, early Christians favored communal metaphors to describe their shared discipleship to Jesus. Paul’s image of the Church as Body of Christ was the most compelling. Within this body, the hand and foot, the eye and ear, and all individual parts are vitally important; yet all the organs must function together as one (see 1 Corinthians 12:26). By baptism, we are bonded together as one with Christ and each other; “we though many, are one body in Christ (Romans 12:5). And all members must contribute their gifts for “building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

Rooted in History

During the Reformation, Protestant leaders rebelled against the exaggerated power of the Church, charging it with replacing rather than representing God. As a consequence, they de-emphasized the communal nature of Christian faith. When the Catholic Church regrouped at the Council of Trent, it agreed that people must have their own personal relationship with God but that our faith must be realized through Christian community.

Catholicism is so intent on the communal nature of faith as to propose that even death doesn’t break the bond of baptism. So, we can ask those in the eternal presence of God to pray for us—with Mary holding pride of place among this communion of saints. Likewise, we can intercede for departed loved ones who may need “purgation” in order to enter the eternal presence of God. In death, “life is changed, not ended” (Preface, Mass of Resurrection) and certainly not the bond of baptism.

This communal emphasis of Catholicism requires that we be active in a local parish. If we don’t like our assigned one, the 1983 Code of Canon Law gives us permission to “shop around” a bit. It is imperative that we find a local Catholic community to call home and share our time, talents, and treasure to sustain its mission. For Catholics at least, we’re all in this together. +



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

January 29–February 3

Mon. Weekday: 2 Sm 15:13–14, 30; 16:5–13 / Mk 5:1–20

Tue. Weekday: 2 Sm 18:9–10, 14b, 24–25a, 30—19:3 / Mk 5:21–43

Wed. St. John Bosco, Priest: 2 Sm 24:2, 9–17 / Mk 6:1–6

Thu. Weekday: 1 Kgs 2:1–4, 10–12 / Mk 6:7–13

Fri. Presentation of the Lord: Mal 3:1–4 / Heb 2:14–18 / Lk 2:22–40 or 2:22–32

Sat. Weekday: 1 Kgs 3:4–13 / Mk 6:30–34