



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time | January 21, 2018

The Power of Christ's Invitation

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Whether he knew it or not, Jonah was one of the most powerful prophets in Israel. He had scarcely started on his journey through Ninevah when the entire city under the direction of the king expressed sorrow for their sins and turned God's judgment to mercy. I think we all hope we might be that effective in our jobs.

If we to continue to read the Book of Jonah, though, we find that he wasn't so happy about this turn of events—he felt it

made him look weak. Did he not predict the destruction of Ninevah if they failed to repent?

But for now, we see a people so moved by the word of God that they immediately change their behavior. In Mark's Gospel, Christ's invitation is just as compelling for the four fishermen who abandon their nets and their father by the sea and immediately change their direction and their lives.

I have a hard time imagining the words that would make me drop everything to follow a completely different path. Certainly I've taken the advice of friends and family or have responded to circumstances that demanded a new direction, but only after reflection and prayer—but it took considerably longer than a single moment.

The power of the good news, however, is unlike any other to those who are open to it. When we really hear God's voice, our hearts yearn to be in his presence and, though not always easily, our souls and minds bend to his will.

How is God's word calling you to change today?+

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A Word From Pope Francis

For every Christian, the proclamation and witnessing of the Gospel is never an isolated act. This is important... No evangelizer acts, as Paul VI recalled, "in virtue of a... personal inspiration, but in union with the mission of the Church and in her name."

—Address to International Union of Superiors General, May 8, 2013



Sunday Readings

Jonah 3:1–5, 10

They proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

1 Corinthians 7:29–31

For the world in its present form is passing away.

Mark 1:14–20

Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I understand that putting off the voice of God is also putting off all the good, joy, and peace he wants to bring about by what he is asking?



Seven Divine Works of Art

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

One thing you can say about Catholics: We aren't afraid of things. In fact, it's the opposite. We know that creation is good and that created things can serve as a window through which we see something of God. For us, things are not an obstacle to grace but a means of grace. This is true in those celebrations we call sacraments.

Humans are body, mind, and spirit, and we Catholics come to God with our whole being—not with words alone. We do not simply say, "Jesus is my Savior." We Catholics do more.

We go into the baptismal tomb where we die with Christ, then plunge into the waters of birth in him. We come up from the Church's womb with rebirth and new life to be oiled and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and fed on the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist. Catholicism is an incarnated religion. It uses the ordinary stuff of this world to touch the world beyond.

An artist is always somehow embodied in his or her work. We can look at a painting and say, "That is a Picasso." We hear a piece of music and say, "That's clearly Beethoven."

In a similar way we can look at the sacraments and say, "That's God!" We

see the artist revealed in the work of art. That's what the sacraments are—seven great artworks revealing the Creator.

Portraits of God

Baptism reveals God as the womb and source of all life. When I see a newly baptized infant in his or her parents' arms, I get a glimpse of parental God embracing us—loving us, not because of what we have done, but because we are God's children. Confirmation reveals our destiny; we are to live to make visible in outward signs the "personality" of our Creator God. We are to be signs of wisdom, judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and awe.

Eucharist says it all: We become present to the Lord who died that we might live—who feeds us with his Body and Blood so that we become one body filled with his Spirit.

Reconciliation reveals a God ever ready to forgive and embrace us. Anointing shows us a God who heals, longing for the end of sickness, pain, and disease and calling us—along with all creation—to wholeness. Holy orders provides a glimpse of a God who shepherds the flock, leading and sanctifying all into the kingdom.

And what a powerful sign we have in marriage! In the faithful, total, through-thick-and-thin, for-better-or-worse love the couple promises each other in the rite of marriage, all who witness the sacrament can glimpse how God loves us:

faithfully, totally, through thick and thin, for better or worse. At their wedding, the bride and groom receive many wonderful gifts. But the gifts they receive are not as wonderful as the gift the couple gives us. They give us a sacrament, a sign of who God is.

Seeing More

As Americans, we value efficiency and production. We like getting to the point and getting the job done. Sometimes this can blind us to the symbolic function of things and events.

Sacraments "produce" through symbols. Sacraments help us see more. They help us see God in a baby's smile or in the touch of a loved one; they help us to find God in the "I'm sorry" of someone who has hurt us. The sacraments, and all of creation, reveal the divine Creator artist. +



Lord, you call me to do the work of God in the world. Help me to say yes to your work of peace and reconciliation.

From Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time,

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 22–27

- Mon. Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children: 2 Sm 5:1–7, 10 / Mk 3:22–30
- Tue. Weekday: 2 Sm 6:12b–15, 17–19 / Mk 3:31–35
- Wed. St. Francis de Sales: 2 Sm 7:4–17 / Mk 4:1–20

- Thu. Conversion of St. Paul: Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 / Mk 16:15–18
- Fri. Sts. Timothy and Titus: 2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 4:26–34
- Sat. Weekday: 2 Sm 12:1–7a, 10–17 / Mk 4:35–41