



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
September 13, 2020

## Right Judgment

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Often when we think of a judge, we think of severity or cold justice. Courtroom and criminal-justice dramas—even some news coverage of major crimes and scandals—love depicting the offender as receiving his or her just rewards, with the judge or prosecutor smugly reflecting or sighing in relief.

But in the scriptural sense, a judge is much more. A good judge is an educator, teacher, and parent. Good judges promote wise living and respect for authority and the law. Their tools are sometimes mercy, sometimes penance, but always prompted by love.

A better image to understand the judge's role is a parent educating his or her child. Sometimes education means letting something slide; sometimes it means holding the child accountable. Both can be expressions of love.

Today's readings caution us against selfish passions that prompt us to judge. One who has been forgiven much but is then harsh with others will be severely punished—or as Sirach puts it, God "remembers their sins in detail."

Mercy toward others is key to the Gospel message. Some think they are good Christians because they don't steal and haven't killed anyone. They may even be active in their parish but are highly critical of others.

Remember, as Jesus said: "The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you" (Matthew 7:2). And, "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart" (Matthew 18:35). +

## Sunday Readings

### Sirach 27:30—28:7

Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults.

### Romans 14:7–9

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

### Matthew 18:21–35

Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times."

***Good judges promote  
wise living and respect for  
authority and the law.***

## A Word from Pope Francis

The increase in the rates of suicide in your cities, as well as bullying and various kinds of neediness, are creating new forms of alienation.... I ask you to pay special attention to [the young] and their needs. Try to create spaces...of generous and selfless love...to everyone, and not only to those who have "made it."

Meeting with bishops, Tokyo,  
November 23, 2019



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How forgiving, patient, and kind am I on a regular basis?
- How forgiving, patient, and kind would others say I am?

# Meaningless Ritual? Never!

By Johan van Parys

My liturgy professor once shocked me out of my post-lunch comatose state one afternoon by saying, “If the Eucharist does not cause you to want to make a difference in the world, then you are doing nothing more than making meaningless, ritual turns around an altar.” What could he possibly mean? Surely the Eucharist is more than just ritual turns, even if it doesn’t cause me to want to change the world.

Since that day, I have been affirmed in my thinking that the celebration of the Eucharist is never a meaningless ritual. The liturgy is always transformative, regardless of anyone’s state of mind or ensuing actions. Although we may not notice this in the short term, we can be assured of the efficacy of the liturgy in the long term. Just as water carves out even the hardest rock, liturgy molds us all into the image of Christ—even those with the hardest of hearts.

Though the connection between celebrating the Eucharist and working for the betterment of the world is apparent each time we celebrate the Eucharist, it’s made especially clear during the Mass of our Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday. On that day, we celebrate the Eucharist (Luke 22:15–20) and we wash feet (John 13:4–17) just as Jesus asked of us during the Last Supper. It’s important to remember to embody these acts we perform so solemnly on Holy Thursday during every day of our life. Christ



mandates us to pray for the needs of the world and, at the same time, work toward a better world. These two Christian characteristics of prayer and action are not mutually exclusive—prayer without action is hollow, while action without prayer is arrogance.

This all became clear to me one particular Holy Thursday many years ago. As our priest finished the washing of feet, I noticed a man entering the building and walking briskly toward the front of the church. He walked right into the sanctuary and sat down. Without hesitation, our priest walked over to the man and the two engaged in a brief conversation. He then motioned to the

servers, who brought a pitcher and bowl. The man took off his shoes, revealing his unwashed feet. Our priest knelt down and slowly washed the man’s feet. When finished, they both got up and hugged. The man walked out, never to be seen again. As we processed the Blessed Sacrament to the altar of repose later that evening, I couldn’t help but think that it was Jesus who walked in and sat down to have his feet washed right in our midst.

By the way, my former professor denies making the statement at the top of this column. He agrees that the celebration of the Eucharist is never a series of empty turns around an altar but always efficacious and constantly invites us to be Christ to the world. While some people know that and act upon it rather easily, others need a professor’s shocking wake-up call and the extraordinary opportunity to see Jesus’ feet being washed. +

## PRAYER

*Lord, I am grateful for your endless mercy. Give me the humility and courage to forgive those who have hurt me.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 14–19

**Monday**, The Exaltation of the Holy Cross:  
Nm 21:4b–9 / Phil 2:6–11 / Jn 3:13–17


**Tuesday**, Our Lady of Sorrows: 1 Cor 12:12–14,  
27–31a / Jn 19:25–27 or Lk 2:33–35

**Wednesday**, Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian:  
1 Cor 12:31–13:13 / Lk 7:31–35

**Thursday**, Weekday:  
1 Cor 15:1–11 / Lk 7:36–50

**Friday**, Weekday:  
1 Cor 15:12–20 / Lk 8:1–3

**Saturday**, Weekday:  
1 Cor 15:35–37, 42–49 / Lk 8:4–15

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