

## Sunday, Sep 02, 2018

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Law is good, love is better

It seemed like such a good idea at the time: carve the law of the nation in stone. We citizens of another land and millennia can appreciate how final the Ten Commandments must have felt—and yet how inadequate they turned out to be. We too have laws and rules, Declaration and Constitution, rights and amendments. But a community doesn't emerge from stone or paper, from documents and words and promises. We may give lip service to high ideals, but only love leads to the common good. Do we really love our neighbor as ourselves?

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8; James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 (125). *"What great nation has statutes and decrees that are as just as this whole law?"*

## Monday, Sep 03, 2018

MEMORIAL OF GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

### The law of love

The Pharisees criticized Jesus for letting his disciples pick grain on the sabbath to eat. The disciples were desperately hungry, or they would not have been breaking the sabbath rules. Jesus' radical idea is that the sabbath is made for people, not the other way around. As Lord of the sabbath, Jesus recognizes that if religious observance hurts people, something's wrong with our priorities. Religion can seem to focus on the do's and don'ts, but rules are not ends in themselves. They serve to bring about love and justice, not give us opportunities to oppress or exclude one another. In his Book of Pastoral Rule, Pope Gregory, celebrated today, says, "The law of Christ is charity." Try to keep the rules in perspective when you apply them to yourself or others.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Luke 4:16-30 (431). *"Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place."*

## Tuesday, Sep 04, 2018

### O little town of Capernaum

You've probably heard the saying, "All politics is local," suggesting that people are mostly concerned about the quality of life in their neighborhood or town. The same might be said of religion. Though Christianity now counts more than 2 billion believers worldwide, it all began in Capernaum, a small fishing village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Reportedly the home of the apostles Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the tax collector Matthew, Jesus selected this hamlet as the center of his public ministry after he left the mountainous town of Nazareth. Think of Capernaum as the mustard seed from which a great world religion sprung forth. And never underestimate the power of your own "small" life to bear great fruit as well.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16; Luke 4:31-37 (432). *"Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee."*

## Wednesday, Sep 05, 2018

### Faith comes first

A major part of Jesus' active ministry was as a healer. Those who came to him had faith that he could heal them; they believed in his power and were changed because of it. Scripture scholar Father Donald Senior, C.P. writes, "If there was faith, then the miracle had already begun: the miracle of a transformed life . . . physical cures were simply dramatic illustrations of the

fundamental restoration Jesus worked in everyone whom he touched and who believed in him." Faith drew people to Jesus for healing, not the other way around. Believing opens your life to God and allows for transformation that's nothing short of miraculous.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Luke 4:38-44 (433). *"He laid his hands on each of them and cured them."*

## Thursday, Sep 06, 2018

### Reach beyond patience

In the confessional recently, a friend admitted she lacked gratitude. "I hate my life!" she told the priest. To her surprise he accepted her frank admission. "Some people suffer from poor health, others from a poverty of peace in their circumstances," he observed. Then he advised her: "Pray for peace. Not for patience to simply bear your life, but peace to fully live it." Many of us endure seasons when our days feel infertile, our efforts seem purposeless. We lower the nets, again and again, and come up empty. In these hours, pray not for patience but for an enlivening peace.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; Luke 5:1-11 (434). *"We have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."*

## Friday, Sep 07, 2018

### Reserve judgment

Two very old titles for Jesus are *King* and *Judge*. His kingship over the universe is one of the "offices" or aspects of his divinity in which believers share, the other two being the priestly and prophetic. Jesus is also the ultimate judge of the world—only God can judge, and Christ is God revealed. Hand in hand with Jesus being the Judge is that the rest of us are not. The biblical message is clear: Judging others calls down God's judgment on yourself. Another downside to judging is that it sets people over one another—"I'm better than you and so I can judge you"—when in fact all are equally subject to God. Leave the ruling and judging to God and get to work loving your neighbor.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Luke 5:33-39 (435). *"Do not make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes."*

## Saturday, Sep 08, 2018

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

### Unbroken chain

Birthdays are great stopping-off points on life's journey; they are days to look backward and forward. We marvel at the patterns of our lives that are visible only from a distance. We look ahead to the future with hope. On Mary's birthday, we recall the extraordinary circumstances leading to her birth—an aging, barren couple, a surprise visit from an angel, a prayer answered—and we look forward with wonder at the life of the child who became the Mother of God. Scripture offers a long genealogy of Jesus—another reminder that life is an unbroken chain of births and deaths, deeds and consequences. Today ask yourself, "What might the action I'm contemplating set into motion? Will it be for good or ill?" and then act accordingly.

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 5:1-4a or Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 or 1:18-23 (636). *"She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

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



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