

Sunday, Sep 23, 2018

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Race you to the bottom

We're bred for competition. In the ongoing contest for limited resources, we don't want to be without a chair when the music stops. Pitted against siblings for the finite attention of parents, the competition grows larger as we do. Schools bid us compete for grades and rank. Sports, video games, the car we drive, the job we get, the promotion we achieve, the money in the bank, are contests won or lost on the ladder toward greatness. Jesus says don't compete; serve. True greatness is a race to the bottom. Count the ways you're winning.

TODAY'S READINGS: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20; James 3:16—4:3; Mark 9:30-37 (134). "They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest."

Monday, Sep 24, 2018

Invite God to be your friend

It helps to think of the Bible as a "library," a collection of different kinds of books written at different times by diverse authors for a variety of purposes over thousands of years. Like any library, it is divided into sections, and one of those areas is known as "Wisdom literature," which deals specifically with wise actions in contrast to foolish ones: the Books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. One of the messages biblical wisdom offers is the importance of friendship with God, and to be friends with God is reflected in how you are friends with others: not refusing to do good when you have the chance, not creating needless conflict, not being envious. Be this kind of a friend, and God will friend you back.

TODAY'S READINGS: Proverbs 3:27-34; Luke 8:16-18 (449). "Say not to your neighbor, 'Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give,' when you can give at once."

Tuesday, Sep 25, 2018

We are family

While many English translations make it sound as if Jesus had brothers, confusion arises because Hebrew and Aramaic, the written and spoken languages of the day, lacked distinct words for *brothers*, *cousins*, and other close kin. When Christian scripture was written in Greek, the word *adelphos*—"brothers"—was used to represent all of those relations. So it remains unclear what kind of extended family Jesus might have had. What *is* clear is that Jesus saw blood relations as secondary to spirit relations. Those who follow Jesus are family to him. Claim your place in that gathering.

TODAY'S READINGS: Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13; Luke 8:19-21 (450). "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

Wednesday, Sep 26, 2018

MEMORIAL OF COSMAS AND DAMIAN, MARTYRS

Doctors without fees

Many folks have heard of Doctors Without Borders, who selflessly bring medical care around the world in response to humanitarian emergencies and where it's most needed. But the idea of doctors who don't charge fees goes back to the second century, when, according to legend, Cosmas and Damian, twin brothers from Arabia, combined their medical practice with their new Christian faith to become the "silverless ones," practicing medicine without

charge. Some parishes today recognize the need for affordable, accessible health care and sponsor "parish nurses" to assist with basic screenings and visitations. How does your parish attend to the needs of its most vulnerable members?

TODAY'S READINGS: Proverbs 30:5-9; Luke 9:1-6 (451). "Take nothing for the journey."

Thursday, Sep 27, 2018

MEMORIAL OF VINCENT DE PAUL, PRIEST

An angel on my shoulder

In his first inaugural address, President Abraham Lincoln hoped the nation would be "touched . . . by the better angels of our nature." His imagery says a lot about life: We can take either the high road or the low. We can be selfish and angry, or generous and kind. Saint Vincent de Paul (1580-1660) knew both sides. He admitted he had a "caustic temper" and had to mind his "black and boiling moods." He also wrote: "We should remember that Christ himself said that by gentleness we inherit the earth. If we act on this, we will win people over so that they will turn to the Lord. That will not happen if we treat people harshly or sharply." By which angels do we choose to live, the better or the worse?

TODAY'S READINGS: Ecclesiastes 1:2-11; Luke 9:7-9 (452). "One generation passes and another comes, but the world forever stays."

Friday, Sep 28, 2018

LORENZO RUIZ AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

One life to give

Lorenzo Ruiz (c. 1600-1639) was born in Manila. Married, with two sons and a daughter, he became a companion to Dominican missionaries who sailed for Japan despite intense persecution of Japanese Christians. In Nagasaki, facing torture, Lorenzo at first asked if, by giving up his faith, his life would be spared. He received no answer but felt his faith strengthen to the point that he finally said, "I am a Catholic and wholeheartedly accept death for the Lord; if I have a thousand lives, all of them I will offer to him." In 1987 Pope John Paul II canonized 16 Asian and European men and women who spread the faith in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan. Lorenzo Ruiz is the first canonized Filipino martyr. What does your faith inspire you to offer the world?

TODAY'S READINGS: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Luke 9:18-22 (453). "There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every thing under the heavens."

Saturday, Sep 29, 2018

FEAST OF MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND RAPHAEL, ARCHANGELS

Help from on high

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Archangels. Michael, the chief archangel, is known as a defender of God's people. *Michael* in Hebrew means "who is like God?" *Gabriel* is inseparable from the event of the Annunciation when Mary said "yes" to be the Mother of God. Gabriel's name in Hebrew refers to the strength or power of God. *Raphael*, "God heals," appears in the Book of Tobit as a protective, healing presence to both Tobias and his father, Tobit. Honor the archangels this day by looking for ways to incarnate the message that each of them represents. How can you be a source of safety for those in distress? In what ways can you spread the word that through God all things are possible?

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12a; John 1:47-51 (647). "You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending."

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



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