

Resources

Sunday, 1 October 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 21:28-32

1. It is possible to be a dutiful and observant Christian, and yet feel there is something missing. It makes such a difference when your heart is in what you are doing – so much better than just going through the motions. Where do you experience that most in your life?
2. The desire of Jesus for us is that we grow in that kind of committed, enthusiastic involvement in life. What encourages you to grow in this way?
3. The elders probably thought well of themselves in contrast to the tax collectors and sinners. Perhaps you know some unconventional people, ones who appear to ignore the 'right' way of doing things, and yet they have taught you something about true goodness.

John Byrne OSA

Email jbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS

St Paul says that we received the spirit of being children, and the spirit 'makes us cry out *Abba: Father*' (Rm 8:16). This is where our dignity lies and even in the depths of distress teaching that we are beloved of God ... It is hard to speak of the Spirit of love. Hans Urs Von Balthasar says: 'This Spirit is breath, not a full outline, and therefore he wishes to breathe through us, not to present himself to us as an object; he does not wish to be seen but to be the seeing eye of grace in us and he is little concerned about whether we pray to him, provided we pray with him, *Abba, Father*, provided we consent to his unutterable groaning in the depths of our soul.'

For Von Balthasar Christ is the proper object of our vision. The Holy Spirit remains hidden in revealing the love of God revealed in Jesus.

John O'Brien OFM, *Waiting for God: From Trauma to Healing*

learn that to be a good citizen and to serve God are not in contradiction with each other. There are times in life when we do not know what to do or what choice to make. Sometimes we are put under pressure by colleagues, classmates or companions. It can often be very difficult to remain true to our beliefs in the face of friends. How to do the right thing is often the question, because going against Facebook, Twitter or Instagram communities requires a lot of courage. This takes bravery! But by keeping a connection with Jesus through prayer and a sense of God's Spirit in our hearts, we will always have the help and support we need during difficult times or decisions.

Prayer of the Faithful

1. Loving Jesus, you hungered and thirsted for justice. Help us to walk in your light as we work to follow you.
2. God our Father, help us to always hear the cry of the downtrodden, the poor and those who feel lost.
3. Guiding Spirit, we pray for each other with a full heart and one voice. Let us be aware of the love we create as companions on the journey.



29 October, 2017 • Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40
Theme: Jesus' summation of morality as the twofold commandment of love

Sacred Space: Symbols of love in every possible format

Homily: Today's gospel tells us how Jesus interpreted the greatest commandment. Love on two counts is present in each of us. Love of God and love of neighbour – this is the commandment of Jesus. Sometimes the first love is one that we can embrace with the most ease. Sometimes it is the love of neighbor that causes greatest difficulty. However, Jesus specifically tells us that without this 'double' love, all we say we do for God is really done for ourselves. Nothing is above this law of love. Jesus said this, and lived by this commandment in his life. Many times Jesus showed us through his words and actions that the laws of religion cannot overtake the need for love. The message in today's gospel is all-embracing. It penetrates and is at the heart of our relationships. We are invited to see this for what it is. We are invited to see the 'neighbour' in the sister we argue with, the brother who irritates us, the aunt who forgets us ... Love is the foundation whereupon all our relationships are built. We are called to love those who are near (our family and community) and those who are far away (global citizens) in need of our love that can be given with a full heart in so many different ways.

Prayer of the Faithful

1. God of love, empower us with your divine invitation to have love at the centre of our being.
2. Jesus our loving Saviour, thank you for giving all so willingly and so graciously for our greater good.
3. Spirit of life, walk with us on this journey of life. Guide our acts of love and embrace our potential to love to Christ our Lord, Amen.



for your Newsletter

Sunday, 8 October 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 21:33-43

1. The target audience of this allegorical parable are the Jewish chief priests and elders portrayed here as rejecting Jesus and his teaching, and as a consequence losing out on what God was offering them. It is a story of opportunity for life presented and rejected, and they lose out in the process. How important have you found it to recognise and accept opportunities for growth, development and new life when these were presented to you?
2. The parable is also a cautionary tale about the destructive effects of greed – doing violence to the rights of others and eventually destroying the greedy themselves. What attitude towards possessions has helped you to be at peace in yourself and at peace with others?
3. The vineyard of the Lord is an image for God's people. As we look at the vineyard we have been given we can ask ourselves 'are we good tenants?' Recall times when you have been a good tenant, and reached out caringly for those around you.
4. 'It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it was wonderful to see'. Sometimes a person not highly regarded plays a key role in a project, and it is wonderful to see. Can you recall examples of this?

John Byrne OSA
Email jpbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS

When God wants to speak to our hearts he leads us to the wilderness. This was his pedagogy with the people of Israel. They had lessons to learn and he had much to teach them. They were schooled and seasoned in the desert. And the schooling was a good forty years!

The forty years in the desert for the Israelites was a fairly long novitiate. God was their Novice Master! He formed them well with lessons that would last a lifetime! They needed to know that he alone was their God and that they were his people. They had to know too that they needed him for they depended entirely on him as he screened them from the scorching sun during the day and sheltered them at night from the freezing cold.

The desert is the place between promise and fulfilment. God had delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt but they still had to cross the desert to reach the Promised Land. It was not an easy lesson that they had to learn. It took them some forty years!

We who are time bound and always in a hurry find it difficult to keep pace with God's eternal rhythm.

Mgr Alex Rebello,
Wandering in the Wilderness: Discovering the Divine in Everyday Things

Sunday, 15 October 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 22:1-14

There are two parables here that Matthew has joined together. Looking at the first one:

1. Scripture often speaks of the kingdom of God as a banquet. The image of people being at a meal where everyone is happy and welcome and where all hunger and thirst is satisfied gets across the idea that God loves, accepts and welcomes us and wants us to make that experience available to one another. Think of times in your life when you have had 'banquet' experiences and when you have felt accepted and loved?
2. The host enlists the help of his servants to invite people to the banquet. We are commissioned by the Lord to invite people to the banquet of the kingdom, to the fullness of life – as parents, teachers, friends, etc. What has it been like for you to play a part in leading others to a fuller life?
3. As in the parable last week there is a message about being alert to invitations that offer a fuller life and the danger of losing out if we neglect to respond to such invitations. Perhaps there have been opportunities offered to you that you missed, and now regret. Think also of the blessings you received because you seized the moment and took an opportunity that presented itself.
4. The second parable puts the focus on how we respond to invitations. Some invitations are ones that challenge us to change, to conversion, to put on a 'wedding garment'. What has been your experience of changing in response to an invitation you received?

John Byrne OSA
Email jpbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS

Priests will continue to minister to 'occasional Catholics,' or the 'semi-attached.' This is sometimes a source of frustration for priests. In part, this is because there does not seem to be any coherent strategy, not only at a national level but even within dioceses, for instance, with regard to admitting children who are from non-practising families to the sacraments of initiation and providing for sacramental marriage. In other countries people are quick to register formally 'in' or 'out' of the Church. In Ireland, we tend to be pragmatic rather than to take principled stances, and so it is likely that many people will drift in and out of the Church. The challenge here is to get the balance right between providing pastoral care sensitively, on the one hand, and inviting people into fuller communion and conversion, on the other.

Fr Eamonn Conway, 'Being a Priest in Contemporary Culture,'
in Priesthood Today: Ministry in a Changing Church

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Sunday, 22 October 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 22:15-21

1. The story sees a mixture of religion and politics, a potentially explosive combination. Jesus does not ask us to avoid politics, but that our involvement in the affairs of the world be informed by the perspective of the reign of God. How does the gospel give you a vision of how your involvement in society should be?
2. Pharisees and Herodians were not natural allies but a shared dislike of Jesus brought them together in an attempt to discredit him. Perhaps you experience the same opposition in society today when you profess to being a Catholic. Jesus did not get into an argument with them but simply professed his belief in the priority of God in his life. What have you found helpful in bearing witness to the fact that you are still a Catholic?
3. Jesus recognises that we can be faced with conflicting claims for attention. He does not tell us how to solve that dilemma, but challenges us to make sure that our allegiance to God takes priority. When have you been faced with a conflict of loyalties? What helped you to get your priorities right?

John Byrne OSA
Email jpbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS

In our work with groups we have noticed a certain tension between those who feel hopeful about the future and those who are not there and voice their lack of hope and even despair. With such groups, we have found it helpful to adopt what we call a family systems approach to hope. When trauma or illness strikes a family, hope and hopelessness are often 'divvied up' between family members. One parent may 'hold' the hope for the child making a recovery, while the other parent may 'hold' the hopelessness, fearing the worst. As the illness progresses members step in and out of hope and hopelessness. We find something similar happens in a traumatized organization. Some members will be optimistic about the future and others will hold the hopelessness. It is not a question of one group being more faithful than another ... Before we can recapture hope we sometimes need to be present to hopelessness and trauma. This truth is often overlooked.

Kevin Egan and Cora Lambert, 'Trauma in the Church.' *The Furrow*

Sunday, 29 October 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 22:34-40

1. You may feel some sympathy with the Jews struggling to cope with 613 laws and wondering which were the important ones. But have you ever felt overwhelmed by the rules and regulations of your own tradition? And have you ever been blessed by meeting someone, or reading something, that was able to cut through all the layers and point out to you what is essential in life? Who was that person? What did they say or do? Is there some phrase or text that encapsulates such wisdom for you?
2. If you were asked what is most important in life, what would your answer be? Recall the experiences and relationships you have had. Which are the ones that you treasure most? What has particularly enriched your life? How would you encourage another person who asked you how s/he could live a full life?

John Byrne OSA
Email jpbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS

Prayer of Pope Francis to Mary, Mother of Silence

Mother of silence, who watches over the mystery of God, Save us from the idolatry of the present time, to which those who forget are condemned.

Purify the eyes of Pastors with the eye-wash of memory: Take us back to the freshness of the origins, for a prayerful, penitent Church.

Mother of the beauty that blossoms from faithfulness to daily work,

Lift us from the torpor of laziness, pettiness, and defeatism. Clothe Pastors in the compassion that unifies, that makes whole;

Let us discover the joy of a humble, brotherly, serving Church.

Mother of tenderness who envelops us in patience and mercy, Help us burn away the sadness, impatience and rigidity of those who do not know what it means to belong.

Intercede with your Son to obtain that our hands, our feet, our hearts be agile: let us build the Church with the truth of love.

Mother, we shall be the People of God, pilgrims bound for the Kingdom.