



Bringing Home the Word

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 26, 2015

God Provides More Than Enough

By Janel Esker

When my husband and I were planning our wedding, we found the phrase “for richer, for poorer” to be lacking. We felt the phrase “in abundance and in scarcity” would be better because it could encompass not just money, but also time, hope, and happiness. We would be vowing to keep our love abundant even when other things feel scarce.

We live in a culture that focuses on scarcity even though our country is blessed with abundance. Advertisements convince us we don’t have enough and

we aren’t enough. We’re rarely satisfied with our hair, our clothes, our life choices—we often feel empty and in need of more.

Today’s Gospel begins a series of reflections over the next weeks about Jesus being the bread of life, and today’s focus is the abundance Jesus provides. Not only was there enough to feed the 5,000, but there was *more than enough*—there were leftovers, my favorite kind of abundance. I like to refer to these moments in Jesus’ life as “doggie-bag theology”: Jesus shares more than enough of what is needed—more than can be enjoyed in one sitting, plenty to take home for further enjoyment.

Abundance. It’s a characteristic of God we may forget in a culture that constantly tells us we don’t have enough. Even when we feel we don’t have enough money or time or even enough of *ourselves* to go around—God overflows with the love, wisdom, and strength that help us through each day.

God really does provide more than enough. Are we focusing on the scarcity in our lives or on the abundance of God?

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A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus underlines that he has not come into this world to give something, but to give



himself, his life, as nourishment for those who have faith in him. This our communion with the Lord obliges us, his disciples, to imitate him, making our existence, through our behavior, bread broken for others, as the Teacher has broken the bread that is truly his flesh. Instead, this means for us generous conduct towards our neighbor thereby demonstrating the attitude of giving life for others. Every time that we participate in Holy Mass and we are nourished by the Body of Christ, the presence of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit acts in us, shaping our hearts, communicating an interior disposition to us that translates into conduct according to the Gospel. Above all, docility to the Word of God, then fraternity amongst ourselves, the courage of Christian witness, creative charity, the capacity to give hope to the disheartened, to welcome the excluded. In this way the Eucharist fosters a mature Christian lifestyle.

Angelus, June 22, 2014

Sunday Readings

2 Kings 4:42–44

They shall eat and there shall be some left over.

Ephesians 4:1–6

Strive to preserve the unity of the Spirit.

John 6:1–15

Have the people recline. Jesus took the loaves and distributed them.

Sin: Not Always Black or White

By Fr. Stephen T. Rehrauer, CSSR

Common misunderstandings about sin stem from the word's many meanings. In discussions about whether an action or choice is sinful, I, as a theologian, often make use of a particular and very specific definition, while the person with whom I am speaking has in mind a very different definition. The result is a situation in which neither of us is hearing the other's point. We are using the same word but with very different meanings. To further complicate the matter, the word *sin* is subdivided by theology into different types: formal and material, mortal and venial, personal and structural, individual and social, and so on. So when we talk about whether specific types of actions or choices are sins, it is essential that we have at least the most basic definitions of sin in our minds.

The biblical understanding of sin takes precedence. The word for sin most commonly used in the Scriptures literally means "to miss the target." I prefer to translate it as "missing the point." When we sin, we miss the point of life. We are created to give glory to God by authentically imaging God in this world. Any action or choice that does not bring glory to God, authentically reflect the goodness of God, or conform to God's will is one which reveals that we have missed the point of our very existence. In this sense, sin is not so much about what we have done or not done. It is the orienting of our lives away from God and goodness.



Given this basic understanding, we can now subdivide sin into formal and material sin. Material sin is any action that is objectively evil. This includes acts of theft, adultery, lies, and so forth, when considered apart from any subjective considerations of intention, motivation, knowledge, or freedom in the person who performs these acts. The concept of material sin preserves the *objective* nature of morality in our tradition. Some actions are wrong by their very nature. Material sins can be more or less grave, depending on the specific good lost or harmed.

Formal sin adds the *subjective* aspect to the description of sin. Formal sin is the free, knowing, deliberate choice to engage in material sin, to do what we know to be evil. When we say stealing is a sin, we are talking about material sin. We are saying that it is objectively wrong to take what rightfully belongs to


another. This is different from saying that Ida committed the formal sin of stealing. When we say that, we mean that Ida deliberately and freely chose to take what rightfully belongs to another, knowing it is wrong to do so. It is possible to perform an action that is materially sinful without formally sinning. It is also possible to formally sin without doing what is materially sinful. Material sin is in the act chosen; formal sin is in the will of the one who chooses.

All formal sin and only formal sin affects our relationship with God. The more severe the material gravity of the sin, and the freer and more knowing the choice to commit the material sin, the further away from the target our life flies. A mortal sin is one that, in its material aspect, is so grave that it reverses the very orientation of our life away from God and toward evil. Serious and venial sins weaken our minds and wills.

Unchallenged over time, these make it more likely to fall into mortal sin, but they do not destroy completely our relationship of love with God. The most important point to remember is that Jesus came into the world so that sin can be forgiven. No sin is so grave that it cannot be forgiven, no sinner so lost that he cannot be reconciled to God. This is the Good News that we proclaim, which is the source of humanity's hope. That we sometimes sin is less important than that Christ died to set us free from the power of sin and death over our lives. Where sin abounds, there grace abounds even more.

WEEKDAY READINGS July 27–August 1

Mon.	Weekday: Exodus 32:15–24, 30–34 / Matthew 13:31–35	Thu.	Weekday: Exodus 40:16–21, 34–38 / Matthew 13:47–53
Tue.	Weekday Exodus 33:7–11; 34:5b–9, 28 / Matthew 13:36–43	Fri.	St. Ignatius of Loyola, Priest: Leviticus 23:1, 4–11, 15–16, 27, 34b–37 / Matthew 13:54–58
Wed.	St. Martha: Exodus 34:29–35 / John 11:19–27 or Luke 10:38–42	Sat.	St. Alphonsus Liguori, Doctor of the Church, Leviticus 25:1, 8–17 / Matthew 14:1–12

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