



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 8, 2017

Powerful Positive Thinking

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In a scene from the musical *The Music Man*, the central character, Harold Hill, tells his band that if they want to play the Minuet in G, all they have to do is think the Minuet in G. He’s a swindler, and when the mayor tries to prove it by having “the professor” conduct his band, he looks at them pleadingly and begs them to think.

To the surprise of everyone, including Harold, the band slowly (and even painfully) plays something that sounds a little like the Minuet in G and a little like many grade-school concerts, making parents proud and keeping Harold out of jail. Soon the show ends with the band

playing a rousing rendition of “Seventy-Six Trombones.”

Paul has his own version of the “think system” in today’s passage from Philippians. For Paul, every minute spent thinking about that which is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise is another minute that brings us closer to the living God whose presence is evident in all these things.

It’s not such a bad idea. God manifests the divine self in truth and beauty and in all the things Paul names. To reflect on these is to become more aware of his presence to us through them.

Centuries later, the Christian founders of the university where I work adopted Paul’s “think system” as their motto, reasoning that our thoughts should not be directed only toward facts to grow the mind but also toward the things that would transform our characters.

Like Harold Hill’s band, we might sound a little or a lot out of tune at first, but with practice, we will get better and march in our own big parade. †

“Think, men, think!”

—Harold Hill,
The Music Man

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 5:1–7

The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel.

Philippians 4:6–9

By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

Matthew 21:33–43

[Jesus said,] “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

A Word From Pope Francis

The prayer of praise is a Christian prayer, for all of us. In the Mass, every day, when we sing the “Holy, Holy, Holy,” this is a prayer of praise: we praise God for his greatness because he is great. And we address him with beautiful words because it pleases us to do this. The prayer of praise bears fruit in us. Sarah danced as she celebrated her fertility—at the age of ninety! This fruitfulness gives praise to God. Men and women who praise the Lord... bear fruit.

—Address to the
Catholic Fraternity
of Charismatic
Covenant
Communities and
Fellowships,
October 31, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How does our Lord want to see fruit and growth in your life?
- Have I squandered God’s harvest in my life?



A Difficult—and Important—Eleventh Commandment

By Kathy Coffey

“Thou shalt be joyful.”

Groans might greet this hypothetical eleventh commandment. Where are we supposed to cram joy on an overloaded to-do list? Does it go before or after the litany of chores, bills, and family obligations? All we want is to make it through the crunch of the workweek, then collapse in exhaustion.

Sad, but true. This stressed state of affairs points clearly toward the need for a joyous eleventh commandment. The rationale is this: If we were made for eternal joy, we should start now. We are more than cogs in a machine, toting up hours that feed corporate profits but fail to satisfy our souls. God made us for the everlasting bliss of gazing into his eyes. So if drudgery consumes our time, we should fill our free hours with deep nurture rather than televised fluff.

The acid test is always: How shall we be remembered? Imagine grandchildren saying, “She trudged dutifully, year after year, to all her commitments, but we didn’t see her much.” Or imagine their voices lightening as they recall, “She was so much fun! When we cooked her special chili we laughed and told stories.” “I’ll always remember his pride in his garden, how he’d grin at the first tomatoes, or how he happily took me canoeing.”

These positive attitudes aren’t Pollyanna-esque. They are choices as

difficult to honor as any of the Ten Commandments. Let’s face it, daily news is often depressing. A sample of headlines: “Thirty Killed in Iraq.” “Terrorists Attack London Bridge.” “Bullied Child Kills Self.” The daily media hardly sends us rushing for the tambourines. That’s why we need God’s strength to remain faithful, confident, and hopeful.

Joy in the Real World

From prison comes an example of one who honored the difficult eleventh commandment. There, Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote, “Yes, we are in chains, deprived of liberty, but in our sorrow we are restored to joy, without which we cannot live....We underground men, we will dig in the entrails of the earth a tragic hymn to the God of joy!”

If convicts can sing praise from the “entrails of the earth,” what about us? We are rich in faith, blessings, comforts, and wealth. Yet our distracted days and frowning faces give little praise to the “God of joy.”

Pursuit of Joy

Before we all start a serious pursuit of joy, a few qualifications: It cannot be sought. It’s a gift. It springs from the conviction that the Kingdom of God is near. It’s like Lazarus emerging from the tomb, squinting in the sunlight—and laughing. Joy is the appropriate response when we know we are saved, rescued despite

failures, happy not in our achievements but in God’s fidelity.

The image of a child snoozing in a parent’s lap may be a cliché, but it resembles our contentment in God’s presence, where we are at all times. Joy spills from the security of knowing every need will be met—not necessarily the way we foresaw, but in God’s time and pleasure. Dancing conveys the same joy: arms wide, feet in rhythm, worries set aside.

Contrast that with our postures when burdened by negativity. We must carry ourselves with joy. The living Jesus won’t be found in boredom and inertia but in what brings beauty and restores grace. And because he is risen, so are we. Despite suffering, we were made for joy. Maybe that commandment isn’t carved on a stone tablet, but we can write it on our hearts. †



Lord, I am grateful
for your vineyard of love.
Remove my shortcomings
that I may cultivate
your gifts of
compassion and peace.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 9–14

Mon. Weekday:
Jon 1:1—2:2, 11 / Lk 10:25–37
Tue. Weekday:
Jon 3:1–10 / Lk 10:38–42
Wed. Weekday:
Jon 4:1–11 / Lk 11:1–4

Thu. Weekday:
Mal 3:13–20b / Lk 11:5–13
Fri. Weekday:
Jl 1:13–15; 2:1–2 / Lk 11:15–26
Sat. Weekday:
Jl 4:12–21 / Lk 11:27–28