



Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 23, 2017

The Parable of the Car Trash

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When our children were smaller, my husband would periodically clean out my car. His method was always interesting to me. Into a bag would go receipts, empty juice boxes, stray books, mittens, pens, loose change and anything that would get in the way

of vacuuming the floor. He made no distinction between trash and stuff we could keep. Then he'd bring it all to me to sort through. I used to playfully laugh at his carefulness: "Really, you kept the soda can?"

I have come to realize that his method of cleaning is an echo of today's parable. Young shoots, whether wheat or weeds, look very much alike. What if, in our zeal to toss out weeds, we throw away the wheat as well? Jesus tells us it is better to gather them all together at the end when they look more like their true selves and deal with them then.

Perhaps there might be some final use for the juice box or the soda can before we throw it away. At least they can be recycled! I find this a remarkably hopeful attitude and, while we do end up throwing out a great deal, we have occasionally uncovered some treasures that might have been lost forever.

Maybe the kingdom of heaven is also like a person cleaning out a car. Whether field or car, I'd like to think that God watches over what he plants and carefully looks to find new strains of wheat among the tried-and-true stalks. And in his mercy, God will carefully examine everything before he lets go of the weeds altogether. †

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

You taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are righteous must be kind; and you gave your children reason to hope that you would allow them to repent for their sins.

Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit...comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.

Matthew 13:24-43 or 13:24-30

[Jesus] replied, "...If you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

A Word From Pope Francis

The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love. "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus' entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

—*Misericordiae Vultus*,
April 11, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I more readily imitate God's judgment, justice, or mercy?
- How can I practice all three?



Some of the Ways We Talk to God

By Phyllis Zagano

The first thing we need to know and believe is that prayer—any type of prayer—is real, and that God knows our needs and always answers our prayers.

Most times when we think of prayer, the prayer of petition comes to mind first. It is common to say that sometimes God’s answer to our prayerful pleas is “no” but that, come to think of it, the “no” we seem to hear is in fact a “yes.” God always affirms who we are as humans. That is, when we pray in petition for things we want, God kindly teaches us who we are by supplying what we truly need.

In other words, we may *want* a new car to impress friends and neighbors, but what we *need* is security from God. Once we accept that gift—a gift born of prayer—then the rest becomes easy.

So the first petition we must present to the Lord is a genuine petition to see ourselves as God sees us. And God sees us, always, as perfect for what we are to do and how we are to be, so long as we cooperate in God’s plan and with God’s will.

People often want to know what the best type of prayer is. I do not believe there is any “best” prayer, provided that every prayer is rooted in an understanding of our dependence on God and his unconditional love for us.

There are four essential movements of the heart that follow our accepting

that God exists and God loves us. They are adoration, petition, contrition, and thanksgiving. Each is a separate movement of the heart and of the head, and each is “best” for a certain time of life or even for a certain time of day.

Loving and Being Loved

Adoration is at once the easiest and the hardest type of prayer because it requires that we do nothing but love and be loved. That involves giving up control, which most of us do not like to do.

But think of the wonder in a baby’s eyes as the child looks at you. And think of the wonder in your eyes as you look at the child. This is how you are with God, and God with you, in the prayer of adoration. No words—at least not many—just a sharing of love between two beings for whom there is nothing and no one else in the world at that moment.

Contrition is another familiar type of prayer. With contrition we acknowledge that we have made a mistake, denied God’s perfect creation of us, and tried to remedy the pain of that denial.

Sometimes we do this with excessive alcohol or food, or sometimes we misuse our sexual faculties. Sometimes our insecurities cause us to lie, cheat, or steal. These are real forces in everyone’s life, and we need to apologize to God for denying who we are and forgetting that our real security is with God, not with creatures or with creature comforts. So we say “sorry” in a deep, genuine way and move on.

Answered “in Love”

Petition, as stated earlier, involves simply asking a favor of God. Sometimes the favor we ask cannot be granted—the loved one will die, the job will end, the illness will return. Here we can feel angry with God. That is actually very healthy, for we have the right as God’s beloved to complain and to complain loudly. As we do, we might hear more clearly how God has answered our prayers in love (albeit in the negative) and how God wants us to have lives that mirror his love for the world.

Thanksgiving is the final mode of prayer, and it deserves much more attention than we give it. Thanksgiving is more than simple manners—like the thank-you notes we may write after receiving gifts at birthdays and Christmas. Thanksgiving is a minute-by-minute attitude that brings us to the place of conscious dependence upon the Lord and joyful acceptance of God’s will in our lives.

So when we pray, we find God’s gift of joy in life—without our even asking for it.†

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Lord, do not abandon me, for I am small and weak. I need your love.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 24–29

Mon. Weekday:
Ex 14:5–18 / Mt 12:38–42
Tue. St. James:
2 Cor 4:7–15 / Mt 20:20–28
Wed. Sts. Joachim and Anne:
Ex 16:1–5, 9–15 / Mt 13:1–9

Thu. Weekday: Ex 19:1–2, 9–11, 16–20b / Mt 13:10–17
Fri. Weekday:
Ex 20:1–17 / Mt 13:18–23
Sat. St. Martha: Ex 24:3–8 / Jn 11:19–27 or Lk 10:38–42