



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time | September 9, 2018

Opening Our Eyes and Ears to God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

It seems odd that Jesus would tell someone he just cured to keep silent about the whole incident. If I had experienced a miraculous cure, I think my first impulse would be to tell everyone about it and how it came to be. It's hard to keep that kind of good news to oneself. But Jesus' reasons for asking this went beyond mere modesty. He did not want people to follow him simply because of what he did. There were prophets and preachers at that time who called attention to God and appeared to cure those who were ill.

They cast out demons and preached their understanding of the truth. But Jesus wasn't like any other person. He wanted people to look within themselves and believe in him because of who he was: Emmanuel, God with us.

If we believe in Jesus only because we have seen a miracle, then our faith is not rooted in a deep conviction of heart and mind. The first time something bad happens, our faith will waver. If we believe only because someone else told us to, then when that person exits our lives, our faith may stop. But if we have had a personal encounter with Christ mediated through sacraments, in prayer, or through another person and have come to believe in Christ as the Son of God, then our faith will grow. It will see us through rocky times and brighten the rest of our days. We will be like someone whose eyes and ears have been opened, because we will see Christ present in the world and hear his voice calling to us to come and follow him. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 35:4-7a

Then the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf be opened.

James 2:1-5

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 7:31-37

He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.

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A Word From Pope Francis

The proclamation of the Gospel is destined for the poor first of all, for all those who all too often lack what they need in order to live a dignified life. To them first are proclaimed the glad tidings that God loves them with a preferential love... Go to the poor first of all.

—Diocese of Rome ecclesial convention,
June 17, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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- Is my faith in Jesus rooted in a deep, personal conviction?
- Do I regularly pray and participate in the sacraments to strengthen that conviction?



Praying in Good Faith

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

Saint Monica, the mother of the great St. Augustine of Hippo, was a prayerful woman. She truly believed that what she asked of the Lord would be granted. In his *Confessions*, Augustine writes how he deceived his mother in leaving Africa to sail for Italy. His mother prayed tearfully to God that Augustine not be allowed to sail, yet he made the voyage anyway.

Here is a disturbing paradox. Does intercessory prayer work? We ask for healing of cancer, and a friend dies. We pray for peace, and wars continue. We implore our Lord for family unity, and alienation divides parents and children.

Are our prayers effective? What should we expect as we approach our providential Father in heaven?

Mary, the mother of Jesus, once again points the way. Her faith was deep and firm. Her refrain was: "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Yes, ask that Grandma's cancer be arrested, if it is your will, Lord. Yes, grace us with peace and family unity, but in your time, Lord. A radical trust and faith should underlie every petition.

Let us not limit our prayer life to asking the Lord to meet our needs. As people of faith we should praise God for God's majesty and glory; we should thank God for all the gifts in our lives;

we should appeal to God for forgiveness. We should come to God aware of our own sinfulness and our need for mercy. In the end, it is God's will that should be the basis of all prayer.

God's Will, Not Ours

Jesus said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike" (Luke 10:21). This is the same Jesus who, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42). The same dynamic that characterizes Mary's submission to God's will is present in her Son. God's will, not our desires, reigns supreme.

Surely when St. Monica realized that her prayer requesting that Augustine remain with her was not granted, she became discouraged. She possibly even developed doubts in a God who proclaims through Jesus that if we ask, we will receive; if we knock, the door will open; if we seek, we will find.

Again, what is needed is a radical trust that divine providence is at work and that, as Julian of Norwich says, "All shall be well."

Trusting in God

Every Sunday the community gathers in worship. We praise God, ask forgiveness, and petition the Lord regarding our needs and the needs of our world. In the end we know that we are gifted with God's love and mercy revealed in Jesus. We are also given the Holy Spirit who is the principal agent of our prayer and ministry. It is the Spirit who empowers us to rejoice when our prayers are "answered" as we desire. It is the same Spirit who enables us to trust that God's will is being worked out even when Grandma is not healed, peace remains elusive, and family unity is still lacking.

William E. Gladstone offers this prayer: "Pardon, O gracious Lord and Father, whatsoever is amiss in this my prayer, and let thy will be done, for my will is blind and erring." Gladstone knew that God could do so much more than we could ask for or imagine. This humble attitude is the key to all "effective" prayer. +



Lord, I am grateful for your faithfulness. Teach me to bring the comfort of your loving presence to those who are afraid.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 10-15

Monday, Weekday: 1 Cor 5:1-8 / Lk 6:6-11

Tuesday, Weekday: 1 Cor 6:1-11 / Lk 6:12-19

Wednesday, Weekday: 1 Cor 7:25-31 / Lk 6:20-26

Thursday, St. John Chrysostom:
1 Cor 8:1b-7, 11-13 / Lk 6:27-38

Friday, Exaltation of the Holy Cross:
Nm 21:4b-9 / Phil 2:6-11 /
Jn 3:13-17

Saturday, Our Lady of Sorrows:
1 Cor 10:14-22 / Jn 19:25-27 or
Lk 2:33-35