



# Bringing Home the Word

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time June 26, 2016

## Hearing No, Saying "Yes"

By Janel Esker

**W**hen our eight-month-old daughter began to crawl, it quickly became evident that we needed to teach her the meaning of the word no. She was drawn to all the things she shouldn't touch—computers, electrical outlets, hot liquids. However, in response to our firm "No!" she smiled and giggled. Not exactly what we were hoping for. It took a while for her to learn that she had some restrictions on her newfound freedom.

I recalled my daughter's amused reaction to "No!" when I read St. Paul's warning against "biting and devouring one another"—the unethical behavior among the Galatian community—gossip, backbiting, cheating. Clearly God had said "no" to these behaviors long ago, but the Galatians continued to exhibit them—kind of like laughing in God's face.

Saint Paul reminds them that in Christ they do have freedom, but it's not unbridled. This freedom comes with responsibilities—a commitment to love and serve one another rather than treat each other immorally and unethically.

Next week we celebrate our country's gift of freedom. But the freedom we enjoy through Jesus is deeper. It's freedom from sin and death, and it isn't restriction-free. It comes with a full-time, wholehearted commitment to work for the good of others with love. It's less about hearing no and more about saying "yes" to what God asks of us in gratitude for such a great gift. †

*"The freedom we enjoy through Jesus comes with responsibilities."*

## Sunday Readings

### 1 Kings 19:16b, 19–21

"You shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, as prophet to succeed you."

### Galatians 5:1, 13–18

"You were called for freedom, brothers and sisters. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh."

### Luke 9:51–62

"No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

## A Word From Pope Francis

Even in the midst of difficulties God acts and he surprises us....But he asks us to let ourselves be surprised by his love, to accept his surprises. Let us trust God! Cut off from him, the wine of joy, the wine of hope, runs out. If we draw near to him, if we stay with him, what seems to be cold water, difficulty, sin, is changed into the new wine of friendship with him....

If we walk in hope, allowing ourselves to be surprised by the new wine which Jesus offers us, we have joy in our hearts and we cannot fail to be witnesses of this joy....If we are truly in love with Christ and if we sense how much he loves us, our heart will 'light up' with a joy that spreads to everyone around us.



—Homily in Basilica of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Conception of Aparecida; July 24, 2013

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I use my freedom?
- Does my yes mean yes, and my no mean no?

# Drafting New Christians

By Sarah Vabulas

**E**vangelization is in my blood. Something happened the day I first received the sacrament of confirmation and I've never been the same. When Archbishop John Donoghue of Atlanta marked the sacred chrism on my forehead in the shape of a cross and said, "Be sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit," my mind, heart, and soul were forever changed. I attribute my desire to evangelize to my confirmation.

I first learned the art of evangelization by watching and emulating my high-school youth ministers. As I transitioned into college, I learned from my peers, from my religious-studies classes, and from self-exploration of my gifts and talents. At the women's college I attended, I found in my religious-studies courses a wonderful and intelligent group of women to call my friends. We had an immediate shared bond of interest in theology and the Church—and we also enjoyed a good drink.

We used to debate (over instant messenger, of course) about whether we were actually drinking alone if we drank by ourselves in our dorm rooms while reading the Litany of Saints. Only religious-studies students laugh at such nerdy jokes! We also created a secret code for when we would want to go out to a pub and chat about homework or



theology—we called it Exegesis. Our professors began to pick up on our shenanigans and wanted to join the fun, so we printed T-shirts that said "Exegesis..." on the front and "I know I want to" on the back. It was our own way of evangelizing on campus and to each other.

In college I received an education not only from books but from my peers in how to love another no matter what. This has been integral in my efforts to continue to preach the gospel post-college. I believe every person has an interesting story to tell. No two individuals have traveled the same path in life, and because of that we all have a unique story to share. I love to sit in places, meet new people, and learn about them. Acknowledging a person by looking him in the eye and genuinely seeing him can have a profound impact.

You never know the inner turmoil someone may be battling.

For a few years, I lived within walking distance of a sports bar and would hop over there to grab dinner and a pint after work. I was usually alone, so I sat at the bar—the best place to sit in any restaurant! I befriended the bartenders and several of the wait staff since I was a regular. I was comfortable there. And because I knew I was safe, I opened up a bit more to meet other people sitting near me at the bar. I can't tell you the countless number of people I met during my visits there, but a few of the encounters have stuck with me over the years.

All I do is go to dinner and strike up a conversation with a neighboring patron, acknowledging his dignity and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide my words and actions. This is the call of the New Evangelization. It's how we say "yes" to the Lord in our everyday lives.†

## PRAYER

Lord, by your cross and resurrection you set us free. Liberate me from the prison of selfishness and empower me to lovingly serve my brothers and sisters.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

June 27—July 2

Mon. Weekday: Amos 2:6–10, 13–16 / Matthew 8:18–22

Tue. St. Irenaeus: Amos 3:1–8; 4:11–12 / Matthew 8:23–27

Wed. Sts. Peter and Paul: Acts 12:1–11 / 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 17–18 / Matthew 16:13–19

Thu. Weekday: Amos 7:10–17 / Matthew 9:1–8

Fri. Weekday: Amos 8:4–6, 9–12 / Matthew 9:9–13

Sat. Weekday: Amos 9:11–15 / Matthew 9:14–17

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