

Sunday, May 20, 2018

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

Do something useful

Be honest: Do you think prayer is useful? While we might describe the act of praying positively, we may not be convinced it actually “works”—at least not as we intend. Here’s the shocker: Many theologians agree it’s a trap to consider prayer in terms of utility. Prayer is not an effective activity; that is, it’s not a penny in, gumball out procedure. Prayer’s not an activity at all. Rather it’s a form of relationship, an unveiling of the self before the God of love. Loving relationships, however, are *very* effective. Just ask the Pentecost gang what love can do.

TODAY’S READINGS: Day: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Galatians 5:16-25; John 20:19-23 or 15:26-27; 16:12-15 (63). “*And [they] began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*”

Monday, May 21, 2018

MEMORIAL OF MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Thank you, Mother

Pope Francis recently added a memorial to celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary in her role as “Mother of the Church” every year on the Monday after Pentecost as a way to foster Marian piety and the “maternal sense of the church.” The Marian title of “Mother of the Church,” was given to the Blessed Mother by Blessed Pope Paul VI at the Second Vatican Council. With its addition to the General Roman Calendar, it will now be celebrated by the whole Roman Catholic Church. Ponder how your own faith has been nurtured within the church community, and take a moment to thank Mary for serving as mother of us all.

TODAY’S READINGS: Gen. 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14; John 19:25-34 (572A). “*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.*”

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

MEMORIAL OF RITA OF CASCIA, RELIGIOUS

Support gentle, loving relationships

If you knew you would be canonized a saint and could choose your patronage now, for what cause would you cheerfully accept intercessions? Be careful in your selection: Saints become the patrons of causes they know all too well. Rita of Cascia is the patron saint of bad marriages, victims of spousal abuse, and loneliness, among other conditions she endured personally. There are still many who seek her help today. Support local programs that assist families in trouble.

TODAY’S READINGS: James 4:1-10; Mark 9:30-37 (342). “*If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.*”

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

The Lord loves those who love wisdom

At times biblical poetry sets theological distinctions aside. In some places in Hebrew scripture, for example, divine wisdom is feminine and spoken of in a way almost indistinguishable from God. While the church often uses the masculine term “Father” for God, that is not to say God is male but that God acts toward us as a loving father does. Scripture and tradition have other names for God as well. Of course the Supreme Being is ultimately beyond gender—and all description really—but human beings need human terms to express their experience of God, including that of “wise woman.”

TODAY’S READINGS: James 4:13-17; Mark 9:38-40 (343). “*For whoever is not against us is for us.*”

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Pass the salt, please

What might humble table salt have to teach us about God? Surprisingly, a lot! The *Catholic Encyclopedia* has an entire entry devoted to salt, noting that historically it almost always has had a sacred and religious character. As a seasoning, salt gives a kick of flavor and taste to what might otherwise be a bland meal. It’s also a preservative to keep food from going bad. The gospels use the symbol of salt to refer to Christ’s new life within us, an ingredient that indeed transforms our whole lives. How can you add some more seasoning to God’s activity in your life?

TODAY’S READINGS: James 5:1-6; Mark 9:41-50 (344). “*Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another.*”

Friday, May 25, 2018

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE DE’ PAZZI, VIRGIN

Suffering can be service

Jacqueline de Decker had gone to India to serve the poor and wanted to join Mother Teresa’s newly founded Missionaries of Charity, but a spinal injury ended her dream. Or so she thought. In 1952 Mother Teresa sent Decker a letter with a proposal: “I need souls like yours to pray and suffer for the work” who could “do much more while on your bed of pain than I running on my feet.” Decker’s vocation sounds a lot like that of the 16th-century Carmelite sister Saint Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi, who withstood years of physical and spiritual suffering yet had a mystical prayer life and later even rose from her “bed of pain” to become a wisdom-figure in her community. Jesus calls us all to serve. Consider your strengths not your weaknesses when answering that call.

TODAY’S READINGS: James 5:9-12; Mark 10:1-12 (345). “*Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged.*”

Saturday, May 26, 2018

MEMORIAL OF PHILIP NERI, PRIEST

Stepping out for Jesus

Saint Philip Neri (1515-95) must have had a good cobbler, because he sure put a lot of miles on his shoes. He sauntered through Rome, striking up conversations with whomever he met, beggars or bankers, warming hearts as he talked about God. Often, he’d bid them walk and talk with him en route to a church or hospital. Later, after becoming a priest, he organized pilgrimages to churches in the city, inviting people to walk and pray together. As the one who brought the Forty Hours Devotion to Rome, Philip would like today’s practice of walking in procession as a prelude to adoring the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes we need to wear out our soles to touch the souls of others.

TODAY’S READINGS: James 5:13-20; Mark 10:13-16 (346). “*Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*”

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



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