

Sunday, Nov 01, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

Get in the ring

Catholic activist Mary “Mother” Jones famously urged: “Pray for the dead—and fight like hell for the living.” She did both, especially fighting for miner’s rights and against child labor at the turn of the 20th century. Called the “most dangerous woman in America” for her clout with the laboring class, she spoke for those who weren’t heard. Mother Jones won’t ever be a saint on the books, but she did as saints do: listened carefully to the concerns of her times, then went in punching for the needs of the oppressed. Who needs your voice—and maybe your boxing skills?

TODAY’S READINGS: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12a (667). *“They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”*

Monday, Nov 02, 2020

COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED (ALL SOULS’ DAY)

It is well with my soul

This year, as we mourn the scores of those in our country and around the world who are dead from the pandemic, All Souls’ Day has a uniquely terrible gravity. We are not only grieving the loss of so many human lives but also the loss of what our lives were like before, and we are doing it without the same emotional support we might have had in physically closer times. Today is an opportunity to pray and remember, and acknowledge the deep sadness that is so important to the healing process. Invite the God of hope to wipe away your tears.

TODAY’S READINGS: Wisdom 3:1-9; Romans 5:5-11 or Romans 6:3-9; John 6:37-40 (668). *“Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life.”*

Tuesday, Nov 03, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MARTIN DE PORRES, RELIGIOUS

Create healing and harmony

After the summer we’ve had, Martin de Porres is the perfect intercessor for the United States today, on Election Day. This famously humble Dominican friar, born of poverty and mixed racial background, is the patron saint of race relations and social justice. Plus, he trained as a doctor to hide an ability to perform miraculous cures. Ask for his help and healing to end our time of pandemic and social division. And ask to have a heart like his: “Everything, even sweeping, scraping vegetables, weeding a garden, and waiting on the sick could be a prayer, if it were offered to God.”

TODAY’S READINGS: Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 14:15-24 (486). *“Bring in here the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame.”*

Wednesday, Nov 04, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CHARLES BORROMEO, BISHOP

Be bread for the world

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, bishops dispensed Catholics from their Sunday obligation to attend Mass. While there were worries about the future of the Eucharist, some leaders found ways for parishioners to be the church in the world, helping the needy, feeding the hungry, and even doing such things as sending baked goods to local hospitals. During the plague of 1576, Cardinal Charles Borromeo took to the streets of Milan to feed the hungry, going into personal debt to do so. Patron saint of

cardinals, seminarians, and catechists, Saint Charles pray for us until the day when it is safe for all to gather again to share in the Eucharist.

TODAY’S READINGS: Philippians 2:12-18; Luke 14:25-33 (487).

“Every one of you who does not renounce all . . . possessions cannot be my disciple.”

Thursday, Nov 05, 2020

Keep the conversation going

Have you ever had to rethink your life? Vocation is an ongoing conversation between you and God about how best to use your gifts, and sometimes a “reset” is necessary. Saint Paul refers to the years he spent persecuting the church as a loss in today’s first reading. He thought he was doing the right thing when he pushed to have Christians flogged. But he listened to God through dramatic events in his life and discerned that his calling was to join the Christians, eventually becoming their lead evangelizer.

Keep the conversation between you and God going!

TODAY’S READINGS: Philippians 3:3-8a; Luke 15:1-10 (488). *“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people.”*

Friday, Nov 06, 2020

No more scarring the Earth

Today marks the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War. Just as human life is impacted and threatened by war, so too is our Earth. In 2003, the archbishop of Dublin spoke with the U.S. bishops on today’s challenge of peace, saying: “The pursuit of peace—lasting peace based on justice—ought to be an environmental priority because the Earth itself bears the wounds and scars of war.” The bishops call the church to “help build bridges among the peace, justice, and environmental agendas and constituencies.” How can we do this in our own neighborhoods? How can we avoid war and bring justice and peace to the local environment in which we live?

TODAY’S READINGS: Philippians 3:17—4:1; Luke 16:1-8 (489). *“Prepare a full account of your stewardship.”*

Saturday, Nov 07, 2020

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Dare to love

In his papal letter “The Joy of Love,” Pope Francis speaks of the “tender gaze” with which Jesus looks on all. He might have learned this from Mary. In marriage, spouses learn to look at each other this tenderly, marveling at goodness even when youth and attractiveness fade, as Francis notes. Negotiating conflicts, seeing challenges as resolvable, and appreciating the “large nest” of extended family must have been skills Jesus gained by spending most of his life in such a setting. The pope suggests turning off mobile devices, creating conversation around the dining table. Can you and your loved ones take the challenge?

TODAY’S READINGS: Philippians 4:10-19; Luke 16:9-15 (490). *“The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones.”*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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Sunday, Nov 08, 2020

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prudence is my co-pilot

Some of us can still recite the four Cardinal Virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They're good not just to recite but also to practice. Virtues are good habits; i.e., things we *don't* have to surrender for Lent. *Cardinal*, meanwhile, means "hinge." Put together, the four hinge virtues swing open the door to a life well lived. Prudence is called the pilot of the virtues because it enables us to discern the good and how best to accomplish it. When a decision is important, reflect on it through the lens of scripture. How is God inviting you to proceed?

TODAY'S READINGS: Wisdom 6:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13 (154). "*Wisdom 'is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her.'*"

Monday, Nov 09, 2020

FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA

Open the door and look at all the people

Why would there be a feast day for a church? Because it's the "mother of all churches," one that all Catholics can call their own, and so we all celebrate its dedication in the year 324. Christianity had only recently been legalized in the Roman Empire, and the Lateran Basilica—full name: Cathedral of the Most Holy Savior and of Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist in the Lateran—was the first church in Rome and, to this day, remains the pope's church as the bishop of Rome. Keep passing on the faith of the Mother Church that has been passed down to you through the centuries.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22 (671). "*His disciples recalled the words of scripture, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'*"

Tuesday, Nov 10, 2020

MEMORIAL OF LEO THE GREAT, POPE, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

The great pope who did good things

Leo the Great was the first pope to be called "Great." His diplomacy kept Attila the Hun from attacking Rome. His authoritative teaching solidified the role of the bishop of Rome as Saint Peter's successor. And his eloquent prose—detailing the two natures of Jesus Christ, both human and divine—was key to defeating heresy at the Council of Chalcedon. "Peter has spoken through Leo," marveled the bishops of Chalcedon. "The infancy of the Babe is exhibited by the humiliation of swaddling clothes," wrote Leo, while "the greatness of the Highest is declared by the voices of angels."

TODAY'S READINGS: Titus 2:1-8, 11-14; Luke 17:7-10 (492). "*We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.*"

Wednesday, Nov 11, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MARTIN OF TOURS, BISHOP

Half of what I have is yours

Fourth-century Bishop Martin of Tours was not born to the faith but chose it for himself as a young man. He followed his father into the Roman army but found that he could not remain a soldier; Martin is one of the earliest documented conscientious objectors. Yet it was while serving as a soldier that perhaps the most famous episode of Martin's life occurred. Coming upon a naked beggar, Martin took out his sword, cut his own cloak in two, and shared it with the poor soul. Martin was a founder of

monasteries, a popularly acclaimed bishop, destroyer of pagan shrines and builder of churches, and most of all, he inspires us to share what we have with those most in need.

TODAY'S READINGS: Titus 3:1-7; Luke 17:11-19 (493). "*Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.*"

Thursday, Nov 12, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOSAPHAT, BISHOP, MARTYR

Draw courage from Josaphat

Books of saints have long been filled with the gore of martyrs, but the story of Josaphat is shocking even in that bloody context. Josaphat, a Polish Byzantine priest and archbishop, was embroiled in controversy for much of his life because of his emphasis on reforming lax practices within the church and striving for unity among Christians. After years of wrangling, his enemies mobbed him, killed him, and tossed his beaten body into a river in 1623. With Josaphat's courage as a model, take a step today to support the ongoing reform efforts in the church, including efforts to end sexual abuse in the church we love.

TODAY'S READINGS: Philemon 7-20; Luke 17:20-25 (494). "*No one will announce, 'Look, here it is,' or, 'There it is.' For behold, the kingdom of God is among you.*"

Friday, Nov 13, 2020

MEMORIAL OF FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI, VIRGIN

Do likewise

What would we do if a saint of God rose in our midst today and instructed us in the proper care of people who are immigrants and refugees at our borders? Would that saint's halo give us any more certitude to stand behind every effort to protect the lives of women, men, and children seeking a safe home? Just over 100 years ago we had such a saint showing us the way. Frances Xavier Cabrini was called by Pope Leo XIII to tend to the many immigrants landing on the shores of the United States in the late 1800s. She built schools, orphanages, and hospitals to tend to them. Though she met resistance, she persisted, and her legacy lives on in each of us and our ancestors, for the most part immigrants. How do we honor this legacy in our own treatment of immigrants and refugees today?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 John 4-9; Luke 17:26-37 (495). "*Look to yourselves that you do not lose what we worked for.*"

Saturday, Nov 14, 2020

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Let your soul proclaim greatness

Take an opportunity today to celebrate Mary, who found her voice in difficult circumstances so that we might follow her voice and find our own in these difficult times. Read her "Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-56) for a canticle to the power of trust. Imagine how she waited years to understand her son's calling, grieved his inconceivable death, and then, in the many years of her grief, nurtured the early Christian community. That's greatness!

TODAY'S READINGS: 3 John 5-8; Luke 18:1-8 (496). "*Will [God] be slow to answer them?*"

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Sunday, Nov 15, 2020

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Believe in magic—your own!

We each have a little something special we can call our own. Maybe it's school smarts or street smarts. Maybe you know your way around the halls of power or around the kitchen. Some are good with kids, others with elders, still others with sick or dying people. You might be great with people, or math, or words, or research. You could be physically strong or have that dogged ability to keep at a task when everybody else gives up. Do an assessment of your gifts and skills. Whatever your special magic is, put it at the disposal of grace.

TODAY'S READINGS: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 25:14-30 (157). "Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more."

Monday, Nov 16, 2020

MEMORIAL OF GERTRUDE THE GREAT, VIRGIN

Mystic mysteries

Me, a mystic? Yes, you! Intimate union with Christ is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments, the catechism says, and "God calls all of us to this intimate union with him . . ." But, you may be thinking, I don't have visions or experiences of ecstasy, and I definitely don't have stigmata, like a saint we remember today, Gertrude the Great, German Benedictine mystic of the 13th century. No matter, the catechism says, "The special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift to all." Enjoy your slice of the mystery

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 1:1-4; 2:1-5; Luke 18:35-43 (497). "Have sight; your faith has saved you."

Tuesday, Nov 17, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, RELIGIOUS

Love the one you're with

As a young queen, Elizabeth of Hungary was so moved by the love of Saint Francis of Assisi that she took care of the sick and poor herself, tending to them like a servant in her own castle. Equally notable, though, is the loving relationship Elizabeth had with her husband, King Louis of Thuringia. Growing up together, their mutual affection was exceptionally deep as friends and confidants—long before they married and became parents. Most notably, they championed each other in the practice of their Christian faith. Today, pray gratefully for loved ones who have nurtured your own faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22; Luke 19:1-10 (498). "Half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor."

Wednesday, Nov 18, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE, VIRGIN

Pray always

One of Rose Philippine Duchesne's (1769-1852) biographers noted that she was born with a strong and dauntless will. She ignored family wishes and joined a French convent, intent on ministry to Native American peoples. Not until the age of 49 did she set sail for St. Louis, where her ministry of opening schools and orphanages remained much the same as in her native France. After many years of ministry, at the age of 72 Rose was asked to live among the Potawatomie Indians in Sugar Creek, Kansas. It

was a short-lived assignment—her health was failing—yet Rose's ministry of prayer was recognized by the Potawatomie, who called her Woman-Who-Prays-Always. The witness of Saint Rose reminds us that where there is a will—our own and God's—there is a way. Ask for the grace today to seek and embrace God's will.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 4:1-11; Luke 19:11-28 (499) or for the Dedication, Acts 28:11-16, 30-31; Matthew 14:22-33 (679). "'Sir, your gold coin has earned ten additional ones.' He replied, 'Well done, good servant!'"

Thursday, Nov 19, 2020

The Omega point

These days Catholic laity and leaders don't typically dwell on the so-called "end times." Modern Catholics tend to be engaged in questions of how to live here and now for the common good and our personal salvation. Pope Francis frequently urges us on in righteous living. That is the context as our year moves toward its own "end times." The year 2020 has been hard around the world. We can hope and pray that 2021 will be gentler and promote that outcome in our own interactions with others in this contentious age. Put your trust in God, the Alpha and Omega.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 5:1-10; Luke 19:41-44 (500). "[Jesus] saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If this day you only knew what makes for peace.'"

Friday, Nov 20, 2020

Feed the children

Today is World Children's Day. It marks the anniversary of the 1959 signing of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. A fundamental right of every child is to live and grow. But a 2018 study by UNICEF found that more than 3 million children in the world die from malnutrition every year. Some people ask why God allows this to happen. But that misses the point. God commands us to feed the hungry, and Catholics have a serious obligation to do just that. Log on to Catholic Relief Services (CRS.org) and find out how you can help feed the starving children of the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 10:8-11; Luke 19:45-48 (501). "Yes, your decrees are my delight; they are my counselors."

Saturday, Nov 21, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Your presence is requested

Celebration of Mary's presentation at the temple—a story from time-honored tradition rather than directly from scripture—took place as early as the sixth century in Jerusalem. The Eastern Church ran with it right away, but the West was slow to follow. At times the feast seemed to disappear entirely from the calendar, but finally in the 16th century it took its place as a universal feast. Though the feast points to Mary's lifetime of preparation for her sacred role in salvation, it also invites each of us to ponder for a moment: Suppose Jesus came knocking right now to bring you to the heavenly temple. Would you be prepared? If you feel a bit sloppy or unkempt, spiritually speaking, now is a great chance to do what is necessary to become a bit more presentable!

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 11:4-12; Luke 20:27-40 (502). "Then they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, 'Come up here.'"

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Sunday, Nov 22, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

You decide

The church year ends this week. Along with that we're invited to consider another ending: our mortality. What goes on in eternity, anyway? Thomas Aquinas declares that God and eternity are the same. When we go from here, we go to God. How we experience the Divine Presence depends on whether our lives have become fully compatible with Love. Francis de Sales envisions Jesus saying to us: "Be it done as you desire; and because of what you have done, come, enjoy eternity." The desire of my heart will be answered: Will the choice be a life of love?

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28; Matthew 25:31-46 (160). "These will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Monday, Nov 23, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BLESSED MIGUEL AUGUSTÍN PRO, PRIEST, MARTYR

¡Viva Cristo Rey!

Mexican Jesuit priest Miguel Pro was executed on fabricated charges in 1927 by a fiercely anti-clerical government. Pro had served the persecuted church by secretly celebrating the sacraments. He was killed by firing squad while holding a rosary in one hand and a crucifix in the other, his arms stretched out in imitation of the crucified Christ, shouting "Long live Christ the King!" His death energized the resistance. We may not be called to such dramatic sacrifice, but can we give up some comfort and convenience to fight for the greater good?

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 14:1-3, 4b-5; Luke 21:1-4 (503). "This poor widow put in more than all the rest."

Tuesday, Nov 24, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ANDREW DŨNG-LAC, PRIEST, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Holiness in high numbers

Nine times in the liturgical lineup of feast days we memorialize a canonized person or two "and companions." All were martyrs and many had been foreign missionaries. Today's memorial honors Andrew Dũng-Lạc, a Vietnamese priest beheaded in 1839 for promoting Christianity instead of the official state religion; he's joined by another 117 killed in Vietnam, tortured and martyred during the 18th and 19th centuries. Just as we began this month with the feast of All Saints—honoring a multitude of holy unknowns—may every instance of "and companions" encourage us to call to mind the "great cloud of witnesses."

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 14:14-19; Luke 21:5-11 (504). "Reap the harvest, for the time to reap has come."

Wednesday, Nov 25, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGIN, MARTYR

Raise your voice

Christian tradition holds that Catherine of Alexandria (287-305) was an eloquent young Christian convert who challenged the Emperor Maxentius' persecution of Christians. That faithful courage led to her own martyrdom. The United Nations has declared today the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, asking the world to recognize that "violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent, and devastating human rights violations in our world today." We honor the courage of Saint Catherine by paying attention to the violence that others endure, speaking up in

defense of the voiceless, and adding our prayers for those whose suffering too often goes unnoticed.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 15:1-4; Luke 21:12-19 (505). "They will seize and persecute you . . . they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name."

Thursday, Nov 26, 2020

THANKSGIVING DAY

Give thanks, indeed

This Thanksgiving won't be celebrated the way many of us hoped and imagined back when the pandemic started. And yet, we are alive. Most of us reading these words can breathe freely. The virus has reminded us to never again take these simple matters for granted. One of our wisest teachers about prayer, Dominican priest Meister Eckhardt (1260-1329), said: If the only prayer you ever said in your entire life is thank you, that would suffice. Even amid hard times, giving thanks to God is appropriate. Let it be your prayer today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9a; Luke 21:20-28 (506). "But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."

Friday, Nov 27, 2020

Turn the page

The "Book of Life" is mentioned several times in the Bible. A bit like the contact list you keep on your phone, the Book of Life is the figurative expression of how God is said to keep track of those heading for heavenly repose united with the Divine. According to Jewish tradition, God opens the Book of Life on Rosh Hashanah and leaves it open for 10 days, until Yom Kippur. During those days, believers spend time repenting of their sins and amending their lives in order to be written into the Book of Life. If there's something you need to repent, today is a good day to turn the page.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 20:1-4, 11—21:2; Luke 21:29-33 (507). "Then another scroll was opened, the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to their deeds."

Saturday, Nov 28, 2020

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Call forth your best self

Perhaps you've heard that Jesus' life was foreshadowed in passages from the Hebrew scripture that predated him. But were you aware that Mary's life and role in salvation history might have been as well? The prophet Isaiah (7:14) speaks of a young woman (sometimes translated as a "virgin") who will give birth to a son she will name Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." Mary has been "going ahead" of us for generations, a role model beckoning us to live our best lives, regardless of how improbable, even miraculous, that might turn out to be.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 22:1-7; Luke 21:34-36 (508). "These words are trustworthy and true."

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Sunday, Nov 29, 2020

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Keep your eyes open

Nothing is more empowering than a fresh start. Advent brings with it a new gospel to guide us through the new liturgical year: Mark, the shortest of the four narratives about Jesus. Consider reading all 16 chapters at the start of the liturgical year to grasp the breathless beauty of Mark's story. Reflect on other ways to stay alert to new spiritual discoveries, in keeping with Jesus' summons: "Watch!" Pay attention, not just to the news of the day but also to the movements of the Spirit in you. Where might you be prompted to forgive, be generous, get involved, or keep silent?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37 (2). "What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Monday, Nov 30, 2020

FEAST OF ANDREW, APOSTLE

First responder

Saint Andrew has a special place in the collective heart of Scotland. He is sometimes known as the "first called" apostle because of his early encounter and following of Jesus, alongside his better-known brother and fellow fisherman Simon Peter. When confronting his own crucifixion in the year 60, it is said Andrew chose an X-shaped cross, or saltire, because he felt unworthy to be crucified on the same kind of cross as Jesus. That saltire is now Scotland's national flag. Follow the Scottish example: Give first-called Andrew a special place in your heart.

TODAY'S READINGS: Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 (684). "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Tuesday, Dec 01, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

A light shines in the darkness

In this first week of Advent, the church highlights the theme of hope. We remember that the "people who walk in darkness will see a great light." Good news at this time of long nights as we are reeling mentally, physically, financially, emotionally from the coronavirus pandemic and find it hard to cope. But today is also World AIDS Day, a time to remember another virus-borne pandemic that has killed more than 30 million worldwide, calling to mind the inspiring way our world can come together at its best to respond to terrible diseases. Pray for an increase in hope and healing today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176). "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain."

Wednesday, Dec 02, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Martyrs in our time

Forty years ago today, four American churchwomen were murdered and dumped in a shallow grave in a cow pasture in Santiago Nonualco, El Salvador. Maryknoll sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan were victims of the country's civil war, killed by members of the Salvadoran National Guard. The women knew they faced danger and yet they could not leave the people. Jean Donovan wrote in a letter two weeks before her death: "Several times I have decided to leave El Salvador. I almost could, except for the children, the poor bruised victims of this insanity."

Inspired by the life and martyrdom of Archbishop Saint Oscar Romero, all four women shared a commitment to the church's "preferential option for the poor." Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean—you walk with us still and we remember.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 (177). "Jesus summoned his disciples and said, 'My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they . . . have nothing to eat.'"

Thursday, Dec 03, 2020

MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

Gain from apparent loss

While focus is often on Francis' youthful fervor, which sparked his missionary adventures in Asia, less emphasis falls on his maturation. In Japan, he learned to appreciate local culture, connecting it with the gospel. While ocean travel in the 16th century was perilous, long separation from Ignatius of Loyola may have been an even greater suffering. Francis was one of Ignatius' first companions at the founding of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, as they are commonly known. And imagine Francis' disappointment when he couldn't reach his ultimate dream destination: China. Have you ever had a "dream deferred," an unrealized goal? What have you learned from the apparent failure that you might not have learned from success?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 (178). "The house . . . did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock."

Friday, Dec 04, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF DAMASCUS, PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

An iconic witness

History takes some strange turns. John Damascene is considered one of the great fathers of the Eastern Church, known today for its beautiful iconographic representations of the communion of saints. Yet back in the seventh century, John had to *defend* the use of icons against a movement in the East to ban them. And who protected him from being arrested by his powerful opponents? The Muslim caliph of Damascus under whose rule John lived and served administratively. Beneath the twists of history, search for the hidden story of salvation, unfolding through the centuries and before our eyes in these iconic times as well.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31 (179). "Then he touched their eyes and said, 'Let it be done for you according to your faith.' And their eyes were opened."

Saturday, Dec 05, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Pay it forward

Why is it that the season of Lent seems to get all the instructions of what to do—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—but with Advent, we have no handy summary about what to actually do during the season—besides wait? Sure, we have our creches and wreaths, maybe even a Jesse tree or, better yet, an Advent calendar with chocolate hidden behind each door. While all these customs are good, how can we "effect"—that is, bring about—the new life we so eagerly await? The world may have an answer for us. Today marks International Volunteer Day. How can you put into action on behalf of others your faith and expectation of new life in God?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180). "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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