



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 11, 2016

Lost and Found

By Janel Esker

I lost my wedding ring once. For two days I was frantic, practically turning my whole house upside down. The loss was devastating—the ring symbolized so much and obviously couldn't be replaced. I couldn't do much else during those days but worry—I had trouble working, sleeping, and focusing. When I found the ring safely tucked amid some blankets that had fallen off the bed, my joy was nearly indescribable.

I was filled with relief, and my world was back on track.

That experience gives me insight into “the joy in heaven” Jesus describes in today’s Gospel at the repentance of a sinner. Sin causes a rift in our relationship with God—it’s a profound loss, like that of a shepherd losing a sheep, a woman losing a coin, or a careless wife losing her wedding ring.

Jesus tells us that God’s joy at our repentance is even more profound—it’s worthy of a grand party and celebration. Take my joy at finding my ring and multiply it a hundredfold or more—that’s the rejoicing in heaven when a sinner comes home.

Knowing that’s how God feels about our repentance should bring us relief and peace and move us to extend mercy to those who have wronged us. Broken relationships are losses. We may try to pretend they don’t affect us, but deep down they can still eat away at us, slowly destroying our sense of peace and well-being. We can continue nurturing grudges and anger, or we can grab on to the palpable joy that comes with mercy and healing.

Are you missing out on some much-needed joy? Forgive someone, and then rejoice. †

Sunday Readings

Exodus 32:7–11, 13–14

“They have quickly turned aside from the way I commanded them, making for themselves a molten calf and bowing down to it.”

1 Timothy 1:12–17

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost.”

Luke 15:1–32

“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people.”

A Word From Pope Francis

We cannot forget the great content, the great intuitions and gifts that have been left to the People of God. And Divine Mercy is one of these....It is up to us, as ministers of the Church, to keep this message alive, above all through preaching and in our actions, in signs and in pastoral choices, such as the decision to restore priority to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the works of mercy....Thus, in the image of the Good Shepherd, the priest is a man of mercy and compassion, close to his people and a servant to all.

—Address to priests in Rome, March 6, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have I felt mentally, emotionally, or spiritually lost?
- What is the deepest hurt you have forgiven—or need to forgive?
- What stifles it?



Forgiving God

*The best thing we can do:
Tell God how we feel*

By Fr. Eamon Tobin

While it's true that God and his ways are perfect, it's also true that his ways may deeply hurt us and cause us to distance ourselves from him. We may wonder why a good and all-powerful God allows terrible things to happen. Coming to terms with unanswered prayer and destruction can be very difficult, even for people with deep faith.

The worst thing we can do is break our relationship with God or distance ourselves from him. When we do this, we hand Satan a victory. The devil's plan is

to use the bad things in life to weaken or destroy our relationship with God.

The best thing we can do is let God know exactly how we feel. This is what the psalmists and other Old Testament figures did. If and when we feel God has abandoned us and allowed evil to triumph, we can express our anger or disappointment. If we feel like giving God a piece of our minds, we should go ahead and do so. He certainly can handle it. Also, God certainly will be happier with our heartfelt prayer of anger than with our rote prayers that don't express how we truly think and feel.

It may take us some time to work

through our anger with God. We must keep relating to God even if it's with anger. When we feel distant from God, we're engaged in spiritual warfare. The powers of darkness are trying to make us believe that God doesn't care about us while the Holy Spirit is trying to help us see God's presence even in the midst of our tribulations.

It is a mystery why a good and loving God allows so much suffering in our world. But if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, we will never conclude that God doesn't care about our pain or other people's pain. We may also seek the help of Mary, our Blessed Mother. She continued to believe in God and his care for her even as he allowed horrific things to happen to her innocent Son.

When we choose not to forgive, we knowingly or unknowingly cheat ourselves of the joy of living. When we harbor resentment in our hearts, our resentment becomes the lens through which we see reality. We see God not as he is but how our resentment wants us to see.

What Forgiveness Isn't

Forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean that we must forget a hurt or injustice. Some hurts and injustices are too big and painful to totally remove from our memories. We may need to remember some hurts to prevent them from happening again. But we can let go of the resentments connected with the hurt. If we don't, they will continue to wound us, cloud the way we see reality, and control our actions.

Forgiveness Doesn't Mean...

- ...we surrender our right to justice. We shouldn't confuse forgiveness with stupidity. Jesus asks us to forgive, but he doesn't ask us to be stupid in our dealings with others.
- ...we have to relate to or befriend our offender. This is especially true if the offender shows no sorrow or remorse for the wrong he or she did.
- ...we have to put up with intolerable behavior. Forgiveness doesn't ask that we become doormats for nasty people.
- ...excusing, condoning, or minimizing the wrong inflicted on us.
- ...we never have negative feelings toward our offender. †

Adapted from *Learning to Forgive: Steps to Reconciliation*, © 2015 Liguori Publications



Lord, I am grateful for your gentle, guiding ways. Save me from losing myself in the things of the world. Help me to find my way to your heart of goodness.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 12–17

Mon. Weekday:

1 Corinthians 11:17–26, 33 / Luke 7:1–10

Tue. St. John Chrysostom: 1 Corinthians 12:12–14,
27–31a / Luke 7:11–17

Wed. Exaltation of the Holy Cross:

Numbers 21:4b–9 / Philippians 2:6–11 / John 3:13–17

Thu. Our Lady of Sorrows:

1 Corinthians 15:1–11 /
John 19:25–27 or Luke 2:33–35

Fri. Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian:

1 Corinthians 15:12–20 / Luke 8:1–3

Sat. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 15:35–37,
42–49 / Luke 8:4–15

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