



SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2016 FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Extend a merciful hand

Mercy refers to both kindness and forgiveness, and it's extended to those who aren't otherwise receiving much of either, those alienated by distress and harshness. Mercy is an act of compassion—the kind of love Jesus commanded you to have for your neighbor. But in this us-versus-them world, too few people are acting neighborly. This Year of Mercy is an invitation to devote yourself to the Divine Mercy of Jesus and welcome the outsider into your heart, life, community—where you encounter the same mercy extended toward you.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 30:10-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37 (105)*. “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart . . . and your neighbor as yourself.”

MONDAY, JULY 11 FEAST OF BENEDICT, ABBOT

Don't rule monasticism out

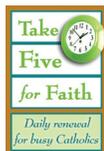
Many forms of governance have been tried by religious communities large and small. Many have failed either because they were too strict and intolerant to instill loyalty, or they were too lax and lenient to encourage respect. Saint Benedict somehow found the perfect balance. The “Rule of Saint Benedict,” as the precepts he wrote for his monks is known, is characterized by balance, moderation, and practicality. Written 1,500 years ago, the [Rule](#) has stood the test of time and has become the most influential guide for religious life. Whether you physically join a monastery or not, you can be one in spirit with those who do. Lead a balanced life—it has stood the test of time!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 10:34–11:1 (389)*. “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

TUESDAY, JULY 12

Contemplate this

“I will pray for you” is regular evidence of Christian charity, but prayer is not only about asking. The deepest prayer—often assumed to be reserved to nuns and monks—is accessible to all. Contemplation, or the prayer of unity, is the simple and intimate experience of oneness between you and God. Such prayer is neither secret nor for “specialists.” It is not a fad nor a new way to pray, but ancient and time-honored. Helpful guides include Father Basil Pennington and Father Thomas Keating, but be careful not to substitute reading *about* contemplative prayer for experiencing it.



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

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TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 7:1-9; Matthew 11:20-24 (390)*. “Unless your faith is firm you shall not be firm!”

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

The secret is mercy

Many in the church hold the belief that the Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal seven times in 1917. At the third apparition, with about 5,000 people present, the children reported that Mary revealed three secrets. The message of Fatima is one that is very much relevant today, in this Year of Mercy, and so pray with the words Mary gave the children of Fatima: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of Thy mercy.”

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 10:5-7, 13b-16; Matthew 11:25-27 (391)*. “You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.”

THURSDAY, JULY 14

FEAST OF KATERI TEKAKWITHA, VIRGIN

Serenity now

Since when is following Jesus easy? Since Jesus said it himself: *I will give you rest*. That doesn't mean you won't face challenges, resistance, and work. But if you surrender to what you know in your heart to be the Way, the peace and love along it are deeply comforting and liberating. Saint Kateri Tekakwitha—the first canonized Native American saint—was shunned by some in her tribe for converting to Catholicism. When she died, it is said the smallpox scars on her face vanished—evidence of the tranquility she'd found in her faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19; Matthew 11:28-30 (392)*. “My yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

FRIDAY, JULY 15

FEAST OF BONAVENTURE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

We are all one family of faith

Saint Bonaventure's heroic efforts to stabilize the Franciscan Order in the 13th century had the unintended effect of dividing the friars into “lay” or “clerical” categories—a sad distinction—to conform to church law at the time. “Oh, you're just a brother,” would horrify Saint Francis. Since Vatican II, the unity of the friars has begun to re-emerge. Is there someone in your life to whom you refer as just a woman? Just a kid? Just a teacher? Just blue-collar? Not only rude but wrong. Offhand remarks may reveal hidden prejudices. Choose your words carefully!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Matthew 12:1-8 (393)*. “I say to you, something greater than the temple is here.”

SATURDAY, JULY 16 FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Soften my speech

No one expects the public rhetoric of an election year to be humble or gentle. But lately there's been a lack of civility in our social conversation that saddens the soul. The practice of mercy—which the church celebrates and encourages in this Jubilee Year—seems to have faded from view. A show of mercy can even be derided as weak or misguided. The men who first climbed Mount Carmel in the 12th century in what is now northern Israel to give their lives to prayer and imitation of Mary-like virtues would not be taken seriously today. Yet mercy's soft voice needs to be lifted up, now more than ever.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Micah 2:1-5; Matthew 12:14-21 (394)*. “Nor shall you walk with head high, for it will be a time of evil.”