

Sunday, Jun 17, 2018

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

God gambles the farm

Imagine a farmer sowing a field, and then going about his life, not bothering about the progress of his crop. When it's harvest time, the happy farmer takes in an incredible return of grain. Crazy, right? What farmer has ever been that clueless and that lucky? God's realm operates pretty much this way. God offers the gift of life in seed form. We're on our own to take it as far as we want to go. God won't force our fruitfulness; we're free to waste our time and produce nothing. Is God betting the farm wisely on you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 17:22-24; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34 (92). *"It is as if a man were to scatter seed . . . and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how."*

Monday, Jun 18, 2018

Words to the wise about scripture

To encounter scripture is to encounter the word of God, but sometimes you need help in understanding how God is speaking to you right now. When you are attracted to a passage of scripture but not sure what to do with it, find some saints, poets, or theologians who have meditated on and written about the passage. Their words might be the springboard you need to gain greater understanding. For example, Jesus' enigmatic command to turn the other cheek? Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement sets it in the context of living nonviolently. "To be truly nonviolent," she writes, "is to . . . turn the other cheek, put aside all power, walk another mile, give up coat and cloak, too."

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 21:1-16; Matthew 5:38-42 (365). *"When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well."*

Tuesday, Jun 19, 2018

MEMORIAL OF ROMUALD, ABBOT

One in community

It's natural when something bad happens to want to run in the other direction. For that reason, 1,000 years ago Saint Romuald went into a monastery after his father had committed a terrible crime. The desire to escape evil and do penance might have been strong motivations for him. Perhaps, though, there was something else: a deep need to encounter God in solitude. Though his brother monks made him abbot—their leader—Romuald sought greater separation and established a new monastic community where daily contact with others was kept to an absolute minimum and each monk spent considerable time alone and in prayer and study. Romuald's example points to the importance of solitude and serves as a reminder that God is with you always.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 21:17-29; Matthew 5:43-48 (366). *"Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

Wednesday, Jun 20, 2018

Fast times

When applied to food, *fasting* and *abstinence* have different meanings in Catholic tradition. Fasting involves the reduction of one's intake of food, while abstinence means refraining from eating a certain kind of food. With exceptions for age and health reasons, Catholics are asked to engage in some kind of penitential activity, like abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent and fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by consuming only

one full meal. Prayer and works of charity are also encouraged as ways of fasting. When practiced for the right reasons—spiritual focus, self-discipline, awareness of dependence on God, and imitation of Christ—these practices can be very powerful. Give them a chance to work for you.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 2:1, 6-14; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (367).

"When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting."

Thursday, Jun 21, 2018

MEMORIAL OF ALOYSIUS GONZAGA, RELIGIOUS

Lead by example

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga was a young Italian Jesuit who devoted much of his life to prayer and fasting. As an advocate of the poor, he would also roam the streets during the plague to pray for and take care of those who were infected. While in Rome, his spiritual director Saint Robert Bellarmine encouraged him to spend more time befriending and teaching his companions about the importance of prayer. Aloysius' love of prayer and pious reading, his great devotion to Jesus and Mary, and his constancy in his vocation were all ways he influenced those around him to be devoted followers of Christ and his message. Today be inspired by the power of prayer in your own life and like Aloysius be faithful in all you do.

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 48:1-14; Matthew 6:7-15 (368). *"In life he performed wonders."*

Friday, Jun 22, 2018

MEMORIAL OF PAULINUS OF NOLA, BISHOP

How well do we see ourselves?

Self-knowledge isn't always welcome. We prefer to think well of ourselves, so if that requires a little trip to denial-land now and again, it can't be helped. Or can it? In the fourth century, when future saint Paulinus was a pen pal to Saints Augustine, Jerome, and Martin of Tours, clear-eyed self-awareness was considered a prerequisite to Christian life. These men threw off all pretense of self-importance in favor of the truth. "Truth will reveal its face to you and unlock to you your own person," Paulinus wrote.

Abandon the mask. Become who you were born to be.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 11:1-4, 9-18, 20; Matthew 6:19-23 (369).

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light."

Saturday, Jun 23, 2018

Protect us from all anxiety

Fifty-one percent of our annual household spending goes toward shelter and transportation, according to a U.S. Department of Labor report, and another 18 percent goes to food, drink, and clothes. That amounts to many thousands of dollars for most Americans—cash outlays that undoubtedly cause anxiety for most of us, despite Jesus' admonition not to worry about such things. Like it or not, wealth has an impact on our lives and can too easily consume us. That is what Jesus tries to warn us against. Yes, we need things to live, but what we don't need is to compare, judge, and rank. Our time is best spent unconcerned about what we don't have and focused on what we do have in abundance: the love of God and the glory of all creation.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Chronicles 24:17-25; Matthew 6:24-34 (370).

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear."

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



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