

Sunday, Jun 06, 2021

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

Remember those who must fast

Many faithful Catholics have been unable to approach the Eucharist in person for many months. Age and health, coupled with necessary protocols, have made this pandemic an unanticipated time of spiritual fasting. The words of the ancient sequence *Laud. O Zion* sung on this solemnity are especially poignant this year: "Thousands are, as one, receivers./ One, as thousands of believers." Those with access to the sacraments receive them for all of us. Those who embrace a spiritual communion continue to find ways to be the grateful "receivers" of a wondrous mystery: Christ's life dwelling in us.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 24:3-8; Hebrews 9:11-15; *Lauda, Zion*; Mark 14:12-16, 22-26 (168). "Take it; this is my body."

Monday, Jun 07, 2021

Don't rule it out

Rules are restrictive, right? Or can they be liberating? The word "rule" comes from the Greek word for "trellis," and a trellis supports living things so they can grow up and out and bloom. The best rules create space for your priorities, turn your values into practices, and give you the freedom to live intentionally with God at the center. Why not create your own "rule of life" that helps you do that? Many Christians do. Monastic orders, starting with the Benedictines, began this tradition and all follow a rule of life to govern every aspect of life, including prayer, work, and community interaction. Rules of life can also address diet, exercise, recreation, relationships, and mental stimulation. The point is healthy balance. Thankfully, there are no rules to creating a rule of life—it's up to you and God to decide.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Matthew 5:1-12 (359). "Rejoice and be glad; for your reward will be great in heaven."

Tuesday, Jun 08, 2021

SOS: Save our seas!

In the beginning, says Genesis 1, God not only created the seas but made the "waters teem with swarms of living creatures." Today, designated World Oceans Day by the United Nations, we're reminded that God's creation is in real danger. As Pope Francis writes in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, these formerly teeming waters are increasingly a graveyard, "due largely to pollution which reaches the sea as the result of deforestation, agricultural monocultures, industrial waste and destructive fishing methods," all of it "aggravated by the rise in temperature of the oceans." Visit the *Laudato Si'* Movement for ways to make a difference.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Matthew 5:13-16 (360). "Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds."

Wednesday, Jun 09, 2021

Faith fulfills life

The definition of *fulfill* is "to put into effect, to convert to reality." Jesus teaches that the best way to bring the Kingdom into effect is to practice mercy and humility, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to work at making peace, and to understand that

persecution can befall those who preach and live his message. In Jesus, the law of the prophets was not abolished but fulfilled. How do you choose to live your faith in a fulfilling way?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 5:17-19 (361). "I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."

Thursday, Jun 10, 2021

Mercy me

It is hard to overstate the centrality of forgiveness within the Christian tradition: both God's forgiveness when we do wrong and our forgiveness when others hurt us. Forgiveness is so foundational, we have a sacrament for it; it's in our creed; it's part of *The Lord's Prayer*; Pope Francis declared 2016 the Year of Mercy; and the list goes on. Do you need to forgive or be forgiven, or perhaps both? Now is the acceptable time to seek or extend mercy.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 3:15—4:1, 3-6; Matthew 5:20-26 (362). "Leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother."

Friday, Jun 11, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Promise with all your heart

The devotion to the Sacred Heart, which dates back centuries, includes consecrating oneself to, and benefiting from, the promises of the Sacred Heart. In honor of today's feast, consider committing to the following: Consecrate all your actions to glorify the Sacred Heart; consecrate all your weakness within the strength of the Sacred Heart; consecrate all your confidence in the faithfulness of the Sacred Heart. Do this and the peace of Christ, who is our peace, will be with you.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 11:1, 3-4, 8c-9; Ephesians 3:8-12, 14-19; John 19:31-37 (171). "For this reason I kneel before the Father . . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

Saturday, Jun 12, 2021

MEMORIAL OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

May your heart be on fire with love

Yesterday we celebrated the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and today we commemorate the Immaculate Heart of Mary: two hearts on fire with love and made one in suffering. The Sacred Heart symbolizes the love of God for people, pierced by the thorns of rejection. The Immaculate Heart symbolizes the love of people for God, wounded with a sword of suffering in solidarity with Christ. Remembering that Jesus identified with the struggles of the least of our sisters and brothers, today we can pray for those refugees driven from their homes by violence and poverty and waiting for help at our southern border.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Luke 2:41-51 (364; Gospel 573). "His mother kept all these things in her heart."

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



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Sunday, Jun 13, 2021

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Surprising yields ahead

Many have been glad to shake off the past year with good riddance. We're quick to write off difficult situations as sinkholes of our personal efforts, with nothing to show for our suffering. Every plague, war, and famine of history has caused its multitude of lost lives, endless grief, and economic devastation. Yet Jesus promises us that underneath the soil of human experience, the kingdom of God is always at work, pushing new life and fresh hope into existence. Many are working hard right this moment to promote a new vision for humanity. Commit to the new seed of Kingdom Coming.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 17:22-24; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34 (92). *"And through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how."*

Monday, Jun 14, 2021

Make an offering

It is fitting that today is both Flag Day in the United States and World Blood Donor Day. Many have shed their blood for the ideals a flag represents, and while most of us are not called to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country, many of us can make the small sacrifice of donating blood to save the lives of others. In some areas, the blood supply has become low because of fewer blood donations during the pandemic, and blood donation remains essential everywhere. If you are able to donate, or be supportive of someone who can, it will contribute to our much-needed healing in these hurting times.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Matthew 5:38-42 (365). *"Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow."*

Tuesday, Jun 15, 2021

With respect to elders

It's World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Pope Francis marked the observance last year by describing a shameful and painfully obvious truth: "The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that our societies are not organized well enough to make room for the elderly, with proper respect for their dignity and frailty. When the elderly are not cared for, there is no future for the young." Eighty percent of COVID deaths have been people 65 or older. What does your parish or local community do to support and engage seniors? If programs are not in place, can you help initiate them?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; Matthew 5:43-48 (366). *"I say this not by way of command, but to test the genuineness of your love by your concern for others."*

Wednesday, Jun 16, 2021

Be well intentioned

Jesus' admonition to perform good deeds in private and pray alone in our rooms can be difficult to figure out when we belong to a church that calls the community's public gathering for Mass the "source and summit of faith." So here's the deal: Jesus isn't telling us to hide our faith but instead to check out *why* we do what we do. He frowns on giving alms to get attention or making a big public display of our prayer, as if to prove we are closer to God

than our neighbor. Instead, we are called to pray, fast, and give alms simply to draw closer to our Lord. In public or private, let's pray with the best of intentions.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (367). *"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites."*

Thursday, Jun 17, 2021

Time to move beyond temptation

The Lord's Prayer, introduced in today's gospel, is the best-known Christian prayer the world over. Two years ago, a change in the way French Catholics say the prayer made headlines. The new translation avoids "lead us not into temptation" in favor of "do not let us fall into temptation." The point is that God doesn't lead us to sin. Rather, God gives us the strength to resist it, overcome it, learn from it, move beyond it. The next time you pray the great prayer, picture the Creator extending a hand to pull you away from sin into grace and light.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 11:1-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (368). *"This is how you are to pray: 'Our Father who art in heaven . . .'"*

Friday, Jun 18, 2021

Get some rest

Saint Augustine of Hippo captures the human condition perfectly when he says in his *Confessions*: "Lord, . . . our heart is restless until it rests in you." Christian prayer practices are designed to protect us from spirit-dulling anxiety and bring us to the peace of Christ. Try meditating on these words from Saint Francis de Sales for starters: "The same Eternal Father who cares for you today will take good care of you tomorrow and every day of your life. Either he will shield you from suffering, or he will give you the unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then and put aside all useless thoughts, vain dreads, and anxious imaginations."

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 11:18, 21-30; Matthew 6:19-23 (369). *"Store up treasures in heaven."*

Saturday, Jun 19, 2021

MEMORIAL OF ROMUALD, ABBOT

A simple practice for inner peace

Romuald was a 10th-century Italian monk and teacher. He started life as a wealthy aristocrat but soon found his life of pursuing comfort and pleasure unsatisfying. He sought refuge in a monastery and discovered peace as a monk. Wishing to help others achieve fulfillment, he founded the Camaldolese Order of monks and established several monasteries, instructing the monks to practice intellectual stillness and interior receptivity in meditation. "Take every opportunity you can to sing the Psalms in your heart," he wrote in his rule, "and to understand them with your mind." Take a moment today and give it a try.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10; Matthew 6:24-34 (370). *"Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself."*

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



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Sunday, Jun 20, 2021

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Heal the human family

Fathers are an unpredictable lot. Some are lovingly remembered as protective and dependable captains who sailed their families to calmer waters through every domestic storm. Others may be lamented as the source of many a squall themselves. We pray this day for both kinds of fathers: those who stayed and those who abandoned ship, the faithful and the faithless, the tender and the tyrant. The church teaches that our world can't be whole until our families are healed. This Father's Day, we pray especially for those who volunteer as benevolent father figures for children in need of one.

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 38:1, 8-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Mark 4:35-41 (95). *"[Jesus] woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Quiet! Be still!'"*

Monday, Jun 21, 2021

MEMORIAL OF ALOYSIUS GONZAGA, RELIGIOUS

Sometimes you have to swim upstream

Discerning one's vocation can be tricky enough, but once you've figured out God's call, you might encounter resistance from others in answering it. Saint Aloysius Gonzaga can relate. As an aristocrat in Renaissance Italy, he was expected to join decadent courtly life and have an accomplished military career. But even in his early teens, Aloysius was dismayed by the violence and licentiousness of his time. Deeply devout, he bucked family and societal expectations and sought a different path. He renounced his inheritance and became a Jesuit. When we encounter pressure to ignore God, may Aloysius help us all stay true.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 12:1-9; Matthew 7:1-5 (371). *"The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you."*

Tuesday, Jun 22, 2021

MEMORIAL OF JOHN FISHER, BISHOP AND THOMAS MORE, MARTYRS

Truth trumps tyranny

Thomas More shares this feast day with John Fisher—both beheaded for daring to cross England's King Henry VIII in his power grab. Significantly, Henry moved up Fisher's execution day so it wouldn't fall on the feast of another sainted John—John the Baptist, who likewise was beheaded by a king for opposing royal tyranny. It's always the right time to speak truth to power, even when the cost is high.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 13:2, 5-18; Matthew 7:6, 12-14 (372). *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction."*

Wednesday, Jun 23, 2021

Let's make the world a better place

Today the United Nations celebrates Public Service Day to honor the public servants who selflessly work to promote the common good. Each of us, however, is called to make the world a better place through service. As Pope Francis says in *Fratelli Tutti*: Service means caring "for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people . . . Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness . . . and tries to help them." Whether as emergency responders, sanitation workers, public advocates, teachers, community volunteers, or whatever

your vocation or profession may be, take the opportunity to recognize the humanity of the vulnerable and offer your help.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Matthew 7:15-20 (373). *"So by their fruits you will know them."*

Thursday, Jun 24, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Catch fire

Although American Catholics in general don't tend to make a fuss over the Nativity of John the Baptist, today's solemnity is one of the church's earliest, and it used to be widely celebrated in Europe with bonfires and outdoor festivities. Some regions still hold celebrations for John, who prepared humanity for the coming of Christ. The bonfires recognize the fire within this zealous, outspoken saint. Do you harbor a fire for Christ? If your passion has ebbed, pray to Saint John the Baptist to intercede that you might reignite your fire for the kingdom of God.

TODAY'S READINGS: Day: Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80 (587). *"He asked for a tablet and wrote, 'John is his name.'"*

Friday, Jun 25, 2021

Confirm your spiritual identity

Most seventh-graders are thrilled by two things about Confirmation: the possibility of having a tongue of fire hover over their heads and choosing a new name. It's not that anything is necessarily wrong with their given names, but it seems awesome to choose one's very own name. Many spiritual traditions and rites employ the custom of taking a new name, signifying a new moment in our life with God. Though a sacrament and public witness in the church, Confirmation is also a personal confirmation of our own selves as unique and beloved of God. What can you do today to confirm your relationship with God?

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 17:1, 9-10, 15-22; Matthew 8:1-4 (375). *"Do not call her Sarai; her name shall be Sarah. I will bless her."*

Saturday, Jun 26, 2021

We are worthy of healing

In these divisive times, it is heartening to have examples of the healing power of a word. The gospels tell the story of a centurion, a powerful military leader of the Roman army that occupied Jewish lands, who had such great faith in Jesus that he only needed Jesus to speak a healing word. No ordinary centurion, this fellow had been a great friend of the Jewish people of Capernaum, even building their synagogue. Where are such examples today? Speak a word of healing across all that seems to divide: across the aisle, the religions, the races and ethnicities, the neighborhoods, languages, genders, and sexualities that distinguish us but do not have to divide us. Only say the word and healing shall begin.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 18:1-15; Matthew 8:5-17 (376). *"Only say the word and my servant will be healed."*

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Sunday, Jun 27, 2021

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

God is the champion of life

We're made for immortality. Christianity celebrates that death has no sting and life has no end. Our tenacious possession of the lives we're given is a sign of our refusal to accept death as the last word on the subject of our lives. We're impatient with limitations, reject gloom-and-doom projections, and insist on second opinions when the news is grim. We relentlessly cling to hope despite the odds of our predicament. God is on our side in this stubborn grip we have on life. God intends for death itself to pass away. Put your resources at the service of life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24; 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15; Mark 5:21-43 (98). *"God did not make death, nor does [God] rejoice in the destruction of the living."*

Monday, Jun 28, 2021

MEMORIAL OF IRENAEUS, BISHOP, MARTYR

We're part of the Lord's great chain of being

It's fun to consider "six degrees of separation"—the theory that everyone on Earth is connected to any other person by a chain of five acquaintances. Perhaps you even know how you are connected to someone famous. Imagine being only three degrees separated from Jesus! Saint Irenaeus is known for that claim. He studied under Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the apostle John. We may be countless more degrees removed than Irenaeus, but all Christians are part of the chain that goes back to our Lord because we're the beneficiaries of what's been passed down the links along the way—as well as being links ourselves to the future. Keep those connections strong.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 18:16-33; Matthew 8:18-22 (377). *"Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."*

Tuesday, Jun 29, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

Call me by my new name

Before Jesus, they were Simon and Saul; afterward, Peter and Paul. In the great biblical tradition, both experienced a name change to signify God's call to a new and greater destiny. They became the two pillars of the church. Jesus gave Peter the "keys" to unlock the "kingdom of God," on Earth as it is in heaven—the Kingdom Jesus preached about for three years. Paul received a "sword," the "sword of the Spirit" that's the word of God—which Paul used as he spread the gospel to new lands. Is there something new you can do for God today?

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19 (591). *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Wednesday, Jun 30, 2021

You are part of God's agenda

Prayer has many forms and many expressions: It turns our hearts and minds to God with a desire to praise, to request, to give thanks, or to intercede on behalf of others. Prayer is conversation with God; sitting in silence with God; sharing with God every hope and fear we carry. But as Saint Thomas Aquinas reminds us, "We set forth our petitions before God, not in order to make known to Him our needs and desires, but rather so that we ourselves may

realize that in these things it is necessary to turn to God for help." Go ahead, place your concerns on God's desk. There's always space.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 21:5, 8-20a; Matthew 8:28-34 (379). *"When the poor one called out, the LORD heard."*

Thursday, Jul 01, 2021

MEMORIAL OF JUNIPERO SERRA, PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, MISSIONARY

Man on a mission

Today the church honors Saint Junipero Serra, the Spanish Franciscan missionary who tirelessly evangelized native peoples in California in the late 1700s, founding the first nine of 21 missions in the region. His sainthood is not without controversy since missionaries were enmeshed in the brutal Spanish conquest of the Americas, but Serra's record also shows he endured many hardships late in life for the sake of the gospel, genuinely loved the indigenous people, and defended their rights against the worst Spanish abuses. His memorial is a good time to learn about and pray for greater justice for Native Americans and all Indigenous Peoples.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 22:1b-19; Matthew 9:1-8 (380). *"He then said to the paralytic, 'Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.'"*

Friday, Jul 02, 2021

Pray for us sinners

Sometimes denial, shame, and fear keep us from recognizing the harmful effects of our sin. Pope Francis encourages us to give even our sin over to God. As he put it in a 2013 homily, "In my own life, I have so often seen God's merciful countenance, his patience; I have also seen so many people find the courage to enter the wounds of Jesus by saying to him: Lord, I am here, accept my poverty, hide my sin in your wounds, wash it away with your blood. And I have always seen that God did just this—he accepted them, consoled them, cleansed them, loved them." Draw close to Jesus and be comforted.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 23:1-4, 19; 24:1-8, 62-67; Matthew 9:9-13 (381). *"Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."*

Saturday, Jul 03, 2021

FEAST OF THOMAS, APOSTLE

Let doubt deepen your faith

We have come to know today's saint as "Doubting Thomas," but in terms of his legacy, it was the missionary zeal that grew out of his doubt that endures. According to tradition, Thomas traveled far, reaching the Malabar Coast of southwest India, where he established a community still known today as "Saint Thomas Christians." A more diverse mix could not be found: the Nazranis, as they are called, are said to be "Indian in culture, Christian in faith, and Syrian in liturgy," with a dash of Jewish and Hindu influence for good measure. Your doubt can be the catalyst to a faith that endures and leaves a rich legacy. Ask God to help your unbelief!

TODAY'S READINGS: Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:24-29 (593). *"You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones."*

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