

Sunday, Jul 22, 2018

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ease up!

Are you living at one speed all the time: busy, busy, busy? Some of us are overextended, many of us have never learned to say no, and more than a few of us hang our self-worth on the precarious hooks of what we can accomplish. Even Jesus took time out for retreat and recollection. When was the last time you went on retreat? Do you take the occasional night off, observe a real Sabbath rest, sit for five minutes in a quiet, empty church? Block out time on your calendar not to *do*, but to *be* with God.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Mark 6:30-34 (107). *"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."*

Monday, Jul 23, 2018

MEMORIAL OF BRIDGET, RELIGIOUS

Give God a try

From the moment we're born we face challenges in life. We learn how to walk—and we take some tumbles. We allow ourselves to fall in love—and we experience heartache. We work hard to be better people—and we sometimes fall short. It takes faith to attempt things without knowing how they'll turn out. Fear can tempt us to not try hard at anything. Yet we're all called by God to do and be more than we can envision! We see that in stories of our ancestors in faith, such as Moses, who, by the grace of God and the willingness to try, achieved remarkable things. How have you allowed God to work in and through you today?

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 6:1-4, 6-8; Matthew 12:38-42 (395). *"Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."*

Tuesday, Jul 24, 2018

MEMORIAL OF SHARBEL MAKHLUF, PRIEST

Listen up

Saints haven't always done big things like bring the gospel to whole continents or found great religious orders—laudable though those achievements have been. Sometimes they just sat by the door and listened to God and the people who visited them. Many visited Saint Sharbel (1828-98), a Lebanese hermit, for his blessing and counsel. The service he rendered consisted almost entirely of welcoming, listening, and praying with anyone who came to him. Do you have an attentive and welcoming friend who can help you find a way through your troubles? Can you be that attentive friend to others who need some support?

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Matthew 12:46-50 (396). *"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

Wednesday, Jul 25, 2018

FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE

Take a big gulp

Saint James was a disciple of John the Baptist who took up Jesus' call to follow him. Brash, impulsive, and hotheaded (he and his brother John were nicknamed by Jesus the "Sons of Thunder"), James was rebuked on several occasions, but he proved himself when put to the test. He dedicated his life to spreading Jesus' gospel, traveled to Samaria, Judea, and Spain in the name of

Christ, and died a martyr's death—the first apostle to do so—in Jerusalem in the year 44. James drank deeply from the cup Jesus passed to him. Prepare yourself each day through small acts of faith to do the same.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605). *"Jesus asked the sons of Zebedee, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?'"*

Thursday, Jul 26, 2018

MEMORIAL OF JOACHIM AND ANNE, PARENTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

A grand legacy

Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary, are not mentioned in scripture, but legend says they were childless until they experienced simultaneous annunciations indicating that God had other plans. While Grandparents Day was established in 1979 "to help children become aware of strength, information, and guidance older people can offer," today's memorial of Jesus' grandparents emphasizes handing on the treasure of faith. The affinity that the old and the very young often have for each other in our families is an opportunity to leave grandchildren an inheritance of love.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13; Matthew 13:10-17 (398). *"Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear."*

Friday, Jul 27, 2018

The good earth

To be "honest as dirt" may not seem much of a compliment, but it is. A nicer word might be *humus*, a word taken directly from Latin that means "earth." And from this root our word *humility* comes. Humility has a bad rep because it is often mistaken for humiliation. But humility has nothing to do with groveling. What it means is "I am who I am before God: nothing more, and nothing less." That kind of humility ("I need you, Lord!") is the honest soil in which the word can take hold, take root, take heart, and bloom. Worry less about briars: just need the Seed.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 3:14-17; Matthew 13:18-23 (399). *"The seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it."*

Saturday, Jul 28, 2018

Tough love

In his book *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, psychologist and best-selling author M. Scott Peck takes up one of the most difficult problems human beings face in this mysterious life: the problem of human evil. Why does it exist, and why does a good God permit it? Peck doesn't provide any simple answers, but he does caution us not to give into the temptation when we are harmed, to return evil with evil and exact revenge. Leave the judgment to Jesus. Weeds eventually are separated from wheat, but that is not your job. Hard as it may be, you are called to return evil with love. Do your best.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 7:1-11; Matthew 13:24-30 (400). *"Let them grow together until harvest."*

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



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