



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 3, 2019

Moving Toward a Transformational Love

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In my work as a pastoral associate, I frequently speak with couples preparing for marriage. They often ask for suggestions about readings and desire to have something a little unconventional. When I ask what they mean, they will say something like, “We’ve heard that love reading so many times, and some of the Gospel readings we have heard aren’t what we want to say.” I ask them what they think love is and, after a pause, they begin to tell me

what they believe about love. It usually includes words like patient, humble, wanting the good of the other. We look at the reading from Corinthians again and they suddenly understand why so many choose it. It is one of the more beautiful descriptions of love that we have, and the love Paul describes is grounded in the Lord—God’s love for us and the love we must have for each other.

I think the ending of the passage is of greatest importance to marriage and the Christian life. Marriage is a process of becoming known. We “put aside childish things,” (1 Corinthians 12:11) like unrealistic notions of romantic love, and work at loving a real person. Spouses begin their marriage knowing each other only partially but grow in understanding with each passing day. That wisdom leads to unity and transforms the spouses. This movement mirrors our life with God. We know very little as baptized infants and children. But as we pray, worship, and serve, we come to know God more until we meet him face to face and our lives are one with his. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

No matter how many Sunday Masses, if your heart does not reach out to others, if you do not know what is happening to your people, your faith is weak, unhealthy, or dead. It is a faith without Christ; faith without solidarity is faith without Christ, it is faith without God, faith without brothers and sisters.

—Address in
Paraguay,
July 12, 2015



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 1:4–5, 17–19

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.

**1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13 or
1 Corinthians 13:4–13**

So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Luke 4:21–30

And [Jesus] said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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- How can I develop the attributes noted in Reading 2: patience, kindness, humility?
- Do I remember to realistically love my spouse (or another loved one), warts and all?

Called to be Missionaries



If you're Catholic, you are a missionary. All Catholics are called to be missionaries.

That doesn't mean we have to leave home and go to distant lands to preach the gospel to those who have never heard of Jesus, although some Catholics accept that vocation. Every Catholic is a missionary because we all participate in the mission of Christ.

What it means to be Catholic can be described in various ways, but following Jesus is at the heart of it. We are Catholics because God called us to follow Jesus. We follow Jesus out of love, and love is generative. That's the very nature of love.

For example, as a husband and wife grow in their love for one another, they will seek ways to express it beyond themselves. They may decide to have children. They may decide to express their love in a ministry of service. Love

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

always seeks some outward, generative expression. This generative love is at the heart of understanding God as Trinity: The love of the Father generates the only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from their love. This generative love is the reason for creation and the reason for the Incarnation. "God so loved the world ..." It was Jesus' mission to proclaim this love or, in the language of the Bible, to announce the kingdom of God.

Love moved Jesus to open his arms on the cross and to breathe the Holy Spirit into the Church. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Jesus commissioned us to continue his mission of announcing the kingdom. At the Eucharist, we as a Church gather to proclaim our yes to God's offer of love.

To the Ends of the Earth

Through the Eucharist, we are continually transforming into Christ's body, empowered by his Spirit. As Catholics, we are to be the sacrament, the outward sign of the "I love you" that God spoke in Christ. God doesn't want this great love to be a secret. God wants this "I love you" to embrace everyone. For that to happen, the Catholic Church must be a missionary Church.

Being a missionary is what makes being Catholic so exciting! Being Catholic is not just membership in a club or something we do occasionally at our parish. Being Catholic means we are missionaries of the good news, living signs of God's generative love.

We announce by words, but especially by our deeds, that the way things are is not how they have to be. We don't have to live in fear. God's love is more powerful than evil. Peace is possible. Sins are forgiven. Justice will triumph. Death isn't the end. Easter holds the final word! To carry this message—to participate in Jesus' mission—is the joy of being Catholic.

Living Signs

Not everyone enjoys being Catholic. I think of the man who, when asked why he no longer went to Mass, replied: "Because I see Catholics in church looking as holy as Christ himself. But when they walk outside, you can't tell them from anybody else."

That's where being a missionary kicks in. When we walk out those doors, can people see we are different? I don't mean different in some superficial way. Are we more tolerant, open, truthful, inclusive, and just? Are we more concerned about the poor and generous with our wealth? In short, are we more Catholic?

If our mission is to announce the kingdom of God, we must be living signs of that kingdom. +



Lord, your love never fails. Help me to embrace life with gratitude and love and joyfully welcome all people into my heart.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 4–9

Monday, Weekday:
Heb 11:32–40 / Mk 5:1–20

Tuesday, St. Agatha:
Heb 12:1–4 / Mk 5:21–43

Wednesday, St. Paul Miki and Companions: Heb 12:4–7, 11–15 / Mk 6:1–6

Thursday, Weekday:
Heb 12:18–19, 21–24 / Mk 6:7–13

Friday, Weekday:
Heb 13:1–8 / Mk 6:14–29

Saturday, Weekday:
Heb 13:15–17, 20–21 / Mk 6:30–34