

Sunday, Jul 21, 2019

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Worriers have a captain

These days, who isn't a worrier? Climate change is predicted to be irreversible very soon unless drastic changes are made across the globe. Meanwhile, oceans are rising, coastal areas are flooding, weather is erratic, and food supplies are threatened one crop at a time. If Martha were among us today, she'd be the first to lodge a complaint. Let's marshal our inner Marthas and raise our voices about the need for radical lifestyle changes. And don't neglect your inner Mary: She needs to keep on listening to Jesus.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 18:1-10a; Colossians 1:24-28; Luke 10:38-42 (108). *"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things."*

Monday, Jul 22, 2019

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE

Call him teacher

She turned toward the risen Lord and called him "Teacher," marking a significant pivot for human history. Mary Magdalene is first to experience the Resurrection, moving from a fear that death meant the end to a trust in ongoing life. In that moment, history moved from Jesus confined to one physical body to the universal Christ alive in the mystical body; from "head" knowledge to trusting a voice that recognizes intimate presence; from confusion to conviction—the authority of direct experience announcing the best news ever to the other disciples. Why Mary? Perhaps because she bracketed Jesus' Passion with fragrant anointing or because she waited outside the tomb, weeping but hopeful.

TODAY'S READINGS: Song of Songs 3:1-4a or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; John 20:1-2, 11-18 (603). *"I have seen the Lord."*

Tuesday, Jul 23, 2019

MEMORIAL OF BRIDGET, RELIGIOUS

Drama with a twist

Today's first reading on the parting of the sea is so important that the church includes it in the Easter Vigil during a series of readings that summarize salvation history. Our hearts leap for the Israelites who are saved. Yet some may also wonder about the Egyptian families who mourned for their loved ones "cast into the sea." The church teaches us that sin (such as enslavement of the Israelites) cuts in many directions, often hurting the innocent—even those Egyptian soldiers who were obliged by *their* masters to pursue the Israelites. Can you refrain today from a bad habit, a sin, so it cannot hurt anyone, guilty or innocent?

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 14:21—15:1; Matthew 12:46-50 (396). *"For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."*

Wednesday, Jul 24, 2019

MEMORIAL OF SHARBEL MAKHLÜF, PRIEST

Choose the reign of God

Who, you may ask, was Sharbel Makhlüf? Saint Sharbel, (sometimes spelled "Charbel") was a 19th-century Maronite monk from Lebanon, the son of a mule driver. He lived a life of solitude, austerity, and prayer. After his death at the age of 70, miracles were attributed to his intercession. He was beatified in 1965 at the close of Vatican II by Pope Paul VI. In his remarks, the pope said: "May he make us understand, in a world largely

fascinated by wealth and comfort, the paramount value of poverty, penance, and asceticism, to liberate the soul in its ascent to God." Many times a day God invites us to divest from the passing world and invest in the coming reign of God. What choices will you make today?

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15; Matthew 13:1-9 (397).

"Would that we had died at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread!"

Thursday, Jul 25, 2019

FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE

Best friends forever

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, certainly stand out among the 12 apostles. Jesus nicknamed them the "Sons of Thunder," and from the stories of them in scripture, the two men clearly had big, bold, fiery personalities. Jesus had to put them in their place more than once. And yet, they are also described as being in Jesus' inner circle, an experience that changed them to the core—James became the first apostle to be martyred and John came to be known as the "apostle of love." If you made Jesus your best friend, what might happen to you too?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605).

"Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant."

Friday, Jul 26, 2019

MEMORIAL OF JOACHIM AND ANNE, PARENTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Treasure the stories of faith

Saints Anne and Joachim are known to Catholics as the parents of holy Mary. But if asked how we know that, we might be stumped. The truth is there is no mention of Anne and Joachim in the Bible. Their names come to us from a second-century document called the Gospel of James. The church does not recognize that document as a reliable source, but the document's story of an angel's promised child to an aging couple has become an accepted tradition in our Catholic heritage. Say a prayer today for those couples whose yearning for children goes unfulfilled.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 13:18-23 (399).

"Honor your father and your mother."

Saturday, Jul 27, 2019

The harvest is plentiful

Jesus talked a lot about farming in parables to teach his followers. So why don't Catholics have a harvest feast of some kind? Some folk traditions have popped up over the centuries: In Hungary, the Feast of the Assumption includes thanks for the harvest, and in Poland, harvest wreaths are blessed by priests. The Feast of Saint Martin of Tours on November 11 was celebrated in Europe in the Middle Ages much the same way Americans celebrate Thanksgiving Day today. But notwithstanding, the answer is, we don't need one. Every Mass is the offering of sacrifice to God. You're welcome to celebrate thanksgiving every day!

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 24:3-8; Matthew 13:24-30 (400).

"Collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."

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



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