



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time October 2, 2016

From Fear to Strength

By Janel Esker

I'm not the world's bravest person. When I got to college, I was delighted that I no longer had to go on roller coasters or into haunted houses to avoid my friends' mocking for being afraid. My college buddies didn't base our friendship on whether I went along with the crowd. I could say, "No, I really dislike roller coasters and haunted houses. See you when you get done!" It was liberating.

Life is full of much scarier things than amusement-park rides and fake goblins.

We hear the prophet Habakkuk speak of some of it in today's first reading. Evil, violence, strife, destruction—add to that cancer, natural disasters, Alzheimer's, domestic abuse, and unemployment, and sometimes it can take a lot of courage just to get up in the morning.

As a person who's more fearful than most, I take hope in St. Paul's reminder to Timothy today: "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control." Feeling afraid is a normal human emotion, but it's not what God wants for us, and it isn't part of the spirit God gives us.

As St. Paul reminds us, the Holy Spirit "dwells within us." The Spirit is the source of our daily strength; the Spirit can get us out of bed when all feels lost; the Spirit helps us persist in the face of incredible challenges.

Do we have faith in this Holy Spirit—faith at least the size of the minuscule mustard seed that Jesus speaks of in Luke? If so, it's enough. With such faith, we will experience the courage to face our fears and to trust that God is with us through them all. †

"God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control."

A Word From Pope Francis

Fear and sadness cause illness in people and in the Church, too; they cause paralysis and selfishness, and in the end spoil the air of a community... However, a Christian sustained by the fear of God and by the Holy Spirit has the courageous attitude of joy, which in pain becomes peace.

—Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, May 15, 2015



Sunday Readings

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

"How long, O LORD, must I cry for help and you do not listen?"

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control."

Luke 17:5-10

"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to [this] mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

REFLECTION
QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- How does your faith offer you power when you're afraid?
- What is one fear you would like God to help you overcome with strength and joy?

Joyful Noise

By Miriam Van Scott

The sound billowed through the aisles and lingered in the muted sunlight, then it was gone. Those of us waiting in line glanced at one another and smiled nervously before retreating back into our hushed deliberations. How odd, I thought. Laughter is the last thing I would expect to hear coming from the confessional. But then some distant, melodic voice whispered back, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.” Was a rush of honest, spontaneous laughter from the darkened room where secrets of the human soul are laid bare really such a contradiction? In God’s plan, laughter is inextricably tied to redemption. It’s the instinctive music of a soul finding its way back home.

The Old Testament gives us the story of Sarah, a woman well past her days of fertility, who has given up hope of ever bearing a son to her husband, Abraham. Angels, disguised as travelers, visit Abraham and tell him they will return at the same time next year and Sarah will be cradling a baby boy in her arms. Overhearing this, Sarah couldn’t help but snicker. But her disbelief would soon turn to jubilation as she and Abraham welcomed Isaac—whose name means “laughter”—a few months later. Rather than reproach her for her doubt, God responded to Sarah’s laughing by filling her with joy that would echo through the ages.

Job is likewise rewarded with merriment after enduring tragedies that would crush most spirits beyond repair.



Satan, jealous of Job’s fidelity to God, declares that Job is only faithful because he is healthy and prosperous. God then allows the devil to destroy Job’s property, slay his children, and even afflict his body with painful sores, yet Job accepts all without complaint. It is the memory of joy and the hope of its return that sustains Job as he takes comfort in the promise, “Once more will your mouth be filled with laughter and your lips with rejoicing” (Job 8:21).

Jesus himself offers a tale that resonates with the sound of unbridled exhilaration in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The aged father, heartsick over thoughts of his impetuous son lost to a world of debauchery and callousness, catches sight of the young man making his way back home through the fragrant fields. As we read the words of Luke we can picture the elderly man, his feet tripping over themselves, running like a child to embrace his beloved boy, tears of

laughter streaming forth like the grace of God flowing from heaven.

Then we come to the tomb of Christ. It is here, in the glory of the empty tomb, that we meet God with laughter in the confessional. We share with Mary Magdalene the bliss of discovering that what was gone has now been restored, and our closeness to the person of Jesus is once again part of us. The door God opened with the rolling back of the stone remains open, beckoning to us in the sacrament of reconciliation, promising that same electrifying joy. Through this redeeming grace, God not only invites us to return—he ardently yearns for that reunion. And our souls, purged of sin and its foul residue, can’t help but sparkle with glee as they draw close, once again, to their Father.

Thus, what better spot for laughter than the confessional: the ultimate expression of joy beyond words, emanating from a place of hope without limits. †

Source: *Liguorian*, October 2009

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your gentle voice of love. Help me to speak with love and peace everywhere I go.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 3–8

Mon. Weekday:
Galatians 1:6–12 / Luke 10:25–37
Tue. St. Francis of Assisi:
Galatians 1:13–24 / Luke 10:38–42
Wed. Weekday:
Galatians 2:1–2, 7–14 / Luke 11:1–4

Thu. Weekday:
Galatians 3:1–5 / Luke 11:5–13
Fri. Our Lady of the Rosary:
Galatians 3:7–14 / Luke 11:15–26
Sat. Weekday:
Galatians 3:22–29 / Luke 11:27–28

Bringing Home
the Word 
October 2, 2016

© 2016 Liguori Publications, One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. **1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.**
Designer: John Krus. Scripture quotations in this publication are from *New American Bible*, revised edition,
© 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. Pope Francis quotation is used
with permission and copyright © 2016 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. For licensing information, call **1-800-488-0488**.
All rights reserved. Distribution rights granted only to license holders. BHW001