



Bringing Home the Word



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 7, 2016

Humble Words

By Janel Esker

My husband and I joke that the sweetest three words in the English language aren't "I love you" but "You were right." We relish hearing them, but they're often hard to say, especially when you're certain you were the one who had it right, however trivial "it" was. It's tough to admit you're wrong and that you don't have all the answers. Simon Peter faced this dilemma in the Gospel. He had followed Jesus' command to lower the nets, but you can almost hear the exasperation—sarcasm, even—dripping from his voice: "We have

worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." I can't blame him: He was exhausted, an experienced fisherman, and now someone trained as a carpenter is telling him how to do his job. I imagine he expected to pull up an empty net and shake his head knowingly at Jesus.

But he ends up having to admit that Jesus was right as the nets practically tear open from the weight of the fish. His self-confidence melts, and Simon sees himself as nothing but a sinful man. He joins the ranks of Isaiah (in the first reading) and St. Paul (in the second) in claiming he is unworthy to draw near to and serve the Lord.

Jesus specifically chooses sinful, broken people as his followers. It's baffling, but it's true. Simon was unworthy and we are unworthy, but as St. Paul reminds us, "His grace to me has not been ineffective." God's grace fills us with what is lacking, and we are then capable of believing, following, and serving the Lord. †

A Word From Pope Francis



Let us ask the Lord that our work today might make us all humble, gentle and patient, and more confident in God. This is how the Church can be a beautiful witness to people... The Lord always goes ahead, making the way of a Christian known to us. It is not... a path of revenge. The Christian spirit is something else, the Lord says. It is the spirit that he showed us in the most important moment of his life, in his passion: a spirit of humility, a spirit of meekness.

—Morning Meditation, "The Humility and Strength of the Gospel"; October 1, 2013

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 6:1–2a, 3–8

"'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!'"

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

"I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins."

Luke 5:1–11

"Astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him."



Lord, you are the center of my life. Give me a trusting heart to remain faithful to you and myself in times of self-doubt and personal struggles.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

Evangelizing Our Emotions: From Anger to Passion and Compassion

By Raymond F. Dlugos, OSA, PhD
Part 1*

If we let them, our emotions can get in the way of our being the persons we want to be. The Gospel demands that we show love, mercy, forgiveness, and generosity, but when we are overcome by anger, fear, sadness, or shame, we can be pushed toward violence, cowardice, despair, and separation from the human community. These same emotions can make us profoundly aware of our humanity and present us with opportunities for conversion, transformation, and to more fully respond to Gospel values.

Once, when my flight was delayed for several hours, I became angry. I might call it annoyance, irritation, disappointment, or frustration, but it was still anger. It is not wrong to feel anger; it is a normal human response when our needs, desires, hopes, and expectations are not satisfied. Anger may prompt us to reveal these intimate feelings and parts of ourselves out loud to others, to God, even to ourselves. Anger invites us to examine ourselves, and the source of our anger, honestly. Anger can open us to the possibility that we are seeking satisfaction in ways that may be wrong or inappropriate. It also can



lead us to question whether gratifying even legitimate needs in certain ways is necessary. If we are unwilling to risk shaking our fists and shouting a bit when we don't get what we want, we may be blinded ultimately to the truth about God.

When we use anger to gratify our needs at the expense of others, we create places in our hearts that need to hear the word of God. When we allow anger to make us vulnerable to the effect of God's word, we find ourselves joined with a lot of other people who are deprived of their needs. When that happens, anger has led us to compassion.

Anger should be our response to intolerable injustices. If we don't feel angry when we see starvation and slavery, terror and violence,

the exploitation and abuse of the vulnerable and weak, then our hearts are hardened. Paradoxically, our ability to be outraged at these wrongs is the sign of a heart soft enough to be moved with compassion. Anger can soften our hearts, while the denial of anger hardens our hearts to the point of indifference.

To imagine that God's response to these realities is anything other than the passionate outrage we hear on the lips of the Old Testament prophets would be taming and domesticating our God. When our rage at the presence of evil and injustice is stirred, we are joined with divine rage. Anger leads us to a passion for justice—the energy required for the work of love.

** The article from which this excerpt was taken was originally published in Liguorian magazine as "Feeling Good About Feeling Bad." Other sections will appear in Bringing Home the Word in the coming weeks.*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How might my weaknesses and failures keep me mindful and in right relationship with God?
- What might God be calling me to do, even in my humility?

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 8–13

Mon. 1 Kings 8:1–7, 9–13 / Mark 6:53–56
Tue. Weekday: 1 Kings 8:22–23, 27–30 / Mark 7:1–13
Wed. Ash Wednesday: Joel 2:12–18 / 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2 / Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

Thu. Thursday after Ash Wednesday: Deuteronomy 30:15–20 / Luke 9:22–25
Fri. Friday after Ash Wednesday: Isaiah 58:1–9a / Matthew 9:14–15
Sat. Saturday after Ash Wednesday: Isaiah 58:9b–14 / Luke 5:27–32