



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

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2010

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Please stop fussing and sit for a minute

As essentially Christian and counter-intuitive as “love your enemies may be,” Jesus’ defend-

ing Mary’s “laziness” over her hard-working sister Martha seems even more outrageous and unfair! If Americans love and believe in anything, it is hard work. It’s what gives us identity. I’m a farmer, an attorney, a physicist, a salesperson. So how can Jesus tell poor Martha, who just burned her fingers taking the soufflé out of the oven and could use a little help in the kitchen, that her sister has chosen the “better part”? It’s a matter of priority. We can imagine Jesus saying, “Martha, can’t we just get take-out? I came to visit you, not your cuisine. I know you show love by your hard work, but *you* mean so much more to me than what you do. Come sit here with me.”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Genesis 18:1-10a; Colossians 1:24-28; Luke 10:38-42*

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.”

MONDAY, JULY 19

If you do this for me, then . . .

The scribes and Pharisees were “credentialed” religious leaders, and they took offense with this upstart Jesus. Without a degree or apparent pedigree, he appeared out of nowhere (or so it seemed) and began teaching with authority. They wanted to “see his papers,” to be given some proof, and then they would believe him. The operative phrase here is “and then.” How many times in our own faith journey have we uttered that qualifier? Help me get well, “and then” I will believe; find me a job, “and then” I will have faith; answer my prayers, “and then” I will believe. Isn’t it time we dropped the qualifier, stopped demanding signs, and let the truth of Jesus’ message speak for itself in our hearts?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Micah 6:1-4, 6-8; Matthew 12:38-42*
“See, something greater than Solomon is here!”

TUESDAY, JULY 20

Prayer by any other name

It’s been said there are five kinds of prayer: praise and adoration, blessing, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession. Some prayers are one or another, but many prayers don’t fall into these neat categories; they combine different ones. Take the Lord’s Prayer, for example. It has “hallowed be thy name” (adoration) and “forgive us your trespasses” (petition). Or the Hail Mary: “The Lord is with thee” is praise, while “Blessed art thou among women” is—obviously—blessing. The five types of prayer are really more ways of praying as much as set forms. When you pray, whether the prayers of the church or your own, be aware of how the different kinds of prayer are at work. It will enrich your prayer.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Matthew 12:46-50*
“Who is a God like you? . . . You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21

FEAST OF LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

The fruitful witness

Can a politician be saved? Some would say it’s impossible! But we know that for God anything is possible. Take for instance today’s saint, Lawrence of Brindisi. A Capuchin priest, he was also a politician. He was at various times during the 17th century vicar-general of his order, chaplain to the emperor, papal nuncio

to Bavaria, and special envoy to the king of Spain. He was in politics up to his ears. Yet his saintly patience, kindness, and goodness witnessed to those with whom he worked. “You will know them by their fruits,” Jesus said. Even politicians can bear good fruit!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 1:1, 4-10; Matthew 13:1-9*

“Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!”

THURSDAY, JULY 22 FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE

The heart of a disciple

Mary Magdalene is one of the bad girls of the Bible, right? Although tradition often depicts her that way, the gospels paint a more accurate picture of who Mary Magdalene is. Mary proclaimed the Good News with Jesus and other disciples throughout the land. At the foot of the cross she risked her own life to stand vigil with Jesus as he was crucified and died. After Jesus was buried, she channeled her own grief into an act of love by going to the tomb to show reverence. Finally, it was Mary whom the gospels tell us was the first witness to the Resurrection. May we be blessed with the heart and courage of Mary Magdalene.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13; John 20:1-2, 11-18*
“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ which means Teacher.”

FRIDAY, JULY 23 FEAST OF BRIDGET OF SWEDEN, RELIGIOUS

Read, think, ponder

After raising eight children in a happy marriage, Bridget of Sweden was attracted to a life of contemplation. We’re not surprised: Ask any parent of a large family if a little peace and quiet isn’t appealing! The Bridgettine sisters were committed to giving all surplus income to the poor at the end of each year. They also kept their buildings simple. But one thing they didn’t skimp on was books. Each member could have as many as he or she pleased. In an age that gets its information from sound bites, book reading is a vanishing art. Promote “extreme understanding.” Read books!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 3:14-17; Matthew 13:18-23*

“But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.”

SATURDAY, JULY 24 FEAST OF SHARBEL MAKHLUF, PRIEST

A cedar of Lebanon

Saint Sharbel (or Charbel), born in northern Lebanon in 1828, was a Maronite Catholic monk and priest. His reputation for holiness and simplicity led to his canonization in 1977. Descended from the ancient church at Antioch, Maronite Catholics spent centuries isolated from other Christian communities and appointed their own patriarch. Unique among Eastern Catholics, however, Maronites have always remained in full communion with the Church of Rome. When Sharbel was canonized, Bishop Francis Zayek, head the U.S. Diocese of St. Maron, noted that Sharbel’s canonization and other Maronite beatifications prove “that the Aramaic Maronite Antiochian Church is indeed a living branch of the Catholic Church.”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 7:1-11; Matthew 13:24-30*

“Let both of them grow together until the harvest.”

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