

Sunday, Feb 16, 2020

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Embrace a larger ethic

The Ten Commandments make for a simple lesson plan when teaching children how to behave. By contrast, the Sermon on the Mount isn't for Sunday-school kids. Jesus lays down grown-up challenges with breathtaking clarity. In a similar way, modern church teaching can take our breath away with its demands, as in this statement from *Brothers and Sisters to Us*: "Today's racism flourishes in the triumph of private concern over public responsibility, individual success over social commitment, and personal fulfillment over authentic compassion." Can we let go of the me-first culture and more truly become the Body of Christ?

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 15:15-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37 (76). "We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age."

Monday, Feb 17, 2020

MEMORIAL OF THE SEVEN HOLY FOUNDERS OF THE SERVITE ORDER

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us

The Servites helped popularize a special form of Rosary prayer that's dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Called simply the "Rosary of the Seven Sorrows"—and not to be confused with the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary—this form of devotional prayer recalls seven instances when Mary suffered. Mary's "Seven Sorrows" are: the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of the Child Jesus in the temple, Mary's meeting of Jesus during the Way of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the taking down of Jesus' body from the cross, and the burial of Jesus. The devotion became widespread during the Black Plague of the 1300s; more recently, it's associated with an apparition of Mary to one of the victims of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. It's a reminder that Our Mother is with us always, even and especially during tragedy.

TODAY'S READINGS: James 1:1-11; Mark 8:11-13 (335). "He sighed from the depth of his spirit."

Tuesday, Feb 18, 2020

Higher ground

Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the words of Saint John Damascene: "The bread and wine are not a foreshadowing of the body and blood of Christ—by no means!—but the actual deified body of the Lord." Catholicism teaches that Christ is literally and wholly present—body, blood, soul, and divinity—in what you receive and adore, through a process called transubstantiation that occurs by the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest during Mass. The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life," the church says—let it take you higher!

TODAY'S READINGS: James 1:12-18; Mark 8:14-21 (336). "Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

Wednesday, Feb 19, 2020

Be a doer

"Religion" has a bad name these days. Among other things, hypocrites, extremists, and institutional sin have caused many to reject organized religion—what Christians would simply call "the church." Even so, secular people everywhere admire members

and leaders of organized religion when their lives reflect radical love. That may be why two movies have already been made of the life of Fred Rogers, the kindly Presbyterian minister who produced *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. By extending unconditional love in word and deed, Rogers was what James in today's first reading called a "doer." Be the doer of an act of Christian charity and bring authenticity to your religion.

TODAY'S READINGS: James 1:19-27; Mark 8:22-26 (337). "Religion that is pure and undefiled . . . is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

Thursday, Feb 20, 2020

Threading the needle

Can you be rich and be Christian? The author of the Letter of James speaks challenging words about wealth and poverty, and in this he is not alone. The biblical witness is filled with warnings about the dangers of great wealth. The rich man went away sad, not ready to part with his wealth for the sake of the Kingdom. On the other hand, both Job and Abraham were wealthy men who loved God more than their wealth. It is a question of priorities. If you have been blessed with wealth, consider it a loan from God. Your task is to accomplish as much good for as many as possible with that wealth.

TODAY'S READINGS: James 2:1-9; Mark 8:27-33 (338). "Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom . . . Are not the rich oppressing you?"

Friday, Feb 21, 2020

The cost of commitment

The recently canonized John Henry Newman was born on this date in 1801. Criticized by both liberals and conservatives, he disliked hierarchical triumphalism, but found bedrock truth in Catholicism. In fact, he gave up social support in the Church of England to convert. Because he upheld the laity's role, the primacy of conscience, and the intellectual life, he's called a forefather of Vatican II. Today is also the feast of Robert Southwell, a Jesuit and poet who ministered secretly in England when it was forbidden, under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I—and died in 1595 for his faith. Read a bit about both of their lives to learn what integrity means.

TODAY'S READINGS: James 2:14-24, 26; Mark 8:34—9:1 (339). "What could one give in exchange for his life?"

Saturday, Feb 22, 2020

FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE

The successors of Peter

This isn't the feast day of a piece of furniture. "Chair" holds the meaning of a person presiding over a meeting or a group. In this case, "chair" refers to the office of Saint Peter, who presided over what would become the early church. It's interesting to note that technically speaking, popes do not succeed each other, e.g., Francis did not succeed Benedict. Rather all popes are the successors of Saint Peter. He is not only the proto-pope, he is the eternal pope who presides over the church through the popes of history. Pray for our pope. The whole world is his parish.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19 (535). "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."

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



©2020 TrueQuest Communications. TakeFiveForFaith.com; mail@takefiveforfaith.com. All rights reserved. Noncommercial reprints permitted with the following credit: Reprinted with permission from TakeFiveForFaith.com. Scripture citations from the New American Bible Revised Edition. For more information about TAKE FIVE and our regular contributors, go to PrepareTheWord.com. **Free daily email and app available online at [TakeFiveForFaith.com/subscribe](https://www.TakeFiveForFaith.com/subscribe).**