



Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

July 26, 2020

Rags to Riches

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The richly decorated portrait *The Vision of Saint Helena* by Paolo Veronese is immediately impressive. Helena, a woman of humble origins, became the wife of Constantius Chlorus (Rome's emperor from 293–306). An innkeeper's daughter in an outback town, her beauty caught the eye of the most powerful man on earth. She went from rags to riches.

In the painting she wears lush, Eastern fabrics with woven prints and royal colors. The gold and blue details of her dress and the velour of her crimson cape broached under her chin denote

the wealth her position afforded. She rests on a high-back leather throne; an elegant textile wall covering provides a background from floor to ceiling.

The softly flowing fabrics and her serene posture exude calm and focus our attention on her tranquil face and spirit of contemplation. No matter the power, wealth, and beauty of the world surrounding her, Helena has forsaken all to pursue the true treasure she possesses as a Christian and values more than the rest. Helena traveled from Rome to Jerusalem to bring back the relics of Christ's passion. These reminders of Jesus' love for sinners became the most important treasures of Christendom.

Veronese wants to convince us that through prayer we come to understand our treasure is not found in wealth but in the glorious vestment of baptismal faith. As adopted sons and daughters of the king, we become like St. Helena: poor commoners raised to royalty! Thank God for his gift of life in Christ and allow your heart to follow the inspirations he shares with you. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 3:5, 7–12

Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil.

Romans 8:28–30

We know that all things work for good for those who love God.

Matthew 13:44–52 or 13:44–46

[Jesus said,] "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

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A Word from Pope Francis

How nice it is to feel that our school, or the places where we gather, are a second home....School then ends up being one big family. A family where, together with our mothers and fathers, our grandparents, our teachers and friends, we learn to help one another, to share our good qualities, to give the best of ourselves.

—Our Lady Queen of Angels School,
Harlem, NY, September 25, 2015



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

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REFLECTION

- What are you searching for? Will you make sacrifices for it?
- Do riches have a stronger hold on you than God?



Belonging to God

By Kathy Coffey

The First Commandment: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall not have other gods beside me” (Exodus 20:2–3).

Newspapers carried the story of a father who was boating with his son and the boy’s friend. When a strong, unexpected current carried the children overboard, the dad rescued them both. But after dragging them to safety, he could not save himself and drowned.

We can speculate about the gratitude the son, his friend, and their families will carry throughout their lives. Every breath they take is, in some sense, a gift of and a tribute to the heroic father who saved them. When people do us a big favor, we can rarely repay them. We breathe gratitude and cannot say thanks enough.

The extreme thankfulness that recipients must feel gives us a clue about the First Commandment. When we read about God freeing the Hebrews from Egypt, it’s hard to relate. Few of us know slavery firsthand. Hearing about people who are slaves today, many of them children, we’re appalled. We can only imagine what it means when someone unlocks the prison door and says, “You’re

free.” To forget such a liberator would be the worst ingratitude.

Awareness, Gratitude

After a gift like the one the Hebrew people received, how could they ignore God? How could they even think of worshipping anyone or anything else?

Before we get too high and mighty, scorning those ungrateful Jews, we should look at the ways God has freed us. Our situation may not be as obvious as imprisonment, but there are other, subtler forms of slavery. Some are caught in addictions to gambling, smoking, drugs, or alcohol. Others are trapped in unhealthy habits, fears, or relationships. From all of these, God is the ultimate liberator, freeing us in ways that surpass what we can do for ourselves.

Whatever our particular circumstances, God has freed us from something. And how gratefully do we respond? We probably need a reminder to put God first as badly as the Hebrews did.

If we say we belong to God completely and wholeheartedly, how do we show it? Do we set aside time each day to reflect on God’s ongoing action in our lives? (For harried commuters this can be done at stop signs.) Do we fall asleep naming the ways God was present in our days and the blessings he brought? If we take this commandment seriously, it will be reflected in our calendars and checkbooks. How do we spend our time and money?

Learning from Jesus

If we really want to know what this commandment means, we should look at the way it operates in Jesus’ life. He is passionately caught up in the love of his Father; his primary goal is pleasing God. Inspired and heartened by God, he responds constantly to God’s initiatives. Prayer punctuates his life; he often withdraws to renew his delight in God and be strengthened by their time together. During this time, he must experience God’s love, listen for God’s guidance, imagine God’s face.

Jesus shows us what it means to belong to God. During his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, every human instinct rebels against the course ahead, but he holds fast to whatever the Father asks. If we can share in his all-consuming love, it places us in the house of God at all times. As Jesus’ joy and compassion shows us, that’s a far better place to live than the house of slavery. +



Lord, you reveal the kingdom of heaven on earth. Help me be more aware of God’s presence.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 27–August 1

Monday, Weekday:

Jer 13:1-11 / Mt 13:31-35

Tuesday, Weekday:

Jer 14:17-22 / Mt 13:36-43

Wednesday, St. Martha: Jer 15:10,

16–21 / Jn 11:19–27 or Lk 10:38–42

Thursday, Weekday:

Jer 18:1–6 / Mt 13:47–53

Friday, St. Ignatius of Loyola:

Jer 26:1–9 / Mt 13:54–58

Saturday, St. Alphonsus Liguori:

Jer 26:11–16, 24 / Mt 14:1–12

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