



## SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2016 THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Christmas is official!

It wasn't until 1870 that Christmas was officially declared a federal holiday in the United States. Before that, some condemned the celebration of Christmas as an invention of the Catholic Church. In fact in 1647, England's Puritan rulers banned Christmas! The Puritan influence was brought to the Americas and a ban was in place in the Boston area until 1681. Nowadays Christmas Day is a public holiday in the U.S. and many countries around the world. Even though Christmas is six months away, take some time today to give thanks for the gift of Christmas and the gift of religious freedom.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21; Galatians 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62 (99)*. "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

## MONDAY, JUNE 27 Celebrate hard work and achievement

Today we unofficially celebrate the life and achievements of Helen Keller, who, even though deaf and blind, grew to be a renowned activist and author. We are reminded that people can overcome challenges and achieve anything they put their hearts into. Despite her challenges, Keller became the first deaf and blind person to earn a college degree *cum laude* in the U.S. In 1980, during Keller's birth centennial, President Jimmy Carter proclaimed today—her birthday—as Helen Keller Day. This is also a good time to celebrate the patience and resilience of Keller's teacher, Anne Sullivan. Today, encourage those in challenging conditions and celebrate the achievements of the most vulnerable among us.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Amos 2:6-10, 13-16; Matthew 8:18-22 (377)*. "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

## TUESDAY, JUNE 28 FEAST OF IRENAEUS, BISHOP, MARTYR Befriend the outsider

In the late second century, groups of Christians called Gnostics claimed to have "secret knowledge" directly from Jesus. Saint Irenaeus rejected their divisiveness: Authentic teachers lead the *whole* church, not a closed or secret society. Still, religious division and mistrust are with us today, for example between many Christians and Muslims. Pope Francis says, "Christians, Muslims . . . ought to remain united in working to defeat what disfigures the Face of God by seeking only their own interests." Whom do you consider outsiders? Do you really know much about them? Take time to learn

rather than reject, to share rather than practice secrecy or division.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12; Matthew 8:23-27 (378)*.

"If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love."

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29 SOLEMNITY OF PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES Hail to the chiefs!

Peter and Paul are often called the "chief apostles" because of the way their witness helped spread the gospel far and wide in the early Christian community. Each is an example of what faith can look like. For Peter, it meant spreading his experience of Jesus to everyone he met, to be the "rock" on which the church was built. For Paul, it meant building relationships and speaking to the power of the word to transform lives. Each was a giant in his own right, but together, on this feast, they remind us that disciples never go it alone.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19 (591)*. "Put on your cloak and follow me."

## THURSDAY, JUNE 30 FEAST OF THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE CHURCH IN ROME Love and courage

In the year 64 a fire broke out in Rome and raged for seven days, destroying more than half of the city. Historians suggest that the emperor Nero actually set the fire in order to blame it on the Christians, whom he persecuted throughout his 14-year reign. And blame them he did. But this time, Nero's methods of torture were so horrific that the public turned against him. He took his own life in 68, but not before he had made martyrs of many early Christians. People still face unjust persecution in parts of our world. But most of us forget the price the early Christians paid. When we remember them today we ask for the grace to imitate their faith in God.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Amos 7:10-17; Matthew 9:1-8 (380)*. "Such things are bound to happen, but that is not yet the end."

## FRIDAY, JULY 1 FEAST OF JUNIPERO SERRA, PRIEST It starts in the eyes

Conquest begins in the eyes. We see, we want, and we plot to take. Spanish explorers saw the New World as a land worth possessing to the fullest. That it was inhabited seemed no obstacle. Native peoples—awed, overpowered, or enslaved—made conquest all the richer. Missionaries like Franciscan Junipero Serra, founding father of California, offered "salvation and civilization" ahead of the conquistadors, but also the mantle of church protection. We view all these historical actors more critically now. How can we make up for the injustices of history today?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Amos 8:4-6, 9-12; Matthew 9:9-13 (381)*. "We will buy the lowly man for silver; and the poor man for a pair of sandals."

## SATURDAY, JULY 2 MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY "These scars say I am alive"

One of Mary's titles is Mother of Sorrows, but her sorrow can seem remote. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a group of eight British women posed for a photograph. Topless. The shock makes you want to look away, but you cannot, and they don't want you to. They are scarred but strong and smiling, as if to say, "We're survivors. Don't feel sorry for us. Help others caught in sorrow." Mary doesn't need us to weep for her pain, but is there a woman you know who needs your support? You may not be able to remove her sorrows, but at least don't turn away. You can let her know she is loved.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Amos 9:11-15; Matthew 9:14-17 (382)*. "Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss."



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

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