



Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 2, 2017

The Race We Run

By Mary Katharine Deeley

What was it like in those years after the crucifixion? What was it like to talk about an experience and a relationship unlike anything ever encountered? What was it like to go to jail for preaching what you described as good news even though it seemed foolish to many of those who were listening?

Paul saw it in terms of a race whose finish line was heaven and for which he was willing to spend his last ounce of energy. Peter saw that once he acknowledged who Jesus was, he had no

choice but to proclaim the truth of his heart. He knew Jesus was the Messiah because he saw it in the looks of those who were healed, fed, and restored at Christ's hand. He experienced it in the love Christ gave him, even after he denied him. He saw it in the faces of those whom he healed in Christ's name and who eagerly came to baptism and the outpouring of the Spirit.

What is it like now? How do we know in our hearts that Jesus is the Messiah? And how has that made a difference in our lives? Is this relationship so unlike any other that we are willing to be poured out, to spend our energy to proclaim the good news even though it may seem foolish? That's an uncomfortable question for many Catholics today.

For many of us, religion and faith are private, and sometimes that helps us avoid arguments or endless debate. But the compelling story of our redemption begs to be told, if not in words, then in lives transformed. This is our story and our race to be run full out to the very last. †

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Sunday Readings

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

...Elisha promised, "This time next year you will be cradling a baby son."

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

Matthew 10:37-42

[Jesus said,] "...Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me."

A Word From Pope Francis

Commitment to mission is not something added on to the Christian life...but is an essential element of faith itself. A relationship with the Lord entails being sent out into the world as prophets of his word and witnesses of his love...We must overcome a sense of our own inadequacy and not yield to pessimism, which merely turns us into passive spectators of a dreary and monotonous life. There is no room for fear! God himself comes to cleanse our "unclean lips" and equip us for the mission.

—Fifty-fourth World Day of Prayer for Vocations, November 27, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can I live my life as though nothing is more important than Jesus?
- Do I regularly witness to my love for Jesus, using words when necessary?



We Are Called to Be Missionaries

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

If you are a Catholic, you are a missionary. All Catholics are called to be missionaries.

That doesn't mean we have to leave home and go to some distant land to preach the gospel to those who have never heard of Jesus, although some Catholics accept that vocation. Every Catholic is a missionary because we all participate in the mission of Jesus Christ.

What it means to be Catholic can be described in various ways, but following Jesus is at the heart of it. We are Catholics because God has called us to follow Jesus. We follow Jesus out of love, and love is generative. That's the very nature of love.

For example, as a husband and wife grow in their love for one another, they will seek ways in which their love can find expression beyond themselves. They may decide to have children and start a family. They may decide to express their love in a ministry of service. Love always seeks some outward, generative expression. This generative love is at the heart of our understanding of God as Trinity: The love of the Father generates the only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from their love. This generative love is the reason for creation; it is the reason for the Incarnation. "God so loved the world..." It was Jesus' mission to proclaim this love or, in the language of the Bible, to announce the kingdom of God.

It was love that moved Jesus to open his arms on the cross and to breathe the Holy Spirit into the Church. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Jesus has commissioned us to continue his mission of announcing the kingdom. At the Eucharist, we as a Church gather to proclaim our "yes" to God's offer of love.

To the Ends of the Earth

Through the Eucharist, we are continually being transformed into Christ's body and empowered by his Spirit. As Catholics we are to be the sacrament, the outward sign of the "I love you" that God spoke in Jesus Christ. God doesn't want this great love to be kept a secret. God wants this "I love you" to embrace every man and woman and to reach the ends of the earth. In order for that to happen, the Catholic Church must be a missionary Church.

Being a missionary is what makes being Catholic so exciting! Being Catholic is not just being a member of a club. It is not something we do from time to time at our local parish. Being Catholic means that we are missionaries of the good news, that we are living signs of God's generative love.

We announce by our words, but especially by our deeds, that the way things are is not the way things have to be. We do not have to live in fear. God's love is more powerful than evil. Peace

is possible. Even the "little ones" are important. God is a God of abundant life. Sins are forgiven. Justice will triumph. Death is not the end. Easter holds the final word! To carry this message—to participate in the mission of Jesus—is the joy of being Catholic.

Living Signs

Not everyone finds being Catholic a joy. I think of the man who, when asked why he no longer went to Mass, replied: "Because I see Catholics in Church looking so holy that they could be Jesus Christ himself. But when they walk out those doors, you can't tell them from anybody else."

That's where being a missionary kicks in. When we walk out those doors, can people see that we are different? I don't mean "different" in some superficial way. Are we more generous, more tolerant, more open, more truthful, more just, more concerned about the poor, more generous with our wealth, more inclusive? In short, are we more Catholic?

If our mission is to announce the kingdom of God, we ourselves must be living signs of that kingdom. †

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Lord, your death on the cross brought life to the world. Help me follow your example of selfless love.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 3–8

Mon. St. Thomas:
Eph 2:19–22 / Jn 20:24–29
Tue. Weekday:
Gn 19:15–29 / Mt 8:23–27
Wed. Weekday:
Gn 21:5, 8–20a / Mt 8:28–34

Thu. Weekday:
Gn 22:1b–19 / Mt 9:1–8
Fri. Weekday:
Gn 23:1–4, 19; 24:1–8, 62–67 / Mt 9:9–13
Sat. Weekday:
Gn 27:1–5, 15–29 / Mt 9:14–17