



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Lent
March 24, 2019

Finding Humility

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Now that I'm older, I can look back on my life and clearly remember times when I took great pride in my accomplishments, the breadth of my knowledge, and my insight into human dynamics. The problem was that my pride bordered on, and occasionally slipped into, a sense of superiority and hubris. At such times I was not fun to be around. The advantage of maturity is that we become more aware of our shortcomings and, hopefully, develop a humility that appreciates the gifts that everyone brings to the table, recognizes that we always have more to learn, and

grows grateful, rather than prideful, at the gifts we have been given.

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges the sense of pride that the Israelites feel from God's choosing them and the sense that they are, therefore, better than the people of the surrounding nations. He also questions their habit of judging those on whom misfortune fell as more sinful than they were. In a way, he was asking them to grow up and find the humility that comes from age, holding them to the same standard with which they held others. He challenged them to spend less time judging others and more time recognizing their sins and need for repentance.

That's a hard lesson for us all, but a necessary one. If we are to accompany one another on this journey through Lent and life, we need to know we are all the same in God's eyes and all in need of God's grace to make it through. +

Sunday Readings

Exodus 3:1–8a, 13–15

God replied to Moses:....This is what you will tell the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.

1 Corinthians 10:1–6, 10–12

These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us.

Luke 13:1–9

"Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future."

*My pride bordered on
a sense of superiority
and hubris. At such times
I was not fun to be around.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Gathered before Jesus crucified, we hear his words ring out also for us: "I thirst" (John 19:28)...What does the Lord thirst for? Certainly for water, that element essential for life. But above all for love....He thirsts to give us the living waters of his love, but also to receive our love.

—Visit to Assisi,
September 20, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When blessed by good fortune, do I give credit where it is due—on God's grace?
- Rather than feeling superior for my earthly blessings, am I mindful that we're all the same in God's eyes?

The Heart of the Sower



By Joyce Rupp

“A sower went out to sow”
(Mark 4:3).

Parables, like dreams, have many layers of meaning. They teach us and stretch us into further growth. In one parable Jesus describes how a sower scatters seeds in hope of a harvest, but only the seed that lands on good soil thrives. The rest wither or sprout because they fall on rocks, grow in weedy soil, are trampled, or are quickly devoured by birds. Jesus explains how this is a metaphor for accepting, or not accepting, the Word of God in his listeners' lives.

We are told what happens to the seeds, but what about the sower? What does

the sower experience when seeds, strewn with hope, do not grow? When a field is ready for planting, the farmer feels expectant eagerness, a readiness to spend long hours of work planting, because each seed holds a promise of growth.

When seeds are poor and grow weakly, when hail or windstorms destroy the growing crop, when sun and drought wither it, the farmer often grows discouraged. Did Jesus, the Divine Sower, also feel this when he served his people? Did he feel pained and disheartened when he saw how little effect his message had on their lives, or did he maintain hope in spite of mixed results?

The gospels tell us that Jesus felt disheartened at the lack of receptivity and the failure of his message to change lives, but the Scriptures also remind us that he never quit. Jesus continued to believe in the possibility of change and growth in everyone. He did not withhold his love and openness to the “seeds” that fell on the wayside, or the rocky, weedy soil.

Untested Soil

We're also sowers of seed. Each of us spreads the gospel message of faith and love by how we live our lives. Being a sower of God's goodness can be joyful when we see positive results from what we've planted. Our hearts flood with happiness and satisfaction when the seeds grow well.

Like Jesus, we also encounter defeat as we plant the seeds of his message. Faith-filled parents with love for their children see them choosing a life of drugs, violence, and immorality. Pastoral teams experience the apathy of parishioners toward faith-formation

programs. Seeds of marital faithfulness are destroyed by the rocky soil of adultery or the arid refusal to communicate. Teachers promoting honesty and integrity may find their efforts falling on the stony indifference and hostility of their students. People trying to plant seeds of harmony in their workplaces and communities may watch the seeds fail to develop.

Hope in the Harvest

It takes faith and relentless hope to be a sower of the Word of God, to be untiring in accepting and caring about others. It requires resolve and continual prayer. Like Jesus, we may not see the harvest in our lifetimes but we cannot give up trying to live in God's kingdom as faithful, compassionate people. Steadfast hope is a vital component of a sower's heart.

As we live in the spirit of the Divine Sower this Lent, let us keep on sowing the seeds of our good works without giving in to discouragement. Let us sow with confidence, letting go of our expectations for immediate results. Let us trust that the Word of God will take deep root in our own hearts as well as in those with whom we live and work. +



Lord, you are patient with me and never withhold your love and mercy from me. Strengthen me with your grace to become fully human, fully alive in the world.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 25-30

Monday, Annunciation of the Lord:

Is 7:10–14; 8:10 / Heb 10:4–10 / Lk 1:26–38

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:

Dn 3:25, 34–43 / Mt 18:21–35

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:

Dt 4:1, 5–9 / Mt 5:17–19

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:

Jer 7:23–28 / Lk 11:14–23

Friday, Lenten Weekday:

Hos 14:2–10 / Mk 12:28–34

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:

Hos 6:1–6 / Lk 18:9–14