



Sunday, Sep 06, 2020

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Strive for rugged interdependence

Individualism—rugged or otherwise—has its perks. But what's more rugged and infinitely more fruitful is the spirit of communal interdependence. Jesus tells us not merely that there's safety in numbers, but that Christianity itself is in the balance. A loner Christian simply can't be found. Even a hermit lives in communion with the greater church. Our gathering hymn at the start of each Mass tells us why we come together, whether in person or online: because Jesus is present in the love that passes between us. Practice your Christianity in all of your daily contacts.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20 (127). *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

Monday, Sep 07, 2020

Stand for work

This year's Labor Day is a difficult one for our country, with so many workers unemployed, underemployed, or employed in high-risk settings as a result of the pandemic. In these tough times, let's remember the church's teachings on the dignity of work and workers. The U.S. bishops have stated, "All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations." Stand up for workers' rights today and every day.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; Luke 6:6-11 (437). *"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?"*

Tuesday, Sep 08, 2020

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Find hope in Mary

One of the most beautiful prayers of the Catholic Church, "The Litany of Loreto" dates back to the 1500s and uses poetic language to proclaim the many titles and symbols of Mary. One of those symbols—Mary as Morning Star—describes Our Lady's relationship to Jesus and her role in salvation history. Just as Earth's morning star, Venus, emits the day's first light ahead of the dawning of the sun, so too does the birth of Mary provide a glimmer of hope ahead of the birth of her son. Turn to Mary today with anything you might feel hopeless about.

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 5:1-4a or Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 (636). *"Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ."*

Wednesday, Sep 09, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PETER CLAVER, PRIEST

Care about body and soul

Saint Peter Claver (1581-1654) was a Spanish Jesuit missionary to the Americas who preached the Good News by first caring for the physical needs of the people. When slave ships docked in the port city of Cartagena, Colombia, Claver came with food and medicines to care for the African people who survived the journey, because he believed that, "We must speak to them with our hands before we speak to them with our lips." In four decades in Colombia, he baptized more than 300,000 people, proof perhaps that compassion borne of faith is the best means of

evangelization. May compassion for everyone be the means of our own sainthood.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 7:25-31; Luke 6:20-26 (439). *"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude and insult you."*

Thursday, Sep 10, 2020

Bible banter

While we may quote the Bible now and then, Catholics in general are less likely to quote scripture than many Protestants, not because we don't value scripture but because Catholics rely on tradition and teaching *alongside* scripture. Individual Bible quotes tend to be emphasized less. Most believers will spend a lifetime coming to understand and embrace their faith deeply. Next time you read the Bible, see it as one more step on the journey to God.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 8:1b-7, 11-13; Luke 6:27-38 (440). *"Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you."*

Friday, Sep 11, 2020

What would Jesus do?

Religion has too often been weaponized. Criticism and even attacks on others are justified in the name of "God." Many a "holy" war has been fought with little understanding of a God who can be expressed as compassion, mercy, and love in many and varied ways across religious traditions. As Christians, we are called to measure our words and actions by the gospel of Jesus the Christ. This standard should guide our choices, whether confronting injustice, voting for political leadership, or encountering a stranger. As we pause to remember the victims of 9/11 and other terrorist acts today, let's pledge to resist all efforts to weaponize religion. How can love incarnate your entire being?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22b-27; Luke 6:39-42 (441). *"Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?"*

Saturday, Sep 12, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF MARY

Your litany of personal saints

Tony in *West Side Story* wasn't the first to sing the name of his beloved, and the word "Maria" barely contains his wonder. One of the first words heard by newborns is their name, reverently whispered by parents. What name best will fit this little person? Throughout scripture, names carry significance: from John the Baptist to Cephas/Peter to Jesus at the burial site calling Mary Magdalene after his Resurrection. So is it any surprise that those who revere the Virgin Mary have cherished her name for centuries? Take a moment to create a list of names, your personal litany of people who have nourished or inspired you. Then pray it in thanksgiving for them.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; Luke 6:43-49 (442). *"No good tree bears bad fruit . . . for each tree is known by its own fruit."*



Sunday, Sep 13, 2020

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Share the wealth

Jesus tells the parable of the servant forgiven his large debt who then refuses to forgive a small debt owed him. How could we not forgive others, when God has forgiven us so much? Someone always raises the objection that you can't let someone who kicked you once have another go at it. But that is not what Jesus is asking us to do. He's not asking us to be fools. He's reminding us we're all deep in the red with a debt we can't possibly repay. Be grateful we don't have to.

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 27:30—28:7; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35 (130). "Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?"

Monday, Sep 14, 2020

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Cross purposes

It might seem strange to non-believers that the instrument of our savior's torture and execution is the symbol of our faith. But believers know that the cross represents Christ's defeat of death; the symbol is one of triumph. The entrance antiphon for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is: "We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life and our resurrection: through him we are saved and made free."

Reflect on how the crosses you've borne in your own life have also led to freedom.

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 21:4b-9; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17 (638). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

Tuesday, Sep 15, 2020

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Pray for us, Mother of God

Yesterday was the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Today, in connection, we remember Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows. Many saints and poets have tried to convey the weight of Mary's pain. But it's Romanos the Melodist who, in the 500s, wrote the "Hymn of Mary at the Cross." In it, Jesus reveals to his mother the redemptive power of his suffering—plus, her role as our intercessor. He says: "Run, Mother, announce to all that 'By suffering he strikes the one who hates Adam, and as victor he is coming.'" How can Our Mother pray for you today?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-31a (444); John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35 (639). "Behold, your mother."

Wednesday, Sep 16, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CORNELIUS, POPE, AND CYPRIAN, BISHOP, MARTYRS

Let compassion prevail

The third century was a terrible time of persecution for Christians, some of whom had either to deny their faith or face death. Some rather understandably denied the faith in order to survive, but when persecutions lifted, asked to return. Their desire for reconciliation caused an uproar. Pope Cornelius faced strong challenges because he believed they should be allowed to return after a period of penance. His friend and brother bishop, the learned Cyprian, sided with him in this decision. Their compassionate response prevailed. Both men ended up giving their lives for the faith as Cornelius died in exile in 253 and

Cyprian was martyred under the Emperor Valerian in 258. Follow the lead of these two early Christians and let compassion have the last word.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13; Luke 7:31-35 (445).

"Love does not brood over injury."

Thursday, Sep 17, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ROBERT BELLARMIN, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Live in peace to rest in peace

Today is the Memorial of Saint Robert Bellarmine, a Jesuit theologian and doctor of the church. His scholarly work inserted him into a number of the controversies of his day (late 1500s to early 1600s). One of his many works still in publication is *The Art of Dying Well*, whose advice starts with the concept that dying well (in peace, connected to God) depends on living well. Take a cue from this brilliant saint and contemplate whether you need to make changes to be living well by Christian standards. It's never too late to get right with God.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 7:36-50 (446). "But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'"

Friday, Sep 18, 2020

Holy honey!

We don't often think about snacks in the Bible, but surprisingly they're there! While there were likely no cake pops or ice cream in the kitchens of our matriarchs and patriarchs in faith, they still had a sweet tooth—especially for honey! Do an online search of the Bible and read through more than 60 references to honey. Honey has become a symbol of God who can satisfy us with a most pure, joyful sweetness. The Jewish celebration of Rosh Hashana recalls the significance of honey, especially remembering how God cared for the Israelites in the desert by feeding them manna, which tasted like "wafers made with honey." On this first day of Rosh Hashana, let us, with our Jewish friends, wish one another a good, sweet year ahead, trusting in the providence of God.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 8:1-3 (447). "Accompanying Jesus were the Twelve and some women . . . and many others who provided for them out of their resources."

Saturday, Sep 19, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JANUARIUS, BISHOP, MARTYR

Relate to the world's suffering

Reading the gruesome details of tortures like that of fourth-century Januarius, martyred by Emperor Diocletian in 305, may make their suffering seem far removed from our daily experience. But it's not a huge leap to consider more ordinary sufferings today: of the unemployed, the victims of racial hatred, trafficking, disease, or addiction. In the doctrine of the Mystical Body, all suffering is given meaning by Christ's. His Passion means that no one agonizes in vain, that all is redeemed. Consider a gift of financial support to an organization like Catholic Charities, which helps alleviate the suffering of the refugee, the hungry, the trafficked person.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-49; Luke 8:4-15 (448). "Some fell into good soil and . . . produced a hundredfold."



Sunday, Sep 20, 2020

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Grow your faith

Who gave you your first God lessons? On this Catechetical Sunday, we thank family members, preachers, teachers, RCIA teams, and others who brought the Good News to us. We're also grateful for holy ones, like Venerable Mother Theresa Dudzik, who taught by their example. A remarkable seamstress, Dudzik arrived in Chicago at age 21 after the Great Fire of 1871. She took the destitute into her apartment and sewed to earn money to feed them. In time she founded the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago to run homes, schools, day-care centers, and an orphanage. What will your own example teach others?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:6-9; Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a; Matthew 20:1-16a (133). "Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near."

Monday, Sep 21, 2020

FEAST OF MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

Rise up

Nobody likes paying taxes or has warm, fuzzy feelings about the IRS, but it seems tax collectors in Jesus' time had it especially rough—being lumped in with all manner of sinners. That is because tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Romans, the enemy occupiers of Jewish lands, so they were viewed as traitors by their people. Jesus sought them out for salvation anyway and led Matthew to a new position: apostle and evangelist. What does it take to get a promotion like that? Merely "get up and follow Jesus," as Matthew did.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:9-13 (643). "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Tuesday, Sep 22, 2020

Trade stressed for blessed

Back-to-school September is such a stressful time for families. Add the reality of COVID-19—with parents trying to work from home, kids' schedules often up in the air—and it gets all the messier. Even if you don't have children at home, you probably know people who do and are stressing. How can we all find balance? Honor the sabbath in whatever way you are able, by hitting the pause button—even for a few hours. "Human life has a rhythm of work and rest," says the Catechism of the Catholic Church. "The institution of the Lord's Day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social, and religious lives." Plan ahead for this coming Sunday.

TODAY'S READINGS: Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13; Luke 8:19-21 (450). "To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD."

Wednesday, Sep 23, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PIUS OF PIETRELCINA, PRIEST

Listen from the heart

Saint Pius of Pietrelcina (1887-1968) is better known by his nickname, Padre Pio. He is said to have borne the stigmata, the wounds of our Lord, for more than 50 years. To be sure, he was a man of prayer and suffering, a Capuchin Franciscan priest who lived in a small Italian friary nearly all of his life. However, the principal reason for his local fame was his ability to listen to those who came seeking his counsel, to "read their hearts" and to offer them the love of God in the sacraments. His frequent

message to penitents, "Pray, hope, and don't worry," is a message for us to treasure and savor today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Proverbs 30:5-9; Luke 9:1-6 (451). "He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God."

Thursday, Sep 24, 2020

Find the balance between law and freedom

Today's gospel notes King Herod's interest in Jesus, whom Herod likely saw as a threat. The tension between political power and the moral and religious power of Christianity has been part of the faith since its beginning. In *Dignitatis Humane*, the Vatican II document on religious liberty, the Council "urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form people who, on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom." Sounds like a recipe for peace and progress.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ecclesiastes 1:2-11; Luke 9:7-9 (452). "But Herod said, 'John I beheaded. Who then is this about whom I hear such things?'"

Friday, Sep 25, 2020 Keep the faith!

The coronavirus has taken quite a toll on Catholic parish and sacramental life. Nearly every bishop responding to a recent survey said the pandemic has seriously affected the celebration of the sacraments and rites and sacramental preparation programs in their dioceses. In addition, they report that the morale of priests, lay ecclesial ministers, deacons, and chancery staff has been damaged by the long shutdown, according to a survey out of Georgetown University. People are hurting at all levels of church life because the very thing we thrive on—gathering together—has become problematic and potentially life-threatening. Be patient and work with your local faith community to find safe and creative pastoral responses. And keep faith alive in your own home and heart!

TODAY'S READINGS: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Luke 9:18-22 (453). "There is . . . a time for everything under the heavens . . . a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces."

Saturday, Sep 26, 2020

MEMORIAL OF COSMAS AND DAMIAN, MARTYRS

Saints for this season

Today's brother physicians are patron saints to a long list of healthcare workers, and also against plagues. A brief year ago, biblical references to plagues and epidemics seemed quaint and far removed. Our eyes have been opened to the enduring force of such outbreaks, however, and Cosmas and Damian truly become saints for our time. Perhaps even more so when we learn they were Arab physicians from the area now called Syria. Healing role models come from all backgrounds. Thank the frontline healthcare workers in your own town. They are likely from diverse backgrounds as well.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8; Luke 9:43b-45 (454). "Fill us at daybreak with your kindness."



Sunday, Sep 27, 2020

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Still time to change your mind

One of the lovely things about having a mind is that you can change it. A working brain takes in new information, reflects on it, and makes connections. Sometimes the result is a revised perspective on ideas you thought were chiseled in stone. People of faith also pray for wisdom and inspiration, which can be troubling prayers to have answered if you're banking on the status quo. Jesus told his followers that folks they had counted out of the circle of grace were being counted in by God. A thoughtful faith will be able to absorb the divine curveballs.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 18:25-28; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32 (136). "*Son, go out and work in the vineyard today. He said in reply, 'I will not.'*"

Monday, Sep 28, 2020

MEMORIAL OF LAWRENCE RUIZ AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Make an offering of your life

Saint Lorenzo Ruiz, patron saint of the Philippines and the first canonized Filipino martyr, died in 1637 and was elevated to sainthood in 1987. A Dominican-educated altar boy who grew up to become a clerk, marry, and have children, he was falsely accused of murder and fled on a ship to Japan in the company of missionaries. Once there, he was arrested and tortured for being a Christian, but he refused to recant his faith and was executed, saying, "Had I a thousand lives, all these to Him shall I offer."

What sacrifices are you willing to make for your faith?

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 1:6-22; Luke 9:46-50 (455). "*Whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*"

Tuesday, Sep 29, 2020

FEAST OF MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND RAPHAEL, ARCHANGELS

Pray for heavenly healing

Some Christians call today "Michaelmass," for Michael the archangel. And indeed, among the three archangels the Catholic Church honors today, the mighty Michael—depicted in art battling Satan—is probably best known. Almost as well known is Gabriel, who announces to Mary that she will conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and bear the Messiah. Raphael is least familiar. But, as the angel most known for healing—his name meaning "God's medicine"—Raphael is arguably the heavenly help we need right now. Ask for Saint Raphael's intercession today, to heal a world reeling from a pandemic.

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12a; John 1:47-51 (647). "*You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending.*"

Wednesday, Sep 30, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JEROME, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Being a saint doesn't make you perfect

Saint Jerome (345-420) is a highly regarded scholar of the church who translated the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into Latin. He was also a complex human being whose crabby nature sometimes complicated his life. In other words, he was fully human. In addition to his enduring Latin translation, called the Vulgate, there are many homilies, quotes, letters, and commentaries attributed to Jerome. This quote is one to

contemplate on his feast day: "*It is our part to seek, His to grant what we ask; ours to make a beginning, His to bring it to completion; ours to offer what we can, His to finish what we cannot.*"

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 9:1-12, 14-16; Luke 9:57-62 (457). "*Let my prayer come before you, Lord. Daily I call upon you.*"

Thursday, Oct 01, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS, VIRGIN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Love greatly in small ways

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is one of the most accessible role models ever canonized. Her spirituality, affectionately known as the "Little Way," is a path anyone in any walk of life can follow because its central tenet is simple (though not easy to follow!): "What matters in life is not great deeds, but great love." She lived a short, quiet life as a French Carmelite nun, modeling the conviction that people can live in profound union with God simply by carrying out our daily tasks with a loving spirit. Choose one task today that you can carry out with loving kindness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 19:21-27; Luke 10:1-12 (458). "*Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand.*"

Friday, Oct 02, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS

Watching over you

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is clear about the existence of angels. "The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls 'angels' is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition." In Genesis 16, Hagar's angel rescues her. In Exodus 23, when God told Moses to lead the people, he said, "My angel will go before you." In Numbers 22, an angel kept the oracle Balaam from the mistake of cursing Israel. Psalm 91 says that God "commands his angels . . . to guard you wherever you go." In the Book of Tobit, young Tobias is accompanied by the Archangel Raphael. Angels are the loving care of God personified in celestial beings, God faithfully standing at our side. You can call on angelic support in your time of need.

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5 (459); Matthew 18:1-5, 10 (650). "*Their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.*"

Saturday, Oct 03, 2020

Divinely inspired

Job is a famous biblical character many of us can admire from a distance but few would take the opportunity to imitate up close. During a pandemic, however, all of us get to taste some of what Job experienced. Job's story invites us to examine a central question: In whom or what do I place my trust? In a time of crisis, we're invited to dig down to a deeper truth underneath the shifting conditions—the unconditional love of God for all of us, regardless of the circumstances. Try offering your own love to others unconditionally and learn something about how God operates.

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; Luke 10:17-24 (460). "*I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you.*"