



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 1, 2017

## Consensus With Christ

By Mary Katherine Deeley

**M**any committees and work teams believe the ideal way to make a decision is by consensus. Though time-consuming, consensus assures that everyone is heard and that all have been given a chance to come to the same point of view. Everyone owns the decision and works to support it.

Saint Paul gives a Christian spin to the whole idea of consensus—not for making decisions but for living as Christ would have us live. The apostle wants us to have the same attitude Jesus had.

For Christians, “the same attitude” means we share the same Spirit, have compassion and sympathy for one another, set aside our own interests, and look to the interests of others.

“Wait,” you say. “Does that mean I can never say what I want?” No, but it does mean trusting others to care for your interests just as you care for theirs.

This is not easy for us, but Paul is adamant: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus.” There’s the difference. In the corporate world, consensus is about coming to the same conclusion. In the Christian life, consensus means putting on the one mind of Christ.

If we can do that, we can empty ourselves for the sake of others, take the risk to love and care for others, and live in the utter confidence that Christ dwells in us.

Where does such confidence come from? From Christ himself, who loved us from the very beginning and who invited us through baptism to be one with him.

That’s an idea we can all support. †

*Christians share the  
same Spirit...and look to  
the interests of others.*

## Sunday Readings

### Ezekiel 18:25–28

But if the wicked turn from the wickedness they did and do what is right and just, they save their lives.

### Philippians 2:1–11 or 2:1–5

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus.

### Matthew 21:28–32

[Jesus said,] “When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him.”

## A Word From Pope Francis

Priestly joy is a joy which is sister to obedience....It is likewise an obedience to the Church in service....The availability of her priests makes the Church a house with open doors, a refuge for sinners, a home for people living on the streets, a place of loving care for the sick, a camp for the young....Wherever God’s people have desires or needs, there is the priest, who knows how to listen and feels a loving mandate from Christ who sends him to relieve that need with mercy.

—Homily,  
Holy Thursday,  
April 17, 2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Am I fair to God by giving him thanksgiving, adoration, and obedience for his love?
- Am I fair to others by offering them gratitude and humble kindness?



# Christ Jesus Is Always Our Starting Point

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

**B**eing Catholic starts with Jesus Christ. In fact, everything begins with Christ. He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13). He is “the firstborn of all creation” (Colossians 1:15).

Of course, I wasn’t around before the creation, but from my perspective I can imagine things happening something like this: God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—was sitting at breakfast when God the Father said, “Being God is wonderful, but eternity can sure get boring.” “So let’s do something different,” the Son replied. “Let’s create something out of nothing!” The Father asked, “Can we do that?” “Sure,” said the Spirit, “we’re God, aren’t we?” The Father said, “OK, what shall we make?”

And (this is the crucial point) what did God make? Jesus Christ—the firstborn of creation, the Word through

whom God made everything else that exists.

If you are not accustomed to thinking of Jesus in this way, an analogy may help. Years ago when I was teaching at a seminary, one popular hobby among the students was making model airplanes. On winter evenings the hobby shop would be crowded with boys gluing together various shapes of balsa wood pinned to diagrams on a table.

When asked, “What are you making?” the seminarians never said, “I am gluing piece A7 to H5.” One might respond, “I am making a P-51 Mustang.” From the beginning, their minds were on the finished project. Similarly, if you asked God at the creation, “What are you making?” he would have responded: “We’re making Jesus Christ.”

### God’s Masterpiece

Jesus is God’s masterpiece. God created Christ out of love, and Christ returned perfect love to God. We can see this in

everything Jesus said and did while he walked on earth. We see this most clearly in Jesus humbling himself, “becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). And on the cross “he handed over the spirit” (John 19:30) to the Church so that we who are baptized put on Christ and become his body.

At Mass we ask God to “grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ.” Our incorporation into Christ is the principal petition at every Eucharist. We pray that we, to paraphrase St. Augustine, be what we see on the altar and receive what we are—Christ’s body. Through Christ, in him, with him, our lives have meaning. We live for more than ourselves. We are taken up into that great, mysterious plan of God that is Jesus Christ. †

## GOD’S COWORKERS

And what is our role in God’s plan? Our mission is reconciliation. While God has reconciled all things in Christ, “making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20), with our incorporation into Christ, God has “given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). We are to improve the quality of life for all, to alleviate hunger and disease, injustice and conflict.

And while this task may seem impossible, we Catholics know that it is possible. In fact, we know that it will be achieved because it is God’s plan. This is what gives us our inherent Catholic optimism. We are optimistic because we know that grace is more original than sin. God’s great plan of love did not start with Adam and Eve, the fruit, or the snake, but with Jesus. Everything starts with Jesus. † –Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

## WEEKDAY READINGS

October 2–7

Mon. The Holy Guardian Angels:  
Zec 8:1–8 / Mt 18:1–5, 10


Tue. Weekday:  
Zec 8:20–23 / Lk 9:51–56

Wed. St. Francis of Assisi:  
Neh 2:1–8 / Lk 9:57–62

Thu. Weekday:  
Neh 8:1–4a, 5–6, 7b–12 / Lk 10:1–12

Fri. Weekday:  
Bar 1:15–22 / Lk 10:13–16

Sat. Our Lady of the Rosary:  
Bar 4:5–12, 27–29 / Lk 10:17–24



Lord, I am grateful for your example of humble service toward others. Help me to be a humble and loving person toward all people.

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



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 8, 2017

## Powerful Positive Thinking

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**I**n a scene from the musical *The Music Man*, the central character, Harold Hill, tells his band that if they want to play the Minuet in G, all they have to do is think the Minuet in G. He’s a swindler, and when the mayor tries to prove it by having “the professor” conduct his band, he looks at them pleadingly and begs them to think.

To the surprise of everyone, including Harold, the band slowly (and even painfully) plays something that sounds a little like the Minuet in G and a little like many grade-school concerts, making parents proud and keeping Harold out of jail. Soon the show ends with the band

playing a rousing rendition of “Seventy-Six Trombones.”

Paul has his own version of the “think system” in today’s passage from Philippians. For Paul, every minute spent thinking about that which is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise is another minute that brings us closer to the living God whose presence is evident in all these things.

It’s not such a bad idea. God manifests the divine self in truth and beauty and in all the things Paul names. To reflect on these is to become more aware of his presence to us through them.

Centuries later, the Christian founders of the university where I work adopted Paul’s “think system” as their motto, reasoning that our thoughts should not be directed only toward facts to grow the mind but also toward the things that would transform our characters.

Like Harold Hill’s band, we might sound a little or a lot out of tune at first, but with practice, we will get better and march in our own big parade. †

**“Think, men, think!”**

—Harold Hill,  
*The Music Man*

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 5:1–7

The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel.

### Philippians 4:6–9

By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

### Matthew 21:33–43

[Jesus said,] “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

## A Word From Pope Francis

The prayer of praise is a Christian prayer, for all of us. In the Mass, every day, when we sing the “Holy, Holy, Holy,” this is a prayer of praise: we praise God for his greatness because he is great. And we address him with beautiful words because it pleases us to do this. The prayer of praise bears fruit in us. Sarah danced as she celebrated her fertility—at the age of ninety! This fruitfulness gives praise to God. Men and women who praise the Lord... bear fruit.

—Address to the  
Catholic Fraternity  
of Charismatic  
Covenant  
Communities and  
Fellowships,  
October 31, 2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How does our Lord want to see fruit and growth in your life?
- Have I squandered God’s harvest in my life?



# A Difficult—and Important—Eleventh Commandment

By Kathy Coffey

*“Thou shalt be joyful.”*

**G**roans might greet this hypothetical eleventh commandment. Where are we supposed to cram joy on an overloaded to-do list? Does it go before or after the litany of chores, bills, and family obligations? All we want is to make it through the crunch of the workweek, then collapse in exhaustion.

Sad, but true. This stressed state of affairs points clearly toward the need for a joyous eleventh commandment. The rationale is this: If we were made for eternal joy, we should start now. We are more than cogs in a machine, toting up hours that feed corporate profits but fail to satisfy our souls. God made us for the everlasting bliss of gazing into his eyes. So if drudgery consumes our time, we should fill our free hours with deep nurture rather than televised fluff.

The acid test is always: How shall we be remembered? Imagine grandchildren saying, “She trudged dutifully, year after year, to all her commitments, but we didn’t see her much.” Or imagine their voices lightening as they recall, “She was so much fun! When we cooked her special chili we laughed and told stories.” “I’ll always remember his pride in his garden, how he’d grin at the first tomatoes, or how he happily took me canoeing.”

These positive attitudes aren’t Pollyanna-esque. They are choices as

difficult to honor as any of the Ten Commandments. Let’s face it, daily news is often depressing. A sample of headlines: “Thirty Killed in Iraq.” “Terrorists Attack London Bridge.” “Bullied Child Kills Self.” The daily media hardly sends us rushing for the tambourines. That’s why we need God’s strength to remain faithful, confident, and hopeful.

### Joy in the Real World

From prison comes an example of one who honored the difficult eleventh commandment. There, Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote, “Yes, we are in chains, deprived of liberty, but in our sorrow we are restored to joy, without which we cannot live....We underground men, we will dig in the entrails of the earth a tragic hymn to the God of joy!”

If convicts can sing praise from the “entrails of the earth,” what about us? We are rich in faith, blessings, comforts, and wealth. Yet our distracted days and frowning faces give little praise to the “God of joy.”

### Pursuit of Joy

Before we all start a serious pursuit of joy, a few qualifications: It cannot be sought. It’s a gift. It springs from the conviction that the Kingdom of God is near. It’s like Lazarus emerging from the tomb, squinting in the sunlight—and laughing. Joy is the appropriate response when we know we are saved, rescued despite

failures, happy not in our achievements but in God’s fidelity.

The image of a child snoozing in a parent’s lap may be a cliché, but it resembles our contentment in God’s presence, where we are at all times. Joy spills from the security of knowing every need will be met—not necessarily the way we foresaw, but in God’s time and pleasure. Dancing conveys the same joy: arms wide, feet in rhythm, worries set aside.

Contrast that with our postures when burdened by negativity. We must carry ourselves with joy. The living Jesus won’t be found in boredom and inertia but in what brings beauty and restores grace. And because he is risen, so are we. Despite suffering, we were made for joy. Maybe that commandment isn’t carved on a stone tablet, but we can write it on our hearts. †



Lord, I am grateful  
for your vineyard of love.  
Remove my shortcomings  
that I may cultivate  
your gifts of  
compassion and peace.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

October 9–14

Mon. Weekday:  
Jon 1:1—2:2, 11 / Lk 10:25–37  
Tue. Weekday:  
Jon 3:1–10 / Lk 10:38–42  
Wed. Weekday:  
Jon 4:1–11 / Lk 11:1–4

Thu. Weekday:  
Mal 3:13–20b / Lk 11:5–13  
Fri. Weekday:  
Jl 1:13–15; 2:1–2 / Lk 11:15–26  
Sat. Weekday:  
Jl 4:12–21 / Lk 11:27–28



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 15, 2017

## Joining God's Feast

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**W**hen I was growing up, Thanksgiving and Christmas were always great feasts in our house. Turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and corn were on the menu in November. The December food lineup substituted roast beef for turkey, and my father would pour a little sip of sparkling wine for each of us kids—a once-a-year treat.

My mother always made a little extra, “because,” she said, “you never know when a guest might come by.” Sure enough, in one year or another, one of us would invite someone or a neighbor would stop in. There was always plenty, and we would feast and tell stories into the night.

Those memories and the ones I make

with my own family now are as close as I can come to the banquet Isaiah and Jesus describe, and I’m sure they’re no match for that great feast in heaven.

But I think I know why Isaiah and Jesus use the metaphor. There is something sensual and earthy about gathering around a table with family and friends. It begins with the smells wafting through the house, the noise in the kitchen, the setting of the table with more than the everyday plates. We dress a little more carefully.

We are preparing for our family banquet. No matter what food is on the table, we’ll be fed with love that draws us in and accepts us simply because we are family.

Love is the gift we bring to the table, and love is the gift we receive in the act of breaking bread with one another. Our love feast needs our care and attention.

And God’s feast deserves no less. †

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 25:6–10a

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples.

### Philippians 4:12–14, 19–20

I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.

### Matthew 22:1–14

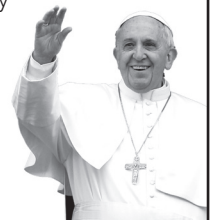
Many are invited, but few are chosen.

*No matter what food is on the table, we’ll be fed with love that draws us in and accepts us simply because we are family.*

## A Word From Pope Francis

Man takes control of everything. He believes he is God, he believes he is king. And wars...they do not exactly help to sow the seed of life but to destroy. It is an industry of destruction. It is also a system, also of life, that when things cannot be fixed they are discarded: we discard children, we discard the old, we discard unemployed youth. This devastation has created the culture of waste....May the Lord help us and give us the grace of...hope, [and] also the grace of courage to emerge from all this destruction.

— Homily, Solemnity of All Saints, November 1, 2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What attitudes do I regularly bring with me to Mass?
- Is Mass about my pleasure or God’s glory?





# God Invites Us to His Table Because He Loves Us

By Richard Rohr, OFM

**G**od does not love us because we deserve it but because we need it. Does that sound startling? It shouldn't. If there is one prime idea in the Bible, it is God's undeserved love for what he has created. There is no accounting for God's love. It is not earned. There is nothing we can do to attain it or lose it. All we can do is surrender to it, trust it, and let it flow through us.

The significant difference in this world is not between those who are worthy of God's love and those who are not. (In truth, we are all unworthy to various degrees.) The significant difference is between those who know and enjoy God's love and those who do not. God does not love us because we are good. We are good because God loves us. That is a major transformation of consciousness! It moves us from life as an obstacle course to life as a banquet to be eaten and shared.

We may be uncomfortable with this truth, especially if we think in terms of a merit system where we can change God's feelings about us by doing good or evil. We cannot absorb this good news through conventional thinking, but rather the gospel must eliminate our attitudes of merit, reward, and punishment.

Before conversion, we often view God as a parent who controls, punishes, and rewards according to legitimate criteria. But God's love doesn't work that way. We

can never keep our side of the bargain, measure up, or be good enough. But that does not keep God from loving us.

### Covenant of Love

This is what makes the Bible extraordinary and different from other literature. It conveys the great and central theme of grace: God's unearned favor is his steadfast, unilateral covenant of love. The merit system has been destroyed once and for all!

Human love depends upon the merits of something or someone: Is a person worthy of my love? Is he or she attractive? It's because we find something good and beautiful that we are attracted to it. That's the only way we know how to love. God's love, however, is different because the object does not determine it. It is determined by the subject, by God's self. By loving us, God is being true to God's self—not working out some arithmetic about our degree of worthiness.

Perhaps nowhere in the Bible do we see God's covenant love manifested more than in the recurring theme of the free but resented banquet. For example, in today's Gospel the king sends his servants to call everyone to a wedding feast. (Note the symbolism of loving union.) But one

***God's unearned favor is his covenant of love. The merit system has been destroyed!***


by one, the invited guests make excuses. They are not interested.

The master becomes furious and sends out his servants again, this time into the main roads to invite "whomever you find," bad and good alike. The banquet hall is finally filled—not with the "worthy" but with the willing!

### God's Inclusiveness

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus invokes banquet symbolism on many occasions. Along with the little child, it seems to be his primary metaphor. He eats with sinners, invites outcasts to share a meal, does not wash his hands or the food, and allows a woman to dine at a symposium for men. He always expands the meaning of the table, even breaking social conventions to communicate the hospitality and inclusivity of God.

If we are grateful and confident in God's grace, we will spend our lives trying to give back to others what has been so graciously given to us and invite all of God's children to God's table.†



Lord, I am grateful you guide us along safe paths. Help me to remain close to you and walk with you all the days of my life.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

October 16–21

Mon. Weekday:  
Rom 1:1–7 / Lk 11:29–32

Tue. St. Ignatius of Antioch:  
Rom 1:16–25 / Lk 11:37–41

Wed. St. Luke:  
2 Tm 4:10–17b / Lk 10:1–9

Thu. Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues:  
Rom 3:21–30 / Lk 11:47–54

Fri. Weekday:  
Rom 4:1–8 / Lk 12:1–7

Sat. Weekday:  
Rom 4:13, 16–18 / Lk 12:8–12

Bringing Home  
the **Word**   
October 15, 2017

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# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 22, 2017

## Paying What We Owe God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**W**e are long removed from our nation's traditional tax season, but I always think about it when I read today's Gospel. It's nice to know that the debate about paying taxes was going on more than 2,000 years ago. Part of the issue for the Jews was that Caesar considered himself a god, and paying taxes seemed like worshiping a false god.

We don't pay taxes to a false god, but many of us would like more say over where our money goes and don't feel that our representatives always speak for us.

Jesus didn't get involved in the debate then, and he will not now. But his answer

gives us something to think about: *What do we owe God?*

God loved us into being, knew us in our mother's womb, and called each of us to a life with him. When we turned our backs, God redeemed us through the Incarnation and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has promised to be with us always and is, through the Holy Spirit, guiding us through the ages until the end of days.

If we could look at our heart and soul, we'd find only one image stamped there: God's. We owe him nothing less than ourselves. The world can take all we possess, but it cannot take away our identity as children of God. The world can have the fruits of our labor, but God alone has our being and fulfills our desires.

How do we pay what we owe God? By loving others, using our gifts and abilities for the glory of his name and, in every way, living in a manner worthy of the reign of God.

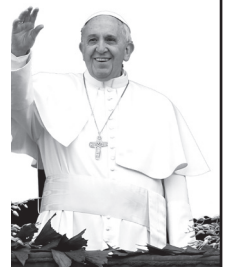
Let's start paying that now. †

*We owe God nothing less than ourselves.*

## A Word From Pope Francis

Profit and capital are not a good over and above the human person; they are at the service of the common good. When the common good is used only at the service of profit and capital, this has a name: it is called exclusion, and through it the throwaway culture gets stronger and stronger.

— Homily in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, at world labor meeting, February 17, 2016



## Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 45:1, 4–6**

I am the LORD, there is no other.

**1 Thessalonians 1:1–5b**

For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the holy Spirit.

**Matthew 22:15–21**

[Jesus said,] "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I realize my value doesn't come from others' opinions or even my opinion but from God's gift?
- Do I render to God what he deserves for all he has given me?



# Faith and Finances: Managing Debt Makes Sense

By Phil Lenahan

**T**here's a link between our faith and how we handle money. Examining this link begins with considering what really matters. Money touches many aspects of life—family, work, and our faith. Are your financial goals determined by our culture, with an emphasis on having? Or are they based on the principles of Scripture and the Catholic faith, which emphasize being?

I remember my dad sharing stories of the Great Depression. He spoke of families setting spending priorities—because if they didn't, there wouldn't be enough for basic needs. Now we're taught by our consumer culture to buy all we want, when we want, without concern for repayment. If we don't have money today...well, that's what credit cards and home-equity loans are for, right?

## The Financial Drug

Debt has become a financial drug, creating dependencies for millions of Americans. There is no doubt that the misuse of debt played a major role in recent economic crises. Some statistics:

- Seven of ten of households with credit cards don't pay the full balance every month.
- The average household carries a credit card balance of \$8,000.
- Almost eight of every ten undergraduates have credit cards, averaging \$2,200 in credit card debt.

Does Catholic teaching give insight

into debt? People are often surprised to find that Scripture and other Church writings have much to say about finances. "The borrower is the slave of the lender" (Proverbs 22:7).

## Productive and Unproductive Debt

It makes sense to borrow when debt is used prudently to purchase assets that increase in value. That's known as productive debt. For debt to be used productively, there must be guards to limit excessive borrowing. That is, borrowers must have a sufficient financial cushion to manage debt during economic downturns.

Some types of debts are unproductive. Unproductive debt is used to purchase depreciating assets, those that decline in value. The most common example is credit card purchases that aren't paid off each month. Americans would do well to eliminate their unproductive debt and develop a more cautious attitude even when using productive debt.

## Eliminating Unproductive Debt

Straightforward but difficult steps can be taken to eliminate unproductive debt rapidly.

Once you've committed to becoming free of debt, your first step is to prepare a financial plan. There's a saying that when you fail to plan, you're planning to fail. Jesus says, "Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding


himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him" (Luke 14:28–29).

Your financial plan should include a balance sheet, debt summary, an annual budget, and strategies for debt repayment and savings.

## Accelerating Repayment of Debt

Many with unproductive debt pay the minimum required balance. This strategy will keep you in debt forever. Instead, I recommend an aggressive approach that will eliminate unproductive debts in short order. This requires changing spending habits and perhaps temporarily taking a second job. But by increasing the amount of money allocated to debt repayment, you can be debt-free quickly.

Our financial priorities have ramifications for our families and faith. Becoming financially free is foremost a function of fulfilling our call as stewards of God's providence. We must grow to understand God's principles for managing money and apply them. †



Lord, I am grateful for the power of your love and grace. Teach me to trust that you care about my human needs and obligations.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

October 23–28

Mon. Weekday:  
Rom 4:20–25 / Lk 12:13–21

Tue. Weekday: Rom 5:12, 15b, 17–19,  
20b–21 / Lk 12:35–38

Wed. Weekday:  
Rom 6:12–18 / Lk 12:39–48

Thu. Weekday:  
Rom 6:19–23 / Lk 12:49–53

Fri. Weekday:  
Rom 7:18–25a / Lk 12:54–59

Sat. Sts. Simon and Jude:  
Eph 2:19–22 / Lk 6:12–16





# Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 29, 2017

## Loving God and Neighbor

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**Q**uickly, name the greatest law of the United States. I think all of us would have to think about that. Some might name a precept like: "All men are created equal." Others might talk about the Bill of Rights. But when it comes to the laws that embody these precepts, we might point to any number of them and disagree about which is the greatest.

Jesus has no such problem. When the Pharisees try to test him with a similar question about Jewish law, Jesus responds with the great commandment from Deuteronomy (6:4) and pairs it with a law found in Leviticus (19:18).

The Pharisees knew both laws, but the first had been emphasized throughout Israelite tradition. The Jews were commanded to teach it to their children and to bind the words to their foreheads and wrists. The second, though, was one of a series of laws, seemingly no more or less important than the ones that surrounded it.

When Jesus lifted up the two of them, he made it very clear that our first love is always for God, to whom we give our entire being. Jesus is equally clear, though, that we cannot stop there. We must also love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Indeed, our relationship with God and our relationship with one another are bound together. When one is broken, so is the other. When one flourishes, so does the other. Loving God and neighbor draws us together as Church to praise and worship God and to reach out to the world.

Let us obey both these commandments with equal joy. †

***Our relationship with God and our relationship with one another are bound together.***

## A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus did not say: "One of you go," but "All of you go": we are sent together. Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission....Jesus did not call the Apostles to live in isolation, he called them to form a group, a community.

—Homily at World Youth Day, July 28, 2013



## Sunday Readings

### Exodus 22:20-26

You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth.

### Matthew 22:34-40

[Jesus said,] "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What next thing is Jesus asking for as you strive toward giving him your all?
- There is joy that comes from giving our all. Do I experience that joy?



# Answering the Question Why We Believe in God

By Phyllis Zagano

**I**f a friend asked you why he or she should believe in God, how would you answer? Catholics have a common understanding of what it means to speak of God. But in our pluralistic society where different religions meet every day, just what people mean by God is unclear. Christians, Muslims, and Jews all believe in a single God but think about him differently.

When agnostics say they don't know about God, it is the God of these great Western religions they profess ignorance of. The same is true of atheists, who do not believe in one supreme being who created the world and sustains its existence.

For most, either you believe you are in charge—or not. If you believe you are not in charge but that the cosmos is ordered by a supreme intelligence and not by chaotic chance, then you likely believe in God.

Why is that? A French philosopher named Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) presented an interesting wager. He said we all either bet there is a God or that there is not. The possible results of Pascal's wager really argue for belief in God.

If we bet that there is a God and there is not, then we effectively lose nothing. However, if we bet that there is not a God and there is a God, then we lose everything. And if we bet that there is a God and there truly is a God, then we win everything. This is a coldly rational way of looking at God, but for many

it is a way to start thinking about his existence.

## Limits of Human Reason

Even so, we cannot really know much about God. That is because our intellects are limited and if God is God, then he is without limits. Our minds are unable to surround the enormity and complexity of God.

Before Pascal, many great thinkers such as St. Anselm (1033-1109), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and René Descartes (1596-1650) presented proofs for God's existence. Even today, philosophers argue the point. But arguments and counterarguments about the existence of God are limited by the confines of human reason. In the end, whether we are a brilliant philosopher or the simplest child, the Church teaches that everyone can know and love God.

How can that be? To begin with, Christianity teaches that God came into history as Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus was to teach us about the Father, who loved Jesus—and us—into being. The fact of that love is understood in the person of the Holy Spirit. This is how we understand God as the Trinity. In

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the Church's earliest years, Christians hammered out the definition of God that remains today and which forms the first words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary..."

## Unique Evidence

Even so, after millions of people have professed the Apostles' Creed, and after brilliant philosophers have "proved" God's existence, why should we believe?

The question is best understood in the negative. How can anyone see a sunrise or a baby and not believe in God? How can anyone watch a flower grow or see a wave upon the shore and not believe in God? How can anyone who has seen reflected in his or her own heart, the bright star in the east that continues to shine throughout eternity, not believe in God? †



Lord, I am grateful your commandments to love are simple and to the point. Keep my focus on loving you. Stretch my heart to love my neighbor, too.

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

## WEEKDAY READINGS

October 30–  
November 4

Mon. Weekday:  
Rom 8:12–17 / Lk 13:10–17


Tue. Weekday:  
Rom 8:18–25 / Lk 13:18–21

Wed. All Saints' Day: Rv 7:2–4, 9–14 /  
1 Jn 3:1–3 / Mt 5:1–12a

Thu. All Souls' Day: Wis 3:1–9 /  
Rom 5:5–11 or Rom 6:3–9 / Jn 6:37–40

Fri. Weekday:  
Rom 9:1–5 / Lk 14:1–6

Sat. St. Charles Borromeo:  
Rom 11:1–2a, 11–12, 25–29. / Lk 14:1, 7–11

Bringing Home  
the **Word**   
October 29, 2017

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