

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

KINDNESS: ALWAYS IN SEASON



SUNDAY READINGS:

II Kings 4:8-11, 14-16

Psalms 89:2-3, 16-19

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42

LIVING KINDNESS DAILY

The word “kindness” appears to capture a common thread in today’s three scripture readings. Elisha promises a child to a barren woman. Through God’s grace we can conquer death and live forever with Christ. A simple cup of cold water is a genuine expression of kindness. This faith-reflection proposes what I call the “ten commandments” of kindness.

I. Meditate on God’s kindness. The Judaeo-Christian tradition is rich in its assertions of God’s kindness. Jesus is described as the revelation of “the kindness and love of God our savior for humanity” (Titus 3:4). God reveals “the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). **II. Cultivate an “attitude of gratitude.”** All life is gift. We are gifted again and again. All people and events are gifts. Each day is a new gift. Thus, gratitude can never be a single, one-time expression.

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III. Appreciate your own goodness. Kindness to those around you is important, but it only flows out of your own person. Realize that God has created you good. I like to say, “God does not make junk!” We are precious! **IV. Empathize with others.** Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand another person’s feelings or difficulties. Empathy is the ability to walk in the shoes of the other, to see life from his or her perspective.

V. Practice deliberate kindness. Acts of deliberate or random kindness often involve the most mundane aspects of daily life. They may be demonstrated by opening the door for an elderly lady, helping a vision-impaired person get off the bus, thanking the grocery clerk for her kind service, offering a cold drink to the garbage collector on a hot day. **VI. Employ “kind speech” always.** One could make a long list of practical tips for “kind speech.” Remember the admonition of Blaise Pascal: “Kind words do not cost much; yet, they accomplish much.”

VII. Judge others compassionately. Situations inevitably arise when a judgment is necessary. Seeking to sympathetically understand a complicated and difficult situation is the “first kindness step” needed in many situations, be they in the family, office, neighborhood or school. **VIII. Forgive from the heart.** Christian life is lived one kindness at a time. When Peter asks Jesus how often he must forgive, Jesus answers: “Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:21-22).

IX. Admit your narcissism. Practicing the virtue of kindness demands awareness of both one’s strengths and weaknesses. In the words of Henri Nouwen, we are to be “wounded healers.”

X. Pray, meditate, seek inner peace. Friends, to practice this virtue, we all need to pray and meditate frequently, using the words of Jesus in the gospels and the insights of holy persons like Mother Teresa, who said: “What we need is to love without getting tired.”

Conclusion. One final quotation can bring this reflection to a challenging finale. It is drawn from William Penn (1644-1718); he was an English-born American Quaker reformer. “I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.” I believe Jesus would agree and probably repeat words from his Good Samaritan parable: “Go and do likewise.”

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - II Kings 4:8-11, 14-16: We read the Old Testament to appreciate the history of God's interaction with the Chosen People before the birth of Christ. Elisha had inherited the mantle of the prophet Elijah (ninth century B.C.). Today we read a delightful little story how kindness is shown to Elisha and the kindness Elisha shows to the childless woman.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 89:2-3, 16-19: This psalm expresses the gratitude of the barren woman—and all the faithful. We sing the numerous favors of the Lord, proclaiming his faithfulness. We believe that God's "kindness is established forever." God's faithfulness perdures through all generations.

Second Reading - Romans 6:3-4, 8-11: Paul's rich letter to the Romans affirms that we have been reconciled with God through Jesus Christ. Indeed, God's grace is more abundant than sin. We are now to live a fruitful life, seeking to avoid sin. This is our new life in Christ because of our Baptism.

Gospel - Matthew 10:37-42: This year we are delving into the Gospel of Matthew. Today's passage is from the second set of Jesus' sermons. Jesus specifies that living in the Kingdom contains serious challenges. It means taking up our cross daily, avoiding focus on ourselves, welcoming others, and showing everyone kindness through our charitable deeds.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► *Living in Joyful Hope*, ► *Exploring Vatican II Treasures*, and ► *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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