



Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 13, 2023

Who Are the People of God?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

This is still an unresolved theological issue. For so long the resolute answer of many was: the Roman Catholic Church is the people of God. However, the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) opened the Church's understanding to include all Christian denominations, paraphrasing Ephesians 4:4-5: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism" (UR 2). The council went even further in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), "calling together a people made up of

Jew and Gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God" (LG 9).

To be united with Protestants is one thing; to be united with Jews is quite another. For centuries, many interpreted the New Testament to say that the Jews lost favor with God. Such thinking supported—even caused—various forms of anti-Semitism, ethnic and religious persecution, and killings. We realized how wrong this thinking was. Vatican II quotes today's second reading and later states: "This sacred synod wants to foster and recommend...mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues" (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions [*Nostra Aetate*], 4).

We may have corrected some grievous errors in this matter, but we have not gotten much further than Paul did in resolving the issue. However, he experienced "great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart" (Romans 9:2) because of the separation. Do we? †

"[Christ called] together a people made up of Jew and Gentile, making them one."

A Word from Pope Francis

When we have strong feelings of doubt and fear and we seem to be sinking, in life's difficult moments where everything becomes dark, we must not be ashamed to cry out like Peter: "Lord, save me." To knock on God's heart, on Jesus' heart. "Lord, save me." It is a beautiful prayer!

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 9, 2020



Sunday Readings

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Elijah...stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah?

Romans 9:1-5

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit.

Matthew 14:22-33

Peter said to [Jesus] in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do most Christians think of Jesus and the original disciples as Jewish?
- Could the Holocaust have happened if they did?

Obstacles to Faith

Daniel P. Horan, OFM

One of my greatest weaknesses is a lack of patience. I struggle to be patient with others and myself, and that struggle sometimes carries over into my relationship with God. My prayer can feel rushed or demanding, my thoughts unwilling to focus on God, who is my dialogue partner, and my ears unwilling to open and hear the Spirit. During these experiences of impatience in the spiritual life, it can feel as though my heart is anything but firm because it is so restless.

Pope Francis once delivered a homily during a weekday Mass in which he talked about the hidden obstacles to conversion. Although there are people who resist being open to conversion, blocking the change that comes with embracing the will of God, Pope Francis invites us to reflect on those ways most of us unthinkingly prevent the Spirit's action in our hearts and lives.

He calls the first kind of obstacle



“empty words.” These are the ways we talk the talk of Christianity but fail to walk the walk. Jesus regularly warned his followers that it isn't enough to simply proclaim affiliation with him without also living one's faith in action. Pope Francis reminds us that we close ourselves off to genuine conversion when we offer empty words but do not care for the least among us (Matthew 25).

“Words that justify” form the second kind of hidden obstacle. This is a kind of mindset or attitude that makes excuses and self-satisfying reasons for why further investment in the life of Christian discipleship isn't needed in my case. I convince myself that all is fine and foreclose the possibility that God may be inviting me to a deeper commitment.

The third hidden obstacle is that of “accusatory words.” This is when we blame others in order to justify the status quo or accuse others of sinfulness, wrongdoing, or ill will so we don't have to look at ourselves and truly examine our consciences. Pope Francis points to the famous Gospel episode of the Pharisee and the tax collector to illustrate this. How often do we find ourselves in the Pharisee's shoes? What can we do to shift our attention toward those obstacles we would rather not see but still need to overcome?” †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Daniel P. Horan, OFM, © 2017 Liguori Publications (827303).

We're in the midst of the sea, in a boat that seems fragile, and there are howling winds and enormous waves that threaten to capsize us. This is the life of every person at some point. Jesus is there to help us negotiate the trials and as long as we keep our eyes on him, we can walk on water; that is, we can do the impossible. When we focus on the strength of the winds and the depth of the waves and how wet and cold we are, then we panic and grasp and clutch and sink.

Paige Byrne Shortal

From a Liguori Publications bulletin, August 7, 2005



For those hoping for what seems impossible: healing, reconciliation, justice, peace among the nations and within communities and families. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 14–19

Monday, St. Maximilian Kolbe:
Dt 10:12–22 / Mt 17:22–27


Tuesday, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab / 1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56

Wednesday, Weekday:
Dt 34:1–12 / Mt 18:15–20

Thursday, Weekday: Jos 3:7–10a, 11, 13–17 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Friday, Weekday: Jos 24:1–13 / Mt 19:3–12

Saturday, Weekday: Jos 24:14–29 / Mt 19:13–15

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

August 13, 2023

© 2023 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2023 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.