



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time | September 23, 2018

Participating in God's Unfolding Tale

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I get engrossed in a book, I try to read it through without stopping. Sometimes I can't help myself and I peek at the last few pages to see where the author is taking me. It is satisfying to let a story unfold and allow ourselves to be surprised, but there is also a secret delight in glimpsing at the end of our journey and wondering how the storyteller will get us there.

Looking ahead to the end of the story is what the Book of Wisdom wants to do when it says, "Let us see whether his words be true...Let us condemn him to

a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him" (Wisdom 2:17, 20). The author knows that the end of the story will reveal the truth.

Jesus picks up the story when he gives the second prediction of his passion. He offers the disciples a glimpse of what is yet to come. The disciples, as usual, miss the point. Instead they argue about how they wanted the story to go—with one of them as the greatest over all. Like a good storyteller, Jesus takes them in a different direction. The ending he has in mind does not come close to defining greatness as they think about it—a prize for being the best. Rather, Jesus points to a child, and we suddenly realize that greatness has nothing to do with power or ability, but with innocence and openness to the unfolding tale.

The story Jesus tells and the life he lives will include death and resurrection for him and his followers. Let's participate in it fully because we do know how it ends. +

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 2:12, 17–20

Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him in the end.

James 3:16—4:3

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.

Mark 9:30–37

[Jesus said,] "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me."

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A Word From Pope Francis

For all of us, the Catholic Church continues to be a field hospital that accompanies us on our spiritual journey. It is the place where we can sit with others, listen to them and share with them our struggles and our faith in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

—Address to Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, September 21, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Do I live in humility as "last of all and servant of all," or do I seek self-serving glory?
- Does my life story follow the way God wants it to go, rather than me trying to take control?



How Much Is Enough?

By Kathy Coffey

You shall not covet your neighbor's house...or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Exodus 20:17).

“I want a house on a hill like the ones with the gardens where papa works.” In *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros remembers her childhood when the Sunday entertainment was riding around looking at beautiful homes. But eventually she quits going, not telling her family, “I am ashamed—all of us staring out the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at what we can’t have.”

How many of us waste precious time and energy ogling “what we can’t have,” or figuring out a way to get it? In doing so, we overlook the great goods we *do* have: the endless reservoir of God’s love, the gifts of family and friends, the beauty of creation, a warm pool of memories, individual talents, health, the support of a faith community. Each of us could create a unique litany of blessings—a far better exercise than longing for the latest iPhone or designer jeans.

The trouble with envy is, it never ends. Those who own the beautiful homes others crave are probably wishing they also had waterfront property—or a Swiss chalet. What an infinite, frustrating loop! Desiring the brother’s Lexus or the friend’s swimming pool seems harmless, and cars or pools aren’t intrinsically evil. The problem is, they’re never enough.

We’ve all had the experience of yearning for something that we thought would bring happiness: the child’s bike, the adolescent’s car, the adult’s antique. Getting that object might thrill us temporarily, and we might even cherish it for some time. But eventually, the bike is outgrown, the car dies, and the antique joins the junk pile. No thing can provide the long-term happiness for which we were created.

“Good” Longings

Ignatian spirituality encourages our desires—as long as they are consonant with our deepest selves. These longings are good because they are planted in us by God. We should ask, then, for more wisdom, compassion, or kindness, because these will make us the fullest, best persons we can be. In contrast, a shopping list of things is simply too small for us, unworthy of God’s splendid children.

If we use the latest gizmos to shore up a weak ego or impress friends, we’re in big trouble, caught in a long quest for *more*. Nothing wrong with the gadget—the problem lies within if we can’t believe we’re *enough*: fashioned by God, redeemed by Christ, invigorated by the Spirit, and precious to some fine people.

What else do we need?

Most people who accumulate find that one thing leads to another. New furniture in the living room makes the dining room look shabby. And on it goes, until we don’t even realize we’re caught in an unending cycle. We work hard to afford storage lockers for stuff we don’t even use, then wonder why we’re not at peace.

Setting Limits

As life’s end approaches, do we want to cling stubbornly to possessions that probably won’t fit into the casket? Or will we be ready to ease joyfully into God’s arms because we’ve been there all along? If we set our ultimate sights on God’s face, anything lesser seems like a temporary distraction.

As Joan Chittister writes in *The Ten Commandments*, “Only God is really enough. Only when we see beyond all the things in which we are immersed, only when we learn to hold them all with a relaxed grasp, can we ever discover the One in whom all of them take their being.” +

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful that you are my advocate. Take away all my fears and doubts. Fill me with your wisdom and love that I may be an instrument of your peace in the world.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 24-29

Monday, Weekday:
Prv 3:27–34 / Lk 8:16–18

Tuesday, Weekday:
Prv 21:1–6, 10–13 / Lk 8:19–21

Wednesday, Weekday:
Prv 30:5–9 / Lk 9:1–6

Thursday, St. Vincent de Paul:
Eccl 1:2–11 / Lk 9:7–9

Friday, Weekday:
Eccl 3:1–11 / Lk 9:18–22

Saturday, Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael:
Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 or Rv 12:7–12a / Jn 1:47–51