

Sunday, Feb 04, 2018

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Let's magnify our unity

These days the game seems to be to capitalize on differences. Do you belong to the other (morally reprehensible) political party? Are you a member of the wrong religion—or no religion at all? Are you part of that bone-headed (fill-in-the-blank) generation? Are you less American than I am because of X, Y, or Z? Saint Paul chose a more challenging method of dialogue. He sought common ground: Are you from the Jewish or the Greek worldview? So am I! Are you a sinner or believer? Me too! Join the human race, and find family everywhere.

TODAY'S READINGS: Job 7:1-4, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1:29-39 (74). *"I have become all things to all, to save at least some."*

Monday, Feb 05, 2018

MEMORIAL OF AGATHA, VIRGIN, MARTYR

Inner peace be with you

It's stories like that of Agatha, a young virgin from Sicily (d. 251) who was tortured by having her breasts cut off, that make following in the footsteps of the saints seem so, well, horrible. But what's often missing from popular accounts of the lives of saints is their ability to find God, and therefore joy, in all things—including those experiences that an observer might consider unbearable. Today as we contemplate our own voluntary deprivations during the upcoming season of Lent, we can glimpse the inner peace that conquers hardship when our intention is, as Agatha put it, that "Christ possess alone all that I am."

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Mark 6:53-56 (329). *"They . . . began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was."*

Tuesday, Feb 06, 2018

MEMORIAL OF PAUL MIKI AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Give your all

Japanese-born Paul Miki (1562-97) was baptized at age 5. A man of his culture with a profound knowledge of Buddhism, he made an effective and affectionate preacher among the Japanese. When his fellow Jesuits were expelled from Japan, he remained and was eventually crucified with 25 others in Nagasaki. For each generation of Christians the demands of faith and the promises of Christ remain the same: Love God and love one another and you will live in love eternally.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Mark 7:1-13 (330). *"You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition."*

Wednesday, Feb 07, 2018

What's for break-fast?

With the season of Lent and its practice of fasting arriving next week, it's a little puzzling to remember that Jesus was a great *breaker* of fasts and violator of religious food rules—that was one thing that got him into trouble with the authorities. His followers gathered grain on the Sabbath because they were hungry. He ate with sinners and outcasts. He simply *did not follow the rules*, but for a purpose: to show how the rules should not control but rather serve to bring a person into a more loving

relationship with God and neighbor. What makes a person holy is not external observance but internal faith and love, which leads to right behavior.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 10:1-10; Mark 7:14-23 (331).

"Everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile . . . But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles."

Thursday, Feb 08, 2018

MEMORIAL OF JEROME EMILIANI

Let the children come

Born into a noble family, Jerome Emiliani (1481-1537) led the life of a carefree and dissolute soldier. After being captured and imprisoned, however, he underwent a conversion. Upon release he began devoting his resources to overseeing the educations of his nephews and caring for the sick and poor. Eventually he dedicated himself to abandoned children, of whom he is now the patron saint. Jerome helps us to remember that unwanted children are all around us, and that all children need care and support.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 11:4-13; Mark 7:24-30 (332). *"Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."*

Friday, Feb 09, 2018

Embody mercy

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology that proposes that human beings must have their basic physical and emotional needs met before they can realize their fullest potential. Catholics are expected to help others satisfy those needs through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which include feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and visiting the sick as well as teaching those who lack education, forgiving offenses willingly, and comforting the afflicted. Through works of mercy the world gets closer to reaching its fullest potential. Let's all get to work!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19; Mark 7:31-37 (333). *"He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."*

Saturday, Feb 10, 2018

MEMORIAL OF SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN

Devote yourself from beginning to end

We know few facts about Saint Scholastica: She lived in Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries, was the sister of Saint Benedict, became a nun and a prioress, and helped found Benedictine monasticism. Yet, thanks to two brief comments by Saint Gregory the Great, we know volumes about *how* she lived her life. Of her childhood Gregory wrote: "She was devoted to God from a very early age," and a few paragraphs later he added that when she died "her soul ascended into heaven in the likeness of a dove." Though seemingly innocuous, these comments are like bookends of Scholastica's existence and give us a sense of the rich content of her biography. As you think about your life's journey, what do your bookends look like?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34; Mark 8:1-10 (334). *"My heart is moved with pity for the crowd."*

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



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