



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time August 21, 2016

## Resist Superiority

By Janel Esker

**I**pride myself on being prompt. It shows consideration for those waiting on you. So I am not particularly sympathetic toward the people in today’s Gospel—those who didn’t get to the master’s house before he locked the door. “Should’ve checked your watch / stopped dawdling / planned ahead”; those phrases run cynically through my mind.

But that’s exactly Jesus’ point: Once we’re certain of our moral superiority and others’ failures, we get in trouble. Jesus’ story reveals that people who

assumed they’d be welcomed by the master simply by association, heritage, or neighborhood are surprised to be left outside even as foreigners are welcomed. God doesn’t abide by our rules, divisions, and judgments.

In fact, God delights in upending our ideas of who is right and who is wrong. Jesus states it clearly: “Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” We hear it repeatedly—“Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3)—yet we holler in political and religious arenas about who will be saved, who’s going to hell, and who God favors and despises.

Jesus is clear: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate...” It’s an interesting word choice: To fit through a narrow door, you need only be lean or thin, not necessarily strong. Perhaps he meant strong enough to resist condemning others, strong enough to focus on stripping ourselves of sinful behaviors that keep us from intimacy with God. †

*“God delights in upending our ideas of who is right and who is wrong.”*

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 66:18–21

“I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; they shall come and see my glory.”

### Hebrews 12:5–7, 11–13

“Do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.”

### Luke 13:22–30

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.”

## A Word From Pope Francis

**The way which would** lead [Jesus] to the glory of the Father passed through the Cross, through obedience to the divine design of love for mankind... We too should be clear in our Christian life that entering the glory of God demands daily fidelity to his will, even when it demands sacrifice and sometimes requires us to change our plans. The Ascension of Jesus actually happened on the Mount of Olives, ... where he had withdrawn to pray before the Passion in order to remain in deep union with the Father: ...Prayer gives us the grace to be faithful to God’s plan.

—General audience, April 17, 2013



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Who do I exclude or blindly judge?
- What challenges do I face in fully living out my faith?

# Follow Him... and Reclaim the World

By Fr. Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

“Christianity,” it has been said, “has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.” These words of G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) highlight one of the current enigmas of the Christian story. What passes for Christianity today is often a watered-down version of what it really means to follow Jesus. We have forgotten the rigors that following Christ entails. Rather than a radical change in our outlook on life and the way we live it, Christianity becomes a nominal membership to which we give our lukewarm allegiance.

Understanding Christ’s outlook and adapting it to our world today is difficult but not impossible. Our Christian story is based on the conviction that Jesus was crucified, rose from the dead, and returned to his Father’s right hand in a glorified state. The Jesus of history is one with the Christ of faith, and those who experienced him both historically and in his glorified state have left in sacred Scripture an authentic testimony. What is more, this story asserts that we not only possess a fairly reliable record of Jesus’ words and actions but also can live in his friendship and experience through his spirit an intimate communion of mind and heart. The Apostle Paul makes the



astounding claim to have the mind of Christ himself (1 Corinthians 2:16) and that this same Christ was alive and living within him (Galatians 2:20). We might say Jesus wishes to take possession of our hearts by renewing our minds and clothing us with a new self (Ephesians 4:24). For this to happen—to follow Jesus—we must embrace the cross and the empty tomb by living for others in love and expectant hope.

The Christian story is based on the notion that our world has somehow gone awry and that God has decided to fix it from the inside out. We believe that, in order to redeem our fallen world, God entered it by becoming flesh in the person of Jesus, who gave himself completely to the point of death so that he could become our food, nourishment, and source of hope. More importantly, by entering our world and setting it aright, God elevated it to greater heights

than ever. He decided not merely to restore humanity to its former glory but to divinize us and bestow on us the possibility of becoming his adopted sons and daughters.

Jesus’ story is also our story, and like him, we’re called to enter the world of those around us and give ourselves to them completely. The adventure of Christian discipleship is all about Jesus walking with us on our journey through life. It is about our lives being inextricably bound up with his. It is a constant reminder that the crosses we carry pale in comparison with the joy and hope that has been revealed to us as a result of the empty tomb. It empowers us to engage the world in constructive ways because we, like Jesus, are in it but not of it. It affirms the power of hope over despair, of love over hatred, of life over death. It believes there is nothing to be afraid of because the Lord has overcome the powers of darkness, and his kingdom of light is near at hand. †

## PRAYER

Lord, you came to offer the gift of salvation to all people. Help me embrace all people with a loving and compassionate heart.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 22–27

Mon. Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary:  
2 Thessalonians 1:1–5, 11–12 /  
Matthew 23:13–22

Tue. Weekday: 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3a, 14–17 /  
Matthew 23:23–26

Wed. St. Bartholomew: Revelation 21:9b–14 /  
John 1:45–51

Thu. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 1:1–9 /  
Matthew 24:42–51

Fri. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 1:17–25 /  
Matthew 25:1–13

Sat. St. Monica: 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 /  
Matthew 25:14–30

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