

Sunday, Aug 25, 2019

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Shortcuts take longer

Some friends are famous for their shortcuts—the kind that always take them longer than if they had stuck to the main routes.

Cutting corners rarely winds up with satisfying results. Bakers know that if you use inferior ingredients, you can expect inferior outcomes. Thrown-together carpentry work tumbles apart in short order. Failing to warm up before exercise puts us at risk of injury. Doing things right takes more time and care, but it gets the job done. In moral living, the narrow gate is the most direct route to where we're going. Avoid easy. Choose marvelous.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 66:18-21; Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13; Luke 13:22-30 (123). *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate."*

Monday, Aug 26, 2019

Be steadfast in the face of hypocrisy

Jesus had nothing good to say about hypocrites. He rebuked them often. So does Pope Francis, who recently said it was better to be an atheist than a hypocritical Catholic, calling out those who lead double lives of going to Mass and then exploiting others. It's easy to look around and see people and institutions doing just that—including the church. It would be easy to turn your back on them altogether. But then wouldn't you be letting hypocrisy easily win? Make it hard for hypocrites to take away the faith that is, by right of your Baptism, yours.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 8b-10; Matthew 23:13-22 (425). *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites."*

Tuesday, Aug 27, 2019

MEMORIAL OF MONICA

Persistence pays off

A violent, unfaithful husband, a cranky mother-in-law, an immoral son—all in the same household. Monica could've been canonized simply for surviving. Instead, she pursued her unruly son Augustine from Africa to Rome to Milan when he was 29 (helicopter parenting, anyone?), fasted and wept over his lack of faith. Not quite the way young adults today are parented, but a bishop finally told her, "It's impossible the son of so many tears should perish." He converted, thrived, wrote brilliantly, and told her story in his *Confessions*. Today, compliment the efforts of a mother or son.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Matthew 23:23-26 (426). *"Our coming to you was not in vain."*

Wednesday, Aug 28, 2019

MEMORIAL OF AUGUSTINE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Dig deeper

Among the many works that the towering Saint Augustine is remembered for, his work *On the Trinity* is considered by many to be his masterpiece, his most significant contribution to the Western church. Yet a legend arose that as he struggled with his great work, he took a walk on the seashore and came across a young boy who said he was pouring all the ocean water into a small hole in the sand. Augustine replied that it was impossible to fit the ocean in a small hole, to which the boy replied, "It's just as impossible that understanding the Trinity would fit in your small

mind." And then the child was gone—an angelic visitor.

Approach the mysteries of faith with humility.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; Matthew 23:27-32 (427).

"On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing."

Thursday, Aug 29, 2019

MEMORIAL OF THE PASSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Be careful what you promise

According to the gospel accounts of the beheading of John the Baptist, Herod immediately regretted the promise he made to Salome that led to John's beheading. Whether John met his death for this reason or simply because Herod regarded him as a threat and wanted him out of the way, the story serves as a cautionary tale to think twice before you promise to fulfill the wishes of another. Would you be willing to violate your internal sense of right or wrong or your conscience in order to fulfill a promise? If not, be slow to make promises without first checking your conscience.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 3:7-13 (428); Mark 6:17-29 (634). *"When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb."*

Friday, Aug 30, 2019

Leave your light on for Christ

A Catholic church is never completely dark—as long as the Blessed Sacrament is present. You'll always see at least a small red flicker before the tabernacle, while it contains the Eucharist, the Body of Christ. The tradition goes back to the Book of Exodus, when God told Moses to perpetually burn a lamp filled with pure oil in the Tabernacle. Thousands of years later, Christ is always there, burning with a light and love that never goes out. Likewise keep the flame for him in your soul steadfast and bright.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Matthew 25:1-13 (429). *"The wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps."*

Saturday, Aug 31, 2019

Tame your tongue

Sometimes our daily readings get down to brass tacks. "Don't be a busybody" seems to be the blunt message in Paul's advice to the Thessalonians. It's not an ethereal command to do noble deeds; rather it's the kind of practical advice that makes life in the Christian community (or any community) work. Pope Francis frequently passes along similar wisdom. Put today's citation to immediate use by keeping your silence the next time you're tempted to disparage a neighbor, relative, or coworker.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-11; Matthew 25:14-30 (430). *"Nevertheless we urge you, brothers and sisters, to progress even more, and to aspire to live a tranquil life, to mind your own affairs."*

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



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