



# Bringing Home the Word

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

June 21, 2020

## Struggle and Rest

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Vincent van Gogh is one of the most famous painters in history. His dramatic style of eternally swirling motion and his palette of deep blue, green, and brown captivates us. His life was just as topsy-turvy as his style. He started off as an aspiring minister and missionary yet ended up committing himself to painting. He fought with mental illness most his life and, sadly, died poor and amidst mysterious circumstances.

His painting *Pietà* is one of his most spiritual and religious works. Carried

out in the months before his untimely death, it shows the maturation of his style. Rather than approach the painting with a wide horizontal composition, he keeps it quite vertical, which suggests a connection between heaven and earth. Jesus is falling forward slightly and is not quite resting in Mary's arms. He seems to be somewhat on his own as Mary reacts in grief, offering more than an accepting embrace.

Suffering has both the moment of struggle and of rest. In Van Gogh's *Pietà*, as in life, the unrequited desire to rest prevails. The struggle to accept and embrace suffering was a big part of Van Gogh's life, as seen in his letters to his brother. Van Gogh, like us, sought serenity in a faith that claims in today's readings "he has rescued the life of the poor" and that "all the hairs of your head are counted" and not a sparrow "falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge." We are precious to God, as was his Son. The power of God's love embraces our suffering and offers to bring it to resurrection. +

## Sunday Readings

### Jeremiah 20:10-13

The LORD is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not prevail.

### Romans 5:12-15

If by that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God...overflow.

### Matthew 10:26-33

[Jesus said,] "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

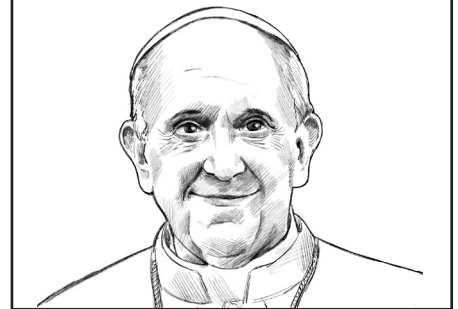
***We are precious to God,  
as was his Son.***

***The power of God's love  
embraces our suffering.***

## A Word from Pope Francis

There is a tendency to justify transgressing all boundaries when experimentation is carried out on living human embryos. We forget that the inalienable worth of a human being transcends his or her degree of development. In the same way, when technology disregards the great ethical principles, it ends up considering any practice whatsoever as licit.

—*Laudato Si'*, May 24, 2015



REFLECTION  
QUESTIONS

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REFLECTION

- What am I struggling with and need to give over to Christ?
- How can I increase my trust in God this week?

# Unmarried and Unashamed: Grace and the Single Life

By Christopher Heffron

It's the same scenario every holiday. Aunt Karen finishes assembling her plate of food and makes a beeline for the chair next to mine. My spine stiffens. I know it's coming.

Between bites, she asks about work, home, and—of course—the question dreaded by singles everywhere: “So, think you’ll ever get married?” Karen follows this with pity for my parents: “They’d love more grandchildren.” All I can do is weather this storm. I love my aunt, but the guilt she’s pouring on is thicker than the gravy.

I want to say, “I’m content with my life. If marriage is in my future, that’s great. If I’m destined to remain single, that’s OK, too. Eat your peas.”

I’m not the only single in my circle of friends, though each person’s outlook on the subject varies. Some are content with singlehood. Others are frustrated by it and deeply desire marriage and a family. Regardless, we’ve all answered or dodged that question. We take pains to lessen the confusion and suspicions of our married friends and family. But it’s never easy.

## We Walk Among You

I’m not unique. According to a 2017 report from the US Census Bureau, there are 110.6 million unmarried



Americans over age eighteen, representing 45.2 percent of the adult population. Despite these numbers, there’s a stigma with being unmarried, particularly in the Catholic world where marriage is an institution dear to the Church—and rightly so. But singlehood is an institution, too, with

an army of faith-filled soldiers. After all, aren’t we all called by God to live holy lives? Our potential as God’s followers isn’t governed by our marital status but by the purity of our hearts.

Saint Paul writes, “Each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. Now to the unmarried and to widows, I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do” (1 Corinthians 7:7–8). Paul and I would have gotten along.

I’m not troubled by my single status, and I admire strong marriages. Mainly I marvel at the teamwork of my married friends. From family functions to soccer practices, from school plays to Boy Scouts, they are busy, functioning units that anybody would admire. They are many, but they work as one.

I am but one, but I work as many. Example: laundry is my least-favorite household chore. But without a partner to pitch in, either I perform this task or I’m stuck wearing dirty clothes. Either I

clean my dishes or I eat out of my shoe.

Undoubtedly, there’s a sense of pride singles feel in being the sole breadwinner, cook, gardener, housekeeper, bookkeeper, and maintenance crew.

## Love Is Singularly Important

The Catholic Church teaches that single life is every bit the vocation that married, religious, and ordained life are. They are different paths—one no better than another. As I am not anchored by parenthood or marriage, I have perhaps greater mobility and more free time to focus my energies on bettering my community, my parish, myself.

To receive love and give it back—that is the beating heart of every vocation. As two parents bathe their baby for the first time, swaddling him in a towel, they’re creating an environment of love. As a dedicated religious sister overcomes tired feet and an aching back to work in a soup kitchen, she is creating an environment of love. Singles do the same.

Being unmarried doesn’t mean I withhold myself from others. I share my talents during the workday with colleagues, my guidance with my beloved nieces, my laughter with family and friends. I lead a full and happy life. I am unattached and unembarrassed. +



*Lord, your gift of unselfish love redeems the world. Remove the selfishness from my heart so I can love and care for others.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

June 22–27

**Monday, Weekday:**  
2 Kgs 17:5–8, 13–15a, 18 / Mt 7:1–5  
**Tuesday, Weekday:** 2 Kgs 19:9b–11, 14–21, 31–35a, 36 / Mt 7:6, 12–14  
**Wednesday, Nativity of St. John the Baptist:** Is 49:1–6 / Acts 13:22–26 / Lk 1:57–66, 80

**Thursday, Weekday:**  
2 Kgs 24:8–17 / Mt 7:21–29  
**Friday, Weekday:**  
2 Kgs 25:1–12 / Mt 8:1–4  
**Saturday, Weekday:**  
Lam 2:2, 10–14, 18–19 / Mt 8:5–17