



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
September 1, 2024

Law Versus Values

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

That is a very difficult choice to place before people. Why can't we choose both? Actually, that is the ideal.

Law is a legislated way that a group lives out a value. We value safe highways, and so we legislate traffic regulations, speed limits, and so forth. We value communal prayer, and so we devise liturgical calendars and worship ceremonies. Usually, the way we live out a value changes more frequently than the value itself. However, it often happens that people become so attached to a custom or law, though unfamiliar with the underlying value it embodies, that a change of custom becomes very disruptive. This certainly happened in the

Church after the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the 1960s.

This seems to be the source of tension in today's Gospel scene. Washing hands before eating was a ritual custom here, not just a hygienic one. It probably originated with priests who bloodied their hands while sacrificing animals. Eventually, ritual washing became one of the 613 customs that Pharisees expected every Jewish man to observe. Referred to as "a hedge around the law," such customs served to ensure the law itself was protected and would not be broken. Jesus' disciples did not observe this ritual, and so they were criticized.

Jesus immediately came to their defense. He did not disparage the value of appropriate ritual behavior. Rather, he accused his opponents of clinging to out-of-date practices while disregarding underlying values. Practices are external; values are internal. Laws and customs can change; fundamental principles and standards endure. †

People become so attached to a custom, though unfamiliar with the value it embodies, that a change of custom is disruptive.

A Word from Pope Francis

How often we blame others, society, the world, for everything that happens to us! It is always the fault of "others:" it is the fault of people, of those who govern, of misfortune, and so on.... [B]ut *spending time blaming others is wasting time...* Let us ask the Lord today to free us from blaming others.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 29, 2021



Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

What great nation has statutes and ordinances that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

[Jesus said,] "You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What Christian values do you try to live?
- What is the most challenging, and why?

Icon of the Poor

Paige Byrne Shortal

This month at Sunday Mass we will hear excerpts from the Letter of James, written around the year 47 AD to encourage Christians whose faith was weakening. It has one dominant theme: Christianity is not a philosophy, but a faith that must be put into practice. James addresses many issues: gossip, the need for patience, care for widows, orphans, and the sick, the responsibility of each Christian to live a virtuous life and to correct others when necessary. He also makes several passionate statements about the fate of the rich who oppress the poor.

This epistle sometimes reads like advice from a fatherly bishop and sometimes like a rant from a very frustrated pastor. After all, it's been less than twenty years since Jesus' death and



resurrection. James was addressing first- and second-generation Christians who were already wandering from the Way, but he saves his harshest words for the rich, words I take to heart.

Most people would say our family lives simply, yet we lack for nothing

necessary, not only to sustain life but to make it pleasant and always interesting. I've never been hungry. I've never helplessly watched my babies cry for food or shiver in the cold. I've never suffered needlessly for lack of medicine.

The only time I feel poor is when I'm confronted with poverty my poor efforts cannot affect. When I was in Guatemala to adopt our first son, I took him on a bus ride through the city. A woman in traditional dress and carrying a baby on her back was bent over, picking up something from the ground. As the bus paused in traffic, I looked closer and saw there had been a spill of corn. She was picking it up, kernel by kernel, and tucking it carefully into the folds of her shawl. The traffic jam broke, and I never saw her again, except... I see her every day, every time I scrape leftovers into the compost bowl. She is my personal icon, reminding me of my riches and the poverty of so many. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From *"The Works of Mercy: Heart of Catholic Identity"*
by Fr James F. Keenan, SJ

Scripture tells us that mercy is the condition for salvation. This is made clear in the Last Judgment (see Matthew 25), where the saved are those who performed what we later called the corporal works of mercy—feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. It is through the practice of these works of mercy that we concretely live our Christian faith. Through them, we show our willingness to enter into the chaos of another. †

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God of abundance, please protect those who do not have enough to sustain life, and make ways for generous people to share their blessings. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 2-7

Monday, Weekday:

1 Cor 2:1-5 / Lk 4:16-30

Tuesday, St. Gregory the Great:

1 Cor 2:10b-16 / Lk 4:31-37

Wednesday, Weekday:

1 Cor 3:1-9 / Lk 4:38-44

Thursday, Weekday:


1 Cor 3:18-23 / Lk 5:1-11

Friday, Weekday:

1 Cor 4:1-5 / Lk 5:33-39

Saturday, Weekday:

1 Cor 4:6b-15 / Lk 6:1-5

Bringing Home
the Word 

September 1, 2024

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
September 15, 2024

Faith or Works?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Unfortunately, these two facets of our faith are often pitted against each other. In many of his letters, St. Paul insists on the superiority of faith, while today’s reading from St. James underscores the importance of good works. It is understandable that one might get confused. Actually, both are vital. In fact, one without the other does not result in full Christian living. At issue is how they fit together.

Paul’s insistence on faith was probably a corrective for the erroneous belief that we can earn eternal happiness by our good works. This was not simply a problem with the Jewish law and practices but with the religious law and practices of many societies. Even today

we find people convinced that obeying religious laws assures salvation. To this, Paul insisted that it was faith in Jesus that saved, not conformity to law. Paul never said that believers should not obey the law.

Rather, he would insist that such obedience should flow from faith, not vice versa. It seems that the people to whom today’s second reading was directed took the idea of “faith alone” to an extreme. They were not committed to good works. This letter corrected that error. It states that faith without works is dead. In fact, good works demonstrate the authenticity and depth of one’s faith.

The message for today should be clear. Faith and works belong together. Genuine faith manifests itself in works of love and mercy, and the works of love and mercy that flow from faith are of God. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 50:4c–9a

The Lord GOD opened my ear;
I did not refuse, did not turn away.

James 2:14–18

What good is it, my brothers,
if someone says he has faith
but does not have works?

Mark 8:27–35

[Jesus] asked [his disciples],
“But who do you say that I am?”

**Faith without works
or works without faith
does not result in
full Christian living.**



A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus asks his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” ... [The disciples] had to take that decisive step, from *admiring Jesus* to *imitating Jesus*. Today too, the Lord looks at each of us personally and asks...*Who am I for you?* This question calls for more than a quick answer straight out of the catechism; it requires a vital, personal response.

HOMILY, BUDAPEST, SEPTEMBER 12, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How are your actions inspired by your faith?
- Is there something you feel called to do that you’ve been putting off?

Healing the Wound of Unforgiveness

Excerpts from *Seven Steps to Peace with Saint Alphonsus Liguori* by Fr. Paul J. Coury, CSsR

When we are wounded in a physical way, the first question the doctor always asks is how it happened. Part of the healing journey is acknowledging and explaining the event itself.

When we embrace the wound of unforgiveness, we take the time to look at the history of the wound. How did this happen? What are the events that surround the initial hurt? It might be necessary to feel again the grief, shock, or sorrow that connect you to this wound of unforgiveness. The wound is like a huge magnet that attracts to itself a history of darkness. There is criticism of the self and the other, there is blame, there is casting of people as villains and victims, there is anger—maybe hatred—and most often feelings of revenge.

As painful as this road is to review and to walk, it is a necessary step in the



process of healing. Look at the stepping stones that led to the event and that followed. Try not to allow the feelings trap you into a downward cycle of darkness. Do not blame yourself or the other.

How do you heal the unforgiveness and bring yourself to a sense of

wholeness? Place the matter into God's healing hands. If you find that anger and hurt still surround the images of unforgiveness, then you must replace that anger and hurt with images of love. When the event or person of your darkness comes into your mind, purposely surround them with a loving presence.

The second aspect of becoming a whole, healed person is to act with compassion toward others, especially those who have injured you in some way. Acting with compassion is one spiritual practice that all major religions promote. Outward compassion brings inner healing. At first this might feel very strange and difficult. The more you challenge yourself to take action, the easier the action will become, and you will be amazed at how quickly you will heal. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From *"Laughing With the Saints"* by James Martin, SJ

The most joyful people are those closest to God. As the Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, "Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." Joy has a somewhat disreputable reputation in the Church, though. And that's a tragedy not only because joy is necessary, but also because it has a distinguished history among the saints and spiritual masters as an essential element for spiritual health. When you meet someone truly in touch with God, isn't that person joyful? Think of the holy people in your life. Are they not full of the spirit of the Resurrection? Full of joy? †

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Holy God, help us to hear the teachings of Jesus, to believe the truth of the Gospel, and to live what we believe in our everyday lives. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 16–21

Monday, Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian:

1 Cor 11:17–26, 33 / Lk 7:1–10

Tuesday, Weekday:

1 Cor 12:12–14, 27–31a / Lk 7:11–17

Wednesday, Weekday:

1 Cor 12:31—13:13 / Lk 7:31–35

Thursday, Weekday:


1 Cor 15:1–11 / Lk 7:36–50

Friday, Sts. Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn,

Paul Chŏng Ha-sang, and companions:
1 Cor 15:12–20 / Lk 8:1–3

Saturday, St. Matthew:

Eph 4:1–7, 11–13 / Mt 9:9–13

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Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
September 29, 2024

Isn't That a Bit Extreme?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

No sacrifice is too extreme in pursuit of a dream. We will forego sleep, the enjoyment of a favorite pastime, the company of good friends, even the pleasure of good food. Ask anyone who has spent hours preparing for a recital, trying out for a position on an athletic team, or studying for an entrance exam. The same is true when one's livelihood is involved. Ask farmers, people in the military, teachers, or healthcare workers. Ask new parents, or even those who have been parenting for a long time. If we really value something or someone, no sacrifice is too great—at least for a while—when that cherished goal is in view.

We don't seem as willing to forfeit comfort when negative inclinations are involved, and we all have them: rivalry, jealousy, fury, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, to name a few. We know that such pettiness or rank cruelty can harm us as well as those we offend, but too often we seem unwilling to restrain such inclinations.

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus speaks quite strongly to such reticence. Does he really expect us to maim ourselves? Isn't that a bit extreme? The fact is, when we try to purge ourselves of reprehensible behavior it is like cutting off our hand or plucking out our eye. Ask anyone who deals with an addiction. If Jesus asks this of us, it means that we certainly have the strength to do it. †

Sunday Readings

Numbers 11:25-29

[Moses said,] "If only all the people of the LORD were prophets! If only the LORD would bestow his spirit on them!"

James 5:1-6

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

[Jesus said,] "For whoever is not against us is for us."

If we really value something or someone, no sacrifice is too great.



A Word from Pope Francis

The disciples would like to hinder a good deed simply because it is performed by someone who does not belong to their group.... Brothers and sisters, every closure tends in fact to keep us at a distance from those who do not think like we do, and this...is the root of many great evils....

ANGELUS, ROME, SEPTEMBER 26, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Is there a habit that keeps you from being your best self?
- Do you want to ask God for the will to change?

Order and Inspiration

Paige Byrne Shortal

There is a tension between Order and Inspiration—both goods, both necessary in the life of the Christian community, both essential to the seeking of wisdom and truth. Inspiration informs and enriches Order. Order tests and directs Inspiration. When Order and Inspiration cooperate, there is possibility for great good.

Consider the efforts of Dorothy Day or Mother Teresa. Dorothy Day was inspired to begin the Catholic Worker movement—to establish places of care for the indigent. There was concern about her apparent association with Socialism and her bishop denied her the title “Catholic.” Dorothy did not abandon the Church as she continued her work, nor did she abandon her dream. She simply persisted until the bishop saw the good of



what she did. Order (the bishop) tested Inspiration (Dorothy Day’s dream).

The case of Mother Teresa is similar. She had a vision of Christ speaking to her from the mouths of the poorest of the poor and she was moved to serve them.

The Archbishop of Calcutta denied her request to engage in this new ministry and asked her to wait a year, and then one more. Mother Teresa complied, prayed, hoped, and continued to petition the Archbishop until he was satisfied that her Inspiration was tested and true.

Imagine if Dorothy Day or Mother Teresa had simply persisted in following their Inspiration without submitting it to Order. Would we know of them now? Would there be Catholic Worker Houses across the land or the Missionaries of Charity, the world-wide religious community founded by Mother Teresa?

The tension between Order and Inspiration is real and both the Keepers of Order and the Inspired Visionaries may suffer. Overcoming this tension and bringing good works to fruition requires patience, humility, listening, desire for the truth, and, above all, charity. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From “The Mass Before and After Vatican II” by Fr. Matthew O’Toole

The growing appreciation for the role of sacred Scripture played an important part in Mass reforms at the Second Vatican Council. The conciliar document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* declares: “The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word.” (SC 51). The Council Fathers set in motion a revision of the *Lectionary*, the book containing the Scripture readings arranged according to the liturgical seasons. To give the faithful greater exposure to the word of God and the breadth of the Bible, a three-year cycle of Scripture was subsequently instituted for Sunday Masses, and a two-year cycle of readings was created for the weekday liturgies. †

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Faithful God, inspire us to follow the way of Jesus, to live according to his truth, to imitate him that we may have the fullness of life. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 30—
October 5

Monday, St. Jerome:
Jb 1:6–22 / Lk 9:46–50


Tuesday, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus:
Jb 3:1–3, 11–17, 20–23 / Lk 9:51–56

Wednesday, Holy Guardian Angels:
Jb 9:1–12, 14–16 / Mt 18:1–5, 10

Thursday, Weekday:
Jb 19:21–27 / Lk 10:1–12

Friday, St. Francis of Assisi:
Jb 38:1, 12–21; 40:3–5 / Lk 10:13–16

Saturday, Weekday:
Jb 42:1–3, 5–6, 12–17 / Lk 10:17–24

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