



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
September 8, 2019

Planning, Flexibility, and Discipleship

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In my family, three members like to plan for what's ahead: What are we going to do? How will it get done? How are we going to get there? What will happen when we do? I can tolerate certain changes up until the day we leave, but after that, change is difficult for me. My daughter hates change at any point and doesn't rest until a revised plan is made. My husband lies somewhere in between. Our other daughter is a much more freewheeling spirit. "I never make plans that far in

advance," she would say when I asked her what she was doing that evening. We would often just stare at each other in wonder. After thirty years, we have also rubbed off on each other in some ways.

Becoming a disciple of Christ takes both planning and flexibility. The planning comes in preparing ourselves to let go of anything that gets in the way of our service to the Lord. For most of us, that will not be our parents, but it might be something or someone in our society or culture. Jesus' challenge comes in the realization that nothing can come between Christ and us—not even our parents—and if they did, we would need to turn from them in order to follow him. The flexibility comes in the understanding that we don't know what or who we might have to give up, or the moment and manner in which Christ will ask us to pick up our cross and follow in his footsteps. All we can do is pray for the grace and courage to do what he asks when he asks it. +

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 9:13–18

For who knows God's counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends?

Philemon 9–10, 12–17

I rather urge you out of love, being as I am, Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus.

Luke 14:25–33

[Jesus said,] "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

*We don't know what,
or who, we might have
to give up to follow
in Christ's footsteps.*

A Word from Pope Francis

I would like to reflect on nonviolence as a style of politics for peace....May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking.

—Fiftieth World
Day of Peace,
January 1, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I prepared to give up anything that interferes with my service to the Lord?
- Am I flexible enough to follow God's call when I hear it?

Why Do We Talk to God?

By Phyllis Zagano

First we need to believe that prayer—any type of prayer—is real, and that God knows our needs and always answers our prayers. Usually when we think of prayer, the prayer of petition comes to mind. It's common to say that sometimes God's answer to our prayerful pleas is no but that, come to think of it, the no we hear is actually a yes. God always affirms who we are as humans. That is, when we pray in petition for things we want, God kindly teaches us who we are by supplying what we truly need. In other words, we may want a new car to impress others, but what we need is secure knowledge that we are God's beloved. Once we accept that gift, then the rest becomes easy.

So the first petition we must present to the Lord is a petition to see ourselves as God sees us. And God always sees us as perfect for what we do and how we are, so long as we cooperate in God's plan.

Often, people want to know what is the best type of prayer. I don't believe there is any "best" prayer, provided that every prayer is rooted in an understanding of our dependence on God and his unconditional love for us.

There are four essential movements of the heart that follow our acceptance of God's existence and love for us.



They are adoration, petition, contrition, and thanksgiving. Each is a separate movement of the heart and mind, and each is "best" for certain times.

Loving and Being Loved

Adoration is the easiest and the hardest type of prayer, requiring that we do nothing but love and

be loved. That means giving up control, which most of us don't like. But think of the wonder in a baby's eyes as she looks at you. Think of the wonder in your eyes as you look at her. This is how you are with God, and God with you, in the prayer of adoration. Few words—just a sharing of love between two beings for whom there is nothing and no one else in the world at that moment.

Contrition is another familiar type of prayer. With contrition we acknowledge we have made mistakes, denied God's perfect creation of us, and tried to remedy the pain of that denial.

Sometimes we do this with excessive alcohol or food. Sometimes we misuse our sexual faculties. Sometimes our insecurities cause us to lie, cheat, or steal. These are real forces in everyone's life, and we need to apologize to God for denying who we are and forgetting that our real security is with God—not with worldly comforts. So we sincerely say "sorry" and move on.

Answered in Love

Petition, as stated earlier, involves simply asking God a favor. Sometimes the favor can't be granted—the loved one dies, the job ends, the illness returns. We can feel angry with God. That is actually very healthy, for we have the right as God's beloved to complain—and loudly. As we do, we may hear more clearly how God has answered our prayers in love (albeit in the negative), and how God wants us to have lives that mirror his love for the world.

Thanksgiving is the final prayer mode, one deserving more attention. Thanksgiving is more than simple manners, like thank-you notes after birthdays and Christmas. Thanksgiving is a minute-by-minute attitude that brings us to a place of conscious dependence upon the Lord and joyful acceptance of God's will. "Thank you" must always be in our hearts.

This attitude of gratitude makes sense of adoration, petition, contrition, and thanksgiving, and brings us to joyful understanding that everything we have is given by God in love. So, when we pray, we find God's gift of joy in life—without even asking for it. +



Lord, I am grateful for your call to discipleship. Give me the grace to respond to your call with courage, love, and humility.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 9–14

Monday, St. Peter Claver:

Col 1:24–2:3 / Lk 6:6–11

Tuesday, Weekday:

Col 2:6–15 / Lk 6:12–19

Wednesday, Weekday:

Col 3:1–11 / Lk 6:20–26

Thursday, Weekday:

Col 3:12–17 / Lk 6:27–38

Friday, St. John Chrysostom:

1 Tm 1:1–2, 12–14 / Lk 6:39–42

Saturday, Exaltation of the Holy Cross:

Nm 21:4b–9 / Phil 2:6–11 / Jn 3:13–17