



Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | July 29, 2018

Abundant Life From Jesus

By Mary Katharine Deeley

My Irish aunt's motto was, "If there aren't leftovers, somebody went away hungry." The motto is shared by aunts, mothers, and grandmothers in nearly every culture. During holidays, our table was a groaning board of food prepared by my mother and aunt, brought by other family members, and shared with everyone. On the many occasions when we had more guests than we realized, the whispered command, "FHB," would make its way through our house. The initials stood for "Family, Hold Back" because our first duty was to make sure that our guests had enough to

eat, and there were always peanut butter sandwiches and apples for us later.

Whenever I think of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, I think about holidays at our house. Impossibly, it seemed, everyone had more than enough to eat. There were always leftovers. But Jesus started with far less than we did. The five barley loaves and two fish were a meager beginning, food of the poor. That food became abundant in Jesus' hands. It wasn't the first miraculous multiplication. The Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, both multiplied scarce resources, but not for so many. Jesus outdoes them all. It is John's way of saying that Jesus isn't just another prophet. He is more powerful than any who came before him. As we will hear in the coming weeks, he is life itself. This is John's eucharistic story. The life that Jesus brings is abundant—we will all be satisfied. Think about that when you next receive Communion. +

Sunday Readings

2 Kings 4:42-44

"For thus says the LORD: 'You will eat and have some left over.'"

Ephesians 4:1-6

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live...with all humility and gentleness.

John 6:1-15

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining.

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A Word From Pope Francis

Love is not a word, it is a deed, a service....Furthermore, it is expressed in the sharing of material goods, so that no one be left in need. This sharing with and dedication to those in need is the lifestyle that God suggests, even to non-Christians, as the authentic path of humanity.

—Jubilee Audience, March 12, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Am I generous with my time, treasure, and talent?
- Do I multiply what I have by giving it to God and others, allowing him to return it to me twelvefold?



Why Should We Read the Scriptures?

By Michael D. Guinan, OFM

When I was first ordained, an older friar asked me if I knew what my assignment was going to be. I told him, “I’m going to study and teach Scripture.” His face grew serious, and he said, “Oh my! Be very, very careful!” For him, there was something dangerous, not quite Catholic about studying Scripture. As common as this attitude was, it was also wrong. The Scriptures are a foundation of Christianity.

When we begin reading the Bible, we notice that it is quite a different world and culture. The Bible was written in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Its stories occur within the setting of the ancient Near East. Because of this, it is a “closed book” to us. That’s why it is a good idea to have a Catholic study Bible at hand.

But we also pray the Bible. We believe that somehow, in and through it, God speaks to us. Our first encounter with the Bible is usually within worship. The community of faith gathers to celebrate, and the Bible has a special role. It is proclaimed, meditated on, preached, and applied to our lives. Outside of the liturgy, we find prayer groups that read, reflect on, and share the Bible. It is also an “open book” to us.

So there is a curious tension between

these two activities. The Bible is an ancient book that needs to be studied like other ancient documents. But more than that, it speaks to us in the context of our community of faith.

Jesus: The Man, the Christ

Although we refer to the Bible as *the word of God*, Jesus is Word of God #1. In Jesus’ teachings, actions, life, death, and resurrection we see who God is (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 101–102). Central to our faith is the belief that, in Jesus, God has become incarnate. Within himself, Jesus combines the human and divine.

As human, Jesus was a first-century Palestinian, a Jewish male who ate, drank, and slept as he walked the roads from Galilee to Judea. As divine, however, Jesus was united to the Father through the Holy Spirit from the first moment of his existence. This same Spirit guided him throughout his life and eventually raised him up in the resurrection.

The Bible is the word of God insofar as it relates to the mystery of Christ. The Bible also has a human and divine side. Because the Bible is human, it is firmly rooted in ancient languages, cultures, and history; it expresses itself in the literary

forms of its time, which are different from ours. As such, it must be studied.

The Spirit Still at Work

But because the Bible is of God, it reveals God to us. Just as the Holy Spirit was in Jesus, the Spirit was also active in creating the Bible. While they may contain historical and scientific errors, we affirm “the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach the truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures” (CCC 107).

The Church has officially affirmed the analogy between the mystery of the Incarnation and the Bible. It is the foundation of a Roman Catholic approach to the Bible. Because the Bible is so intimately tied to Christ, the old friar was right—but in a way different from what he intended: With the Bible, we must indeed be very careful (full of care) to approach the Bible with reverence and to make it a part of our spiritual lives. +

PRAYER

Lord, you are the bread that satisfies hungry hearts. Remove the selfishness from my heart, that I may be generous to people in need.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 30–August 4, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Jer 13:1–11 / Mt 13:31–35

Tuesday, St. Ignatius of Loyola:
Jer 14:7–22 / Mt 13:36–43

Wednesday, St. Alphonsus Liguori:
Jer 15:10, 16–21 / Mt 13:44–46

Thursday, Weekday:
Jer 18:1–6 / Mt 13:47–53

Friday, Weekday:
Jer 26:1–9 / Mt 13:54–58

Saturday, St. John Vianney:
Jer 26:11–16, 24 / Mt 14:1–12