



# Bringing Home the Word



25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME September 21, 2014

## My Thoughts Are Not Your Thoughts...

By Janel Esker

Many of us have watched toddlers try on their parents' shoes and try to walk around the house with "big feet." The first few steps are usually adorable, but inevitably the brave adventurer takes a tumble. I've even seen adults try this trick: On a recent walk to protest domestic violence, men wore high heels while walking a mile. It was entertaining to watch the guys try to stay upright—most tended to lose their balance just like those toddlers.

I feel similarly off-balance when I read

### Sunday Readings

#### Isaiah 55:6-9

Seek the Lord, for his forgiveness is abundant, and his ways are far above the ways of the earth and man.

#### Philippians 1:20-24, 27

Paul explains he is conflicted between preferring life or death. In life, he may serve God and others well, yet in death, he may end his labors and be with the Lord. In either case, Christ is glorified.

#### Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus' parable is of a landowner who hires workers several times during the day. When all are paid equally, the early workers complain. The owner asserts his right to be generous, and Jesus says, "the last will be first, and the first will be last."

today's Gospel passage. The landowner's actions are upsetting to my sense of fairness, balance, and how things ought to be. Shouldn't workers who labor all day get more pay than those who work only an hour? That seems fair, doesn't it? But, as the Lord reminds us in today's first reading from Isaiah, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways..."

When the landowner, who represents God, pays all the workers the same wage, we see unfairness, but God sees mercy showered abundantly on everyone. We can never completely know the mind and heart of God—our human minds can't think that broadly or that generously—but, in Christ, we can *begin* to share in God's mind and heart. What is most comforting about this story is remembering that we're not always the early risers hired first. Often we're the ones hired at noon, or 3 PM, or even just before the day's end. Sometimes we're the late sleepers or the unwanted workers; sometimes we're in great need of God's undeserved mercy—and God showers it upon us abundantly. †



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How does your faith shape your understanding of equality, fairness, ownership, and stewardship?
- How do other examples of mercy or generosity "magnify" the Lord?

## PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for the gift of your compassion. Help me to be more generous in sharing your compassion with others.

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

# The Holy Spirit at Work

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Why do I procrastinate? This phenomenon isn't limited to distasteful projects; I even put off the tasks I enjoy. It's not so much the work that's daunting; it's the starting. When I was introduced to Isaac Newton's first law of motion, I had an "aha" moment. This rule, also known as inertia, states that a body at rest or moving at a constant speed in a straight line will remain at rest or continue in a straight line at that constant speed until acted upon by an "unbalanced force." *Aha!* I thought. *That's* why it's so hard to get going or to change. We're like Newton's inanimate objects, tending to continue as we are—purposeful and productive or on the couch watching reruns.

When a malaise settles over us and it's hard to get going again, we need an unbalanced force—any force strong enough to get us moving in a new direction...or moving at all. This could be a crisis such as a job loss or serious medical diagnosis, or a positive life change such as retirement or the birth of a child. Sometimes a New Year's resolution or "bucket list" will do the trick.

The ultimate unbalanced force, the force that can knock us off our pins and set us right again, is the Holy Spirit. God didn't create us to be slaves to safe routines and mindless amusements. He made us for freedom and instilled in us a longing for meaning. We're here to reveal—indeed to *be*—a face of God



otherwise never known to this world. God sends the Holy Spirit to work in us, to help each of us become our true self.

So, what's on *your* to-do list? †

## Morality Matters: Aligning Our Priorities With God's

By Fr. Stephen Rehrauer, CSsR

We seek the good, but not all goods are equal. Some are more important than others. People are more important and have greater value, and thus are "higher" goods, than furniture. A starving human being's life is of greater value than private property. Learning to correctly distinguish between goods of higher and lower value is one part of forming our conscience.

Classical moral theory distinguishes between "true" or "authentic" goods and those that are merely "instrumental." True goods are those that have value in and of themselves. They are worth seeking and realizing for their own sake: a dignified human life, love, fidelity to our relationships, truth, beauty, integrity, justice, friendship, and knowledge of God. Instrumental goods have only relative value. They are useful only as a means for pursuing and attaining true, authentic goods.

Money is an instrumental and relative good. Its moral value lies in what we do with it. It can be sought and attained through good or evil means, and it can be used as a means for good or evil. Power is also an instrumental good. The president of the United States, the pope, and parents all have power and authority over others. But authority can serve the authentic and "higher" common good of those who are subjected to it or wrongfully encroach upon their freedom and dignity. When power is treated as an authentic good, it can breed corruption and despotism, disfiguring the moral life of the one who has power and harming those subjected to its use.

It is easy to confuse instrumental goods for authentic ones and vice versa. The Christian moral life is a matter of having our priorities correctly ordered. This presupposes a metaphysical order of morality, a hierarchy of goods that exists in the mind and will of God. Correct knowledge of this order requires contact with God and is aided by a spirituality that enables our personal priorities to become those of God. †

## WEEKDAY READINGS September 22–27

Mon. Proverbs 3:27–34 / Luke 8:16–18  
Tue. *St. Pius of Pietrelcina:*  
Proverbs 21:1–6, 10–13 / Luke 8:19–21  
Wed. Proverbs 30:5–9 / Luke 9:1–6

Thu. Ecclesiastes 1:2–11 / Luke 9:7–9  
Fri. *Sts. Cosmas and Damian:*  
Ecclesiastes 3:1–11 / Luke 9:18–22  
Sat. *St. Vincent de Paul:*  
Ecclesiastes 11:9–12:8 / Luke 9:43–45

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