



Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 16, 2017

What Will We Yield?

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Like many families, we planted a garden in the back yard to enjoy the flowers and teach our daughters where food comes from. Cucumber seeds, tomatoes, green beans, and carrots went into the soil. We watched for weeds and bugs. There wasn't a lot we could do about the squirrels. And we plucked the few items of produce our claylike soil allowed to grow.

In the process, I discovered two things. I don't have the patience or passion for gardening that some of my friends do, and I have the utmost respect for those who tend the fields and flocks that supply our food. Every seed they plant expresses their hope in harvest. The farmer rejoices in what happens when seed, earth, and water come together.

So it is with God, who plants *us* on this earth and fills us with his word. We are God's expression of hope for the world. We are the ones through whom God can show forth his love to all. But today's parable in the Book of Matthew makes it clear that whatever ground is in our hearts and souls strongly affects the outcome.

If we are open, ready, and waiting, we will show forth the rich harvest of God's grace and righteousness. If our hearts are rocky or thorny, the yield will be like the handful of beans in my back yard, or it may be nothing and the world will not know God through us.

But we are fortunate. God is a far more patient gardener than I was and will continue to work the soil of our hearts and minds so that when we are planted, we may give a hundred times over the love that God has shown in planting us. †

A Word From Pope Francis

Saint Francis...invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. "Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker" (*Wisdom* 13:5)...For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty....The world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.

—*Laudato Si'*,
May 24, 2015



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 55:10–11

My word...shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.

Romans 8:18–23

We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now....We also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption.

Matthew 13:1–23

[Jesus said,] "But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I spend time outdoors enjoying nature?
- What messages from God can I find in the natural world today?



The Sharp Compassion of Jesus

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

“Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” (Luke 12:51).

Why did Jesus come to earth?

What was his mission? Was he sent for unity or division, for life or death, for love or hate?

The answer is quite clear: Jesus came that we might have life in great abundance (John 10:10). But there is a deep, universal paradox here. In Luke’s Gospel, it would appear that division, not peace, is Jesus’ real mission.

We need to ponder and to pray over this paradox. The poet T.S. Eliot provides an insight: “Beneath the bleeding hands we feel/The sharp compassion of the healer’s art.” The surgeon cuts away the cancer, a bloody “divisive” act, indeed. Yet the motive is not to inflict pain. Rather, it is to bring healing. No false tenderness allows the healer to withhold the knife; no good parent avoids disciplining his or her child. To bring health and peace, pain is sometimes needed.

So Jesus causes “division” wherever there is an unhealthy, unholy union. Out of compassion and love, the Lord separates us from everything that keeps us from the love of the Father. This may appear cruel, but it is in fact a great act of divine kindness. Shakespeare’s Hamlet addresses his mother, the queen, in these words: “I must be cruel only to be kind.”

“Graced” Division

Pope St. John XXIII spoke often about peace, the peace that is the kingdom of God. In his encyclical Peace on Earth (*Pacem in Terris*), he maintains that peace demands four elements: truth, freedom, charity, and justice. Jesus came to inaugurate that kingdom; he came to express truth, to incarnate love, to foster freedom, and to promote justice. In this mission there would be much “division,” since people often opted for untruth and indifference, slavery and injustice.

Each of us must distinguish graced division from divisions that are simply destructive. The surgeon’s knife separates a diseased organ or a tumor from the body—a moment of grace. The slave trader separates children from their parents—a horrendous sin. Moses placed before his people a choice of life or death (Deuteronomy 30:19). We are given the same choice: to be agents of life and peace or instruments of death and chaos.

Just before Communion we pray, “Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles, Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.” So when we read, “Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division,” we know that Jesus is making reference to what is called a false peace, one in which relationships are not harmonious. Jesus will have nothing to do with such unions—he will split them apart out of love and for the sake of truth.

The Big Peace

The human condition requires choices that sometimes cause division and pain. We need but note the mission work of the following Christians: Alan Paton, in his opposition to apartheid in South Africa; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his involvement in a plot to assassinate Hitler; Martin Luther King, Jr., in his ministry to secure human rights; Thomas Merton, in his stand against nuclear war; Dorothy Day, who fought against the status quo that kept so many in radical poverty. All of them came to bring “division,” not peace. These disciples of Christ fought for the big “peace”: the kingdom of God.

Those great people showed us that God’s word is a two-edged sword. And we can be like them. It is a good spiritual exercise for all of us to write out our mission statement. What has God called us to be and to do? Why have we come to this earth? Surely a major task we have all been given is to bring peace, right relationships. We can, with God’s help. †



Lord Jesus, you completed God’s work on earth. Help me know and accomplish God’s will.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 17–22

Mon. Weekday:
Ex 1:8–14, 22 / Mt 10:34–11:1
Tue. Weekday:
Ex 2:1–15a / Mt 11:20–24
Wed. Weekday:
Ex 3:1–6, 9–12 / Mt 11:25–27

Thu. Weekday:
Ex 3:13–20 / Mt 11:28–30
Fri. Weekday:
Ex 11:10–12:14 / Mt 12:1–8
Sat. St. Mary Magdalene: Sg 3:1–4b or 2 Cor 5:14–17 / Jn 20:1–2, 11–18