



# Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time  
November 4, 2018

## Falling in Love with God

By Janel Esker

At the staff meetings of a religious institution I once worked for, we took turns leading an opening prayer. Many of us prepared prayers with detailed language, noting the day's feast or particular intentions drawn from the day's headlines. However, the only prayer I remember was led by a laywoman who began by saying, "God, we love you." I don't remember the rest of the prayer, but I've never forgotten her basic but profound beginning: "God, we love you."

We ask God for a lot of things, we

### Sunday Readings

#### Deuteronomy 6:2–6

Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe [the commandments], that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly.

#### Hebrews 7:23–28

It was fitting that we should have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens.

#### Mark 12:28b–34

[Jesus said,] "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

probably do plenty of complaining to God, and we do a good amount of thanking God. But how much time do we spend loving God?

Jesus upholds the centrality of loving God in his answer to the scribe in today's Gospel. Instead of naming one of the 613 commandments of the Judaic Law as the "first," he quotes the central Jewish prayer, the Shema, and its injunction to love God with our whole being. This, for Jesus, is the most essential commandment.

When was the last time you prayed, "God, I love you"? Loving God is different than loving a person you can actually see, touch, and hear—yet it's so fundamental to the spiritual life. Maybe, like couples who have been married a long time, we just assume God knows we love him. "We've been together so long, we don't even need to say it anymore."

But even long-married couples renew their marriage vows and fall in love all over again. God is always reaching out in love to us, and Jesus challenges us today to recommit ourselves to God.

Can we continue to fall in love with God? +

*We ask God for things,  
but how much time do we  
spend loving God?*

### A Word from Pope Francis

A Church without women is like the college of the Apostles without Mary. The role of women in the Church is not simply that of maternity, being mothers, but much greater: it is precisely to be the icon of the Virgin, of Our Lady; what helps make the Church grow!

—Press conference, July 28, 2013



REFLECTION  
QUESTIONS  
**QUESTIONS**  
REFLECTION

- Do I remember to tell God I love him? He wants to know.
- How can my actions also express love for God?



# To Vote or Not to Vote

By Jim and Susan Vogt

Although our country was founded as a constitutional representative democracy and many fought for the right to vote, some wonder if voting is still worth it. With some campaigns extending for more than a year and large amounts of money devoted to advertising, people wonder if our electoral system is obsolete. It sometimes seems like back-room dealing really determines election outcomes. Who would know if I didn't vote?

Let's examine some arguments nonvoters use and consider why you should vote.

• **I can't fully support any candidate on the ballot.** Politics is compromise, and that means sacrificing the perfect for the possible. It's hard to follow one's conscience when no candidate completely reflects our values.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops publishes a voting guide called *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. The Church can't mandate which candidate to choose, but it can remind us of principles and values consistent with Catholicism. We can use this information to choose candidates who support Christian values.

• **My vote won't make a difference.** Few elections are decided by one vote, but a politically active person can have a multiplier effect, like a video going viral on the internet. Sure, one person seldom makes a difference, but Jesus showed how one person can sometimes change the world.

• **You can't trust politicians.** Many people believe politicians are corrupt and power hungry, thinking, "*They lie to please you, then sell you out.*"

Recent scandals verify this notion. But an Edmund Burke quote still rings true: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

• **The election doesn't impact my life.** You might say, "In my corner of the world, I just focus on keeping my job and feeding my family." So when the economy collapses because a hands-off governmental approach to financial regulations leads to a recession, you can just move in with your parents. That is, if they can afford to welcome you and share their Social Security benefits. Elections *do* affect our lives.

• **If your candidate wins, the opposing party can block the president or your members of Congress from enacting the will of the majority.** Are you fed up with a broken government? Fix it! One can wail about problems and wallow in helplessness, but a successful democracy works when people strive to fix dysfunctional laws and procedures.

• **Voting doesn't help "the least of my brothers."** Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9), and God punished him for not valuing his brother's life. Voting is a way of being responsible for the common good. Jesus taught that if we neglect to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, we will "go off to eternal punishment" (Matthew 25:46).

• **It's inconvenient.** One young adult said, "Many of my friends don't care


about local politics because they don't know much about their community. Besides, it's a hassle to figure out how to register."

Would these folks have the same trouble renewing their driver's licenses? Oh, maybe voter-registration information should be freely available on the internet and at civic gatherings. Oh, wait—it is!

## Why You Should Vote

It's the right thing to do.

"A basic moral test for any society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable" (FCFC 53). Voting is how citizens move the government to accomplish this. The US bishops confirm this when they teach, "In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation... It is necessary that all participate... in promoting the common good" (FCFC 13, quoting from the *Catechism*, 1913–1915). After all, freedom isn't free. +



*Lord, I am grateful for your love and guidance. Show me how to love you, myself, and my neighbors genuinely and generously.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

November 5-10

**Monday** Weekday: Phil 2:1–4 / Lk 14:12–14

**Tuesday** Weekday: Phil 2:5–11 / Lk 14:15–24

**Wednesday** Weekday: Phil 2:12–18 / Lk 14:25–33

**Thursday** Weekday: Phil 3:3–8a / Lk 15:1–10

**Friday** *Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (Rome):* Ez 47:1–2, 8–9, 12 / 1 Cor 3:9c–11, 16–17 / Jn 2:13–22

**Saturday** *Pope Leo the Great:* Phil 4:10–19 / Lk 16:9–15