



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

September 7, 2025

## No Longer a Slave

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

**P**aul urged Philemon to treat a runaway slave, Onesimus, as a brother in Christ, not as a slave. He didn't ask Philemon to free the man. Nor did he encourage him to work for the eradication of slavery. Why not? The letter doesn't tell us. Yet, if we look deeply at this issue, we might discover that Paul was asking for something much more profound than a change in law.

The United States outlawed slavery more than 150 years ago. But that change did nothing to erase the political, economic, and social biases of many citizens. Some people still consider

African Americans and other people of color as inferior, untrustworthy, and dangerous. Laws cannot change thinking or prejudices.

Had Philemon simply freed Onesimus, would the slave's situation have been improved? In the ancient world, slaves were often branded, thus alerting everyone to their servile position in society. Might this have prevented him from living a full life as a free man? Even if the law had changed, would ancient Rome have provided for former slaves any better than contemporary America has?

Paul pressed Philemon to go deeper into his heart, to change his perception of Onesimus' status in his household. Paul is probably not talking about a blood bond, but the bond that joins Christians to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. If we really treat each other in this way, discriminatory customs will crumble, and there will no longer be any kind of slavery. †

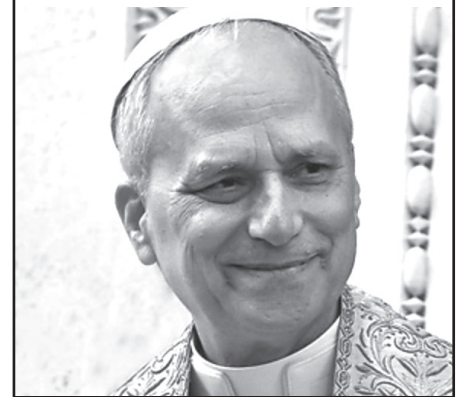


***Paul was asking for something more profound than a change in the law.***

## A Word from Pope Leo XIV

In Gaza...children, families, and elderly are reduced to starvation. In Myanmar, new hostilities have cut short innocent young lives. Finally, war-torn Ukraine awaits negotiations for a just and lasting peace.... We implore [Our Lady's] intercession for the gift of peace, for support and comfort for those who suffer.

REGINA CAELI, ROME, MAY 18, 2025



## Sunday Readings

### Wisdom 9:13–18b

Scarcely can we guess the things on earth, and only with difficulty grasp what is at hand; but things in heaven, who can search them out?

### Philemon 9–10, 12–17

So if you regard me [St. Paul] as a partner, welcome [Onesimus] as you would me.

### Luke 14:25–33

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Is there any group of people I struggle to welcome as brothers and sisters in Christ?
- How can I pray for them?



# A Time of Surrender

Bonnie LeMelle Abadie

**S**ultry summer days surrender to autumn breezes. Lovely, leisurely days surrender to the frantic organization of schedules normally determined by classes, sports, and parish activities. The ordinariness of daily living surrenders to the unexpected: illness, natural disasters, or human-induced tragedies, such as 9/11. Though things happen all the time that call us to stop and notice what is going on, “surrender” is the word I most associate with the month of September. I think that’s because this month signals noticeable and sometimes drastic change.

We humans aren’t typically fans of change. We like things to be predictable and comfortable. Entering the unknown can trigger fear. It is much like paddling a boat through deep, dark waters on a moonless night. What will happen to me? Will I capsize and drown? Will all I’ve worked for be lost? But there are ways to navigate these waters in order to emerge as better versions of ourselves.

Surrendering to God is not easy. My stubborn independent streak can serve positive purposes, but it also can block me from asking for help from others when I need it the most and keep me from relying on God in times of difficulty. If that’s anything like you, I encourage you to consider these questions with me:

- Are we people of faith?
- Do we believe in a loving, redeeming, sanctifying God?
- Do we trust that God loves us unconditionally?
- Do we embrace the fact that Jesus died to save us and that the Holy Spirit guides us?

Fear robs us of our ability to trust and obscures the light shining forth from the heart of God. When we focus on faith, turn to God in prayer, and walk in trust, we surrender our lives to God. Then, we allow God’s grace to become like the waves of the ocean washing upon the sandy shores of our lives. We surrender to God’s presence, pace, and patterns. †

From *Liguorian*, September 2020.

## Wisdom from Catholic Update

From “Catholic Schools” by Elizabeth Bookser Barkley

As a teacher of college students over the past decades, I know that many young people have little grasp of the history of the Catholic Church or of the historical origin of many Church practices. But many tell me that they hope to have children and raise them in the Catholic faith. Knowing our collective history is important if we are to understand the Church today. You can’t open a...history book without [seeing] the Catholic Church inserting itself into almost every century: the origins of the papacy, the role of monasteries in preserving culture, art in Catholic spaces, the philosophical impact of the likes of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, or the influence of papal encyclicals on historical and modern thought. Some of Church history is nothing to boast of, but...there is much we can be proud of and can celebrate.

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Good and gracious God,  
encourage us in our work,  
calm us in our rest, and  
inspire us in our prayer.  
We pray in Jesus’ name.  
Amen.

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 8–13

**Monday**, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary:  
Mt 5:1–4a or Rom 8:28–30 / Mt 1:1–16, 18–23  
or 1:18–23


**Tuesday**, St. Peter Claver: Col 2:6–15 / Lk 6:12–19

**Wednesday**, Weekday: Col 3:1–11 / Lk 6:20–26

**Thursday**, Weekday:  
Col 3:12–17 / Lk 6:27–38

**Friday**, Weekday:  
1 Tm 1:1–2, 12–14 / Lk 6:39–42

**Saturday**, St. John Chrysostom:  
1 Tm 1:15–17 / Lk 6:43–49

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