

Sunday, Sep 10, 2017

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Be reconciled

Christianity is not just a theoretical philosophy; it's meant to be lived. One radical way you can put your faith into practice is to follow Jesus' advice on what to do when someone sins against you: "Go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone." This is not the way of the world, which encourages the aggrieved to broadcast their displeasure on the internet. If you want to test your discipleship, don't talk behind anyone's back, but deal with insults and abuses face to face in a spirit of love and reconciliation.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20 (127). *"If anyone sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone."*

Monday, Sep 11, 2017

Hard prayers

The highest commandments for those who follow Jesus tell us to love God and one another. To love others with a Christian love means to seek their good, even when we do not feel like it or "others" are behaving in a way that makes it very difficult to wish anything good for them. Even more shocking, Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. On this day when we remember acts of great destruction, let us pray not only for the innocents who died, but for those who wished them dead.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 1:24—2:3; Luke 6:6-11 (437). *"Let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."*

Tuesday, Sep 12, 2017

MEMORIAL OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF MARY

Listen to the Queen of Peace

The origin of today's memorial goes back to the celebration of the defeat of Turkish invaders outside Vienna in 1683. While we can sympathize with people who were grateful for the turning back of a force that threatened all of Europe, it's problematic for Christians today to thank the Blessed Virgin Mary for a military victory when extremists of all stripes so regularly use religion as justification for war. Perhaps we better honor Mary's Most Holy Name if we pray and work for peace instead.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 2:6-15; Luke 6:12-19 (438). *"Nothing will be impossible for you."*

Wednesday, Sep 13, 2017

MEMORIAL OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Shed some light on the world

Saint John Chrysostom, the archbishop of Constantinople from 398 to his death in 407, often reminded his subjects to offer prayers universally—that is, to pray for everybody in the whole world. "For [Jesus Christ] did not say 'thy will be done in me or in us,' but 'on earth,' the whole earth," he wrote. Because of the influence of this great Doctor of the church, the prayers of the faithful after the Creed at Mass are called "general intercessions." We pray for friends and enemies, the poor and the rich, the weak and the powerful, the victims of violence and those who inflict it. Our prayers are lights that shine in the darkness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 6:20-26 (439). *"At once Jesus spoke to them, 'Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.'"*

Thursday, Sep 14, 2017

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Christ before us

Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, exiled for years in a Soviet gulag, had finally reached the limits of his endurance. Bitter cold and brutal treatment had taken their toll. He put down his shovel and sat down, resigning himself to a swift, violent death at the hands of the guards. A gaunt, old prisoner scurried over and knelt before him. He said nothing but traced the sign of the cross in the dirt. As Solzhenitsyn stared at this symbol, a ray of light pierced his soul. He did not have to face the evil of the gulag alone. Christ had gone before him. Today is the feast of the True Cross, the one that makes sense of our sufferings and gives us the strength to endure whatever life hands us.

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 21:4b-9; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17 (638). *"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."*

Friday, Sep 15, 2017

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Good grief

There isn't a lot of support for personal grief. While we have days for national mourning, families in mourning are expected to pull themselves together and return to their routines in fairly short order. The placement of Our Lady of Sorrows on the liturgical calendar right after the day honoring the Holy Cross is a reminder that sorrow doesn't go away once the memorial rituals are observed. It may be good that our loved one is no longer suffering, but that doesn't lessen our sadness. Make room for grief, both yours and that of others.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14 (441); John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35 (639). *"Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister . . . and Mary Magdalene."*

Saturday, Sep 16, 2017

MEMORIAL OF CYPRIAN, BISHOP, MARTYR

Build on a loving foundation

The third-century life of Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, might have given rise to the comedy tag line: "It's always something," but his troubles and those of the church were anything but funny. If it wasn't a heresy, it was bitter controversy over whether someone who had renounced the faith might be reconciled with the church; or it was exile, or the plague, or schism. Cyprian's response was always generosity. During a terrible plague, for example, he himself cared for the sick and buried the dead—Christians and non-Christians alike—exemplifying his own words: "Love is the foundation of all the virtues." How can love calm the troubles of your own life today?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Timothy 1:15-17; Luke 6:43-49 (442). *"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

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



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