



Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 19, 2018

Christ, Our Spiritual Food

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a clear memory of leaning over to the classmate in the next row and complaining about an assignment we had just been given. I wasn't the only one. Throughout the classroom, pairs of heads came together in a wave of rolling eyes and muttered remarks. I suppose we thought it went unnoticed. "Is there anything you would like to share with the rest of the class?" the teacher asked. "No, thank you," was the general response. We were a little embarrassed at having been found out.

That long-ago recollection surfaced as I read that the crowd "murmured" when Jesus said that he was the bread that came down from heaven. The word is also used of the Israelites who "murmured" about their hunger in the desert. Jesus calls them out by answering the question they thought he didn't hear. When he explains that he is greater than the manna that kept them alive in the desert, they can't believe their ears. They couldn't see that Jesus was far more than they understood him to be and they did not have faith in him because of that.

Has there ever been a time when you have murmured to yourself or someone else about God? Maybe God called you to ministry and you didn't believe him. Maybe he asked you to give up something and you complained like I did in that class of years past. Maybe you think God has been unfair to you. Save you breath; God hears you. Instead, go to him. Pour out your questions and fears and, with an open and willing heart, listen to the promise of life he alone can give you. +

Sunday Readings

Proverbs 9:1-6

[Wisdom says,] "To any who lack sense I say, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed!"

Ephesians 5:15-20

Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.

John 6:51-58

[Jesus said,] I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever.

No famine, sword, or persecution can touch our spiritual food, Christ.

A Word From Pope Francis

Amid the din of so many voices, the Lord asks us to distinguish between what is from him and what is from the false spirit...to distinguish the word of wisdom that God speaks to us each day from the shouting of those who seek in God's name to frighten, to nourish division and fear.

—Jubilee for socially excluded people, November 13, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do I regularly attend Mass to receive Christ, our spiritual food?
- Do I share Christ's message of love with others?



Respecting All Life

By John Feister

“You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

I’ve stood as an adult at life’s portals several times: once each at the birth of my sons, watching, encouraging, witnessing; again at the bedside of my mother as she passed into life hereafter. All were transition times: My sons surely were alive well before their birthdays; most parents can tell you that there are plenty of signs of life from the outset. At the other portal, I witnessed my mother’s passing with awe as she continued her journey to life everlasting.

When I consider those times, I am reminded of Jesus’ words in John’s Gospel: “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (10:10). That positive promise of life is how I approach the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not kill.” It is certainly a prohibition, but like the other commandments, it is a command that we live to the fullest the life that God gives us.

We have a sad history of ignoring the promise of life from the earliest times—the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:8–12) tells us that. But one could argue that respect for life never has been a more urgent issue than it is today. In his encyclical *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)*, St. John Paul II named our culture’s lack of respect for life as one of the signs of our times.

When we talk of living abundantly,

the deepest meaning of “You shall not kill,” we’re talking about birth and natural death, but we’re talking about much more. We’re talking about openly and actively opposing abortion, but also talking about fighting those other things that take life away.

Global Solidarity

Anyone who has worked in the Third World or among the poor in our United States has witnessed how poverty takes away life and how our culture can strip human dignity, that is, take away respect for life by allowing or even causing poverty.

Being prolife, that is, against death, includes standing in solidarity with those who are powerless, from “womb to tomb.” It is among the brightest witnesses of the Church that acts of solidarity are everywhere in the good works of people building houses, working at soup kitchens, staffing pregnancy centers, opposing the death penalty, and advocating just laws, for example. All of these honor the Fifth Commandment.

The “culture of death” as John Paul called it, dishonors God. Taking of life medically by euthanasia, for example, puts us in the driver’s seat reserved for God. God’s command, “You shall not kill,” also gives us a grave responsibility

to avoid war. Catholics believe, of course, that there are times of legitimate self-defense, when killing is unavoidable and ethical. But nations, including our own, often cut a broader swath, resorting to war when war is unjustified.

Words of Life

It is the teachers of the Church, the bishops, who have framed the challenge of the Fifth Commandment so effectively. An American, the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, introduced the concept of “a consistent ethic of life” as a way to tie together all of the life issues that challenge us today.

Jesus taught us that all of the commandments are about being in right relationship with God and neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40). In an age where we can assert all manner of new and wonderful creativity and control over creation, the Fifth Commandment reminds us of the only true author: It is God, the giver of life, who calls us to have life, and have it more abundantly. +



Lord, you reveal the wisdom of God in the hearts of all people. Help me teach others by example the wisdom of your love, forgiveness, and peace.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 20–25, 2018

Monday, St. Bernard:
Ez 24:15–23 / Mt 19:16–22

Tuesday, St. Pius X:
Ez 28:1–10 / Mt 19:23–30

Wednesday, Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Ez 34:1–11 / Mt 20:1–16

Thursday, Weekday:
Ez 36:23–28 / Mt 22:1–14

Friday, St. Bartholomew:
Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

Saturday, Weekday:
Ez 43:1–7ab / Mt 23:1–12