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For Sunday, July 5, 2015

**Bearing Witness to an
Unpopular Message**

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/070515.cfm>

Ezekiel 2:2-5

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Mark 6:1-6



I remember a time when the world was changing very rapidly indeed. It was the late 80s and much of the change was centralized in Europe with the [Solidarity](#) movement in Poland, [Perestroika and Glasnost](#) in Russia, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The change was inspiring and suddenly you believed that anything was possible. I remember hearing the words of the [Jesus Jones song](#), "Right Here, Right Now" and thinking how accurate they were: *Right here, right now, watching the world wake up from history.*

In the past weeks our country has changed quite a bit, and it is hard to remember so much change here so quickly. From Supreme Court rulings to debates on race, it would appear that our nation is different today than just a few weeks ago. Some of the changes are cause for joy, while others challenge our very Catholic beliefs. As these changes occur, some debate and others hate. Catholics on separate sides of issues raise voices in support or condemnation, oftentimes acting like they have all the answers. But as we spend much time and breath on these societal developments, we fail to see that our own house needs some real order and reform.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate recently issued some of its findings on the spiritual health of Catholic families. [The results are sobering](#). Only 22% of Catholic families attend Mass every Sunday. The number decreases by 3 percentage points for those families with infants. A measly 32% of children in Catholic families attend some form of religious formation, whether it's a Catholic school or a parish faith formation program. Nearly 60% of those children in families that attend Mass do not attend any religious education program.

As we sometimes stand too ready to offer opinions on how non-Catholics should live their lives, too many of us are not in reality living out our faith in the first place. For too long our attention

has been focused outwardly while we suffer inwardly. Perhaps we could truly be a greater influence on our culture if we stood on firmer ground with a solid faith in Jesus Christ and a greater belief in the body of Christ. Perhaps many of our examples of family fall well short of being a light to those who cannot see.

But there is always hope! In many corners of the church we have begun our *waking up to history*. People like [Sherry Weddell](#), author of *Forming Intentional Disciples*, are leading the way to a Catholic discipleship that is more than a label. For too long a cultural Catholicism has reduced our testimonies and witnessing to rather meaningless stories of Catholic school shenanigans and CYO basketball games. It is not the same to be Catholic as it is to be Italian, German, Irish, or Hispanic. One label is given to us without choice; the other requires a serious choice every day of our lives.

Now is the time for those in the church who have become intentional disciples and everyday stewards to reach out to those who share our faith in name only. We need to do it in a loving manner. Our goal is to witness to them the richness of a life truly committed to Jesus Christ. Before we lament about how the world is turning from the Gospel, let us make sure we are turned toward the Gospel as a people of God and that it makes a difference.

The [World Meeting of Families](#) is not far away. I suspect that not only will the event be a source of great joy, but it will also become a target for those who do not understand. The experiences of Ezekiel, Paul, and Jesus himself, in the readings for this coming Sunday, will hopefully give the prophets of our day a resolve to stay the course. I wish I could say that truth spoken in love was easier for people to receive. But many times the opposite is reality. The readings for this Sunday remind us of that reality. As soon as the Gospel message presented is of conflict to no one, chances are, the message is not the Gospel at all.

Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

Author's Note: These issues are more than political or moral issues, these are "people" issues. With all things, love must always guide our way. As the discussion continues, here are some thoughtful responses. You may not agree with all of what you read, but as we inform ourselves, we must be willing to listen.

[USCCB Press Release](#)

[After Obergefell v. Hodges: Now What?](#)

[Article from Pew Research Center](#)

[Simcha Fisher's Blog: I Have to Sit Down](#)

[Laura Norris on the Conciliar Post](#)

[Fr. Robert Barron](#)

PRAYER

Audrey Assad, the Catholic singer and songwriter, wrote on her Facebook page in the midst of all the events of the past couple weeks: "If I took the trouble and time to whisper this prayer before every conversation the world would be a much better place for it."

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.
—*Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.*

NOTICES

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The Church Network's 2015 Conference, "The Rhythm of the Future," promises to provide a wealth of experiences and benefits for church leaders: a launch event; three keynote addresses; a tradeshow with over two hundred representatives from the best products and services available to congregations; more than seventy workshops presented by experts and leaders in the field of church administration; and networking with other leaders for learning, support, and sharing. To learn more visit <http://member.thechurchnetwork.com/2015conference>.

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