



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

SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 2008

SOLEMNITY OF PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES
Passion in action

Today we remember and celebrate the lives of two very different men who nevertheless had one important characteristic in common:

passion. Their passionate love for Jesus found divergent outlets and took different forms, but this quality above all is what makes their words and deeds so compelling, even 2,000 years later. To be passionate about an idea, a cause, our faith is a great gift. But passion requires action. Today is a good day to pause and consider what our passions are. Then ask, “Does my life reflect my passions?”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19*

“Who do you say that I am?”

MONDAY, JUNE 30

FIRST HOLY MARTYRS OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH
Wanted: Dead or alive

Jesus made startling statements about family—that his true kin were those who did the will of God, and, perhaps most shocking, that a would-be disciple forgo burying his dead father and follow him. His point—made with a large helping of biblical exaggeration—is that being a disciple should be job number 1; everything else falls into place behind that task.

But look at the church, and the dead are everywhere among us, commended to God at funerals, laid to rest in cemeteries, prayed to in the communion of saints. We remember some anonymous but important dead today, the first Christians to die from persecution in Rome in A.D. 64. We do not, however, leave these early ancestors in our family of faith unburied but let them lead us by example to follow Christ, even to the cross.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Amos 2:6-10, 13-16; Matthew 8:18-22*

“Jesus said to him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

TUESDAY, JULY 1 FEAST OF JUNÍPERO SERRA, PRIEST

If today you hear his voice

A coworker’s favorite rhetorical question, “Is the pope Catholic?”, is intended to provoke an obvious assent, much as the prophet Amos’ questions indicate absolutely no doubt that punishment will follow abandoning God’s covenant. With that same kind of zeal and confidence the Franciscan Junípero Serra undertook his mission in California and Mexico, undeterred by illness, politicians, or soldiers. Such single-minded individuals can be faulted for their one-track minds, even for excesses in fulfilling what they perceive as their mission. While compromise is a valuable and necessary skill in human relations, the prophet, the saint, holds to the rock of faith. “Always forward, never back,” was Serra’s motto, and hundreds of years later, thousands of people around the world are the beneficiaries of missionaries like him.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12; Matthew 8:23-27*

“Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?”

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2

A silk purse from a sow’s ear?

If you don’t think there’s humor in the Bible, think again. It’s subtle sometimes and a little hard to get, but it’s there. Take for example the story of Jesus driving the demons out of two people and into a nearby herd of swine, who then proceed to drown themselves. First, from the Jewish perspective there’s uncleanness all over the place: the possessed were living among the tombs—and therefore the dead—not to mention the presence of the pigs.

When the demons go into the swine and with them into the sea, Jesus’ audience would have laughed; they already knew the devil was in the pigs. Of course the purpose of the story is to show Jesus’ power over demons. But can’t healing and deliverance from affliction be a moment of lighthearted joy?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Amos 5:14-15, 21-24; Matthew 8:28-34*

“The demons came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed into the sea and perished.”

THURSDAY, JULY 3 FEAST OF THOMAS, APOSTLE

But now he’s a believer

OK, so Thomas was a little incredulous at first. Wouldn’t you be, too, if you were told that someone you know who was dead had been seen alive? Thomas didn’t have the advantage of 2,000 years of faith. But you do. Christ comes to you today in the poor, the lowly, the weak, and the vulnerable who need your help. He speaks to you through the proclamation of the gospel that calls you to faith. He pleads with you in the voice of the hungry and the rejected of the world. Blessed are you even if you don’t see him yet still believe.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:24-29*

“Jesus said to Thomas, ‘Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.’”

FRIDAY, JULY 4 FEAST OF ELIZABETH OF PORTUGAL

From pain to gain

“What a life of bitterness I am leading,” said Saint Elizabeth of Portugal (1271-1336). “On whom but God can I depend?” These anguished words came from a woman who was married to the king of Portugal at 12, endured his philandering, watched their son lead an armed revolt against his own father, and was banished for a time by her husband.

How did she deal with all these problems? By turning to prayer and works of mercy, including founding a hospital, a house for reformed prostitutes, an orphanage, and a pilgrim hostel. She also defused the father-son conflict, lived to see the king repent of his sins before his death, and even conducted some diplomacy by preventing a war. As a widow she lived the rest of her life in a convent of Poor Clare sisters. Elizabeth’s example counsels us not to endure abusive situations but to turn our pain into healing, both for others and ourselves.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Amos 8:4-6, 9-12; Matthew 9:9-13*

“Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’”

SATURDAY, JULY 5 FEAST OF ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA, PRIEST

Someone’s calling

Pope Benedict XVI’s recent trip to the U.S. brought media coverage to the growing number of people who are entering religious life as a second career. Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria (1502-1539) can serve as a model. After learning medicine and practicing as a physician for three years, he studied and was ordained to the priesthood. He worked in hospitals that served the poor and founded no less than three religious orders—one each for men and women religious, plus a lay congregation for married people. Wondering if you or someone you know is heading toward religious life? A visit to VocationMatch.com might offer some leads.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Amos 9:11-15; Matthew 9:14-17*

“New wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

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Scripture quotes come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
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