



SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2017 TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Count to ten . . . blessings

During those dark moments in your life when you are sure God has forsaken you, follow this simple practice endorsed by Jesus: Count your blessings. Think about all that you've been given, the love and mercy that God has shown you and others. Did you demand explanations for those gifts? Wonder at their fairness or equity? Our suffering may never make sense, but it will be redeemed, in fact it has been redeemed many times over. God's love is stronger than sorrow and death. Abide in that love.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 20:10-13; Romans 5:12-15; Matthew 10:26-33 (94)*. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."

MONDAY, JUNE 26 Drop the judgmental mask

Matthew's gospel quotes Jesus as saying, "Stop judging, that you may not be judged." While you have to make some judgments every day, Jesus forbids judging a person's character, worth, intentions, or standing before God on the basis of what you see. Jesus used the word *hypocrite*, which comes from the Greek word for "actor," someone who wears a mask. The gospel asks that you unmask yourself, be real, and leave it to God to judge.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 12:1-9; Matthew 7:1-5 (371)*. "You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye."

TUESDAY, JUNE 27 MEMORIAL OF CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH Can you bear to see the divine?

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 375-444) was a divisive and headstrong leader for much of his life and no great role model for saintly living. He did, however, make one lasting contribution to the teachings of the church. Another bishop, Nestorius, had argued that it was impossible that God could ever become fully human in the weak and vulnerable form of an infant. He argued that Christ's divinity must have come later. Cyril defended Christ's dual nature from the beginning—fully human and fully divine—and defended Mary's title as *Theotokos*, "the bearer of God." The next opportunity you have to gaze upon the face of an infant, see if you can catch a glimpse of the divine. Ask God to give you a touch of the innocence and trust you see reflected in that infant's gaze.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 13:2, 5-18; Matthew 7:6, 12-14 (372)*. "A scribe approached and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'"



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

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28 MEMORIAL OF IRENAEUS, BISHOP, MARTYR Christ's love is no secret

Irenaeus (second century), a Father of the church, was mentored by people who knew the first disciples, which might explain the confidence he felt to write five treatises on detecting and debunking heresies. Irenaeus tamed the threat of Gnosticism by his sure efforts to "strip the fox," as he put it, so that no one could mistake the Gnostic's claims of secret spiritual knowledge for the real and accessible message of Christ. Irenaeus wrote of God: "He cannot be seen or described in . . . all his greatness . . . Yet he is certainly not unknown. Through his Word the whole creation learns that there is one God . . . who holds all things together and gives them their being."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Matthew 7:15-20 (373)*. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing."

THURSDAY, JUNE 29 SOLEMNITY OF PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES Give thanks for the odd couple

Peter and Paul might not have appreciated sharing a feast day. We mean to honor two giants of Christianity, without whom we might not have the church at all. But two more different men would be hard to find. Peter was a Galilean fisherman, impulsive, bull-headed, and rough around the edges. Paul was an educated man of the world, a Pharisee from outside Israel in territory that is now Turkey. These two met rarely and agreed even less frequently. But we value what they taught us about holding the center of orthodoxy (Peter) and pushing the frontier of the Holy Spirit (Paul).

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19 (591)*. "Jesus said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

FRIDAY, JUNE 30 MEMORIAL OF THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME Don't get burned by prejudice

"Nero fiddled while Rome burned," goes the old saying. Some blamed him for failing to fight the fire in a kind of ultimate urban renewal project. Nero himself pointed the finger at Rome's Christians and used the fire as an excuse to persecute them. Not everyone really believed the Christians were responsible, yet many were eager to denounce them for the tired old reason of prejudice. Prejudice still exacts its price in a world that doesn't always care for the truth. Don't fall for it.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 17:1, 9-10, 15-22; Matthew 8:1-4 (375)*. "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."

SATURDAY, JULY 1 MEMORIALS OF JUNÍPERO SERRA, PRIEST; BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Be a fool for Christ

Blessed Junípero Serra (1713-84) is one of those figures from church history who can start an argument. He followed a calling to bring the gospel to Native Americans in 18th-century California. Some say he opposed the Spanish colonial authorities' mistreatment of the natives; critics think he was part of the problem. Whatever else can be said of him, he gave himself completely for the missions and the people they served. Every Christian is part of the mission of Christ and his church. A member of the Spanish military said of Serra, "There is no mischief he will not attempt if exasperated." How can you be a missionary in your own way? What mischief can you make for the sake of God?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 18:1-15; Matthew 8:5-17 (376)*. "You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you."