

Sunday, Aug 11, 2019

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ready, set, jump!

In a secular age, some believers feel the need to “prove” the credibility of religion. If only we could dig up Noah’s Ark, produce Jesus’ swaddling clothes, or locate Martha’s dishes! Even better, if only consecrated hosts would bleed before the eyes of skeptics. Archeological evidence and miraculous interventions aside, a life of faith requires neither and isn’t bolstered by either. Faith is grounded in the future, not the past, and is more about where we place our hope rather than where we misplaced the Holy Grail. Faith is a flying lesson. Let go!

TODAY’S READINGS: Wisdom 18:6-9; Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19; Luke 12:32-48 (117). *“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”*

Monday, Aug 12, 2019

MEMORIAL OF JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL, RELIGIOUS

Make peace with the world

Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.” But at other times, he’s not so clear. What’s more, it’s not always clear what’s a worldly concern and what’s a godly one. No doubt Jane Frances de Chantal wrestled with this ambiguity. Left a widow in 1601, with four children to care for and an estate that she’d rescued from ruin, she found solace under the spiritual direction of Saint Francis de Sales. But even after her worldly affairs were put in order, Francis dissuaded her from jumping too quickly into the life of a nun. There was much good she still needed to do in the world. What in the world are you called to do?

TODAY’S READINGS: Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Matthew 17:22-27 (413). *“The highest heavens belong to the Lord, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it.”*

Tuesday, Aug 13, 2019

MEMORIAL OF PONTIAN, POPE, AND HIPPOLYTUS, PRIEST, MARTYRS

No finger-pointing, please

There is a lesson for us today in looking at the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire that led to the deaths of Pontian, Hippolytus, and many more. When Rome burned, Nero blamed the Christians. As the city fell on hard times, Christians were easy targets. A minority group, with unfamiliar religious customs—what more was needed to scapegoat them? Accused of being disloyal foreigners, things got so out of hand that Christians were suspected of incest for calling each other brothers and sisters and even of cannibalism because they consumed the “body and blood” of their Savior. Next time a demagogue points a finger to vilify a whole group, ask if one day that finger might be pointed at you.

TODAY’S READINGS: Deuteronomy 31:1-8; Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14 (414). *“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Wednesday, Aug 14, 2019

MEMORIAL OF MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, PRIEST, MARTYR

Make a difference

Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941) was a Polish priest whose devotion to Mary was a central part of his life. He was a writer whose monthly columns expressed that devotion to a sizeable readership. Human like the rest of us, Maximilian sometimes was a difficult colleague, and initially his publications reflected some

of the anti-Semitic rhetoric of his time and place. However, he never abandoned the work of promoting faith, citing indifference as the poison of the time. Sentenced to Auschwitz in 1941, he ultimately gave his life to save another prisoner. His was a martyrdom of love. Be mindful today of the toxin of indifference within and around you.

TODAY’S READINGS: Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Matthew 18:15-20 (415). *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name . . . there I am in the midst of them.”*

Thursday, Aug 15, 2019

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Don’t assume faith is easy

The Assumption of Mary is often portrayed in art in a blissful scene of cherubs transporting Mary, eyes cast upward and robes flowing majestically, up into the heavens. Beneath this image, however, is a life of grit and grace in which Mary lived the fullness of Christian discipleship. Mary hears, ponders, challenges, and receives the Word of God, allowing it to permeate her whole being. Her Assumption then is a symbol and a promise to each of us that our journey of discipleship is one destined for ultimate wholeness in God.

TODAY’S READINGS: Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56 (622). *“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”*

Friday, Aug 16, 2019

MEMORIAL OF STEPHEN OF HUNGARY

Hail, holy order

To some, Stephen of Hungary was an iron-fisted monarch who punished any hint of paganism among his people. To others, he was a grieving father who—having outlived his immediate family—spent the rest of his days washing the feet of paupers. Either would be great fodder for the high drama of a Hollywood screenplay. The reality? Stephen’s legacy stems from being an administrator. He created local dioceses for the successful establishment of the church in his country. His rule provided such a lasting peace that a route through Hungary became the preferred way for pilgrims to visit the Holy Land. We tend to bristle at “rules and regulations,” but when the motive behind them is good, more appreciation is perhaps in order.

TODAY’S READINGS: Joshua 24:1-13; Matthew 19:3-12 (417). *“Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.”*

Saturday, Aug 17, 2019

A tribute to touch

Today’s gospel has Jesus placing his hands on children and praying for them. The simple gesture of “touch and prayer” can be profound because all humans crave a kind touch. Examples of “touch and prayer” abound. The sacraments are built on this combination. Some Christians hold hands during grace. In many Latin countries children routinely ask for a blessing from elders, who trace a cross on the child’s forehead as they pray. Can you bless somebody in your life today through the power of “touch and prayer”?

TODAY’S READINGS: Joshua 24:14-29; Matthew 19:13-15 (418). *“Children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray.”*

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



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