



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
September 20, 2020

## A Message of Reform

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Alessandro Farnese was elected Pope Paul III in 1534 amidst very difficult times. Martin Luther had left the Church, and many German bishops, along with their kings, were separating from the faith. Part of the push for separation was financial, another part was political, and a third part was spiritual. The papal court and clerical life in Rome were often criticized, encouraging separation.

Pope Paul III started a reform by calling on nine respected cardinals to investigate the accusations and propose measures. The suggestions were received and true reform began to take root—although much of the success was due to the Council of Trent (called by

the pope in 1545) and the many saints active at the time: Ignatius, Philip Neri, Teresa of Ávila, Francis de Sales, Charles Borromeo, and others.

Another measure taken was to contract Michelangelo to paint two frescoes in the Papal Pauline Chapel—*The Conversion of Saul* and *The Crucifixion of St. Peter*—a kind of sixteenth-century marketing campaign. This chapel would send a message to all popes and the papal court; indeed, the frescoes challenged everyone in the Curia. Amidst the temptation to power and luxury, the pope was saying, “If you want power, it’s the power to serve that requires true conversion and embracing the cross.” The chapel needed a pithy Latin phrase to drive home this message of reform. It comes from today’s second reading: “To me, life is Christ, and death is gain.” That’s a good phrase to live by as we seek our own ongoing conversion. +

## A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus wants to make us contemplate the gaze of that landowner: the gaze with which he looks upon each of the laborers searching for work and calls them to go to his vineyard...It is a gaze which calls, invites one to get up and begin a journey because he wants life for each of us.

Angelus, September 24, 2017



## Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 55:6-9**

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.

**Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a**

For to me life is Christ, and death is gain.

**Matthew 20:1-16a**

[Jesus said,] “Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

*If you want power,  
it’s the power to serve  
that requires true conversion  
and embracing the cross.*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I love without strings attached or do I love to get something in return?
- What is holding me back from reforming my life?

# God's Call Doesn't Wait

By Kathleen M. Basi



Occasions like New Year's, Ash Wednesday, and birthdays seem custom-made for adopting new life goals. It's neat and tidy to say, "As of January 1, I will no longer lose my temper with my children." "Beginning Ash Wednesday, I will stop using food to ward off boredom or anesthetize pain." But how often have you promised to change, only to find that within a few days or weeks you've reverted to your old ways?

Conversion doesn't happen according to a schedule, and God doesn't call us based on the calendar. He calls us when he has work for us or when we're tripping on our own weaknesses. In other words,

he calls every moment of every day. The question is, do we listen and respond?

When I find myself re-resolving the same things, I get frustrated. If my commitment is sincere, why doesn't it "take" the first time? Why do I have to keep starting over?

I once heard a homily that addressed this frustration. The priest urged us not to beat ourselves up when our attention wanders during Mass. We all come to the table filled with our own worries and concerns; its human nature to be distracted. The important thing is to keep turning back.

This, he emphasized, is the true meaning of repentance. Every time we consciously shift our focus from our own anxieties back to God, it's a recommitment—a moment of renewal.

This is an encouraging thought. Bad habits are easier to come by than good ones, and replacing the former with the latter requires constant vigilance. The practice of turning and returning to God defines the Christian journey, separating the true disciple from the seed that's sown in shallow soil and withers in the sun (Matthew 13:1-9).

We all need daily reminders of how much we depend on God's saving grace. We all need to be smacked upside the head with awareness of how little we can accomplish on our own.

God calls us when our lives are in need of refocus, when our hearts are in need of repentance—and that call doesn't wait for some artificially imposed milestone on a calendar. It comes every day, as reliable as the sun rising in the east, as certain as the failure of our own resolve and our own strength. Can you hear that quiet voice within your heart speaking, asking you to make a change? Don't wait for some date on a calendar to tell you it's time to start anew.

"Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). +

## PRAYER

*Lord, I am grateful for the gift of your compassion.*

*Help me to be more generous in sharing your compassion with others.*

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 21-26

**Monday**, St. Matthew:  
Eph 4:1-7, 11-13 / Mt 9:9-13


**Tuesday**, Weekday:  
Prv 21:1-6, 10-13 / Lk 8:19-21

**Wednesday**, St. Pius of Pietrelcina:  
Prv 30:5-9 / Lk 9:1-6

**Thursday**, Weekday:  
Eccl 1:2-11 / Lk 9:7-9

**Friday**, Weekday:  
Eccl 3:1-11 / Lk 9:18-22

**Saturday**, Weekday:  
Eccl 11:9-12:8 / Lk 9:43b-45

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