

Sunday, Sep 08, 2019

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Embrace the hard sayings

Nice-guy Jesus inhabits our religious imagination, a carryover from the coloring books. This smiling Lord seeks lost sheep and welcomes prodigal kids home. He banishes fevers and wipes away tears. It can be a jarring wake-up call to encounter the gospel Jesus, who does all those things but also says we have to give up everything to be his followers. Can't we negotiate here? Does "all" really mean *all*? A very few will take this saying literally. The vast majority of us spend our lives seeking a comfortable compromise. Jesus is asking for ultimate loyalty, not personal poverty. Does he have your heart?

TODAY'S READINGS: Wisdom 9:13-18b; Philemon 9-10, 12-17; Luke 14:25-33 (129). *"Anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."*

Monday, Sep 09, 2019

MEMORIAL OF PETER CLAVER, PRIEST

Step up

What can we do in the face of injustice and inhumanity? We read and hear about it in the news, we see it play out on our borders and in our cities. But what can one person do? Peter Claver, a pious seminarian from Spain who volunteered for the Spanish colonies, was deeply troubled by the treatment of slaves brought from Africa to Cartagena. He headed for the wharf as soon as a slave ship entered the port, boarded, and ministered to the desperately ill human cargo who had managed to survive the horrendous journey. He also advocated and petitioned, insisting that human rights be respected. No evil is so great that you cannot be a force for lessening it.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 1:24—2:3; Luke 6:6-11 (437). *"I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?"*

Tuesday, Sep 10, 2019

Begin anew

A new school year is underway, and many people have stored their vacation luggage and thrown themselves back into work. Today's gospel is also filled with a sense of new beginnings: apostles newly chosen, plenty of healing, crowds eagerly seeking Jesus. New beginnings abound in our faith: at Easter, Baptism, house blessings, Confession, and many other moments. As you read these words, even if you are "not feeling it," be steadfast knowing that new beginnings are a central part of your faith and can emerge from the shadows at any moment.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 2:6-15; Luke 6:12-19 (438). *"Power came forth from him and healed them all."*

Wednesday, Sep 11, 2019

Practicing your faith is rewarding

In psychology, "positive reinforcement" occurs when there is a good result or reward from a behavior, causing the person (or animal) to behave that certain way repeatedly in order to keep getting the reward. Think of the lab rat who gets a treat when it presses a button—and keeps pressing it to get more treats. But this concept predates modern medicine—it goes back to biblical times with the Beatitudes delivered at the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus assures those who are meek, who hunger for justice, and

who have poverty of spirit that they will be blessed for it. There's no greater reward.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 6:20-26 (439). *"Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours."*

Thursday, Sep 12, 2019

Do what is just

Catholics have a tradition of sharing the gifts we have been given. Not for the sake of charity but for the sake of justice. Remember, the early Christian community "shared all things in common." And Saint John Chrysostom wrote that the goods we possess really belong to the poor. Similarly, Saint Gregory the Great taught that when we take care of those in need, we give them what is rightfully theirs, not ours. Make a contribution of your "time, talent, and treasure" today in pursuit of doing what is just.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 6:27-38 (440). *"For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."*

Friday, Sep 13, 2019

MEMORIAL OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Come together

In the fourth century, Roman Emperor Constantine built a city (naming it after himself, modestly), and moved the empire's capitol from Rome to Constantinople. John Chrysostom was an early archbishop of Constantinople. It was always understood that the bishop of the capitol city was the head of the church. So it became clear to some that Chrysostom should now lead the church. Those still in Rome begged to differ. This conflict, along with others, went on for centuries and resulted in the Great Schism of 1054, which separated the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In July of this year Pope Francis presented the current Archbishop of Constantinople, Patriarch Bartholomew, with a reliquary with bones believed to be of Saint Peter as a gesture of good will in the ongoing hope that the two churches might reunite. Pray for the unity of all Christians.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14; Luke 6:39-42 (441). *"Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye."*

Saturday, Sep 14, 2019

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Avoided heated exchanges

Along with honoring the saving power of the cross, today's feast commemorates the dedication by Constantine in 325 of the basilica and shrine in Jerusalem where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher stands today. Reputed to be Jesus' burial site, arguably the most hallowed location in all of Christendom is not immune to petty squabbles. On a hot day in 2002, an Egyptian (Coptic) monk moved his chair into the shade, which was taken by Ethiopian Orthodox monks to be an encroachment on their territory. Stones, fists, and even chairs flew, resulting in a number of injuries (and frowns worldwide as the news circulated). It's all well and good to be passionate about things devotional, but don't forget to love your neighbor too—even if you think they're throwing shade at you.

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 21:4b-9; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17 (638). *"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."*

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



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