



Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter | May 6, 2018

Overcoming Our Prejudices

By Mary Katharine Deeley

It's not often we're caught in our prejudices. My moment of reckoning came with the birth of my second daughter. My hospital roommate was a teenager giving birth to her third child. My husband and I were having trouble making ends meet, and even with insurance we'd still have hospital bills to pay.

I resented the free care my roommate was receiving. *Why can't you be more responsible?* I thought. *Because of people like you, my hospital bills are higher.*

Reflecting back, I'm ashamed of my attitude. I held the assumption that I had

a "right" to this fine hospital because I was working, could pay bills, and had insurance. Would I deny my roommate's child the level of care I wanted for my own?

The early Church wrestled with that type of question. Should Gentiles be admitted to the Christian community? They were considered unclean, and any Jew who touched them or ate with them would be made unclean.

In the encounter with Cornelius, Peter comes to realize that there is no clean or unclean when it comes to people. God shows no partiality. The Holy Spirit makes a convincing argument to the believers by falling on the Gentiles even before they're baptized.

We often decide, out loud or in our thoughts, who is worthy of our care or God's. But Jesus commanded us to love one another and to dwell in love, because God is love.

It's our prejudice that gets in the way. +

A Word From Pope Francis

Therefore, this Word of God calls us to love one another, even if we do not always understand each other, and do not always get along....It is then that Christian love is seen. A love which manifests even if there are differences of opinion or character. Love is greater than these differences!

—Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 10, 2015



Sunday Readings

Acts 10:25–26, 34–35, 44–48

[Peter said,] "God shows no partiality....Whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him."

1 John 4:7–10

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God.

John 15:9–17

[Jesus said,] "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

***Jesus commands us
to love each other.
It's not a request.***

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I help or love someone who disagrees with me or doesn't believe what I believe?
- What do I do when I catch myself being prejudiced?



Discrimination: Not Just a Black-and-White Issue

By Jim and Susan Vogt

We were walking down the street when some children approached us to ask a question. This is not unusual unless you know the context: We were visiting Mali in West Africa and were the only white people in the village.

People in ethnic and racial minorities frequently have this experience when they venture out of our largely segregated neighborhoods. So what does being in a majority or minority have to do with one's faith? Generally it has to do with being privileged or oppressed. Jesus was always on the side of the underdog or, to be more scriptural, the "undersheep": "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?" (Matthew 18:12).

Discrimination is immoral because it is grounded in inequities. "Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of the family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father" (*Brothers and Sisters to Us*, a pastoral letter on racism by Catholic bishops, 1979).

Although being part of an oppressed minority is often based on race or ethnicity, it also applies to class, education, or disability. The common denominator is that the majority has privilege and power while the minority

is disadvantaged from the start. This usually means inferior schools, rougher neighborhoods, health problems, and families caught in the cycle of poverty.

Those in the dominant culture may agree these social problems are unfortunate and may volunteer to help in their spare time, but the issues probably don't impact their everyday lives. Most of us live in neighborhoods where people look and act like us. Our friendship circles feel comfortable. While there's nothing wrong with that, it can be a narrow experience of life. Living with only like-minded people can stunt our worldviews and keep us from investing in the lives of those who don't look like us.

We believe most Catholics aren't overtly racist. But just as there are degrees of skin color, there are degrees of accepting those of different backgrounds. If you're part of the majority culture, it's often hard to recognize subtle prejudice, like moving to the other side of the street when a group from another race approaches, or preferring merchants who look like you.

Christianity calls us to more than *not* being racist or prejudiced; we must take positive steps to create an environment in which all people are respected. You don't have to sell your home and move to a low-income neighborhood to prove you're broad-minded. There are other proactive ways to build bridges:

- **What's on your walls, stovetop, or music library?** Try displaying art from other cultures and listening to music from other ethnicities. Serve food from various countries. You might find a new favorite dish.
- **When have you had a person of a different culture to dinner?** If you don't know anyone well enough to invite to dinner, make it a goal to get to know at least one person from another cultural group.
- **Have all your friends gone to college?** Don't let educational prejudice blind you to the worth of others. Chat with people you might normally ignore. You might learn something.

Look at all the colors in God's dazzling rainbow. It can make us more understanding and help us see our fellow humans as God sees us—children made in the image of God. +



Risen Lord, you command us to love one another. Help me to show your love to all people.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 7–12, 2018

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:11–15 / Jn 15:26–16:4a

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 16:22–34 / Jn 16:5–11

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 17:15, 22–18:1 / Jn 16:12–15

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:1–8 / Jn 16:16–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:9–18 / Jn 16:20–23

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 18:23–28 / Jn 16:23b–28



Bringing Home the Word

Seventh Sunday of Easter / Ascension of the Lord | May 13, 2018

Living a New Reality

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Part of my ministry involves sitting with families as they plan a funeral service for a loved one. There are often long pauses as thoughts flood their minds and memories fill their hearts. They share stories and grief. With great care, we select readings and songs and talk about prayers.

Inevitably, we talk about what will happen after the funeral. I tell them grief is a process, that everyone does it differently, and that it would be good to be gentle with each other. In my

experience, it takes about six weeks just for the reality to begin setting in and to begin adjusting to this new situation. Things don't get better. They get different, and we go on.

I can only imagine how the disciples felt when Jesus, whom they loved, was crucified in front of them. They had only just begun their grieving. I can only imagine the joy they felt when he appeared after his resurrection, eating with and teaching them again, giving them everything they needed for what was to come.

I can't help but wonder how they felt when he left them again, ascending into heaven—not dead, but so very clearly not with them in the same way.

We celebrate Jesus' ascension just past the six-week mark from Easter. I like to think the reality of the death and resurrection has just started to sink in and that we're learning to move on in this new situation.

It's no accident that Jesus' last command to us is to live that new reality and tell the world about him. +

***After a funeral,
things don't get better.
They get different.***

Sunday Readings

Acts 1:1–11

As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

Ephesians 1:17–23 or

Ephesians 4:1–13 or 4:1–7, 11–13

And he gave some as apostles... to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry.

Mark 16:15–20

[Jesus said,] "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."

A Word From Pope Francis

[God] asks us to be missionary disciples, men and women who radiate the truth, beauty and life-changing power of the Gospel; men and women who are channels of God's grace, who enable his mercy, kindness, and truth to become the building blocks of a house that stands firm.

—Homily, November 26, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I live as if I am Christ's presence on earth, aware that I am his missionary?
- If Jesus were in my family, social, and professional situations, what would he do?



The Private Pain of Infertility

By Julie Irwin Zimmerman

The year after our wedding, I sat in church on Mother's Day and daydreamed about how joyful the holiday would be the following spring. My husband and I decided to have a baby, and I imagined we'd have our newborn the next Mother's Day. But the following May and the one after that we went to church with empty arms. To our dismay, we'd been diagnosed as among the 25 percent of married, childless couples in the U.S. who have trouble conceiving or carrying a baby to term.

It wasn't only Mother's Day that was hard to bear. Baptisms and baby showers were difficult. Sometimes, merely seeing a pregnant woman or a couple with a baby sent me into despair.

The months developed an unwelcome rhythm, beginning with hope, then anxiety, and ending in tears. My prayer life had taken on the same rhythm: first, optimistic appeals for pregnancy; then, frantic pleas for help getting through the month; and finally, silent anguish when I felt my prayers had been ignored. I wondered: *What have we done to deserve this? Why hasn't our simple wish for a child been granted?*

Although infertility is common, it can be isolating to sufferers. Often friends and family don't know what to say, make awkward jokes, or avoid the topic altogether. There are moral, ethical, and financial mine fields to navigate, and it's

easy for spouses to disagree about what to do.

Couples facing infertility have three options: seek medical treatment, pursue adoption, or live without children. While it's understandable to want to end the ordeal of infertility as quickly as possible, these decisions are important ones deserving prayer and discernment.

Catholic teaching on infertility treatment is often misunderstood. While the Catholic Church encourages couples to welcome children, not all medical options for infertility are considered acceptable. Surgeries and treatments that restore or enhance a couple's ability to conceive naturally or which assist the conjugal act are encouraged. Procedures that involve a third party, replacing natural conception, or the conjugal act—artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and donor eggs or sperm—are considered unacceptable.

A document by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology*, reiterates the long-standing position of the Church. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of physicians using NaPro Technology, which treats infertility in harmony with Church teaching. The Pope Paul VI Institute is a leader in the field, and an internet search can help couples find local providers.

Adoption is also a path to parenthood that's filled with many blessings. Seeking out adoptive parents and hearing their stories can affirm for infertile couples

the role God played in bringing them together.

And, of course, even in the midst of infertility, couples should take time to nurture their relationships and acknowledge that they're already a family. A weekend away, a walk in the woods, even setting aside dinner hours free from infertility talk helped my husband and me remind ourselves of our love and how satisfying our marriage was.

The experience of infertility helped me understand what Jesus did when he willingly accepted his cross. Before encountering infertility, I still believed if I worked hard enough at something, I could achieve it. Those years taught me a difficult, invaluable lesson about giving up control over my future and trusting God to reveal a future that was beyond my hopes and fears.

To learn more about Catholic teaching on reproductive technologies, visit usccb.org/LifeGivingLove. +



Risen Lord, your death, resurrection, and ascension are good news for us. Help me to share this message of hope with all people.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 14–19, 2018

Monday, St. Matthias:
Acts 1:15–17, 20–26 / Jn 15:9–17
Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a
Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 20:28–38 / Jn 17:11b–19

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / Jn 17:20–26
Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 25:13b–21 / Jn 21:15–19
Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 28:16–20, 30–31 / Jn 21:20–25



Bringing Home the Word

Pentecost | May 20, 2018

The Breath of the Spirit

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When our children were toddlers, we played a game called Typhoon. It was simple—we looked intently into their eyes and then blew into their faces and said, “Typhoon.” Whether it was the breath blowing past them or the word itself, I am not sure, but they always widened their eyes, looked startled for a minute, and then started laughing.

The memory of this game comes unbidden when I read that Jesus blew on the disciples and commanded them to receive the Holy Spirit. I can imagine

that their eyes widened and they looked startled for a minute. Maybe one or two of them were tempted to laugh, but the enormity of what Jesus said next sobered them quickly. There was power in the Spirit Jesus breathed out: a power to forgive sins.

The Church uses this passage, among others, to support Christ’s institution of the sacrament of reconciliation, and so it is. In our reflection, though, we shouldn’t forget that we all are called to forgiveness in our relationships with one another.

While our forgiveness is not sacramental, it’s a measure of our life in the Spirit that’s poured out on the world at Pentecost. One of our great temptations is not to forgive but hold others bound because of our anger, fear, or plain stubbornness.

Remember, though, that forgiving others frees us as much as it frees them. In forgiving, we are no longer bound by hate, resentment, or feelings of vengeance. Rather, we show ourselves transformed in Christ by this immense gift of love. +

We’re all called to forgiveness in our relationships with one another.

A Word From Pope Francis

As he did on Pentecost, the Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; he wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands to continue building the world of today.

—World Youth Day prayer vigil, July 30, 2016



Sunday Readings

Acts 2:1–11

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.

1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13 or Gal 5:16–25

As a body is one though it has many parts...so also Christ.

John 20:19–23 or John 15:26–27; 16:12–15

[Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I seek Mary’s intercession or help?
- Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. How can I practice more patience this week?



Loving Our Human Church

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Unless you have been living under a rock, you probably know all too well that the Catholic Church is a human church—human sins, scandals, and disappointments. It makes one wonder if God couldn't have made the Church a little less human, a little more divine. But that is not how God does things.

And as God entrusted his creation to our first parents, so Christ entrusted his Church to us, his disciples. This is the positive, amazing side of belonging to this human Church. Christ commissioned us to cause the Church to "fill the earth." We are to make the Church catholic, universal, all-embracing—both in space (reaching to every land and culture) and in time (gracing every historical age).

What an awesome responsibility to be co-creators in God's great plan! What trust God has in us!

Rich Traditions

Many cultures and historical periods have shaped the Catholic Church. There are parts of the Church that have taken root in the cultures of Byzantium and Syria. Probably most of you reading this article belong to the branch of the Church that has been highly influenced

by Roman and European culture. Each Sunday we see the priest at the altar wearing Roman clothing. (Albs and chasubles were once daily clothing for a first-century Roman.) We govern our Church with a Code of Canon Law based on the Roman legal system.

From the Europe of the Middle Ages we picked up the custom of serfs bowing and kneeling before the liege lord. From court etiquette we adopted titles such as "Your Eminence," "Your Excellency," and "Monsignor." And as the Church progresses through the centuries we try to select and incorporate what is good from the culture and let go of those elements that are no longer useful.

There's the problem! Our human vision is limited: We are not always sure which elements are good and which are no longer useful. Is the requirement of celibacy for priests still helpful to the Church? Should bishops be appointed or elected?

When, When Not, to Change

During the past fifty years we have experienced many changes in the Mass. We know that some parts of the Mass were instituted by God and can't be changed, while other parts of the Mass

are of human origin. These human elements can be changed and indeed should be changed when they no longer help us express the meaning of the Eucharist. But what elements ought to be changed? How are they to be changed?

These important decisions God has entrusted to us. Sometimes we make wrong decisions as circumstances change or as we see situations more clearly. But isn't that all part of being human?

Catholics believe that being human is a good thing. Our bodies are good. Creation is good. Growth and change are good. That's why it's great to belong to a human Church—a Church that is forever growing, developing, and maturing—a Church that is always discovering new ways to proclaim the gospel until that day when the fullness of God's plan will be revealed in us. +

It's an awesome responsibility to be co-creators in God's plan.

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 21–26, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
Jas 3:13–18 / Mk 9:14–29

Tuesday, Weekday:
Jas 4:1–10 / Mk 9:30–37

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Jas 4:13–17 / Mk 9:38–40

Thursday, Weekday:
Jas 5:1–6 / Mk 9:41–50

Friday, Weekday:
Jas 5:9–12 / Mk 10:1–12

Saturday, St. Philip Neri:
Jas 5:13–20 / Mk 10:13–16



Lord, your Spirit renews our faith, hope, and love. Empower me to be your presence of love and compassion to others.

From Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney



Bringing Home the Word

Most Holy Trinity | May 27, 2018

Adopted by God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I was a young girl, I used to imagine I was adopted. This had nothing to do with loving my parents and family, which I did. I think it was one of the many steps in dealing with the life questions of “who am I” and “who do I belong to?”

Later in my life, I met people who were actually adopted, and one said the experience of being adopted gave him a much clearer sense of belonging than I knew. “Someone chose me,” he said. “A family wanted me to belong to them, and they wanted to belong to me.”

Whenever I read today’s section of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, I remember my friend and my own wondering. The questions of who we are and whose we are don’t go away as we get into adulthood. New schools, new jobs, and new family situations bring those questions into our minds, sometimes with a force that surprises us.

There are times we feel as if we have lost ourselves and lost our way. On other occasions, we might feel alone. When those moments come, all we can do is trust that someone does love us and calls us to be our best selves.

In his letter, Paul reminds us who we are—the adopted children of God—and in the process he also reminds us whose we are. We belong to God, and we are grounded in this reality by our baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God, in his being, is a love relationship. Is it any wonder that our belonging grounds us in the dark times and gives us joy in the others? Is there anything else we need to know? +

***Trust that someone
does love us and calls us
to be our best selves.***

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 4:32–34, 39–40

[Moses said,] “You must keep his statutes and commandments.”

Romans 8:14–17

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Matthew 28:16–20

[Jesus said,] “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.”

A Word From Pope Francis

The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity invites us to commit ourselves in daily events to being leaven of communion, consolation, and mercy. In this mission, we are sustained by the strength that the Holy Spirit gives us: he takes care of the flesh of humanity, wounded by injustice, oppression, hate, and avarice.

—Angelus,
May 22, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Each person of the Trinity has a mission: The Father creates, the Son saves, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. Do I thank each for each one’s gift?
- Do I allow the Lord’s holy breath to fill me with the Holy Spirit?



The Gift of God's Name

By Kathy Coffey

Second Commandment: "You shall not invoke the name of the LORD, your God, in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

If we see this commandment merely as a warning, "Don't swear," we miss its richness. Most people could name greater evils than the occasional curse when we're angry or frustrated. So we wrongly dismiss the commandment as a quaint relic of more polite times.

Numerous law codes preceded Israel's. What makes the Ten Commandments distinct and so enduring that they set standards for people centuries later, all around the world? Among Israel's neighbors, the divine name was often used in curses or magical formulas. In ancient Egypt, some believed that invoking the name of God was an effective weapon.

We may smile at the primitive notion—until we remember how many modern wars have been fought in God's name. Both sides of a conflict create God in their own image, then invoke God's power to destroy the enemy. They forget that all humans are God's beloved children, carefully crafted and intimately known. Killing even one human, regardless of the "righteous" cause, is an affront to God.

Strangers No More

Think of those we call "Sir" or "Ma'am." Clearly they are strangers. We may want to call attention to a dropped wallet or a task we want done. The emphasis is on the transaction, not the personal

relationship. If, over time, "Sir" and "Ma'am" become "Steve" and "Molly," it signals a shift: The stranger has become an acquaintance or friend. Calling someone by name commands the person's attention.

By revealing God's name, God steps off the Distant Deity pedestal and comes close enough for friendship. Knowing God's name is a gift we shouldn't take lightly. It means that God is involved at the most intimate level of our daily life.

What is true for God is also true for humans. "God calls each one by name. Everyone's name is sacred" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2158). Throughout the Bible, a name contains God's dream for the person. When Abram and Sarai's names changed, their identity shifted. Abraham and Sarah were fuller, better people, confident that God was with them.

In the same way, God reassures us with words that bring confidence in the worst circumstances: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). In the New Testament, Jesus knows us intimately, by name. "Whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name..." (John 10:2-3). When Jesus calls Mary's name in the garden after his resurrection, it is the pivotal turning point in history. Before then, no one had risen from death.

Revering God's Creation

The *Catechism* says the Second Commandment includes blaspheming against places or people holy to God. Such a wise guideline establishes an attitude of reverence for all creation, made by God's hand and blessed by God's care. When we destroy forests, pollute air and water, or ignore environmental safeguards, we show grave disrespect for God's holy works. And when we malign God's beloved creatures, we slur God's holy name.

Remember someone calling your name softly, with depth and affection? Or your name being announced as an award winner? Or a beloved voice speaking your name on the phone? We should weave those warm associations around the name of God, who calls our names with love. Knowing that, how could we blaspheme God—or each other? +



Lord, you command me to love all people. Remove the prejudice that keeps me from loving my brothers and sisters.

From Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 28–June 2, 2018

Monday, Weekday:
1 Pt 1:3–9 / Mk 10:17–27

Tuesday, Weekday:
1 Pt 1:10–16 / Mk 10:28–31

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
1 Pt 1:18–25 / Mk 10:32–45

Thursday, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
Zep 3:14–18a or Rom 12:9–16 / Lk 1:39–56

Friday, Weekday:
St. Justin: 1 Pt 4:7–13 / Mk 11:11–26

Saturday, Weekday:
Jude 17, 20b–25 / Mk 11:27–33