



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

SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2008

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Full circle

When it comes to learning, there is a definite circular pattern to our lives. During the earliest years of childhood, almost everything we know comes from our lived experience. As we grow older and learn to read and think in abstractions, we obtain more and more of our knowledge from books and other “experts”—and as a result, we trust ourselves less and less. Eventually in our later years we realize that our truth has been within all along and we begin trusting our own experience again. Perhaps this pattern is what the artist Pablo Picasso was thinking about when he said, “It takes a long time to become young.” Where are you on the circle?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Zechariah 9:9-10; Romans 8:9, 11-13; Matthew 11:25-30*

“You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.”

MONDAY, JULY 7

Your life as scripture

Sometimes we forget that all the holy stories in the world aren’t contained in the pages of the Bible. Our lives, too, are like sacred texts unfolding. That can seem a strange idea when you consider the contents of an ordinary day: busyness, tedium, chaos, headaches, and conflicts. Remember Hosea, the “performance prophet,” whose troubled marriage became the source of one of the most memorable books of prophecy. In the heartache between Hosea and his wife Gomer, he understood something wonderful about the love of God. If you viewed today as a page of scripture, what lesson would it hold?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 2:16, 17b-18, 21-22; Matthew 9:18-26*
“I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.”

TUESDAY, JULY 8

The devil on your tongue

What keeps us from praising God all day long? Oh, probably a lot of things. Bad moods. Rushing around. People who drive us nuts. Distractions besiege us that make praise the farthest thing from our minds. But as the simplest form of prayer, praise could be the easiest way to find more time for spiritual growth. Try offering a few silent words of praise every hour. As you drive: *What wonderful trees!* As you look at your children: *How creative, Lord!* As you cook: *Food smells so good!* Keep the devil off your tongue with a mouthful of praise.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:32-38*
“And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke.”

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9

FEAST OF AUGUSTINE ZHAO RONG, PRIEST AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS
Mixed blessing

With the summer Olympics approaching, religious toleration in China has been in the news. Christianity has a long and sometimes contentious history in China. While many of the foreign missionaries among the 120 martyrs we remember today distanced themselves from politics, Chinese authorities still saw them as foreign agents. Errors were made on all sides, which in 2001 led Pope John Paul II to say, after praising the martyrs for their courage and good works: “History, however, reminds us of the unfortunate fact that the work of members of the church in

China was not always without error . . . I feel deep sadness for these errors and limits of the past. . .” Imitate Catholic missionaries today who are careful to respect local sensibilities as they go about sharing the Good News.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Matthew 10:1-7*

“As you go, proclaim the good news: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

THURSDAY, JULY 10

Love me tender

Anyone who dismisses the God of the Old Testament as mostly vengeful needs to spend time with Hosea the prophet whose own personal life revealed the passionate love of God for God’s people. Who can resist the image of a God who lifts a child to his cheek, who stoops to feed her, who sweeps into his arms the wandering, teetering one? When Jesus asks if a parent could be so cold as to give a hungry child a stone instead of bread, he could easily have had Hosea’s words in mind. And when Jesus sends out his own disciples, it is not with threats but with good news of healing and peace freely received and freely given. Yet this is more than tenderness: “The Holy One is present among you; I will not let the flames consume you.”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 11:1-4, 8c-9; Matthew 10:7-15*

“I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.”

FRIDAY, JULY 11

FEAST OF BENEDICT, ABBOT

Prayer work

Many people think the motto of the Benedictine order is *ora et labora*—“prayer and work.” In fact it’s not, nor will you find this phrase in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the work today’s saint wrote to guide his monks. But these words do summarize nicely a holy way of life and also challenge us to see our work as prayer and our prayer as a work. Anything you do with an awareness of the presence of God is prayer, or at least prayer-ful, and that includes work. And it helps your prayer to see it as work—not in the sense of a chore or drudgery but as something worthy of concentrated effort. Can you find God in your work? Can you work more to find God in prayer?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 14:2-10; Matthew 10:16-23*

“Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God . . . Take words with you and return to the Lord.”

SATURDAY, JULY 12

FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Body language

Pope John Paul II did a lot of things one doesn’t expect from one’s pope. One was to give a startling series of 129 Wednesday audiences on the theme, “theology of the body.” One might ask: What does theology have to do with our bodies? Consider the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Assumption! When you get right down to it, it’s hard to talk about Christian belief without recognizing that the fate of the body is very important to God. Our Lady reminds us that discipleship starts in the flesh. Religion can’t be only a “spiritual” matter.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 10:24-33*

“Fear him who can destroy both soul and body.”

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

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