



Bringing Home the Word

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 7, 2019

Becoming Lambs Among Wolves

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Our nation was founded on the principle of religious freedom. For the most part, we can worship as we like, believe as we like, and enjoy the security that comes from knowing we will not be punished, abused, or discriminated against for our faith. That has not always been the case for all Christians, both throughout history and recently in several countries. Through the media we learn of ongoing killings and oppression inflicted on those who publicly claim to be Christian.

Jesus sent his disciples to preach the good news “like lambs among wolves.” Anyone who knows this simile knows how terrible it is—they will stand out, become the first targets, and easy prey. But Jesus doesn’t tell them to fight back or disguise themselves. Rather, he tells them to give witness at the kitchen table and eat what’s put in front of them. In effect, Jesus tells them to get at the heart of people’s lives and to wish them peace. Even if their peace is not returned, the disciples are not to let that weigh them down. “Shake the dust from your feet” and move on, Jesus says in Matthew 10:14.

Preaching the gospel is the mission of a disciple, no matter where or when he or she lives. Today, in honor of those who have given their lives in service of the gospel, share with one or two people the good news of what God has done in your life. Listen to them. Invite them to come to church. Offer to pray with them. Just for today, be the sheep that everyone sees. You never know who might join the flock. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 66:10–14c

For thus says the LORD: I will spread prosperity over [Jerusalem] like a river, like an overflowing torrent.

Galatians 6:14–18

From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

Luke 10:1–12, 17–20 or Luke 10:1–9

[Jesus] said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few.”

*Share with one or two people
the good news of what God
has done in your life.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Today gratuitousness is often not part of daily life where everything is bought and sold. Everything is calculated and measured. Almsgiving helps us to experience giving freely, which leads to freedom from the obsession of possessing, from the fear of losing what we have.

—Blessing of ashes, March 5, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Rather than just trading small talk, do I work to get at the heart of people’s lives?
- Who might I invite to come to church?

Staying on the Right Path

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

“Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3).

Jesus was a realist. The world, although charged with God’s grandeur, is also an environment scarred by sin and misused freedom.

For centuries Christian writers spoke of life as warfare, a battle unto death. So Jesus gives two pieces of advice to the disciples, to us: Be shrewd! Be simple! To ground these characteristics in his followers’ imagination, Jesus points out the cunning of serpents and the simplicity of doves. This symbolism contains a wealth of wisdom.

Be shrewd! When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about the payment of taxes, they received an answer that foiled their plot to incriminate him. The wolves were after the innocent Lamb. Jesus fended off their designs by distinguishing one’s double obligation to God and to the city of man. Jesus answered a question with a question, thereby confusing his opponents. Jesus himself was shrewd—in the ways of the kingdom.

Shrewd, too, was Oskar Schindler (1908–1974), a German industrialist who helped save more than a thousand Jews from Hitler’s death camps. Living in a culture of hatred and death, Schindler used his intelligence, material resources,



and the God-given grace of compassion to thwart time and time again the work of the Nazis. Perhaps our passage, “I am sending you like lambs among wolves” was engraved on his heart.

Be simple! In contrast to serpents that are earthbound and dependent upon

deception for their survival, doves have as their realm the spaciousness of the sky and the gift of flight. Although their simplicity may hold more complexity than we know, the image of simplicity captures the quality of single-mindedness. Doves live in total dependency upon divine providence, as do we all. We, as human beings, can live with awareness that we are radically poor and, therefore, everything is a gift. Consciousness of our innate poverty tends to simplify life.

All About Love

In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau’s classic, he cries: “Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million, count half a dozen, and keep your account on your thumbnail.”

Whether or not Thoreau had Matthew’s passage in mind, the advice here is similar to Jesus’. There is one thing that is necessary. Martha thought it was hospitality; Mary opted for contemplation. Martha waited on table to express her

love; Mary gazed upon the face of Jesus and knew that love simplified everything.

As disciples of the Lord we are sent. Through baptism we have been given a mission to invite others to know, love, and imitate the life of Jesus. But we are sent into a world filled with forces contrary to gospel values. We work and live in an ambiguous culture, one of death, blatant consumerism, violence, and injustice that violates human dignity. We need a shrewdness that is first cousin to prudence if our ministry in such an environment is to succeed.

Sense of Direction

We are sent but not alone. The Spirit is given to us and is the principal agent of our discipleship. God’s Spirit is simple, for God is love. Here is the cornerstone that supports and sustains our Christian community and ministry. It is the Spirit that unifies all of our activities so that they lead to the glory of God.

Jesus is Lord and the true vine feeding us life and love. Prayer keeps us united to him. We are to bear fruit through service and witness. And, in all this, we give glory to God. Nothing can be simpler—or shrewder. +



Lord, your love protects us in times of trouble. Strengthen my faith that I may be a source of strength to others.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 8–13

Monday, Weekday: Gn 28:10–22a / Mt 9:18–26

Tuesday, Weekday: Gn 32:23–33 / Mt 9:32–38

Wednesday, Weekday: Gn 41:55–57; 42:5–7a, 17–24a / Mt 10:1–7

Thursday, St. Benedict: Gn 44:18–21, 23b–29; 45:1–5 / Mt 10:7–15

Friday, Weekday: Gn 46:1–7, 28–30 / Mt 10:16–23

Saturday, Weekday: Gn 49:29–32; 50:15–26a / Mt 10:24–33