

Sunday, Jan 20, 2019

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Service with a smile

Service mottos abound, ranging from “The customer is always right” to “Ours is not to question why, ours is but to do or die.” At a particular nuptial celebration in Cana, servants in the middle of a supply crisis were told to follow the instructions of a young man who made puzzling demands of them. As a result of their obedience, ordinary water became fine wine. The crisis turned into a triumph. When we listen to Jesus and act on what we hear—the very definition of “obedience”—marvels ensue. Gospel always starts out sounding incredible, until it’s reality.

TODAY’S READINGS: Isaiah 62:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11 (66). “His mother said to the servers, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’”

Monday, Jan 21, 2019

MEMORIAL OF AGNES, VIRGIN, MARTYR

The legacy lives on—the struggle as well

When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, the outcry from other faith leaders was immediate. Pope Paul VI called King a “prophet.” The National Conference of Catholic Bishops joined in a widespread interfaith statement, “bow[ing] together in grief before the shameful murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a unique apostle of the nonviolent drive for justice . . . no service of remembrance or local memorial is equal to the greatness of his labor or the vastness of our national need.” What can your parish do with other churches in the ongoing effort to end racism?

TODAY’S READINGS: Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 2:18-22 (311). “The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them.”

Tuesday, Jan 22, 2019

DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF UNBORN CHILDREN

Remember the us in them

At the heart of *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, is the abbreviation *v.*, “versus,” the antagonism, the eternal contest between “us” and “them.” Our great challenge in choosing life over death is less to beat “them” whom we can easily demonize as the “opposition” but rather to see those with whom we profoundly disagree as persons also beloved by God and saved by “The Lord [who] does not see as mortals see, the outward appearance, but the Lord [who] looks on the heart.” Part of the struggle to uphold the sanctity and value of life must be to draw close enough to the other to actually listen to and hear another human heart.

TODAY’S READINGS: Hebrews 6:10-20; Mark 2:23-28 (312). “They look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

Wednesday, Jan 23, 2019

Working together to heal the world

In developing countries around the world, missionaries of every Christian denomination work side by side to help the poor, the hungry, and the sick. Projects that provide water and medical services to remote villages are accomplished every day by people cooperating despite their religious differences. Jesus encountered resistance to his own healing ministry because he often had to cross the dividing lines of religion in order to get the job done. In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we may not be able to share the sacrament of Communion, but we can share the work of justice, which ultimately is the work of Jesus.

TODAY’S READINGS: Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17; Mark 3:1-6 (313). “Then he said to them, ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?’ But they were silent.”

Thursday, Jan 24, 2019

MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS DE SALES, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Listen to the doctor

What does it mean to be a “doctor of the church”? There are three dozen saints who have been given this title for shaping theology and doctrine through scholarship and writing. Some of the biggies include Saints Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great. Saint Francis de Sales, a French bishop born in 1567, is also part of the esteemed group, and he is known as the “doctor of charity.” He wrote extensively (and is the patron saint of journalists), emphasizing to his readers that charity is a means of spiritual development. Take a page from Saint Francis today.

TODAY’S READINGS: Hebrews 7:25—8:6; Mark 3:7-12 (314).

“Hearing what he was doing, a large number of people came to him.”

Friday, Jan 25, 2019

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

I once was (and often am) blind

Sometimes it seems Paul was lucky. God made it very clear to him that he needed a major attitude adjustment—what spiritual folks call a conversion of heart. If God met you on the road today, could you meet the divine gaze with a sense of peace, or would you want to beg for a second chance to live more faithfully? In prayer today ask, “Am I blind to my own need for conversion?” Pray for the grace to honestly see and to “respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first,” in the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

TODAY’S READINGS: Acts 22:3-16 or Acts 9:1-22; Mark 16:15-18

(519). “Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight.”

Saturday, Jan 26, 2019

MEMORIAL OF TIMOTHY AND TITUS, BISHOPS

Ready to sign on?

Many ministers would probably say that serving sometimes feels like a battle for bodies and souls in need. Saint Titus, an early church leader and missionary, is the patron saint of U.S. Army chaplains. The Order of Titus Award honors outstanding performance of combat ministry in providing religious support to soldiers. Remember all those who are in the trenches—literally and figuratively—offering support in difficult circumstances of one sort or another. Consider enlisting with them today.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Timothy 1:1-8 or Titus 1:1-5 (520); Mark 3:20-21 (316). “When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him.”

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



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