



Sunday, Aug 02, 2020

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The glass is still half empty

August is National Water Quality Month, which may not sound exciting, or even like a religious issue. Yet the sacred character of water is attested from the Creation story, in which God's Spirit hovers over the waters, during the corrective flood in Noah's time, at the Red Sea's freedom crossing, up to the cleansing sign of Baptism. Isaiah issues the divine invitation: Come to the water! But what if that water is risky to drink, as it is for some of our nation's citizens and a sizeable percentage of the world population? Support clean water projects, because water is life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21 (112). "Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water!"

Monday, Aug 03, 2020

A port for any storm

Jesus' mother Mary has many titles—one of them is Our Lady, Star of the Sea. Under this name, she is a protector of seafarers. But Mary is a guiding star for all of us as we seek her son through the storms of life. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: "If the winds of temptation arise; if you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star, call on Mary. If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star, call on Mary." Don't lose sight of her, and you won't lose your way to Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 28:1-17 (407); Matthew 14:22-36 (408). "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

Tuesday, Aug 04, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOHN VIANNEY, PRIEST

Come to the curer of souls

Most male Catholic saints were priests. Some were priests whose great intellect sparked important theological concepts. Others traveled to exotic places to teach about Christ. Still others died as courageous martyrs. But the French saint John Vianney—commonly known as the Curé of Ars—became a saint simply by being an ordinary, but extraordinarily dedicated, parish priest. In French, the word *curé* means "pastor," or one who is "charged with the care of souls." Vianney cared for thousands of souls who sought spiritual healing in the confessional, where he spent up to 16 hours a day. Seek ordinary ways to be holy today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 30:1-2, 12-15, 18-22; Matthew 14:22-36 or 15:1-2, 10-14 (408). "People brought to him all those who were sick."

Wednesday, Aug 05, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY MAJOR

The Word made flesh set in stone

How many papal basilicas are there in Rome? St. Peter's gets primary attention, but actually there are three more, each with its own rich history, including St. Paul Outside the Walls and St. John Lateran. The one whose dedication we celebrate today, St. Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore) pays homage to Mary our mother and her role in the life of her son. Pope Sixtus III built this basilica after the Council of Ephesus (431) decreed that Mary is the mother of God incarnate (*Theotokos*). The theology is important. Once again, the church makes clear that Jesus was both divine and human. Thus, we believe in the sacredness of human

life, and we look to Mary's unflinching love, as Godbearer and first disciple, for inspiration.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 31:1-7; Matthew 15:21-28 (409). "With age-old love, I have loved you."

Thursday, Aug 06, 2020

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

Shining like the sun

The story of Jesus' Transfiguration is important enough to be part of Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels, and the Feast of the Transfiguration has been celebrated since the ninth century and officially on the Roman Catholic calendar since the mid-15th century. This emphasis points toward our deep human longing for transcendence, for a glimpse of divine light such as that experienced by Peter, James, and John. What can you do today to open yourself up to Jesus' light? Perhaps pray for the gift of perception, of receptivity to God's presence.

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Matthew 17:1-9 (614). "And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light."

Friday, Aug 07, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CAJETAN, PRIEST

Faith takes courage

Since the first followers of Jesus, the church has had its struggles, but always, the Holy Spirit keeps the church faithful. Courageous people in every age rise up to lead renewal within the church. In the early 1500s, that person was Cajetan, who felt the pain of the Body of Christ and dedicated himself to doing something about it. With friends, he founded a group of clergy dedicated to trusting in God's providence and claiming no property nor money from the people—the opposite of clergy at the time who were becoming wealthy off the backs of the people. In time, the same church that Cajetan sought to reform recognized him as a saint. Who are the courageous ones in your life who help you stay faithful? Draw strength from them to help institute necessary reforms in our time.

TODAY'S READINGS: Nahum 2:1, 3; 3:1-3, 6-7; Matthew 16:24-28 (411). "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny [themselves], take up [their] cross, and follow me."

Saturday, Aug 08, 2020

MEMORIAL OF DOMINIC, PRIEST

Listening is the first step in preaching

Into a 13th-century world where few knew basic theology, and wealthy, mediocre preachers traveled with retinues, Dominic brought dramatic change. He encouraged his friars to study the essentials of the faith, preach eloquently, live simply on what they could beg, and leave enclosed monasteries to reach out to people where they saw the need. By putting himself amid people, Dominic found opportunities to brilliantly counter the Albigensian heresy, a popular dualism that saw spirit as good, matter as evil, and denied the Incarnation. Take time to hear what others are saying so that you are sure to respond as Dominic did with the gospel of love that promotes the dignity of all.

TODAY'S READINGS: Habakkuk 1:12—2:4; Matthew 17:14-20 (412). "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed . . . nothing will be impossible for you."



Sunday, Aug 09, 2020

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ghosts of the past, spirit of the present

Nagasaki was the second and last city to date to endure attack by atomic weapon. In the instant after the bomb's release, 35,000 people were killed, mostly factory workers. Those factories, which supported the Japanese war effort, were the targets of the attack. It all made sense in a war room at the time. After the mushroom cloud clears, however, we have to reckon with the ghosts of our choices. The animated drama, *In This Corner of the World*, offers a moving reflection on the personal cost of these attacks on ordinary Japanese citizens. Pray for all victims of war, and for lasting world peace.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33 (115). *"The disciples saw him walking on the sea. . . . 'It is a ghost,' they said, and they cried out in fear."*

Monday, Aug 10, 2020

FEAST OF LAWRENCE, DEACON, MARTYR

Be inspired by the martyrs among us

Lawrence, a Roman deacon who was martyred in 258, is one of the most venerated of saints, and there are many legends about his gruesome death, which prompted widespread conversions to Christianity in his city. Most Christians aren't called to such spectacular sacrifice, but there are other types of martyrs—ordinary folks in every generation who face adversity with total commitment to God and sow the seeds of faith all around them. They are martyrs at the hands of disease, hatred, bigotry, selfishness, and cruelty. They fight the good fight and leave us all the better for it. Pray for that level of faith and perseverance.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 9:6-10; John 12:24-26 (618). *"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."*

Tuesday, Aug 11, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CLARE, VIRGIN

We are what we love

Those who enter consecrated life in the Catholic Church make at least three vows—of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Known as the Evangelical Counsels, the vows are meant to shield disciples from greed, lust, and pride. For most religious orders, poverty is simply a commitment to shared (rather than individual) ownership. But Clare of Assisi, among the first followers of Saint Francis and the first woman known to write a set of monastic guidelines, made sure her order of Poor Clares owned nothing at all. "We become what we love," she wrote. "If we love things, we become a thing." In honor of Clare, take some time to examine what you love and what you own to see whether anything is hampering your spiritual life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 2:8-3:4; Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14 (414). *"Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest."*

Wednesday, Aug 12, 2020

Get engaged

One of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching—Call to Family, Community, and Participation—asserts that we have a right and a responsibility to participate in society and to seek the common good, taking special care of the poor and vulnerable. Since 1999, the United Nations has set aside August 12 as International Youth Day to celebrate and enhance the global

efforts of youth to build a better world. This year's theme is "Youth Engagement for Global Action," and we've certainly seen evidence of that in recent street protests. What are you doing to engage youth? Offer young people you know a call to action—or better yet—respond to the call they offer you.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22; Matthew 18:15-20 (415). *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."*

Thursday, Aug 13, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PONTIAN, POPE, AND HIPPOLYTUS, PRIEST, MARTYRS

Bring them out of exile

Today's saints—Pontian and Hippolytus—endured exile together. They were forced by third-century Roman emperor Maximinus to work in the mines of the island of Sardinia and eventually perished there. Formerly, they had been a pope (Pontian) and theologian (Hippolytus). The church advocates at many levels for migrants who have been exiled from their homeland by war, poverty, or persecution. In homage to exiles across the centuries, consider taking a step today to aid migrants in your region of the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 12:1-12; Matthew 18:21—19:1 (416). *"'Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.'"*

Friday, Aug 14, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, PRIEST, MARTYR

Witness to the world

Many young Catholics may have had the opportunity to read the comic book "Soldier of God," about the life of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, who was killed in the Auschwitz concentration camp. It begins: "This is a true story of a real flesh-and-blood hero of God." Young readers were captivated, and most could not forget the images of Maximilian volunteering to take the place of a man who was selected to be killed. "Would I do that?" is an instinctive question when faced with such powerful witness. Not all are called to martyrdom, but each Christian commits to being an example of God's deep love and care for people, especially the most vulnerable. "How can I be God's witness?" is a good question to ask yourself each day.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63 or 16:59-63; Matthew 19:3-12 (417). *"Live in your blood and grow like a plant in the field."*

Saturday, Aug 15, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Hidden glory revealed

Mary, now united totally with her son, with whom she suffered excruciating ordeals, shows us how suffering transforms to glory. She gathers all her human children close in this season of harvest, her bounteous fruits and flowers. Today's gospel shows Elizabeth affirming in Mary a vigor and holiness, mirroring God's, that she herself might not have recognized. This feast points to the same glory in each of us, perhaps hard to believe, but still hidden, vital, intact.

TODAY'S READINGS: Day: Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56 (622). *"My spirit rejoices in God my Savior."*



Sunday, Aug 16, 2020

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Believe outside the box

A natural tension exists between the familiar and unfamiliar, the neighbor and stranger, our kind and every other kind. Even Jesus seems initially to have limited his mission to “the lost sheep” of Israel. A clever woman, a Canaanite, persuades him to think outside the box on this issue. Later, Saint Paul abandons the box altogether, taking the gospel to the Gentiles outright. We’re the beneficiaries of that decision. These days, as we wrestle with how much we’re obliged to share our land and its richness with others, we might consider the crumbs that fell from the table to us.

TODAY’S READINGS: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Romans 11:13-15, 29-32; Matthew 15:21-28 (118). *“It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.”*

Monday, Aug 17, 2020

Be a good steward

When it comes to Christian stewardship, there’s an awful lot we are supposed to take care of—the whole world to be exact! Pope Francis said, “In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts!” The key to stewardship is remembering that it’s not ownership—your talents, your treasure, all of creation were bestowed on you. Show your gratitude to God by using them responsibly and sharing them with others lovingly and generously.

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 24:15-24; Matthew 19:16-22 (419). *“Sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”*

Tuesday, Aug 18, 2020

Build a human economy

People’s livelihoods have been hit by COVID-19’s closure of workplaces. Protests over racial inequality shine an unforgiving light on economic inequality. The Catholic Church has a lot to say about how the economy should work to promote the common good. The Catechism of the Catholic Church denounces two economic extremes—communism’s centralized control, but also capitalism’s tendency to make individualism and the market into modern-day idols. Above all, let us remember what the U.S. Catholic Bishops have written: “The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy. . . . A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.” Keep that in mind as you make big and small economic decisions.

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 28:1-10; Matthew 19:23-30 (420). *“By your great wisdom applied to your trading you have heaped up your riches.”*

Wednesday, Aug 19, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOHN EUDES, PRIEST

Beyond thank you

Today is World Humanitarian Day, a day established in 2018 by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers who step up in times of crises. If ever there is a year for us to honor and advocate for such workers, it is this year. As the world has faced a global pandemic, we have been challenged more than ever to recognize the essential workers in our midst who have risked their lives for

our well-being. Today is a good day to think about ways to support humanitarian workers beyond a simple thank you through a donation, a call of advocacy to an elected official, or joining alongside them in their work.

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 34:1-11; Matthew 20:1-16 (421). *“The last shall be first and the first shall be last.”*

Thursday, Aug 20, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BERNARD, ABBOT, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Faithful through thick and thin

Today is the Memorial of Bernard of Clairvaux, whose impact on Europe in the 12th century was profound and whose influence lives on worldwide in Cistercian monasteries and Catholic theology. He was a scholar (whose books are still readily available), a skilled arbitrator, mystic, monk, reformer, and leader of Europe’s second crusade (a violent venture that ended badly). Through his successes and mistakes, Bernard of Clairvaux aimed to follow Jesus. We are called to do the same. Do one thing today that puts your heart, mind, or skills to the service of God.

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 36:23-28; Matthew 22:1-14 (422). *“Tell those invited: ‘Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.’”*

Friday, Aug 21, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PIUS X, POPE

The right of kings that was wrong

Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, Giuseppe Sarto was elected Pope Pius X, but not without controversy. The leading vote-getter of the papal conclave was Mariano Rampolla, but Polish Cardinal Jan Kosielsko exercised a veto in the name of Emperor Franz Joseph. That swung the vote to Sarto. It was the last time a reigning monarch exercised a longstanding right of veto in a papal conclave. Government interference in church leadership has always been an issue, though today less so in most (though not all) parts of the world. Pray for a worldwide church that answers to only one Lord, Jesus.

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Matthew 22:34-40 (423). *“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*

Saturday, Aug 22, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE QUEENSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

She wears her crown well

Though queenship is a concept quite foreign to a democratic society (especially one that threw off royal rulership at its founding!), when applied to Mary it can be understood as an expression of the Holy Mother’s central role in the reign of God. Though today’s feast, established in 1954, is quite recent in terms of the larger sweep of church history, associations of Mary with queenship go back to the angel Gabriel’s announcement that Mary’s son would inherit the throne of King David. Allow Mary to reign in your heart, especially at times when you are called on to take a leap of faith, as Mary certainly was when Gabriel revealed her mission to her.

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 43:1-7b; Matthew 23:1-12 (424). *“Son of man, this is where my throne shall be.”*



Sunday, Aug 23, 2020

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

What is to be healed must first be acknowledged

Today, on the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition, we seek forgiveness for what's been called the "original sin" of our nation: seeing people of color as exploitable resources. Generations of slaveholders were unrepentant about horrific acts they deemed to be entirely moral. The sin of racism that made such attitudes possible has been condemned heartily by the church in more recent generations—though some church leaders in generations past were late coming to that perspective as slaveholders themselves. If racism is to be overcome, we each have confessions to make, repentance to do, and voices to raise.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 22:19-23; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20 (121). *"The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees, and the proud he knows from afar."*

Monday, Aug 24, 2020

FEAST OF BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE

Take your place

Bartholomew gets only a mere mention as one of the 12 apostles in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and is believed to have been the one called Nathanael in the Gospel of John. But what does a name matter, when Jesus knows you, and knows your character, before you even meet? The "greater things" to come that Jesus promised Bartholomew didn't include the glory of a leading role in salvation history, since little else is known about him, but did include being a firsthand witness to God's glory. There's a front-row seat waiting for you, too.

TODAY'S READINGS: Revelation 21:9b-14; John 45-51 (629). *"Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him."*

Tuesday, Aug 25, 2020

MEMORIAL OF LOUIS

A royal example of God's kingdom

No wonder Saint Louis is the patron saint of the Franciscan Secular Order. He used his position in the world—as King Louis the IX of France—to help build the kingdom of God. Like Francis of Assisi, Louis fed lepers and beggars, usually waiting on them himself. He built hospitals and orphanages to take care of his people. He was committed to being a just ruler: "upholding the cause of the poor." Pray such a priority might overshadow partisan politics among policy makers.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a, 14-17; Matthew 23:23-26 (426). *"Cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean."*

Wednesday, Aug 26, 2020

Keep it real

Hypocrisy is the "practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one's own behavior does not conform." Jesus made it clear that he had no patience with such duplicity, as he called out those who spent more time criticizing the religious practices of others rather than living his law of love. Examine your attitudes and words today to see how often critical judgment of others is your prevailing state of mind. The list of small

critiques, like little pinpricks, can easily deflate a joyful spirit.

Ask for the grace to be centered in Divine love.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, 16-18; Matthew 23:27-32 (427). *"Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing. Woe to you, . . . you hypocrites."*

Thursday, Aug 27, 2020

MEMORIAL OF MONICA

Stick-to-itiveness pays off

Saint Monica, one of a relatively small number of African saints, is typically described as Saint Augustine's long-suffering mother, who prayed, cajoled, and urged him to abandon his wayward life and embrace Christianity, which he eventually did. Her own intellectual and leadership abilities are unrecorded except as they influenced her family members, but her story of persistence and strength continues to inspire. Many in the church uphold her as a model of enduring faith. If you feel like quitting when faced by a difficult problem or problematic family member, pray to Saint Monica for wisdom and perseverance.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; Matthew 24:42-51 (428). *"Jesus said to his disciples: 'Stay awake!'"*

Friday, Aug 28, 2020

MEMORIAL OF AUGUSTINE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

A sin for the ages

In his theological work *The City of God*, Saint Augustine (354-430) proposed that slavery, an accepted practice of his day, was sinful and did more harm to the slaveholder than the enslaved person. Although Augustine's sentiment may have seemed enlightened for its time, slavery, particularly among poor people and people of color, continues to this day in various forms around the world. We can see the evil that racism perpetuates. All of humanity is straining under the weight of this sin. It is time for each of us to "open wide our hearts," as the U.S. bishops advised in their 2018 pastoral letter on racism. We do well to have a first (or fresh) look at it today.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 1:17-25; Matthew 25:1-13 (429). *"Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."*

Saturday, Aug 29, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE PASSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Bravely lead the way

Speaking up—when staying silent would have been easy—cost John the Baptist his earthly life, though it gained him a special place in the heavenly pantheon. He stands as a unique witness to the coming of the Lord, and along with Jesus and Mary, is the only individual honored with multiple feasts in the liturgical calendar. You may not always risk death to speak out against injustice, but it does take courage and a sense of duty to something greater than yourself. Let John the Baptist be the inspiration you need to be a prophetic voice.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (430); Mark 6:17-29 (634). *"When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb."*



Sunday, Aug 30, 2020

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Take the road that leads to glory

Suffering is no one's first choice. But some things are worth suffering for. When women give birth, when parents head off to sometimes grueling employment, when soldiers defend against aggressors, when missionaries leave their homeland, when young adults embrace religious vocations, they all accept that a certain amount of pain and loss will accompany these decisions. So Jesus accepts that the way to defeat the grip of sin and death is through a bitter reckoning in Jerusalem. Peter wanted a safer route and a happy ending. But sometimes the happy ending is only reached by the road we're avoiding.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 20:7-9; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27 (124). "You are thinking not as God does, but as humans do."

Monday, Aug 31, 2020

Read to me

"When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people," says the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. What an honor then to be a reader at Mass! The Missal recommends that readers be "people who are truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared, so that by their hearing the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for Sacred Scripture." Are you up to the task? Consider volunteering to proclaim the word of God in your parish if you are able, and in any case, thank those who already do so.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Luke 4:16-30 (431). "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Tuesday, Sep 01, 2020

WORLD DAY FOR PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

Be a breath of fresh air

How do we pray for creation's care? First, we praise the Creator, who shines in every tree, drop of water, patch of sunlight. God's meticulous, elegant creation nourishes us with food and sustains us with beauty. Second, we educate ourselves to the "urgent challenge to protect our common home," as Pope Francis puts it in *Laudato si'*. Third, we join prayer with action. Understanding the damage of climate change, air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, consider: What to do personally? As a family? A neighborhood? A church? A nation?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16; Luke 4:31-37 (432). "They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority."

Wednesday, Sep 02, 2020

Let them come unto us

One of the many striking features of Jesus' ministry is the fact that he turned no one away. Whether at a meal or preaching and teaching, Jesus welcomed everyone to share in the experience. All who needed counsel or healing received it, regardless of rank or stature. Contrast this with policies in so many areas of society that restrict those who can receive services, support, and aid. What does it mean to really follow Jesus? At the least it means

following his example and building a society that discriminates less, shares more, and places the emphasis on responding to the needs of all people rather than the desires of a few.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Luke 4:38-44 (433). "At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them."

Thursday, Sep 03, 2020

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

Dynasty, the papal version

Gregory was born around 540 in Rome, in an era when priests were still allowed to marry. Born into Roman nobility, he came with quite a clerical pedigree, including at least one papal ancestor, Pope Felix II, who reigned a century before Gregory was chosen pope by acclamation (another tradition of that era) in 590. We don't memorialize Gregory for his lineage, however, but rather for his humility. He preferred monastic life to high office, resisted the trappings of power, and referred to himself as a "servant" of God—language that was unprecedented coming from a member of the nobility. We can thank Gregory not because he was great, but because he was good.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; Luke 5:1-11 (434). "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."

Friday, Sep 04, 2020

Have faith in a historical perspective

Marriage customs were quite different in biblical times than they are now, involving some customs that today would seem unsavory, to say the least, such as death by stoning for women who failed to pass a "proof of virginity" test during the consummation of a marriage. Of course, no such proof was available or expected of the groom. Not every custom from biblical days deserves to be admired, much less perpetuated. A historical approach to biblical literature helps us separate the wheat from the chaff in our heritage.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Luke 5:33-39 (435). "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"

Saturday, Sep 05, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

She stood fast while others fled

The tradition of dedicating Saturdays not already set aside as memorials to Mary dates to the ninth century. Though the origins of the tradition are not clear, Saturdays serve to remind us that Mary was steadfast in her witness in the dark time between Jesus' Good Friday Crucifixion and his Easter Sunday Resurrection. Mary neither fled nor denied the son she loved and followed. We can recall her resolute discipleship today and every Saturday and commit ourselves to stand vigilant in our own faith, even if at times we stand alone.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 4:6b-15; Luke 6:1-5 (436). "Have you not read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry?"