



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
August 22, 2021

Our Legacy of Faith

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

We all want to leave a legacy, to be remembered when we're gone. A legacy comes from faithfully and lovingly living your convictions. Joshua challenges the Israelites, making a definitive statement as their leader and head of his family: "We will serve the LORD." Notice that it isn't a question of *if* you will serve someone, but *who* you will serve.

The easiest way to find out who you are serving is to look where your heart, thoughts, and worries are. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be" (Matthew 6:21).

Sunday Readings

Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

[Joshua said,] "Choose today whom you will serve....As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Ephesians 5:21-32 or 5:2a, 25-32

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her.

John 6:60-69

Simon Peter answered..."You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Peter also had this hard choice placed to him, and he spoke up as the first pope, the head of a family of believers. When Jesus revealed the doctrine of the Eucharist, that it was truly his body and blood, many left him over this difficult saying.

Jesus asks the apostles if they want to leave, too. He could have said this was just a symbol—that those who left had misunderstood. But he doesn't change his teaching. He merely asks the apostles if they accept and believe him.

Peter's answer, like Joshua's, is a fundamental option. He finds in Jesus' words eternal life. There is nowhere else to go when you have tasted the goodness and truth of Jesus. As hard as some of those truths may be, for Peter there is no turning away. Following Jesus faithfully will lead him to lay down his life for Jesus, crucified upside down, and buried on Vatican Hill where you can visit his tomb today. How's that for a legacy? +

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A Word from Pope Francis

When someone is sick, we at times think: "Let's call for the priest to come"; "No, then he will bring bad luck. Let's not call him."...The idea is floating about that the undertakers arrive after the priest, and this is not true....It is Jesus himself who comes to relieve the sick person...and also to forgive his sins.

—General audience, February 26, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What are my convictions, and what ideal do I love and live for?
- Will that ideal last in time and into eternity? There is still time to adjust.

What if We Used God's Gifts?

By Kathleen M. Basi

The summer after I graduated high school, I toured Europe with a music ensemble. One afternoon in the Italian countryside, we passed a tenement in the ditch beside the highway. It flashed by so quickly, I didn't have time to form a clear picture; I only have an impression of shelters constructed from cardboard boxes with sheets draped over them.

That image has haunted me ever since. Seeing such things in pictures doesn't quite pack the same emotional punch as being there in real life. I couldn't believe anybody actually lived like that, especially in the First World.

Many things in the world defy comprehension, particularly for those of us comfortably ensconced in temperature-controlled homes with two- (or three-) car garages and multiple televisions. Terror attacks, genocide, poverty, and war brutal enough to cause millions to flee their homelands are unfathomable. So is the crucifixion, actually.

That image of a body stretched upon intersecting beams is unfathomable for the opposite reason. Its familiarity lessens its impact. To me, the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help offers a different way to approach this pivotal event in salvation history. It depicts the Christ Child shrinking away from the cross, the nails, the lance, and the gall and vinegar. Meanwhile, his Mother is



staring right at us while gesturing to her Son. I can just see in her eyes what she's thinking: "Look what he's done for you!"

Meditating on this image, I realize I may never be able to fully comprehend just what Jesus went through in order to win our salvation, any more than I can comprehend the desperation that leads parents to put their children in a raft in the middle of winter and cross the sea.

Yet comprehending isn't what matters most. The world is full of suffering, full of problems whose magnitude we will never understand, let alone figure out how to fix. And yet each of us is uniquely gifted, with a purpose in God's plan. Each of us

can toss a pebble and make a tiny ripple in that vast surface. One little throw might not make a difference, but if every Christian did the same, who knows what God might accomplish through us?

In the end, when I look at the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, that is what comes to mind. "Look what he's done for you," she seems to be saying. "Now, what are you going to do?" +

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help gives people a powerful way to look at the crucifixion.

**PRAYER**

*Lord, you have the words
of eternal life.*

*Help me believe and trust
in the power of your Word.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 23–28

Monday, Weekday:
1 Thes 1:1–5, 8b–10 / Mt 23:13–22

Tuesday, St. Bartholomew:
Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

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

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

Friday, St. Monica:
1 Thes 4:1–8 / Mt 25:1–13

Saturday, St. Augustine:
1 Thes 4:9–11 / Mt 25:14–30

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