



Sunday, Jul 05, 2020

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

God's here, in the flesh

A small boy resisted saying good night. His father told him, "Don't worry, I'm in the next room." The child pleaded, "But I need you here." Taking a religious tactic, the father said, "You're not alone; God is always with you." Placing both hands on his father's cheeks and drawing his face level to his own, his son replied: "But God don't have no skin." The child perceived that a faceless, invisible God is not of much help on those dark nights when we need a friend near. But God does have skin in the game. The divine Presence is as close as our concern for each other.

TODAY'S READINGS: Zechariah 9:9-10; Romans 8:9, 11-13; Matthew 11:25-30 (100). "Although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones."

Monday, Jul 06, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MARIA GORETTI, VIRGIN, MARTYR

The power of "I forgive you"

As 11-year-old Maria Goretti lay dying after being stabbed for rebuffing the sexual advances of a 21-year-old man who lived on her farm, she forgave her attacker. That act alone is shocking enough. But her attacker was so affected by her forgiveness that he repented in prison, prayed to her every day, sought the forgiveness of her mother, attended Maria's canonization in 1950, and became a lay brother. Makes it pretty hard for anyone to justify a grudge, much less retribution.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 2:16, 17b-18, 21-22; Matthew 9:18-26 (383). "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you."

Tuesday, Jul 07, 2020

Wonders never cease

The Seven Modern Wonders of the World were identified on this day in 2007, counterparts to the seven ancient wonders that predate the earthly life of Jesus. Two of these modern monuments—the Colosseum in Rome and Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro—could be the bookends to Christian history. The Colosseum, symbolic of Roman emperors' power, was where early martyrs died while Christianity was outlawed. The colossal Redeemer statue celebrates Christ's ongoing presence in the world. It was used recently to honor pandemic healthcare workers. It proclaims that Christ's love endures now as it did in the time of the Colosseum. Proclaim that love in your own life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:32-38 (384). "They made idols for themselves, to their own destruction."

Wednesday, Jul 08, 2020

The cure for what ails us

Anointing of the Sick is one of the seven sacraments of the church. In its pre-Vatican II life, this sacrament was called Extreme Unction and was reserved for the time of death. Now the church invites all who are seriously sick or experiencing the challenges of advanced age to receive the grace of this sacrament. Celebrated at home, in a church, or in a healthcare facility, often in the presence of loved ones, this sacrament offers those who are sick the peace, strength, and courage of the Lord who himself knew the pain of human suffering. Draw on God's healing powers

and encourage others to do so as well. COVID-19 has complicated pastoral visits, especially in medical facilities, so consult with a priest or chaplain about the wisest course of action.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Matthew 10:1-7 (385). "Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority . . . to cure sickness and disease of every kind."

Thursday, Jul 09, 2020

MEMORIAL OF AUGUSTINE ZHAO RONG, PRIEST, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Faithful unto death

When Christianity first emerged, members of the early church were often persecuted and even killed. Although the targeting of Christians has waxed and waned over the centuries—depending on the political powers and their attitude toward the faith—Christians continue to suffer at the hands of civil authorities and religious extremists, as did the subjects of today's optional memorial, Augustine Zhao Rong and companions, who were martyred in China over a 300-year period. In honor of these Christian martyrs, take a moment today to learn more about interreligious cooperation, an ongoing effort the Holy Father has championed.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 11:1-4, 8e-9; Matthew 10:7-15 (386). "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

Friday, Jul 10, 2020

Don't get comfortable

As Christians, we not only face the hardships of daily existence, but also the challenges arising from living out a faith that demands justice. When it comes to justice, there is no comfort zone for Christians to sit back and watch. The gospels and the long tradition of Catholic social teaching call us to more. No matter your gender, race, or ethnicity, you must be willing to act: to challenge the racist or sexist joke, to support minority-owned businesses, to see yourself in the "other." Catholic leaders are calling now especially to stand with people of color who are disproportionately infected with and dying from COVID-19. How are you being called beyond your comfort zone?

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 14:2-10; Matthew 10:16-23 (387). "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves."

Saturday, Jul 11, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BENEDICT, ABBOT

A rule to live by

Saint Benedict's wisdom has guided people for centuries. Among the gems of his *Rule*: The search for security, wealth, and salvation is futile. Instead, treat each hour as a gift. See in each day reasons for joy. Reverence the tools of work like the vessels of the altar. Small, daily brush strokes create the stunning canvas. Important decisions should be made with consultation, gaining the richness of different viewpoints. Learn from relationships not to take oneself too seriously. Know the value of silence. Choose one of these guidelines to follow each day for a week. Then start again!

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 10:24-33 (388). "And even the hairs of your head are all counted."



Sunday, Jul 12, 2020

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Tell me what you see

Most stories aren't very mysterious. Even so-called mysteries have predictable plots that we anticipate before they unfold. We know, for example, that the fellow wandering into the cemetery at dusk is going to meet a bad end, and the storyteller knows that we know. It's all part of the fun. When reading Bible parables, the meaning is rarely mysterious. Seeds fall on different soil, reap different results. No surprise there. A parable's mystery isn't in not knowing, but in not seeing. What kind of soil are we? What seed has been planted in us, awaiting its harvest?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 8:18-23; Matthew 13:123 (103). "The disciples approached him and said, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?'"

Monday, Jul 13, 2020

Looking for prophets in our midst

Many of us lately have learned what it's like to be held back by illness, as the coronavirus brought about grinding halts to life as we knew it. Blessed Charlie Rodríguez Santiago, a candidate to be the first Puerto Rican saint, was prevented from getting an education because of severe chronic illness. He died on this day in 1963 at the age of 44—and left behind a legacy of liturgical renewal in the church. He advocated for use of vernacular languages and increased lay participation—which came to be shortly after his death with Vatican II reforms. How can you too be a prophet for hope and change in our own disease-challenged days?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 10:34-11:1 (389). "Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward."

Tuesday, Jul 14, 2020

MEMORIAL OF KATERI TEKAKWITHA, VIRGIN

Indigenous help to heal the world

Kateri Tekakwitha—born Mohawk and Algonquin in 1656, canonized in 2012—is a fitting intercessor for coronavirus, though she is actually patron saint of ecology. Losing her family to the same smallpox epidemic that left her disfigured and half blind, Kateri knew firsthand the suffering wrought by disease. Perhaps her empathy helps account for so many miraculous healings attributed to her to this day. But Kateri's love of the earth may also inspire our continued care of the environment, which has seen healing of its own during human quarantine. Kateri, pray for us on all fronts!

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:1-9; Matthew 11:20-24 (390). "Will you be exalted to heaven?"

Wednesday, Jul 15, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BONAVENTURE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Love finds the common ground

Saint Bonaventure (1221-74) was born Giovanni di Fidanza to a noble Italian family and joined the Franciscan order at the age of 22. By then, Francis had been dead for 17 years, and conflict had arisen among his followers as they tried to imitate the poverty Francis embraced. Bonaventure, who brought gifts of intellect and

organization, emerged as a leader and teacher who helped the order resolve differences and renew its purpose. He encouraged a Franciscan detachment from wealth and practiced it himself, but not at the expense of generous love. Bring a spirit of love to the conflicts you face today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 10:5-7, 13b-16; Matthew 11:25-27 (391). "What you have hidden from the learned and clever, you have revealed to the merest children."

Thursday, Jul 16, 2020

Easy does it

Today's readings promise both a smooth path (the first reading) and a light yoke (the gospel). But Christianity does not promise comfort and ease. Rather, our faith is founded on the idea that Christ conquered death *through* suffering. One of our primary symbols is the crucifix, an ongoing reminder that Christ offers victory over suffering and death but first experienced them. Ultimately, our rough paths and burdens do find rest in Christ. If you are tempted today to give in to ridicule, anger, despair, or a sin that weighs you down, try to "put on the yoke of Christ," and see if your mood lightens.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19; Matthew 11:28-30 (392). "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

Friday, Jul 17, 2020

Kyrie eleison, down the road that I must travel

The Greek words *Kyrie eleison* are some of the most ancient—and powerful—words of the Christian liturgy: "Lord, have mercy." Typically we find these words in the penitential rite where the church asks God's mercy and forgiveness. But these words are not just for penance; they are words of life and encouragement to the weary soul. It's as if we are saying, "Look kindly upon me." This call for mercy is not just directed toward God; it is also part of the fabric of our relationships with ourselves and the world. We can look kindly upon ourselves, instead of berating ourselves for what we didn't get done. We can look kindly upon those around us filled with fear and hatred. We can look kindly upon the fragile earth and God's good creation. How is mercy calling you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Matthew 12:1-8 (393). "If you knew what this meant, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned these innocent men."

Saturday, Jul 18, 2020

A tireless voice for justice

During the era of European conquest of the Americas, Native American people were typically regarded as savages who must be "conquered" and coerced into conversion or pushed aside. Bartolomé de Las Casas is remembered today as one of the few voices opposing the dominant ideology of religious and secular leaders alike. Appalled by colonial cruelties in the Caribbean in the 1500s, he doggedly advocated for the rights of indigenous people for some 50 years, urging an end to the cruelties and coerced conversions. Remember de Las Casas and make justice a central part of your own witness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 2:1-5; Matthew 12:14-21 (394). "They oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance."



Sunday, Jul 19, 2020

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

With friends like this . . . we're blessed!

We tend to find what we're looking for. First Bishop of Boston John Cheverus, who died this day in 1836, always sought—and brought—friendship. Forced to flee France after his ordination because of the French Revolution, he arrived in the United States to become the trusted pastor of native peoples in Maine. Named Bishop of Boston, he drew resistance from Protestant leaders there, who later wept and protested when Cheverus was called back to France. His priests followed him, laypeople trusted him, poor families relied on him. However you lead, do it with love and friendship.

TODAY'S READINGS: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43 (106). *"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed . . . until the whole batch was leavened."*

Monday, Jul 20, 2020

MEMORIAL OF APOLLINARIS, BISHOP, MARTYR

Stay the course

According to tradition, the Syrian Saint Apollinaris was made a bishop of Ravenna, Italy by Saint Peter himself. The miracles and preaching of Apollinaris won over many converts, and the Romans in charge tortured and drove him from his city multiple times, but nothing could stop him from returning to his flock, until he eventually died from his beatings. If you need help persevering in the face of great challenges, look to this early Christian leader and pray for a dose of the strength he found in staying unwaveringly true to his faith and his church.

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 6:1-4, 6-8; Matthew 12:38-42 (395). *"There is something greater than Solomon here."*

Tuesday, Jul 21, 2020

MEMORIAL OF LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Operate out of love

Lawrence of Brindisi, an Italian priest, surrendered everything he had to God's will. His offering consisted not only of the poverty, chastity, and obedience required of his Capuchin religious order, but also his compassion and considerable intellect. Lawrence's fluency in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, Bohemian, Spanish, and French meant he was tasked to translate the Bible as well as negotiate peace with other countries. None of these lofty pursuits kept him from showing love to everyone he met. May we all practice what he preached: "God is love and all his operations proceed from love."

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Matthew 12:46-50 (396). *"Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."*

Wednesday, Jul 22, 2020

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE, APOSTLE OF THE APOSTLES

Be the bearer of Good News

Contrary to the mistaken legend that arose later, Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute. She was a friend and follower of Jesus who accompanied him during his ministry and remained with him through the agony of his death. Compelled by unbearable grief, she is the first person in all four gospels to witness the empty

tomb. In 2016, Pope Francis issued a decree that elevated this day from a memorial to a feast day as he called Mary Magdalene the Apostle to the Apostles. What good news of Jesus can you bring to others today?

TODAY'S READINGS: Song of Songs 3:1-4b or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; John 20:1-2, 11-18 (603). *"Jesus then said . . . 'Go to my brothers and tell them . . .'"*

Thursday, Jul 23, 2020

Your turn to keep the faith going

In today's gospel Jesus notes that the crowd hears him but doesn't understand. Misunderstanding the message of Jesus was a problem from the beginning, which is why we all can use help in understanding matters of faith, help that is available from the Christian community. Catholics do not isolate scripture alone as the sole basis of faith but also emphasize tradition as essential to our understanding; tradition handed on through the church. You are part of the living Body of Christ that carries on the tradition. Today recall that you help express and form the tradition through your actions—make them good ones!

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13; Matthew 13:10-17 (398). *"The disciples approached Jesus and said, 'Why do you speak to the crowd in parables?'"*

Friday, Jul 24, 2020

MEMORIAL OF SHARBEL MAKHLUF, PRIEST

Healing measures

Legend says healing might be gained by traveling to Lebanon and praying at the tomb of Sharbel Makhluf (1828-98), a Maronite monk known for his virtue and holiness. Closer to home, there's a mosaic shrine to Saint Sharbel located in New York City's St. Patrick Cathedral. Throughout the world, there are more than 3 million Maronite Christians, an Eastern Catholic Church established in the fifth century and in full communion with Rome. In a world with so much illness, today is a good day to ask Saint Sharbel to lend a healing hand. And we should all do the same.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 3:14-17; Matthew 13:18-23 (399). *"The seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it."*

Saturday, Jul 25, 2020

FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE

Let the storm subside

The apostle James, along with his brother John, members of Jesus' inner circle, were nicknamed the "sons of thunder" perhaps because of their fiery personalities. At one point in the gospels they asked Jesus if they should call "fire down from heaven" on a village that does not welcome them. Fortunately for the villagers (and for us) Jesus had a different idea of how power should be used—not for vengeance but for healing. Pray that those who wield great power in our own nation and world might take their cue on this point from Jesus rather than James.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605). *"Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant."*



Sunday, Jul 26, 2020

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Treat the children well

Happy Parents' Day! Children are the treasure in every society. For a viable future, we have to invest deeply in their upbringing. Golden-mouthed saint John Chrysostom offered tips on childrearing: Let the saints enter your home through the naming of your children. Teach your kids Bible stories. Raise them singing psalms and hymns. Encourage in them a bold, not timid, spirit. Disciplined self-possession will benefit them all their lives. Show them actions have consequences, now and in eternity. Finally, give more care to your children than you do for your job, home, wealth, and possessions.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13:44-52 (109). *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field."*

Monday, Jul 27, 2020 What is the parable of your life?

Jesus used a lot of parables to teach his followers—so many that his disciples asked him why. So that the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you," he answered. Parables offer a relatable way to understand an abstract spiritual lesson. Most of us know what it is like to plant, cook, eat, manage money, run a business, deal with relationship conflict. What Christian truths would you like your own simple life story to reveal to others? How that parable unfolds is up to you.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 13:1-11; Matthew 13:31-35 (401). *"All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables."*

Tuesday, Jul 28, 2020

Sow the seeds of faith

Blessed Stanley Rother, a missionary and the first U.S. priest to be declared a martyr, died this day in 1981. Not only did he love and serve his flock of indigenous Guatemalans, he helped build a medical clinic, school, and radio station. But it was his upbringing as an Oklahoma farm boy that endeared him even more to his modest agricultural community—a priest who preached but also plowed their fields. As a farmer, he understood the parables of Jesus more than most: how seeds must die, how flocks need a shepherd, how the harvest requires extra help—our help. Play your part.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 14:17-22; Matthew 13:36-43 (402). *"The field is the world, the good seed the children of the Kingdom."*

Wednesday, Jul 29, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MARTHA

Let Martha be an inspiration

We remember today a friend of Jesus who with her brother, Lazarus, and her sister, Mary, provided a home of friendship that was a place of respite for the Lord. She could prepare a meal and manage the many details of hosting a gathering of friends. She could speak her mind honestly and trust that she would be heard. She recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. She was human

enough to be crabby yet faithful enough to believe that Jesus was able to bring life out of death. Saint Martha, in these challenging days, pray for us.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 15:10, 16-21 (403); John 11:19-27 or Luke 10:38-42 (607). *"Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah."*

Thursday, Jul 30, 2020

Deliver us from evil

The United Nations has declared today "World Day Against Trafficking in Persons." Church leaders have been outspoken on this global issue that targets poor and marginalized people, robbing them of their God-given dignity. In today's gospel Jesus envisions the kingdom of heaven as devoid of wickedness. Today is a good moment to oppose the wickedness of trafficking by adding your voice to the many who are committed to raising awareness and rooting out this evil.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 18:1-6; Matthew 13:47-53 (404). *"The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous."*

Friday, Jul 31, 2020

MEMORIAL OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, PRIEST

Soldier us through

Saint Ignatius of Loyola died in 1566 of Roman fever, a type of malaria. During a time of pandemic, it seems appropriate to call on the aid of a saint known for his survival instincts and spiritual prowess. After all, most thought Ignatius, a Castilian soldier, would die from injuries sustained in battle at age 30, but instead he lived another 35 years. During his time of convalescence, he experienced a spiritual conversion that led to the development of his popular *Spiritual Exercises* and the founding of the Jesuit order that has as its motto "For the greater glory of God." What can you do today, following Ignatius' example, to give God glory despite times of confinement and uncertainty?

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 26:1-9; Matthew 13:54-58 (405). *"A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house."*

Saturday, Aug 01, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ALPHONSUS LIGUORI, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Speak plainly

Alphonsus was a bright and gifted youth, earning doctorates in both civil and canon law in Naples at 16. He was so small at the time of his graduation, he later wrote, that his doctoral robes swallowed him up, causing spectators to erupt in laughter. But faith was no laughing matter to the young man, who in short order left the legal profession and dedicated his life to the church to serve those on the margins. This brilliant doctor of the church believed in plain speech. "I have never preached a sermon which the poorest old woman in the congregation could not understand," he said. Let your own witness be simple and direct.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24; Matthew 14:1-12 (406). *"For in truth it was the LORD who sent me to you, to speak all these things for you to hear."*