



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
August 27, 2023

Who's in Charge?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

There are lots of reasons one could be in charge. You might be the only one left to do the job. Or, in the case of babysitting, you might simply be older. You could be in charge because you are a bully with the biggest fists, sticks, or guns. Or you might be in charge because you are the best qualified for the job. Today's readings offer us two stories about being chosen for leadership.

In the Old Testament reading, Shebna, an official in King Hezekiah's court, overreached his position of authority. He was demoted and replaced by Eliakim. Carrying the key symbolizes authority

over the entire household. Placing it on the shoulder suggests an investiture ceremony. In the Gospel, entrusting Peter with the keys to the kingdom of heaven suggests similar authority, though in a significantly different household.

In both instances the position of authority is meant to be exercised for the benefit of the members of the respective household. It was precisely because of his failure in this matter that Shebna was demoted and Eliakim placed in charge. What about Peter? The Gospel tells us that the choice of Peter followed his remarkable statement of faith: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

These stories tell us that God chooses very ordinary people for positions of leadership. Why them? Are they the only ones left? Are they the oldest? Were they the best qualified? It was not because they were bullies. Obviously God thought they could do the job. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 22:19-23

What he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, no one will open.

Romans 11:33-36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever.

Matthew 16:13-20

[Jesus said,] "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

The position of authority is meant to be exercised for the benefit of the members of the household.

A Word from Pope Francis

Charity is always the high road of the journey of faith....But it is necessary that...works of charity...not divert us from contact with the Lord Jesus. Christian charity is not simple philanthropy...it is looking at others through the very eyes of Jesus and...it is seeing Jesus in the face of the poor.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 23, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you pray for leaders, even those you wouldn't have chosen?
- Have you ever thought of volunteering to serve on a church committee?

Put On the Clothes of Christ

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Years ago, while browsing through a used bookstore, I came across a novel by Alfred Alcorn titled *Vestments*. The premise is intriguing. A spoiled, self-centered, yuppie-type man stands to inherit a fortune from his pious Catholic aunt who is dying in a nursing home. But there's a hitch: in her confusion, she thinks her nephew is a priest. To ensure his inheritance he begins wearing a Roman collar when he visits her.

Our man not only enjoys how people treat him as he dresses as a priest (“*Can I check your oil, Father?*” “*Would you like more coffee, Father?*”), but he also begins to enjoy how he treats others. He finds that he is more beneficent, kinder, more helpful, understanding, compassionate. He is even patient! And there are other changes as well. He drinks less, stops “fooling around,” thinks about the purpose of his life, begins to believe maybe there is a God



and that Christianity is more than foolish superstition. What starts as simple fakery begins to change him.

An ancient baptismal acclamation sings, “You have put on Christ; in Him you have been baptized. Alleluia!” It is not the collar or the chasuble or the habit that we put on to be imitators of Christ. It is the robes of the baptized—the white garment. As we grow into the life of

***We will live a better life
if we make a habit of
imitating our Lord.***

the baptized, some of us may don other special clothes—the vestments of a priest, the habit of a vowed religious, the collar of a deacon who promises to serve the poor. These are garments we most readily recognize as belonging to those trying to lead a holy life. But all are called to put on Christ. All are called to holiness.

In today's Gospel, Peter could be our inspiration. He, too, had to grow in the life of faith. The cowardly fisherman put on Christ and became a courageous disciple. The doubtful Peter and the other disciples proclaimed Jesus to be truly the Son of God. The rest is history. †

From a Liguori Publications bulletin
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In almost all the great religions of the world we find special groups of men and women who separate themselves from the ordinary life of society, take upon themselves particular and difficult obligations, and devote themselves to one task above all: to deepening their understanding and practice of their own religion in its most basic implications.

Thomas Merton,
In My Own Words

PRAYER

*For the Church: for the courage
to preach the Gospel, to give
voice to the voiceless, to stand
with those treated unjustly, and to
minister to those in need. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 28—September 2

Monday, St. Augustine:
1 Thes 1:1–5, 8b–10 / Mt 23:13–22


Tuesday, Passion of Saint John the Baptist: 1
Thes 2:1–8 / Mk 6:17–29

Wednesday, Weekday:
1 Thes 2:9–13 / Mt 23:27–32

Thursday, Weekday:
1 Thes 3:7–13 / Mt 24:42–51

Friday, Weekday:
1 Thes 4:1–8 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, Weekday:
1 Thes 4:9–11 / Mt 25:14–30

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