



Sunday, Jun 07, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

The power in three

Faith, hope, love; body, mind, spirit; life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness; executive, judicial, legislative: There's something satisfying and complete about a list of three. Good things come in threes, too: from "bacon, lettuce, and tomato" to "Peter, Paul, and Mary." Alert to the power of three, scripture uses it as the sum of completion. The prophet Jonah spends three days inside the fish to fully absorb a lesson in obedience. Jesus exits the tomb on the third day. We encounter God three ways: as Creator, Restorer, Sanctifier. O God of many faces—recreate, restore, bless our community!

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; John 3:16-18 (164). "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

Monday, Jun 08, 2020

The cure for what ails us

Pope Francis said that living the Beatitudes means "going against the flow" of the world. What the world tells us—that wealth brings security, that power gives us strength, that pleasure makes us satisfied—is the opposite of what Jesus says. Francis asks us to let the Beatitudes "unsettle us . . . challenge us, and . . . demand a real change in the way we live." We've clearly been upended in this sense by the current pandemic, and we have learned firsthand that nothing exempts us from vulnerability. Jesus was, is, and always will be our only hope. Live accordingly.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 17:1-6; Matthew 5:1-12 (359). "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Tuesday, Jun 09, 2020

MEMORIAL OF EPHREM OF SYRIA, DEACON, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Rise and shine!

Leave it to Saint Ephrem to derive beauty from pain. As we feel the ripple effects of coronavirus, let's learn from a man who died in 373 during a plague—from contracting the disease of the people he was ministering to. Ephrem, named a doctor of the church for the poetic nature of his theology, wrote: "We give glory to you, Lord, who raised up your cross to span the jaws of death like a bridge by which souls might pass from the region of the dead to the land of the living." Seek and share beauty today.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 17:7-16; Matthew 5:13-16 (360). "Just so, your light must shine before others."

Wednesday, Jun 10, 2020

Most fulfilling of all

As children, many of us were required to memorize the Ten Commandments. It's likely we can still recite them and have a sense of their importance. However, the catechism teaches that it is the *Beatitudes* that "fulfill, refine, and surpass the old law to its perfection." And how many of us can recite *them* from memory or even know where to find them in the Bible? (Hint: For all eight,

try Matthew 5:3-12.) In these difficult and, for some, tragic days, as we seek God's presence in our midst, we ask for the grace to comfort those who mourn.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 18:20-39; Matthew 5:17-19 (361). "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."

Thursday, Jun 11, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BARNABAS, APOSTLE

Make history

What was it like during the times of the apostle Barnabas, whose memorial is today? Thousands of people at a time were becoming Christians with no real formality or infrastructure yet in the church. There was the "grace of God" and "firmness of heart" at work, today's first reading tells us, but persecution and internal conflict too. Every era has its challenges and opportunities. How are you building the Body of Christ during your moment in history?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 11:21b-26; 13:1-3 (580); Matthew 5:20-26 (362). "They sent Barnabas to go to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all."

Friday, Jun 12, 2020

This most amazing day

Tucked within Muir Woods, a national memorial park in California, is a beautiful space called Cathedral Grove. Hikers are asked to maintain quiet as they behold the old-growth coastal redwood trees. Though not a "cathedral" in the ecclesial sense, the grove reminds us that nature is one of the surest places to experience the power and tenderness of God. Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*: "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God." How do you experience this "caress of God," even in the potted plant in your own home?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-16; Matthew 5:27-32 (363). "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by."

Saturday, Jun 13, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ANTHONY OF PADUA, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Treasure the baby and the Bible

The traditional depiction of Saint Anthony (1195-1231) holding the infant Jesus began with a 1580 painting by El Greco showing the Franciscan priest with a large open Bible in which one can see the very tiny baby emerging from the text. Over time in Christian art the image of the baby grew to become a life-size child in the arms of the saint, sometimes standing on a much smaller book and sometimes with the Bible missing all together. In times of quarantine and isolation, when we may not be able to enjoy the consolation of Jesus in Holy Communion, we can experience the Lord's presence in the Bible, which may have gone missing in our lives. If that is the case, you can invoke Saint Anthony for a return of your lost Bible!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 19:19-21; Matthew 5:33-37 (364). "Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'"



Sunday, Jun 14, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS CHRISTI)

E pluribus unum

As the United States celebrates flag day, remember that when the Revolutionary War began, no “American” flag existed. Each regiment fought under its own banner. It was another two years before the Second Continental Congress determined that 13 stars and stripes would signify the union of the colonies. An everexpanding nation required more stars, and then more. It was wisely decided to leave the stripes alone. Holding 50 states together is a challenge in each generation. It takes even more will to hold together a church a billion strong, squatting under banners of preferred views and opinions. “One faith, one Lord, one Baptism” remains our call to unity.

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58 (167). *“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?”*

Monday, Jun 15, 2020

Cheeky faith

There was a time when the rite of Confirmation included a tap on the cheek—symbolic of being struck—by the bishop, who at the same time wished you peace. The custom was knightly in origin. When you are confirmed, you become a “soldier of Christ,” so you must be ready to risk danger for your faith. But the sacrament strengthens you for the spiritual battles of your lifetime, including for times of crisis. Turning the other cheek hardly means being passive in the face of trials, but rather never giving up in the struggle. Offer yourself over and over in the service of good.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 21:1-16; Matthew 5:38-42 (365). *“Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles.”*

Tuesday, Jun 16, 2020

Perfectly clear

The phrase “biblical criticism” doesn’t mean to criticize Sacred Scripture, though Pope Leo XIII seemed to think so when he wrote the 1893 encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, which took a dim view of the practice. Rather, it refers to the use of scholarly disciplines—such as literature and history—to uncover the Bible’s deeper meanings. Fortunately, 50 years later, Pope Pius XII penned *On the Most Opportune Way to Promote Biblical Studies* to encourage what had been discouraged. Thanks to it, we can delve into the word “perfect” in Matthew 5:48 and learn it’s an imperfect translation of the Greek “*teleios*,” which means to have integrity. May your actions match your words.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 21:17-29; Matthew 5:43-48 (366). *“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Wednesday, Jun 17, 2020

Love leads the way

Doing good is not only what we are called to do as Christians, it is also a benefit to all human beings in the long run. Evolutionary studies show that cooperative behavior has long-term benefits for

human beings; whereas selfish behavior is a short-term win. In these difficult days, let love be your guide, your inner voice, and your consolation. Doing good is indeed its own reward.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 2:1, 6-14; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (367). *“Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them.”*

Thursday, Jun 18, 2020

Lead on

A small change in translation can be a big deal when the words of the Lord’s Prayer are at stake. After years of consideration, Italian and French bishops embraced a change in the version said at Mass, from “*lead us not into temptation*” to “*do not let us fall into temptation*.” The change intends to clarify the fact that God doesn’t lead people toward evil. So, if you are tempted toward sin today, why not ask God to lead you elsewhere?

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 48:1-14; Matthew 6:7-15 (368). *“This is how you are to pray: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.’”*

Friday, Jun 19, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Get to the heart of the matter

Expressions of the meaning of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have come from everywhere—from saints and theologians to singers and tattoo artists—each trying to give shape to the meaning of the unconditional love of Jesus the Christ. The Sacred Heart reminds us to allow ourselves to experience Jesus’ great love for us, to dwell in Jesus’ way of being in and for the world. Use your imagination to place yourself within Jesus’ heart, within love. How does this shift your view of the joys and challenges of the day?

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 1 John 4:7-16; Matthew 11:25-30 (170). *“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God.”*

Saturday, Jun 20, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

What have we done?

During the coronavirus pandemic, some have asked why God would “do this” to us or what we have done to “deserve this punishment.” A similar question was asked of Jesus in the story of the man born blind. Jesus replied that it was nothing the man did and neither was it some form of punishment. Think of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose Immaculate Heart is the expression of her sinlessness. She did nothing wrong yet she suffered mightily. Even her Immaculate Heart is shown encircled with thorns and pierced with a sword. Many have suffered in this season of sickness and loss, through no fault of their own. Pray for those whose hearts are heavy with grief.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Chronicles 24:17-25 (370); Luke 2:41-51 (573). *“His mother kept all these things in her heart.”*



Sunday, Jun 21, 2020

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The true measure of love

How do we know we're loved? It's more than a matter of hearing the words or seeing them written in a card. Love has something to do with fidelity: showing up, being there, not leaving when the stampede is moving in the direction of the door. Love makes sacrifices, shares times of want along with seasons of plenty. Love generously supports and honestly challenges. Love lets go when the time is right. On this Father's Day, celebrate those who have embraced the vocation to show a father's love and helped you recognize your true worth.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 20:10-13; Romans 5:12-15; Matthew 10:26-33 (94). "So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Monday, Jun 22, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PAULINUS OF NOLA, BISHOP

Simplicity is next to Godliness

Paulinus of Nola had it all—a successful career and wealth that enabled him to retire early—and then he didn't. After his only child died as a baby, he and his wife started shedding their life of leisure that sorrow must have rendered insensible. Today, as the world changes dramatically, and our lives with it, we can relate. Paulinus eventually became a monk and celebrated Christian poet. After his wife died, he was named bishop and ended up being friends with many future saints, including Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great. With God's help, you too can turn your own tragedies into triumph in Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 17:5-8, 13-15a, 18; Matthew 7:1-5 (371). "The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you."

Tuesday, Jun 23, 2020

Essential work calls

Today, designated International Widows' Day by the United Nations, is a good day to remember all families that have lost a loved one due to coronavirus—especially families that are most vulnerable, with children or a limited livelihood. As Pope Benedict XVI affirmed in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, "love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind is as essential" to the church "as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the gospel." How can you be Christ's hands and feet today, to help provide sustenance to hurting families and lessen their suffering?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36; Matthew 7:6, 12-14 (372). "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you."

Wednesday, Jun 24, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Give it away

John the Baptist is considered the opening act for Jesus, the forerunner and the one who prepared people to receive the message of Jesus. A better spokesperson could not be found. John's noble counsel that we share our extra coat and food with those who need them holds true today, ever more in these difficult times when we have learned the imperative need to care for one another. Head to the closet—what can you give away?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80 (587). "What, then, will this child be? For surely the hand of the Lord was with him."

Thursday, Jun 25, 2020

Come quick, compassion

The COVID-19 pandemic leaves deep scars around the world. The words of today's psalm are vividly true: "May your compassion quickly come to us, for we are brought very low." The church teaches that God's compassion is always at hand. Suffering can be excruciating, but God's presence endures. Be a compassionate presence to someone who is hurting. The heart you heal may end up being your own.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 24:8-17; Matthew 7:21-29 (374). "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."

Friday, Jun 26, 2020

Make us clean

Today is International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. This year's theme of "Health for Justice. Justice for Health" captures the complexity of the problem, including the need for widespread accountability and equal access to treatment. As a society, we recognize "international days" as a way to raise awareness about global problems and celebrate achievements. The bad news: Worldwide, 35 million people now suffer from drug disorders; the good news: Cooperation among nations is becoming more coordinated and sustained. In April 2020, during a month the church dedicated to the "drama of addiction," Pope Francis prayed that "those suffering from addiction may be properly helped and accompanied." It is a prayer worth repeating.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 25:1-12; Matthew 8:1-4 (375). "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."

Saturday, Jun 27, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Mellow sainthood

Fifth-century Saint Cyril of Alexandria began his career as archbishop with intolerant impulses, expelling Jews from the city. But with time he softened his views, and so is remembered instead for opposing the idea that Jesus' humanity was a mere disguise. How compassionate Jesus is toward the centurion in today's gospel, how tenderly he touches the hand of Peter's mother-in-law. Surely he shows the best of being human, nothing is camouflage. In the process of maturing, how have your own hard edges been softened and made compassionate?

TODAY'S READINGS: Lamentations 2:2, 10-14, 18-19; Matthew 8:5-17



Sunday, Jun 28, 2020

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Welcome, prophet

Younger generations are quick to tell older ones how wrong they are about everything. But wise elders don't dismiss challenges to their perspective lightly—especially when they have some truth to them. A prophetic word may at times come more naturally to the young: free of the accretions of habit and with no comfortable niche to defend (yet). Take time today to talk across the age gap. Hear the words to another generation's songs, consider their protests, withhold instant judgment. Having a conversation partner, as we've learned from the time of isolation, is worth the investment.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10:37-42 (97). *"Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward."*

Monday, Jun 29, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

A matching set for all eternity

Saints Peter and Paul are together the patrons of Rome, where both were martyred around the same time. The two men had their differences, but they were central in establishing the Christian faith, which eventually won over the Roman Empire despite fierce opposition from officials. Saint Augustine wrote: "Both apostles share the same feast day, for these two were one . . . Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labors, their sufferings, their preaching, and their confession of faith." Amen.

TODAY'S READINGS: Day: Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19 (591). *"Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

Tuesday, Jun 30, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME

Holiness involves dying a little each day

Tertullian, one of the first Christian theologians, wrote: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The church's first martyrs are commemorated a day after the feast of Saints Peter and Paul—who tradition says were also victims of Nero's slaughter, beginning in 64. And martyrs aren't meant to be just a memory but also a model. Look no further than first responders and essential workers to see modern examples of those following the model of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Offer a sign of gratitude for their service.

TODAY'S READINGS: Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12; Matthew 8:23-27 (378). *"Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?"*

Wednesday, Jul 01, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JUNIPERO SERRA, PRIEST

Live and learn

Missionaries in the age of the Iberian conquest of the Americas played a complex role, as protectors of the Indians but also projectors of the empire's power. Junípero Serra shares that mixed legacy—a mission priest who brought the saving power of Jesus but also was part of a colonization project that brought harsh treatment and epidemics. We know a little more about

indigenous rights today—and about epidemics too, for that matter. Keep the faith, but mix it with a healthy dose of respect for different traditions.

TODAY'S READINGS: Amos 5:14-15, 21-24; Matthew 8:28-34 (379). *"Seek good and not evil, that you may live."*

Thursday, Jul 02, 2020

The healing power of compassion

Jesus healed in ways we consider miraculous, not because he had anything to prove about his power, but because his compassion urged him to alleviate suffering in whatever ways he could. His teaching and his healing went hand in hand: Both were focused on bringing us to wholeness. When he calls the paralytic man his son or child, it displays a mark of the tenderness he feels for all of us. Jesus draws us close in a healing embrace. Accept his healing today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Amos 7:10-17; Matthew 9:1-8 (380). *"Courage, child, your sins are forgiven."*

Friday, Jul 03, 2020

FEAST OF THOMAS, APOSTLE

Beyond all doubt

Thomas may have started out doubting, but once he saw and touched the truth, his faith took him very far indeed. It is said he traveled to the southwest coast of India in the year 52 and spent the last 20 years of his life there planting Christianity. To this day, "Saint Thomas Christians" in India trace their origins back to the apostle. In fact, Thomas is so popular that India has issued a commemorative stamp in his honor! Doubt does not oppose faith, it makes faith possible.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:24-29 (593). *"Thomas answered and said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'"*

Saturday, Jul 04, 2020

INDEPENDENCE DAY

'Tis of thee

It's not all that well known that at its founding, the United States was not a terribly tolerant collection of colonies when it came to religion. Every colony but Pennsylvania had some form of antiCatholic law at the time of Independence. Thankfully, customs, attitudes, and laws have evolved. But freedom can never be taken for granted, lest it be taken for good! Celebrate your freedom today—as an American and as a Catholic!

TODAY'S READINGS: Amos 9:11-15; Matthew 9:14-17 (382). *"The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."*