

Sunday, Jul 08, 2018

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

No excuses

If only I had more money, more time, more assistance, more talent. We all have a pretty impressive laundry list of why we can't be of more service to God and to others. Even Saint Paul had his "thorn in the flesh," some private difficulty that seemed to hold him back from being the apostle he sought to be. Paul kept praying for its removal so he could be free of this impediment. Finally he reinterpreted the thorn: not an impediment, but an opportunity to let God be God. Maybe it's time to stop protesting and start serving!

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezra 2:2-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Mark 6:1-6a (101). *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."*

Monday, Jul 09, 2018

MEMORIAL OF AUGUSTINE ZHAO RONG, PRIEST, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

The whole world in God's hands

The gospel arrived in China in the fifth century, and Christianity flourished during the T'ang dynasty (618–907). By the 13th century Beijing had its own bishop. In the 1500s missions to China were common, but growing suspicion of the West led to persecutions and the destruction of churches. One hundred and twenty Catholics, including Augustine Zhao Rong (d. 1815), were martyred in China between the years 1648 and 1930. They were children, parents, catechists, laborers, and four priests. Thirty-three were foreign-born missionaries. Pray for the courage of Christians everywhere.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 2:16, 17b-18, 21-22; Matthew 9:18-26 (383). *"Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you."*

Tuesday, Jul 10, 2018

Think unto others . . .

A woman once refused to extend her hand at the Sign of Peace during Mass. At the time it seemed unfriendly, even rude to the woman next to her. But after Mass, she explained that her arthritis was painning her terribly and shaking hands would have hurt her. The woman sitting next to her felt embarrassed that she had taken offense so wrongly. How often do we, like the Pharisees, leap to a negative assessment of the motivations of another only to find out they meant nothing of the kind? Think gently of others, as you would like them to think of you.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:32-38 (384). *"When the demon was cast out, the Pharisees said, 'By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons.'"*

Wednesday, Jul 11, 2018

MEMORIAL OF BENEDICT, ABBOT

Be moderately holy

The main elements of Saint Benedict's famous monastic rule are sleep, prayer, and manual labor. Chapter 48 of the Rule states: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading. . . . They must not become distressed if local conditions or their poverty should force them to do the harvesting themselves. When they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks. Yet, all things are to be done with moderation on account of the

fainthearted." Remember Benedict's concern for moderation. It is the key to all aspects of Christian piety.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Matthew 10:1-7 (385).

"Sow for yourselves justice, reap the fruit of piety."

Thursday, Jul 12, 2018

Love is bigger than hurt

Joseph had it tough as the second youngest in a family of 12 brothers. Picked on and hated because he was his dad Jacob's favorite, Joseph ended up sold into slavery by his brothers. After many years of separation from his family, he again meets his brothers, only this time the tables are turned: Joseph is in a position of power, and his brothers are the vulnerable ones. It wouldn't have taken much for Joseph to tap back into those feelings of hurt, betrayal, and rage and respond measure for measure. But he went beyond that, back to the sibling love he so cherished, and reacted with not only kindness but an outpouring of generosity. We, too, have that capacity and power for a love that is bigger than hurt.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 11:1-4, 8e-9; Matthew 10:7-15 (386). *"But [Joseph's] brothers could give him no answer, so dumbfounded were they at him."*

Friday, Jul 13, 2018

Get smart, but keep it simple

Sometimes it may seem that the gospel's call to simplicity doesn't stand a chance. Popular spiritual writer Henri Nouwen expressed this dilemma well: "So often the problems of the world seem so complex and intricate that your word strikes me as embarrassingly simple," he wrote in a prayer that continued, "but you, O Lord, said, 'Be clever as serpents and innocent as doves.' Let me retain innocence and simplicity in the midst of this complex world." That's a good prayer for all of us as we try to balance spiritual life and daily life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 14:2-10; Matthew 10:16-23 (387). *"I am sending you out like wolves among sheep."*

Saturday, Jul 14, 2018

MEMORIAL OF KATERI TEKAKWITHA, VIRGIN

Witness respectfully

In his poem "Exploding Chippewas," poet Mark Turcotte writes of his Native American ancestors, "In my bones some of them weep, / strapped with their own braids / to slowly swinging crosses, / their meatless faces tight / with skin, / while others stomp down / the grass in quiet circles, / gripping shards of starry cloth / between their teeth, / dripping / blood, white, and blue." Kateri Tekakwitha is said to have been shunned by her people when she became Christian, but North and South American native peoples have also suffered countless indignities at the hands of well-meaning Christians. Spreading the word depends on profound respect as much as it does on zeal.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 10:24-33 (388). *"Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known."*

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



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