

Sunday, Feb 09, 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A light set on a hill

In 1886, one African-American priest served the U.S. church: former slave Augustus Tolton. Sad to say, Catholic America didn't abandon its racism overnight with Father Tolton's ordination. Nearly a century later in 1979, U.S. bishops were still obliged to release a teaching on racism, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*. Yet more significantly, in 1984 ten black U.S. bishops wrote their own pastoral letter on evangelization, *What We Have Seen and Heard*. In it, they celebrate the historical intertwining of Black America and Catholic America. Learn more about Tolton, Pierre Toussaint, Mary Elizabeth Lange, Henriette DeLille, and other significant black Catholic leaders.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 58:7-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16 (73). "Just so, your light must shine before others."

Monday, Feb 10, 2020

MEMORIAL OF SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN

You are worthy to ask for help

Scholastica (480-543) was the twin sister of Benedict of Nursia. Both founded monastic communities, though Benedict gets more press due to the Rule he established. However, the most famous Scholastica story shows her equality before God: She and Benedict met yearly to confer on spiritual matters at a house near his monastery. At the end of one meeting, she had a premonition it would be their last before death would part them. Scholastica encouraged Benedict to stay and continue their conversation. He refused, as his Rule forbade spending the night outside the monastery, but a violent thunderstorm arose and he had to stay. Benedict asked what Scholastica had done. Her response: "I asked you for a favor and you would not listen; so I asked my God." Believe in your own worthiness to ask God for help.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Mark 6:53-56 (329). "Jesus and his disciples, after crossing the lake, came ashore at Gennesaret and tied up there."

Tuesday, Feb 11, 2020

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES/WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

So many Marys!

Why do there seem to be so many versions of Mary in the Catholic Church? Mother of God, Queen of Peace, Black Madonna, Theotokos (God-Bearer), and all of the "Our Lady of" titles. Throughout history, many people have had powerful moments in which they experience Mary's motherly care and encouragement in following Jesus. In these experiences Mary's faith and tenderness become accessible as she appears in the culture and time of the people. She draws close to them in images and languages that they understand. What images of Mary are important for you today? Take time to explore the "Marys" and learn how different cultures have experienced her tender love.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Mark 7:1-13 (330). "Regard kindly the prayer and petition of your servant, LORD, my God."

Wednesday, Feb 12, 2020

Time to come clean

In two weeks it will be Ash Wednesday—and the return of that perennial Catholic question, "What are you giving up for Lent?"

Even though sacrifice is a worthy spiritual pursuit, all too often the focus is on externals. We give up sweets, alcohol, or going out to movie theaters. We fast by going without meat on Fridays. But Jesus wants us to clean house from the inside out. What if we fasted from bad attitudes? What if we gave up our need to always be right—or worked concretely to address our impatience, selfishness, or judgmentalism? Make Lent a true awakening this year by thinking ahead about your spiritual plan.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 10:1-10; Mark 7:14-23 (331). "These evils come from within and they defile."

Thursday, Feb 13, 2020

Make room at the table

A prominent feature of many Bible stories is God's care for Israel's foes. Even though Hebrew scripture identifies the tribes of Israel as the chosen people, God's support and help extends beyond them, even to their enemies. Although it wasn't time yet for gentiles to enjoy the food of the Master's table, a Greek woman cajoled the Lord into slipping her a few scraps. People are ostracized today because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, the country they come from, the religion they embrace, and the people they love. These people also belong at our table. Who's begging to sit at yours?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 11:4-13; Mark 7:24-30 (332). "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's scraps."

Friday, Feb 14, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CYRIL, MONK, AND METHODIUS, BISHOP

Overcome division

It's Valentine's Day, yes, but it's also the memorial of Saints Cyril and Methodius, two clerics who were brothers. These missionary-linguists are best known as "Apostles to the Slavs." Yet instead of being honored during their lifetime for success in spreading the faith, they were so embroiled in ecclesial fights (many over the use of the Slavonic language) that Methodius spent two years imprisoned in a monastery. Today it seems ludicrous to persecute someone for communicating the faith in the most accessible language. Might some of the issues that divide Catholics now eventually fall by the wayside? A sweet move this Valentine's Day might be to ask Saints Cyril and Methodius to pray for our church to overcome its divisions.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19; Mark 7:31-37 (333). "Immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly."

Saturday, Feb 15, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Any day is a good day to thank Mary

There are 19 Marian feast days, solemnities, and memorials on the liturgical calendar, ranging from the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God on January 1 to the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12. There are May devotions to Mary, and October is the month of the Holy Rosary, of which Mary is Queen. And then of course the church has dedicated every Saturday to the Blessed Virgin. While there's such ample opportunity to venerate our Mother, don't miss giving your loving devotion to her any day.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34; Mark 8:1-10 (334). "They ate and were satisfied."

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



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