



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 21, 2018

Jesus' Idea of True Greatness

By Mary Katharine Deeley

We might forgive James and John for their ambition. They had, after all, been with Jesus since the beginning. They had seen him heal the ill, cast out demons, and preach about repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Surely Jesus had a power that no one else had. And surely he would give it away to those who asked for it. James and John make a mistake. They thought power and greatness have to do with position.

We are so like them. We often think that people are great if they have abundant wealth or prestigious titles.

We consider them powerful if they have higher or several degrees, or if the world judges them to be attractive. And the world tells us this is so. But Jesus has a different message. Greatness has nothing to do with wealth or education. Sitting at the right and left hand of Jesus does not depend on appearance, position, or accomplishments. Rather, greatness comes from being willing to empty yourself for the sake of others. Our power lies in being the least among our neighbors.

Jesus challenges us in this reading. He dares us to let go of our ideas of greatness and to become servants of all. He invites us to “do the lesser things” with no strings attached or expectation of reward. (*Ministry* comes from the Latin *minus/minor* and Greek *meion*, meaning “less, smaller.”) We must serve in love out of love for him. This week, look for little things you can do for others, giving thanks to God for this invitation. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 53:10–11

The LORD's will shall be accomplished through him.

Hebrews 4:14–16

...Let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Mark 10:35–45 or Mark 10:42–45

[Jesus said,] “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus invites us to give and not expect to get.

A Word from Pope Francis

We are not called to serve merely in order to receive a reward, but rather to imitate God, who made himself a servant for our love. Nor are we called to serve only now and again, but to live in serving. Service is thus a way of life; indeed it recapitulates the entire Christian way of life.

—Homily, October 2, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do your worldly ambitions get in the way of serving God and others?
- Every week, am I seeking out little things that I can do for others?



Faith Demands Action

By Jim and Susan Vogt

“Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?” It’s easy, in some ways, for the fundamentalist evangelical Christian. If you honestly answer yes to that question, you’re assured eternal life. If not, all the good works you may do are meaningless. But with due respect to evangelicals, it’s not that simple for Catholics. We can’t deny the strong message in James 2:14–17: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? ...[Faith] if it does not have works, is dead.”

Faith and good works are two sides of the same coin of Christian life. Our commitment to Christ calls us to both personal sanctification and active involvement in transforming the world. It’s in the dynamic interplay of these two dimensions that we achieve a growing closeness to God. It’s important to grow in prayer, to do spiritual reading, to study the Bible, and to participate in the Eucharist.

But as the priest says, “Go forth, the Mass is ended.” In plainer terms he means, “You have experienced Jesus in the bread and wine and in community. Now get out and take what you have received to those in need.”

Devotion in Motion

What does faith in action look like? It

can range from caring for a sick child, to serving meals in a soup kitchen, to working for world peace. It means putting others’ needs before our own and deciding where and how we can do that best. Each of us is called to discern how we can follow the Second Commandment of Jesus to love our neighbors as we do ourselves.

Service to our neighbors may involve works of mercy (direct service) or works of justice (social change). The works of mercy include activities like visiting shut-ins, transporting the elderly to grocery stores, or tutoring children. The works of justice include immigration reform, promoting care for the earth through recycling, or advocating for a more equitable economic system.

There are some principles that might help us decide where we can serve.

Tithe our money and time. Faith in action must be generous. We’re called to give financially to those in need and to generously share our time. Do we give 10 percent of our time and treasure to those in need?

Get out of our comfort zone. We might be called to something more challenging than we thought we could do. Remember it’s God’s call to which we’re responding. We believe if it’s a call from God, our Lord somehow will provide the resources we need.

Cultivate solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Whether we’re involved in serving the poor or advocating for government policies to help them, we can’t deny that Scripture repeatedly reminds us that care for the poor and outcast is our special duty.

“To the Least of My Brothers”

Most of us, however, can easily find excuses for inaction: I don’t have the time. I don’t have extra money to support those in need. I don’t have the necessary skills.

It’s helpful to reflect on the passage from the Gospel where Jesus talks about the last judgment (Matthew 25:31–46). The ones who entered heaven were the ones who were cared for the least: the poor, the naked, the hungry, the marginalized. Clearly Jesus calls us to respond to those in need. His call stretches us and challenges us. This is what faith in action is about. +



Lord, I’m grateful for your gift of humility. Give me a humble heart so I may imitate your compassionate ways with all people.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 22-27

Monday, Weekday:
Eph 2:1–10 / Lk 12:13–21
Tuesday, Weekday:
Eph 2:12–22 / Lk 12:35–38
Wednesday, Weekday:
Eph 3:2–12 / Lk 12:39–48

Thursday, Weekday:
Eph 3:14–21 / Lk 12:49–53
Friday, Weekday:
Eph 4:1–6 / Lk 12:54–59
Saturday, Weekday:
Eph 4:7–16 / Lk 13:1–9