



Bringing Home the Word

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 2, 2020

God's "Cookie Jar"

By Mary Katharine Deeley

A cookie jar sits on a table outside my office. Thin Mints, Oreos, and chocolate chip cookies are there for the taking—free and welcome. Sometimes I wish it wasn't there because the daily temptation is hard to resist, though I do avoid the sweets most of the time.

The cookies are part of our hospitality corner. Hot water for tea, coffee, and hot chocolate is also available. Students and associates come to take a break from studying or working and appreciate the refreshment. Over the years, many have stopped by my office to talk about school, jobs, and the meaning of life. Who knew

that such a little thing as free cookies would create such graced moments?

Today we celebrate and remember the free gifts God has given to the human community. "Come to the water," Isaiah urges us; "The LORD is good to all, compassionate toward all your works," the psalmist cries out (Psalm 145:8). Saint Paul reminds us that nothing can separate us from God's love, and Jesus multiplies bread for thousands, making sure that all have what they need.

We only have cookies in our jar, and the looks on people's faces tell me they're much enjoyed. How much more, then, do we welcome and need what is in God's "cookie jar"—love, life, mercy, forgiveness, and himself?

We lift up one another in welcome and conversation. God lifts all of us up—teaching us, refreshing us, and showing us where we can participate in his hospitality by taking what he has given us and feeding others. +

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Sunday Readings

Isaiah 55:1-3

All you who are thirsty, come to the water!

Romans 8:35, 37-39

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

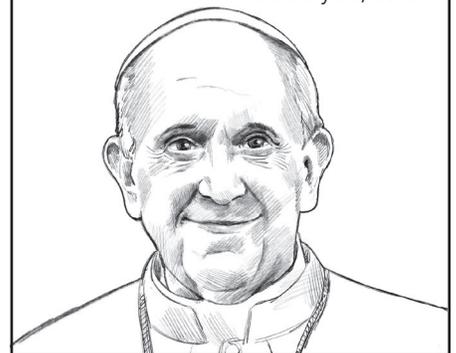
Matthew 14:13-21

They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full.

A Word from Pope Francis

...The Church organized the eucharistic liturgy into moments which correspond to the words and the actions performed by him on the eve of his passion....In the eucharistic prayer, we give thanks to God for the whole work of redemption, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

General audience, February 28, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Are you grateful for the good things in your life that were free of charge?
- Are you grateful God has used you to bless others?



Power Over Persecution

By Kathy Coffey

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:10).

If a vote was taken for the least-favorite Beatitude, this one might win. Our culture worships movie stars, sports heroes, corporate moguls—not saints. So why does Jesus proclaim that the persecuted are indeed blessed?

Jesus' style is not to make rigid rules but to hold up inspiring models. He asks us to look with new eyes upon the celebrities we may have admired and find hidden virtues in people who are quiet, unpublicized, and principled. If we shift our sights, we may find them more courageous, uplifting, and creative than those who once received our adulation.

Relatively few North Americans have suffered the oppression that is known by those in Asia, Africa, South America, and Central America. In countries like Bosnia, Rwanda, and El Salvador, genocide is common, being a catechist is dangerous, and the parents of the “disappeared” mourn their missing children.

You've had a glimmer of their experience if you've been a spokesperson for an unpopular, moral cause; the only ethical one in the department; the woman calling the “ol' boys club” (or the Church!) to equality; or belonging to

a group scorned by authorities. While being outside the norm pales beside the pain endured elsewhere, it teaches a lesson about being ostracized for the gospel.

Bone-deep Beliefs

Those who have undergone persecution are sustained by solidarity, inner freedom, and the knowledge that it doesn't last forever (though it might feel that way). Standing with others who believe in the same cause, at least we're not alone.

The persecuted find intimacy with others that can surpass the idle conversations or superficial ties of secure relationships. Etty Hillesum, author of *An Interrupted Life*, died at Auschwitz at age twenty-nine. At the Nazi concentration camp she called herself “bread shared among the hungry.” Her journal's last words resonate with compassion: “We should act as a balm for all wounds.”

The persecuted are united: Their relationships are based on bone-deep beliefs. Members of the armed services cherish wartime buddies. They put their lives on the line together. So our deepest affinities may be to those with whom we share unpopular beliefs.

Resting in Hope

From the writing of people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gandhi, or Óscar Romero emerges a sense of inner freedom. As the Gospel says, “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 (hell)” (Matthew 10:28). Like the early Christians, Archbishop Romero predicted he would outlive his own martyrdom: “If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people.”

The persecuted teach us how much in our lives is superficial, how little is essential. Those deprived of material things still find joy and fulfillment.

Finally, Jesus directs us to place our sufferings in an eternal context. A problem that looms large does not last forever. The persecuted teach us to carry burdens lightly and wear our chains loosely. They take God's mission on earth seriously but can laugh at themselves.

We can approach persecutions as Jesus did. When we feel diminished by criticism, rejected by the “in” crowd, or demonized by those who disagree with us, we can rest in Jesus' assurance that we aren't alone, the pain doesn't last forever, and the kingdom is ours. +

PRAYER

Lord, your love and compassion are always with us in times of trouble. Help me walk in solidarity with those who suffer and show them your love and compassion.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 3–8

Monday, Weekday:

Jer 28:1–17 / Mt 14:22–36

Tuesday, St. John Vianney:

Jer 30:1–2, 12–15, 18–22 /
Mt 14:22–36 or Mt 15:1–2, 10–14

Wednesday, Weekday:

Jer 31:1–7 / Mt 15:21–28

Thursday, Transfiguration of the Lord:

Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 / 2 Pt 1:16–19 / Mt 17:1–9

Friday, Weekday:

Na 2:1, 3; 3:1–3, 6–7 / Mt 16:24–28

Saturday, St. Dominic:

Hb 1:12–2:4 / Mt 17:14–20

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