



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
October 20, 2019

Keeping the Faith in a Land of Choices

By Mary Katharine Deeley

“Remain faithful to what you have learned and believe.” This was a favorite motto of a former director of the Catholic center where I work. Students who had just entered college and graduating seniors heard many reflections and homilies on this phrase because he felt it was one of the best pieces of advice he could give them. And so it is for us. The world is a complex place. Our choices are many, from the trivial (What breakfast cereal should I buy?) to the vitally important (How do I uphold the

dignity of every human person?). We see great beauty in creation and great evil in its wanton destruction for profit. There are those who think so little of human life that they bomb public places in order to destroy their enemies and those who think so much of life that they run into burning buildings or minister to the poorest and least.

In some cases, our path is crystal clear. In other cases, competing goods push and pull us in different directions. How do we make up our minds? This is where the teaching of Jesus and the Church, our prayer, and our conscience come together. Being faithful to what we believe gives us the foundation for good decisions in complex situations. It makes it possible for us to pass on the faith to the next generation and to the world. Doing this hard work is not always convenient. But this good news is what the world needs and is our path and guide as well. +

Sunday Readings

Exodus 17:8–13

As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight.

2 Timothy 3:14—4:2

Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.

Luke 18:1–8

[Jesus said,] “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

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different directions.*

A Word from Pope Francis

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God’s hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, creation is projected toward divinization, toward the holy wedding feast, toward unification with the Creator himself.

—On Care for Our Common Home
(*Laudato si’*), June 18, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When faced with difficult decisions, do I pray for God’s guidance?
- Is remaining faithful to my Catholic beliefs a guiding principle for me?

Was Jesus a Tree Hugger? Ecology and Faith

By Jim and
Susan Vogt

Climate change is a hot topic these days, but what does it have to do with faith? “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth....God looked at

everything he had made, and found it very good” (Genesis 1:28, 31). “The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it” (Genesis 2:15).

How are we to cultivate and take care of the earth? Scripture can't mean that everyone must become farmers! It means, however, that we all have a responsibility to care for the earth. This is easy to agree to in theory. After all, it feels wholesome to commit to caring for the earth. Being good stewards of creation is holy, natural, and reasonable—but not as easy as it sounds. Consider the following:

Many scientists identify using automobiles as the single most environment-damaging consumer behavior, so Jim urged Susan to take the bus to work. He often rode it himself. After all, we live on a bus line, and it would be “good for Susan's soul.” Jim explained that Susan could use the time to read, meditate, and commune with those who lack transportation choices.



But this quadrupled a twenty-minute commute, once transfers and waiting were factored in.

Vegetable gardening is good stewardship. It provides fresh healthy food, saves money and trips to the store, and can be satisfying to the spirit, not to mention good exercise. (Assuming

you don't overdo it and have to go to a chiropractor afterward, as Susan once did.) But what about those pesky critters that can delete the fruits of our hard work more quickly than we can delete spam? Should we use pesticides on crops, poison the moles, or spend extra on organic remedies? What if our kids won't eat the apples because they don't look as pretty as the ones in the store?

There are plenty of other conundrums for conscientious Christians who want to honor God's creation by preserving and protecting it. In the end, many of us tire of the complexity and mixed messages, throw up our hands, and murmur, “What difference will it make to the environment if I recycle a few soda cans each week?”

What each of us does, however, *can* make a difference. First, we must take personal responsibility for our actions. Whether it's refraining from lying, caring for those in need, or respecting the environment, our own actions are

the ones we control. We must start by responding consistently to God's call to be faithful stewards of creation. In addition, there is the dimension of witness. Who knows when someone might see our small efforts at recycling and decide to do something similar?

Then there is the reality that, as members of the human community, we are not isolated beings dependent only on ourselves. Instead of “*What difference will my action make?*” we might ask, “*What if everyone took my action?*” What if all people just threw their soda cans into the trash? What if all people recycled them? The “everyone” test can often help us judge more clearly.

Perhaps we can revisit the maxim “What would Jesus do?” and ask, “Was Jesus an environmentalist?” Well, he did walk a lot, ate organic and local, and didn't depend on electricity. But he didn't have a choice. We do. Jesus sent us the Spirit to breathe new life into our troubled souls and world. Let us not pollute the gift of creation lest it die on our watch—or on that of our children's children. +

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful that you listen to me. Make my whole life a prayer of thanksgiving in honor of your goodness and love.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 21–26

Monday, Weekday:
Rom 4:20–25 / Lk 12:13–21

Tuesday, Weekday:
Rom 5:12, 15b, 17–19, 20b–21 /
Lk 12:35–38

Wednesday, Weekday:
Rom 6:12–18 / Lk 12:39–48

Thursday, Weekday:
Rom 6:19–23 / Lk 12:49–53

Friday, Weekday:
Rom 7:18–25a / Lk 12:54–59

Saturday, Weekday:
Rom 8:1–11 / Lk 13:1–9

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