

Resources for your News

Sunday, 2 July 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 10:37-42

1. Jesus never wanted suffering for anyone but he knew that if anyone was going to follow in his footsteps promoting love and respect for every person, they would meet with opposition. Fidelity has its price, but also rewards. Would you agree?
2. The passage is a call to both radical and practical discipleship. When have you found that in order to achieve a certain objective you had to make it a priority, and then take the practical steps necessary to reach your goal? What were the benefits to you when you did this?
3. 'Hate' is prophetic exaggeration for the uncompromising loyalty Jesus seeks in disciples. There may be times when people make demands in conflict with fidelity to another relationship. This can be painful. When have you found that being clear about your priorities helped you in that situation?

John Byrne OSA
Email jpb Byrneosa@gmail.com

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MUSINGS: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me

Welcome is at the heart of today's readings but in 2017 what is a host's obligation to his or her guests? What should the good host do?

Greet guests at the door. We don't have to offer bread and salt to symbolise protection, but a warm handshake, a friendly hug are symbols of welcoming that set the stage.

Facilitate conversation. Introduce guests who don't know each other and offer conversation starters: 'Mary didn't you just go to Tuscany? I think John and Joan are planning a trip next spring.'

Watch over guests and make sure they are enjoying themselves, but if they enjoy themselves too much, be prepared to step in and take them home. Safety trumps everything else.

Remain calm. Even in the face of a disaster – the grill ran out of gas before the steak was even turned – the good host is poised and adapts to the circumstances. Calmness – and sense of humour – radiates and affects everyone else.

Be flexible and gracious. The worst guest faux pas is to arrive with uninvited guests, but the gracious host rolls with the punch and sets an extra place.

Be appreciative. Makes sure to say good night to each guest and thank them for coming. Doing so sets the stage for the next get-together.

A thought for the Sunday celebrant?

Peter Post – The E-word

Sunday, 9 July 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 11:25-30

1. For Jesus the key to a personal knowledge of God and relationship with God is not primarily through academic study but through a mind and heart open to learn. Recall moments when you had a sense that your relationship with God took a significant step forward. What kind of dispositions prepared you for that growth?
2. Jesus was dealing with a society in which people were very conscious of status, dignity and external appearances. He wanted to break down the barriers this created so that all would be aware of their worth and dignity. Perhaps you can recall someone who was not highly thought of in human terms, but who was a light to you.
3. In v.27 Jesus lets us into the secret of his relationship with his Father, one of total trust. This trust freed him from anxiety and worry about himself. As a result he was a person of gentle and humble heart and was able to bring rest to those who were overburdened. Recall people whose trust in God enabled them to be supportive to others who were stressed or burdened. Perhaps you have experienced this yourself?
4. Recall and give thanks for people who, like Jesus in the story, were able to combine challenge with sympathetic support and understanding. Perhaps you have been able to do this for others at times also.

John Byrne OSA
Email jpb Byrneosa@gmail.com

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MUSINGS: I will give you rest

In today's Gospel Jesus offers a lifeline. 'Come to me,' he says. Sounds simple, doesn't it? And yet we find it difficult to believe that reaching out to Jesus can make a difference.

Lord, you invite us to take your hand walk with you; how stubborn we can be sometimes. Help us to receive your whispered invitation and respond with faith.

Jesus is inviting those who are not in the comfort zone, who feel oppressed by anxiety and uncertainty.

Lord, I do not ask that you bring my life completely under control; to be mortal is to face uncomfortable realities. I beg you to be my uncomfortable comfort zone.

Saint Ignatius thought that a thick and shapeless tree trunk would never believe that it could become a statue, admired as a miracle of sculpture, and would never submit itself to the chisel of the sculptor, who sees by her genius what she can make of it.

I ask for grace to let myself be shaped by my loving Creator.

From *Sacred Space* – The Prayer Book 2017 www.sacredspace.ie
Messenger Publications

Sunday, 16 July 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 13:1-23

1. Jesus uses parables to make people think about their own responses to his message. As you read this parable you may recognize that at different times you have been like each of the different types of soil. As you recall times when you presented fertile soil for the Word of God, what helped you create that receptive atmosphere? What lessons for life do you get from that?
2. Parents with children, teachers with pupils, speakers with listeners, are all like sowers in a field where the preparation of the soil is up to another – the child, pupil or listener. They can sow the seed but cannot guarantee that it will bear fruit. At times there may be a temptation not to try any more. The challenge is to sow in hope. When have you been surprised by the harvest you have reaped?
3. 'We are wasting our time here' may sometimes be the apparent wisdom in a group. Have there been times when you have gone against this apparent wisdom and seen your efforts bear fruit?

John Byrne OSA
Email jbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS: The Good Seed

Although the life of a person is in a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.

Pope Francis

Jesus' parable of the sower is aimed at the people who listen, or ignore, his word. There are different ways of hearing God's word and they produce different kinds of fruit.

Working too hard to have time to hear God's word: There is the prejudiced hearer who has a shut mind. Such a person is unteachable and blind to the things of God.

The shallow hearer fails to think things out or think them through and lacks spiritual depth. They may initially respond with an enthusiasm, but when it wears off their mind wanders to something else.

Another type of hearer is the person who has many interests or cares, but lacks the ability to hear or comprehend what is truly important. Such a person is forever too busy to pray or too preoccupied to study and meditate on God's word. They may work so hard that they are too tired to even think of anything else but their work.

Then there is the one whose mind is open. Such a person is at all times willing to listen and to learn. He or she is never too proud or too busy to learn. They listen in order to understand.

From *Women in the Bible* by Elizabeth Fletcher

Sunday, 23 July 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 13:24-43

1. The owner of the field who allowed the wheat and the darnel to grow together is a reminder to us to be patient with ourselves and with others when we see everything is not right. Sometimes a preoccupation with the negative (the darnel) can blind us to seeing the positive in our own lives and in the lives of others. When have you found that a willingness to live with the messiness of the present created the conditions for future growth?
2. Have you ever found that it was through accepting the darnel that you learned important lessons for life, e.g., learning by making mistakes, or asking stupid questions, or taking foolish risks?
3. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are reminders that seemingly insignificant things can have very positive results. Have you ever been surprised by the benefit to yourself or others of a kind gesture, a small initiative, or a word of encouragement?

John Byrne OSA
Email jbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS: Let them both grow

Did you ever think that perhaps your faults have some benefits? We get discouraged when we go to confession (did I say 'go to confession?') and discover we are saying the same old things over and over again. In this Sunday's parable Jesus says that the weeds can exist side by side with the wheat and God will sort it out at the end of our lives.

Along the way it just may be that our faults have some benefit. First, they keep us humble. Second, they keep us honest so that we don't approach others with judgment. And our faults can remind us to treasure our virtues and use them to love others. There is value knowing both our capacity for evil and our capacity for good.

Do you want to go to heaven? God wants you to go to heaven. God has made his decision. God wants you to live with him forever. Have you made your decision? Have you cast your lot with Christ? Have you humbly and honestly faced your faults and taken the higher road of virtue in dealing with others? Have you been astute to the presence of the Evil One sowing dissent and bitterness in your heart? Have you been to confession recently?

May the Lord give you peace.

Rev. James M. McNamara, *The Long Island Catholic*

Sunday, 30 July 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 13:44-52

1. Have you ever found yourself saying 'that was worth it' after giving up something (time, pleasure, money, etc.)? What was the treasure that made the sacrifice worthwhile?
2. The 'kingdom of heaven' is when God is really the ruler in our life. What treasures have you obtained when you allow God to be at the centre of your life?
3. In life we gather a lot of things, some good and some bad. The wise person in the kingdom of heaven knows how to sit down and make decisions on what to keep and what to discard. When have you undertaken that kind of discernment? What have you discarded? What have you retained?

John Byrne OSA
Email jbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS: Hidden Treasure

'A parable leaves you with sufficient doubt about its meaning to tease the mind into active thought.'

C.H. Dodd

Hidden or buried treasure sounds like an adventure story. This is intended by Jesus. Finding the kingdom of God is like an adventure in which there is a treasure that we did not expect to find, that fills us with wonder and tension and drama. Not everyone finds this treasure, which is what makes the story exciting. Jesus could have said that the man dug up the treasure and took what he wanted and left the rest out in the field for others to find easily, but he doesn't. The man hides the treasure again.

We who find the treasure of the kingdom of God will come to understand (whether immediately or over time), that it is more valuable than all that we have – all that our lives consist of. The treasure of the kingdom of God does not fit nicely or easily into the lives that we have already constructed for ourselves. Treasure stories are all about disrupted lives. One cannot discover hidden treasure and remain the same or continue, in an undisrupted way, to live the life one has always lived. In a sense, the measure of the disruption of our former lives is also a measure of the meaning of the treasure we have found. Some of us, perhaps, have not yet discovered the treasure that is worth exchanging our lives for.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure – Pete Bauer

Sunday, 6 August 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 17:1-9

1. The transfiguration experience was one that, for Jesus, clarified his relationship with his Father and strengthened him for the future. It was also a moment of deep revelation for the disciples. What have been the experiences, the moments of insight, which for you have clarified your sense of who you are, and what is your relationship with God?
2. The disciples were prepared for the experience by getting an invitation from Jesus to come apart, to withdraw to the mountain. Have there been times when going apart has been an important element in preparing you for a deep experience?
3. On the mountain the disciples saw Jesus in a new way. His appearance changed. Sometimes in friendship there are moments of sharing in which we get to know a friend in a new and deeper way. Have you had that experience in human friendship, or in your relationship with Jesus and God. Recall when that happened, and what it was like for you.
4. After their special experience the disciples came down the mountain again. We cannot live each day at the level of special spiritual experiences, but the memory of them can strengthen us in difficult times. What memories encourage you in time of trouble?

John Byrne OSA
Email jbyrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS: Being Transfigured

From the event of the Transfiguration I would like to take two significant elements that can be summed up in two words: ascent and descent. We all need to go apart, to ascend the mountain in a space of silence, to find ourselves and better perceive the voice of the Lord. This we do in prayer. But we cannot stay there! Encounter with God in prayer inspires us anew to 'descend the mountain' and return to the plain where we meet many brothers and sisters weighed down by fatigue, sickness, injustice, ignorance, poverty both material and spiritual. To these brothers and sisters in difficulty, we are called to bear the fruit of that experience with God, by sharing the grace we have received.

Pope Francis

Like Jesus, we need places where we hear the words 'you are my son, daughter, and the beloved'. We know too that if we believe that, our lives will be challenged. Whenever we climb the mountain of the Lord, make any journey with him, we are changed. As every mountain is different, every moment with the Lord is well worthwhile! Someone said, 'Every time I pray I think of ... and I know I must be kinder!'

Donal Neary SJ

Sunday, 13 August 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 14:22-33

1. The story illustrates the power of faith. Have you noticed that when you believe in someone, or something, you can do things that would not be possible when you are full of doubts? Recall moments when your faith gave you strength and courage? Name for yourself the different kinds of faith that had this effect: belief in yourself, trust in another, faith in God.
2. When Jesus got into the boat the winds ceased. Who has been a Jesus person for you and helped to calm a storm that frightened you or made you anxious?
3. The experience of Peter gives encouragement to us when we waver in our trust and belief in God. In his doubt and fear Jesus reached out to him. Who has reached out a helping hand to you when you felt you were sinking?
4. The story ends with a profession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Have you had experiences of being rescued from some hazard or danger, experiences which deepened your faith in the presence and compassion of God for you?

*John Byrne OSA
Email jpb Byrneosa@gmail.com*

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MUSINGS: Looking at Jesus

I'm fascinated by the first step of Peter as he climbed over the side of the boat. He was looking at Jesus, not at the water. His mind was charged with Jesus' invitation 'Come.' So often the way out of depression, fear or anxiety is not a thought or a consideration but a physical step. I take a risk and find myself strong enough to walk forward, keeping my eyes on the Lord.

*From Sacred Space – The Prayer Book 2017 www.sacredspace.ie
Messenger Publications*

There is an African American saying that we are always either going into a storm, in a storm, or coming out of a storm. Disciples are those who are learning to call on Jesus the Son of God in all three conditions. When our boat is battered by waves, we can call on Jesus. When our boat is far from land, we can call on Jesus. When our boat has the wind against it, we can call on Jesus. He knows our sufferings. He is approaching. He is present and able to offer assistance. He has been here all along. The question is, how are we going to respond to that knowledge? Are we going to keep focusing on the wind and the waves, or on the outstretched hand of our Lord?

Alyce M. McKenzie

Sunday, 20 August 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 15:21-28

1. Having met with rejection from the Pharisees Jesus goes to Gentile territory and encounters faith in an unexpected place, in the Canaanite woman. His mission had previously been to his own people. This adds a new dimension to his mission. Have you had occasions when a chance encounter set your life off in a new direction?
2. The initial reaction of Jesus to the woman was one of rejection but her persistence won a response from him. When have you found that persistence was needed to gain what you sought? What did that experience teach you?
3. In our days, welcoming the stranger is a challenge. We are more comfortable with our own. What difference has it made when you were able to offer a friendly welcoming face to a stranger?
4. Who are the 'Canaanite women' who call out for attention today – people in Church or State whose needs are not being attended to?

*John Byrne OSA
Email jpb Byrneosa@gmail.com*

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MUSINGS: Crumbs from the table

She was a lady like many – the woman of the Gospel today. She would fight for her child. So she took on Jesus, the best known religious figure around. Like someone taking on the Taoiseach over a medical card for a chronically ill child, and not letting him off the hook.

Jesus was testing her. He saw faith, but he wanted everyone else to see it. So he told her she didn't fit into the local religious sphere because she was foreigner, an asylum seeker or a refugee. Or a lone mother who had a bad name. She knew she fitted into the heart of Jesus simply because she was the mother of a sick child. Jesus cured her child and praised her faith. She is another of the unnamed ones of the Gospel. Like the woman of Samaria, the rich young man, the thief on Calvary – she is herself, and she is all of us. She is everyone, man and woman, of faith.

Faith in a surprising God who in Jesus his Son never says no to goodness. Faith that keeps us energetic and alive, not tired, in soul as well as body.

Lord, I believe, strengthen my faith.

Donal Neary SJ

Fear knocked on the door, faith answered. There was no one there.

Dr Martin Luther King Jnr

Sunday, 27 August 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE
THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 16:13-20

1. This marks a turning point in the life of Jesus, and of the disciples. It is the first time that his disciples recognise him as the Messiah. Recall turning points in your own life when you came to some deeper understanding of who Jesus is.
2. 'Who do you say that I am?' This is possibly the most important question that Jesus puts to us. In your heart of hearts, how do you answer this question?
3. Jesus praises Peter for his faith and comments that this was not his own doing but a gift of God. Perhaps there have been times when you have been more than usually conscious that faith is a gift. Be thankful for the gift you have received.
4. These are troubled times for the Church and the promise of Jesus that 'the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it' are an encouragement. What helps you to draw strength from this promise of Jesus? What signs of hope do you see in the Church today?

John Byrne OSA
Email jpb Byrneosa@gmail.com



MUSINGS: Who am I for you?

What does this story tell us? Jesus wanted a response to his question who am I for you? He had spent time with people and some have accepted him. Peter's was the remark of faith. Faith is in the person of Jesus before any creed. Our faith is based on Jesus not on the Church. It is knowing Jesus from the inside – knowing who he really is with the knowledge of the heart.

Is our faith just like a birthmark or a way of life and love?

For some it is just a birthmark. A label for birth, marriage and death. It has become more like this in Ireland and the Church in many ways allows this.

Who is Christ for me? The question that will ground our faith.

We are here for partnership with the Lord in bringing on the reign of God.

What would that look like? That people who care for each other and particularly for the old, the child, the weaker, the unborn and the refugee. The Church is the community where the weakest are welcomed. The son of the living God is the one who heals, cures, wants us, and is the human face of God. We are that too – he has no body now on earth but ours!

Donal Neary SJ

Resources for Family M

2 July, 2017 • Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42

Theme: To be a real disciple is to put the spirit of Jesus before all else

Sacred Space: Tickets/walking shoes/walking stick/signpost

Homily: In today's Gospel Jesus is explaining to us that we are called to be loyal and resilient followers. This means that we need to listen to Jesus when he explains to us what it takes to follow with all of our hearts, minds and bodies. To love God is not a simple and easy thing. It takes years of trying, years of refining our spirituality and always willing to live in the sunshine of the Gospel. There is no quick fix, nor is there a moment where we can say 'That's it, I don't have to try any more'. Following Jesus towards the kingdom of God is a worthy goal in our lives. However, we need to be aware of the kind of life journey this is and aware of our humanity as we journey together. For many, being a pilgrim follower of Jesus is what life is about. Always putting in the effort, some days more effort than others, but knowing nonetheless, that we are loved unconditionally and welcomed as wholeheartedly and lovingly as the prodigal son was. Jesus asks us to remind ourselves that we need to start with his love and then together, travel to a sense of faith, hope and love. Our journey is not a journey alone, but one with and for each other.

Prayer of the Faithful

1. Let us pray today for the whole Church all over the world; let us pray for our Pope as the focus of unity for Christians everywhere.
2. Let us pray for those who, while remaining faithful to the core doctrine of the Church, are creatively finding new ways to proclaim the message of the kingdom to people everywhere.
3. Let us pray for those places where the Church is working under great difficulties; even in pockets of our own lives and parishes.



9 July, 2017 • Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

Theme: Jesus reassures us that he is always gentle and humble of heart

Sacred Space: Loving parent with baby/small bags to carry/calming environmental space/peace lily

Homily: In today's Gospel Jesus explains to us that no matter how sad or weakened from daily experiences we become, he is here, openhearted, loving, forgiving and championing us on. Jesus asks us to come to him and dwell in his love. He further explains to us that God reveals himself equally to children as well as adults through Jesus himself. This means that we should not walk away from the Word of God, scratching our heads, uttering that we are too puzzled and unable to understand it. Children appreciate the message of Jesus and so can each adult. Jesus tells us that he is humble and that he does not worry and stress all day! We can often end up worried and stressed over very little. When we think about it, children run free playing games and are eager to laugh and play with each other. They are not burdened with fretting and stressing about tomorrow. Jesus uses the notion of children being close to God and loving God in a full and complete way. He calls us to be like this in our whole and absolute love of God the Father.