

Sunday, Feb 24, 2019

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Love without distinction

An enemy is defined as someone who's against you. The word springs from the Latin "*inamicus*"—literally, "not friend." If someone's not interested in being your *amigo*, why should you be amicable in return? While contrary to instinct, loving enemies is one of the hallmarks of following Jesus, who chooses to lay down his life even for the sake of those who are killing him. Is it risky to open your arms to an enemy? Yes: see crucifixion, above. But if we refuse to love those who hate us, what makes us any different from those who hate?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38 (81). "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*"

Monday, Feb 25, 2019

Clean from the inside out

Most people may think they've left behind those old-fashioned notions of "unclean spirits" found in the Bible and religious texts of an earlier age, but have they really? Researchers have found that a lot of ancient associations about "clean" and "unclean" are still with us, only now we have translated them into the realm of science, health, or nutrition. Think of how concerned people are about the purity of their food and whether their environment is antiseptically clean. It's all well and good to promote health and guard against disease, but don't forget Jesus taught that purity and impurity ultimately are questions of the heart.

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 1:1-10; Mark 9:14-29 (341). "*Everything is possible to one who has faith.*"

Tuesday, Feb 26, 2019

The last will be first

"*Will you let me be your servant? Let me be as Christ to you.*" The Richard Gillard hymn with this line has become familiar to many Catholics. Sung at funerals, weddings, Holy Thursday foot washings, and Sunday Mass, the lyrics touch human hearts in their eloquent call to humbly serve the needs of others. Pope Francis, who serves the poor in word and deed, calls us to share in this journey. How can I surrender my need for recognition? How can I serve the needs of others?

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 2:1-11; Mark 9:30-37 (342). "*They had been arguing about who was the most important.*"

Wednesday, Feb 27, 2019

Respond to the need, not the creed

In a commentary a few years back, prelate Gerald Kicanas, former bishop of the Diocese of Tucson, addressed the question of whether Catholic organizations are still actually "Catholic" if they provide services to all people, Catholic or not. His response was clear and pastoral: "The heart of Catholic outreach and social doctrine has been that we are here to serve all, and don't make distinctions. So in our Catholic schools there are young people who are non-Catholic. In our Catholic charities, we serve people who are in need." May the measure of your service and outreach always be love.

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 4:11-19; Mark 9:38-40 (343). "*There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me.*"

Thursday, Feb 28, 2019

Gone but not forgotten?

One of the most significant documents the American Roman Catholic bishops issued in the 20th century was *Economic Justice for All*. Issued in 1986, it calls fulfilling the needs of the poor the "highest priority" of economic policy and employment the "most urgent priority for domestic economic policy." Economic rights are fundamental human rights, as much as freedom of speech and religion. Some on Wall Street responded: What can a group of bishops know of high finance? A living Christianity, however, will always speak economic justice to economic power. Speak up for human values as expressed in public budgets.

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 5:1-8; Mark 9:41-50 (344). "*Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ . . . will surely not lose his reward.*"

Friday, Mar 01, 2019

The graceful gift of friendship

The church's current sacramental system designates seven ritual moments in the life of the church as occasions of particular grace. Any parochial school child can recite them: the initiating sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist; the healing rituals of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick; the vocations of Marriage and Holy Orders. But if there's ever room for an eighth candidate, many might vote for a sacrament of friendship. Who hasn't experienced their closest friends as occasions of grace? And didn't Jesus "institute" this sacrament just as obviously in the choice of his companions from Galilee to Jerusalem? Express your gratitude to a friend today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 6:5-17; Mark 10:1-12 (345). "*Let your acquaintances be many, but one in a thousand your confidant.*"

Saturday, Mar 02, 2019

MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Mother, may we?

When parents today chauffeur their kids everywhere or buy them the latest fashion item or cell phone, it's hard to fathom how invisible kids were in Jesus' day. While he built an entire ministry on reaching out to the "least of these," children were the "least of the least"—as we see from the perturbed reaction of the apostles. But Jesus says, "Let the children come to me." Could it be that Jesus learned his technique at the knee of Mary, his mother and ours, who so often is depicted with her arms held wide to welcome us all?

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 17:1-15; Mark 10:13-16 (346). "*Let the little children come to me; for it is to such as these the kingdom of God belongs.*"

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



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