

Sunday, Jul 15, 2018

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

We're not alone

“Through him, with him, in him.” This phrase from the Eucharistic Prayer we hear at every Mass says a lot with a few well-chosen prepositions. Whatever it is we're out there doing, we're never doing it alone. It's *through* Christ that we serve the needs of our families, friends, and strangers too with our charity. It's *with* Christ that we suffer burdens of loss, betrayal, sickness, loneliness. It's *in* Christ that we're strengthened to speak the truth, seek justice, and promote peace with our words and actions. Take a moment to ground yourself in Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: Amos 7:12-15; Ephesians 1:3-14 or 1:3-10; Mark 6:7-13 (104). “*In him we have redemption . . . in him we were also chosen . . . in him you also . . . were sealed.*”

Monday, Jul 16, 2018

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Our Lady of the hour of death

Death has a way of focusing one's attention. You may intend someday to pay more attention to your faith and “get right with God.” But, as you learned in school, you shouldn't postpone studying until the night before finals. Today is the Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, who in 1251 appeared to Saint Simon Stock, an English Carmelite, and bestowed on him the scapular and the promise to intercede at the hour of death for all who wore it in life. The original scapular was the brown sleeveless tunic that is still a part of the Carmelite habit today. The best way to prepare for a good death is to live a better life—starting today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 10:34—11:1 (389). “*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*”

Tuesday, Jul 17, 2018

Empty the schedule for a while

As you take some time for fun and pleasure this summer, remember that what you are doing is holy. It is our duty to rest, repair, and restore ourselves. Several times a year that actually means vacating our normal routine and residence. The word *vacation* comes from the Latin *vacare*, “to be empty, be free.” Taking a vacation is a separate and very different act from making a retreat (from the Latin for “withdraw”), though that, too, is often a holy act. Without the release a vacation provides, our lives can easily get thrown off balance, which leads to stress, exhaustion, apathy, and eventually hardness of heart—a trait Jesus condemns in today's gospel.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:1-9; Matthew 11:20-24 (390). “*If the mighty deeds done here had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until now.*”

Wednesday, Jul 18, 2018

MEMORIAL OF CAMILLUS DE LELLIS, PRIEST

Using what ails us

A six-foot-six-inch-tall soldier, strong and commanding, Camillus was brought low by pain and disease. His addiction to gambling led him to poverty. Instead of giving up, he worked to heal others and brought others to toil with him. Now he is the patron saint of hospitals and the sick as well as of nurses. He used the limitations, pain, and shortcomings of his own life to bring healing

to others and to sanctify himself. What ails us today that we can use to help others and ourselves?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 10:5-7, 13b-16; Matthew 11:25-27 (391). “*Although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.*”

Thursday, Jul 19, 2018

What's in a name?

It makes a difference whether you know someone's name. To be introduced to a person involves learning their name. It puts you on personal terms. It was the same for the ancient Israelites, even when it came to God. When Moses asked God who he should say sent him, God revealed the divine name to Moses to tell the people. In this way they would know the Lord cared for them and would act on their behalf. Call on the Lord by name and ask God to be active in your life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19; Matthew 11:28-30 (392). “*This is what you shall tell the children of Israel: I AM sent me to you.*”

Friday, Jul 20, 2018

Follow the law of love

The Pharisees were a sect that demanded strict interpretation and observance of Mosaic Law. They sometime preferred rules and regulations to thoughtful consideration of circumstances or the larger picture. It's not hard to see why: Laws are neat, impartial, neutral, clear. Moreover, when we simply follow laws, thinking is generally not required! Jesus, however, calls his followers to a higher standard: to *love*, which, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu rightly observed, “is much more demanding than law.” Just for today, let's immerse ourselves in the “something greater” that Jesus talked about. Let's immerse ourselves in love. What would your day be like if you did so?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Matthew 12:1-8 (393). “*I say to you, something greater than the temple is here.*”

Saturday, Jul 21, 2018

MEMORIAL OF LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

The gift of a broken heart

In his *Personal Narrative*, the early American sermon writer Edward Fitzgerald reveals something important about love when he says, “I have greatly longed of late for a broken heart, and to lie low before God.” It is unlikely any of us long for a broken heart. But to consider a broken heart a gift, Fitzgerald must have seen something akin to what Saint Lawrence of Brindisi approached when he wrote, “Love stirs itself from sorrow; and love itself is in equal measure lanced with sorrow.” The lower we lie in sorrow, the further we can experience God's sacrificial love that comes down to us. Moreover, the pureness of our emotions when we are steeped in sorrow allows us to offer up to God a supple material for his grace. Instead of fearing your brokenness, use it to open to God's grace.

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 2:1-5; Matthew 12:14-21 (394). “*Many people followed him, and he cured them all.*”

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



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