



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

SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2010

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First things first

What would happen if you and a whole bunch of other people really took to heart these words of scripture: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself”? What, in other words, would be the result if you and I and lots of others put God first in our lives? There would be mutual respect between people. The love of God would be lived out. Violence would disappear. No one would lack what they need. It sounds too good to be true, but with God all things are possible. Do your part and give it your all.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 30:10-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37*

“Turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

MONDAY, JULY 12

Conflict may be unavoidable

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Yet he himself rejects the idea that his teachings will lead to a Pollyanna world of shiny, happy people. Christianity is not a “nice” religion for “nice” folks. It’s a hefty and challenging commission to make God’s justice tangible on the planet—as the prayer says, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That task requires the surrender of power and resources from the grip of the mighty into the hands of those who are meek. Are you ready to surrender that superior position without a contest?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 10:34-11:1*
“I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

TUESDAY, JULY 13 FEAST OF HENRY

When church met state

The feast of Saint Henry (d. 1024) gives us a chance to face the church as a political reality. We are far removed from Henry and the first millennium, yet some of his long-ago actions still affect the church today. For example, Henry strongly supported enforced clerical celibacy, not for a spiritual purpose but in order that public land and offices that he had granted to the church might not be passed on to any clerical descendants. That in turn ensured that the bishops to whom he granted these benefits would remain loyal to him, the last of the Holy Roman Emperors. Indeed, he was a man of his times, but perhaps Henry should be invoked as the patron saint of (and a most excellent reason for) the *separation* of church and state.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 7:1-9; Matthew 11:20-24*
“If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.”

WEDNESDAY, JULY 14

The not-so-invisible God

If there’s one thing Christians believe above all else, it’s that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—the Incarnation, God made “visible.” Though the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that “faith is the . . . conviction of things not seen” (11:1), we hear from another New Testament letter, to the Colossians, how Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (1:15). Another way to say all this is that Jesus is the *revelation* of God: If you want to “see” the invisible God, if you want to know who God is, then look to Jesus. Believe in him and hear his message of loving God and neighbor with everything you have.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 10:5-7, 13b-16; Matthew 11:25-27*
“No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

THURSDAY, JULY 15

FEAST OF BONAVENTURE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Faith seeking understanding

The play *The Million Dollar Saint*, written in the mid-1950s, portrays Saint Francis of Assisi returning to earth at a Jesuit university and recommending that they “throw away all books” because intellectual pursuits were proud and led to all kinds of evil. Unfortunately the playwright misunderstood the saint who actually welcomed eminent theologians to his humble fraternity. Saint Bonaventure, a near contemporary of Francis, studied at the University of Paris, was a distinguished thinker, a contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, and became the head of the whole Franciscan Order. But Bonaventure’s sharp mind never dissuaded him from the primacy of love. Clear thinking and holiness are not enemies. In an age of *Religion for Dummies*, it’s good to be wary of simplistic approaches to profoundly complex human questions. We didn’t learn all there is to know about faith in kindergarten, and the more we know, the more we may love.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19; Matthew 11:28-30*
“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.”

FRIDAY, JULY 16 FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Everyday holiness

Mount Carmel is located in the Holy Land. A chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary was built there in the 12th century. Devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel centers on the scapular, which was originally a broad piece of cloth worn over the shoulders symbolizing the “yoke of Christ.” She promised: “Whosoever dies wearing [the scapular] shall not suffer eternal fire. It shall be a sign of salvation, a protection in danger and pledge of peace.” By sanctifying almost every aspect of human life, *sacramentals*, like the “Brown Scapular” as it is now known—along with holy water and cards, medals and rosaries—bring us closer to Jesus. And *that* is what our faith is all about.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Matthew 12:1-8*
“I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.”

SATURDAY, JULY 17 FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

How do you see Mary?

A fair amount of confusion exists around the subject of Marian apparitions. Do Catholics believe in them? Perhaps the best answer would be: “Some do and some don’t.” In rare cases the Catholic Church may judge an apparition to be worthy of belief, but that belief is never required of Catholics. According to the Marianum Pontifical Institute in Rome, of the 295 reported apparitions studied by the Holy See through the centuries, only 12 have been approved as worthy of belief. Such an apparition is believed to offer evidence of Mary’s continuing presence in the life of the church. Whether we choose to believe an apparition or not, we can see that Mary offers a timeless witness of the full response to God’s plan for our lives: “Thy will be done.”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Micah 2:1-5; Matthew 12:14-21*
“Here is my servant, whom I have chosen.”