

SUNDAY, JULY 23, 2017

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Get on board with God

“We believe in God . . . the Almighty,” we pray at Mass every Sunday: We believe God to be all-powerful—to think anything less would mean God isn’t God. If we look at the world around us, though, we see bad things happening to just about everyone. Where is the Almighty in all that? The church’s answer has always been that “God grants his creatures . . . the dignity of acting on their own,” as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says. That dignity can go two ways: either working with God to help bring about the reign of God, or not. How can you show your cooperation?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43 (106).* “He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the Kingdom.”

MONDAY, JULY 24

MEMORIAL OF SHARBEL MAKHLUF, PRIEST

Don’t be a closet Christian

Saint Sharbel Makhluf, the Hermit of Lebanon, dedicated himself to imitating Christ at an early age. He entered the Maronite monastery of St. Maro and was eventually granted permission to live as a hermit. Many sought his counsel over the years, but it wasn’t until his body was discovered incorrupt long after his death in 1898 that hundreds of miracles were attributed to him. He became a sign to 20th-century Christians of the liberating power of simple living. We 21st-century Christians may not be prepared to reduce our possessions to a tunic and leaf-filled mattress, but we could begin to loosen the bonds of materialism by giving away the contents of a closet or two.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Exodus 14:5-18; Matthew 12:38-42 (395).* “The scribes and Pharisees said to him, ‘Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.’”

TUESDAY, JULY 25

FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE

Name your faith

James has lots of nicknames. Besides “apostle,” he is “the Greater” to distinguish him from the other, younger apostle named James. He was “son of Zebedee,” which identified his fishing roots. He and his brother were the “sons of thunder,” reflecting a familial temper trait. He is also “the Martyr,” being the first apostle to suffer such a fate. The shrine in his name in Santiago de Compostela refers to his supposed missionary work in Spain. These names indicate that he was larger than life and multifaceted. What nickname would you want to be remembered by?

TODAY’S READINGS: *2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605).* “She said, ‘Declare that these two sons of mine will sit at your right hand and your left in your Kingdom.’”

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26

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

Be a model

Remember when you first realized that you were becoming your mother? Or turning out to be just like your father? Kids do tend



to grow up to be like their parents. Just like Mary’s parents, Joachim and Anne, were the good ground from which the seed of goodness grew, we can be the good soil from which our children spring and produce much fruit. So it might be better for us to invest our energy in self-control, rather than kid-control. The goal, remember, is not well-behaved kids but well-behaved adults.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Exodus 16:1-5; 9-15; Matthew 13:1-9 (397).* “Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

THURSDAY, JULY 27

Be different

The routine nature of daily life can cause our hearts to grow dull. And when we’re feeling dull, it’s hard to hear what God has to tell us. Yet it doesn’t take much to shake things up and get a new perspective. Just break out of a routine and do something different—take a new route to work, rearrange your furniture, clean out a junk drawer, or call an old friend you’ve been thinking about. God often talks to us in

moments of surprise. So get out of your rut and you might even get a fresh message from God.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b; Matthew 13:10-17 (398).* “For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing.”

FRIDAY, JULY 28

Jesus is close at hand

Where does God “live”? Where do you go to find God? Jesus declared he was the new temple, the new dwelling place of God in creation. So wherever Jesus is, God is present, too. In his Body, which is the church, in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, in love of and service to others, and in countless other ways—in these places, God lives. Think of all the places you can encounter Jesus in your life, all the temples great and small where you feel the presence of God.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 13:18-23 (399).* “But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”

SATURDAY, JULY 29

MEMORIAL OF MARTHA

Friendliness is Godliness

Even the savior of the world needed a place where he could put his feet up and let his hair down. The home of Martha, her sister Mary, and their brother Lazarus was just such a place for Jesus. They were his good friends, people with whom he likely shared laughs and good times and perhaps on occasion a good cup of wine. When Lazarus died, Jesus without hesitation put his own life at risk by raising him. Friendship is fundamental to the spiritual life and to our well-being, yet too often we let friendships wither from neglect. Who counts you among their closest friends? If the list is short or nonexistent, it’s time to reassess your priorities.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Exodus 24:3-8; Matthew 13:24-30 (400).* “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”



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

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