



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

Sunday, May 06, 2018

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The age of idols

Celebrity rules. Or so it seems. Every headline, photo shoot, and news crawl seeks to remind us that no matter what we're doing at the moment, someone's living a reality that is *so much cooler*. We may secretly desire to be one of the beautiful people, to taste the sweetness of that success. Consider that folks who do command a high public profile like Pope Francis, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama have all repeated that they are mere mortals, doing nothing more than we all should be doing. Want fame? Pursue sainthood.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15:9-17 (56). "Peter, however, raise him up, saying, 'Get up. I myself am also a human being.'"*

Monday, May 07, 2018

EASTER WEEKDAY

Come stay at my house

God has bestowed so many gifts on creation. In fact, the world is here in the first place because God's love overflowed—God wanted to share the divine love. God even sent Jesus and became human so as to invite people more deeply into life in God. So shouldn't the response to all this generosity be a generous one in which we welcome God into our lives, are open and inviting with God in prayer, and honor and care for our world and its creatures? Start opening doors today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 16:11-15; John 15:26-16:4a (291). "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home."*

Tuesday, May 08, 2018

EASTER WEEKDAY

Make way for the Spirit

Much has been written about the importance of a "ministry of presence"—of being with people in times of need. Important as presence is, there is also a "ministry of absence," said noted spirituality author Henri Nouwen. We should never forget that it is the Holy Spirit ultimately who brings healing and comfort to people and that we need to trust God to do the work that only God can do in human hearts. There came a time when the risen Christ had to depart, but with assurances the Holy Spirit would be with us always. Sometimes your absence serves in a way your presence can't.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 16:22-34; John 16:5-11 (292). "But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go."*

Wednesday, May 09, 2018

EASTER WEEKDAY

When Christians are in the margins

Often in stories of the church, both ancient and modern, you hear in the headlines about the scoffers. The anonymous faithful are relegated to the margins and the footnotes. "Is God dead?" the cover of *Time* magazine inquired funereally in bold red letters on a stark black background in 1966. It would hardly make the back page to reply: Not in the hearts and lives of believers. The pages of the New Testament are sprinkled liberally with folks who encountered Jesus or the apostles and came to faith. Good news travels quietly. Make a little noise with yours.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 17:15, 22-18:1; John 16:12-15 (293). "Some began to scoff [at Paul] . . . But some did join him, and became believers."*

Thursday, May 10, 2018

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD; HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION (IN SOME AREAS)

Reading the signs

Signs are not destinations. They may assist us in getting where we're going, tell how far we've come or what to do next, but they're not intended to be goals in themselves. Early Christians viewed certain signs as indicators of spiritual authority: the ability to heal, inspired speech, command of dark forces, or facing dangers without harm. Saint Paul warned us not to become enchanted with power for its own sake. Instead, we should consider the needs of the community and how best to serve. Name some modern signs that someone is demonstrating with genuine spiritual authority.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:17-23 or 4:1-13; Mark 16:15-20 (58). "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?"*

Friday, May 11, 2018

EASTER WEEKDAY

Then, now, and later

Faith can seem like a time-travel video game. We look to the past, but the past is also present, and the present always looks to the future (for an example, think of the Mass). We learn the kingdom of God is within and among us—but not yet fulfilled. We worship and follow a Lord who appeared in human flesh, left in body but remained in Spirit, and will come again to usher us into the eternal. No wonder we get a little lost sometimes! Here's your compass: The world is broken but God still thinks it's good. Through Jesus, God calls us to help restore that goodness in ways large and small. And, finally, one day that work will be done.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 18:9-18; John 16:20-23 (295). "I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you."*

Saturday, May 12, 2018

MEMORIALS OF NEREUS AND ACHILLEUS, MARTYRS

Strike a blow for peace

In the early years of the church it was a matter of debate whether Christians should belong to the Roman army, although many did. Two of the martyrs remembered today, Nereus and Achilleus, were members of the elite Praetorian Guard, but after they became Christians they refused to serve and were eventually exiled and executed. At the end of the fourth century Pope Damasus had an inscription made in their honor, which read in part: "O miracle of faith! . . . they become converted . . . they throw away their shields, their armor, and their blood-stained javelins. Confessing the faith of Christ, they rejoice to bear testimony to its triumph." What bold and perhaps risky paths can you take to live out what you believe?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 18:23-28; John 16:23b-28 (296). "Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete."*

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Sunday, May 13, 2018 **SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER** **Fake news and peace**

Peace is possible only when truth is readily available. This is why Pope Francis has dedicated this World Communications Day to a reflection on the polarizing effect of fake news. False information creates and fuels division, bleeding its consequences into both personal and group behaviors. By contrast, a “journalism of peace” promotes understanding and unites us around common values and goals. Maybe it’s time to stop clicking on inflammatory headlines and refuse to forward the stuff that riles up our indignation. Propaganda is hardly new. Opt for something truly novel: good news!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26; 1 John 4:11-16; John 17:11b-19 (60).* “Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.”

Monday, May 14, 2018 **FEAST OF MATTHIAS, APOSTLE** **Let go and love**

Jesus’ Last Supper discourses are surely some of the most poignant passages in John’s gospel. You can almost hear the urgency in Jesus’ voice as he exhorts his disciples to carry on and always love one another. Just *love one another*. Three simple words, yet how difficult they are to live at times! Or at least we make them that way. We prefer to hold on to our anger, resentment, or that small slight from this morning. We are entitled to feel the way we do—right? Yet, how much easier it is to simply let the negative feeling go. It’s as easy as opening your hand. Today, when you find yourself holding on to anger, visualize opening your hand. Let it go. Love one another.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts of the Apostles 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15:9-17 (564).* “You did not choose me but I chose you.”

Tuesday, May 15, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF ISIDORE** **Help bring a poor farmer to market**

Seventy-five percent of the world’s poor—900 million people—“live in rural areas in conditions of extreme poverty,” according to a March 9, 2006 Vatican statement on agrarian reform. In the absence of internationally guaranteed protections, the Vatican says, “deprivation, exploitation, lack of access to the market, and social exclusion become more acute” among people who work the land. The Vatican urged rich countries to correct policies, such as farm subsidies and trade barriers, that adversely affect the economies of developing countries, and it condemned the concentration of productive farmland in the hands of a few. In honor of Saint Isidore, take steps to support small farmers by purchasing organic and fair trade products and frequenting local farmers’ markets. Learn more about the Catholic rural ethic at .org.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 20:17-27; John 17:1-11a (298).* “I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do.”

Wednesday, May 16, 2018 **EASTER WEEKDAY** **Take the long view**

The proverb “This too shall pass” may come to mind while struggling through a tough period in life, such as a time of transition or a personal

financial crisis. We hope and trust that the pain of these situations is temporary and will eventually pass. Though not often invoked in good times, this proverb can also refer to the passing of good things in our life. It might be, for example, the death of a loved one or the departure of a close friend or mentor, as the early church experienced when Jesus and then Paul prepared to leave behind their earthly lives. It reminds us to be open to what life brings and draw comfort from the fact that God’s love remains constant.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 20:28-38; John 17:11b-19 (299).* “They threw their arms around Paul and kissed him, for they were deeply distressed that he had said that they would never see his face again.”

Thursday, May 17, 2018 **EASTER WEEKDAY** **Let’s attend the reunion**

The Catholic Church’s approach to ecumenism has come a long way since the Second Vatican Council. The previous Code of Canon Law (from 1917) decreed: “It is illicit for the faithful to assist at or participate in any way in non-Catholic religious functions” (no. 1258). That changed with Vatican II and the new Code of Canon Law in 1983, and in 1993 the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity stated that “Christians may be encouraged to share in spiritual activities and resources, i.e., to share that spiritual heritage they have in common in a manner and to a degree appropriate to their present divided state” (no. 102). We still have a long road ahead, but the road map is clearer.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 22:30; 23:6-11; John 17:20-26 (300).* “I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

Friday, May 18, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF JOHN I, POPE, MARTYR** **In search of what unites us**

Many hopeful moments occurred during the impressive funeral and memorial rites for Pope John Paul II in 2005. Perhaps one of the most remarkable was the gathering of so many leaders of different religious traditions and denominations from around the world. This was a sign of hope that all believers, of whatever corner of the world, could recognize that God is more important than our differences and that, in fact, God longs to gather us all into one. There is one God, the God of all. Let us pray that we will have the faith and humility to let God be God.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 25:13b-21; John 21:15-19 (301).* *Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”*

Saturday, May 19, 2018 **EASTER WEEKDAY** **Mind your own business**

Celebrity gossip is so pervasive that it’s hard to avoid. How much do you know about the personal lives of the “glitterati”? Sure, these people invite the public into their lives for profit, but scrutinizing—even relishing—the foibles of strangers is a slippery slope. Jesus frequently reminded his followers to focus on themselves—their own failings and how they could improve—instead of worrying about those around them. Are you too quick to judge the actions of others?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Acts 28:16-20, 30-31; John 21:20-25 (302).* “What if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours?”

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Sunday, May 20, 2018 **SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST**

Do something useful

Be honest: Do you think prayer is useful? While we might describe the act of praying positively, we may not be convinced it actually “works”—at least not as we intend. Here’s the shocker: Many theologians agree it’s a trap to consider prayer in terms of utility. Prayer is not an effective activity; that is, it’s not a penny in, gumball out procedure. Prayer’s not an activity at all. Rather it’s a form of relationship, an unveiling of the self before the God of love. Loving relationships, however, are *very* effective. Just ask the Pentecost gang what love can do.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Day: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Galatians 5:16-25; John 20:19-23 or 15:26-27; 16:12-15 (63). “And [they] began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”*

Monday, May 21, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH**

Thank you, Mother

Pope Francis recently added a memorial to celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary in her role as “Mother of the Church” every year on the Monday after Pentecost as a way to foster Marian piety and the “maternal sense of the church.” The Marian title of “Mother of the Church,” was given to the Blessed Mother by Blessed Pope Paul VI at the Second Vatican Council. With its addition to the General Roman Calendar, it will now be celebrated by the whole Roman Catholic Church. Ponder how your own faith has been nurtured within the church community, and take a moment to thank Mary for serving as mother of us all.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Gen. 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14; John 19:25-34 (572A). “Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.”*

Tuesday, May 22, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF RITA OF CASCIA, RELIGIOUS** **Support gentle, loving relationships**

If you knew you would be canonized a saint and could choose your patronage now, for what cause would you cheerfully accept intercessions? Be careful in your selection: Saints become the patrons of causes they know all too well. Rita of Cascia is the patron saint of bad marriages, victims of spousal abuse, and loneliness, among other conditions she endured personally. There are still many who seek her help today. Support local programs that assist families in trouble.

TODAY’S READINGS: *James 4:1-10; Mark 9:30-37 (342). “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”*

Wednesday, May 23, 2018 **The Lord loves those who love wisdom**

At times biblical poetry sets theological distinctions aside. In some places in Hebrew scripture, for example, divine wisdom is feminine and spoken of in a way almost indistinguishable from God. While the church often uses the masculine term “Father” for God, that is not to say God is male but that God acts toward us as a loving father does.

Scripture and tradition have other names for God as well. Of course the Supreme Being is ultimately beyond gender—and all description really—but human beings need human terms to express their experience of God, including that of “wise woman.”

TODAY’S READINGS: *James 4:13-17; Mark 9:38-40 (343). “For whoever is not against us is for us.”*

Thursday, May 24, 2018 **Pass the salt, please**

What might humble table salt have to teach us about God? Surprisingly, a lot! The *Catholic Encyclopedia* has an entire entry devoted to salt, noting that historically it almost always has had a sacred and religious character. As a seasoning, salt gives a kick of flavor and taste to what might otherwise be a bland meal. It’s also a preservative to keep food from going bad. The gospels use the symbol of salt to refer to Christ’s new life within us, an ingredient that indeed transforms our whole lives. How can you add some more seasoning to God’s activity in your life?

TODAY’S READINGS: *James 5:1-6; Mark 9:41-50 (344). “Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another.”*

Friday, May 25, 2018 **FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE DE’ PAZZI, VIRGIN** **Suffering can be service**

Jacqueline de Decker had gone to India to serve the poor and wanted to join Mother Teresa’s newly founded Missionaries of Charity, but a spinal injury ended her dream. Or so she thought. In 1952 Mother Teresa sent Decker a letter with a proposal: “I need souls like yours to pray and suffer for the work” who could “do much more while on your bed of pain than I running on my feet.” Decker’s vocation sounds a lot like that of the 16th-century Carmelite sister Saint Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi, who withstood years of physical and spiritual suffering yet had a mystical prayer life and later even rose from her “bed of pain” to become a wisdom-figure in her community. Jesus calls us all to serve. Consider your strengths not your weaknesses when answering that call.

TODAY’S READINGS: *James 5:9-12; Mark 10:1-12 (345). “Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged.”*

Saturday, May 26, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF PHILIP NERI, PRIEST** **Stepping out for Jesus**

Saint Philip Neri (1515-95) must have had a good cobbler, because he sure put a lot of miles on his shoes. He sauntered through Rome, striking up conversations with whomever he met, beggars or bankers, warming hearts as he talked about God. Often, he’d bid them walk and talk with him en route to a church or hospital. Later, after becoming a priest, he organized pilgrimages to churches in the city, inviting people to walk and pray together. As the one who brought the Forty Hours Devotion to Rome, Philip would like today’s practice of walking in procession as a prelude to adoring the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes we need to wear out our soles to touch the souls of others.

TODAY’S READINGS: *James 5:13-20; Mark 10:13-16 (346). “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”*



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Sunday, May 27, 2018 **SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY** **Blessed are the single-hearted**

One Beatitude we routinely misinterpret is the one about being “pure of heart.” Purity of heart isn't about sex but rather about loyalty and fidelity, what we call single-heartedness. From Moses to the prophets to Jesus, fidelity to God alone has been the ideal. We worship a Triune God with a solitary heart. We can't afford to divide our loyalty or it will be no more than a farce. Houseclean your heart from competing loyalties.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 4:32-34; Romans 8:14-17; Matthew 28:16-20 (165).* “*Know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God . . . and that there is no other.*”

Monday, May 28, 2018 **Be happy!**

“How happy is our sacrament of water!” This enthusiastic appraisal of Baptism comes from church Father Tertullian around 203 A.D. The first epistle attributed to Saint Peter certainly agrees. It is sometimes described as a homily delivered to cheer on a first-century baptismal class “graduating” to full Christian initiation. It includes a hymn of thanksgiving, encouragement for holy living, instructions for the Christian household, urging to persevere in hard times, and the duties of members to the community as a whole. Take time to read 1 Peter this week, and give thanks for the happy sacrament.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Peter 1:3-9; Mark 10:17-27 (347).*
“*Although you have not seen him, you love him . . . for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*”

Tuesday, May 29, 2018 **In praise of mission**

There was a time when mission work was about “saving the heathen” and “converting the pagans.” Contemporary Catholic missionary work has undergone profound change since the Second Vatican Council, and today those in mission work are much more conscious of issues of social justice and the dangers of cultural imperialism in the guise of religious conversion. Many modern missionaries speak of “reverse mission”—of being converted by the generosity and wisdom of those they serve, who may be poor in material goods but rich in spirit and tradition. Invite a returned missionary to your parish or faith community to share his or her stories. It can be an eye-opening experience.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Peter 1:10-16; Mark 10:28-31 (348).*
“*There is no one who has given up . . . lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more.*”

Wednesday, May 30, 2018 **What do you see?**

When the light is right, usually around dusk, the glass on a train acts as both a window and a mirror. Depending upon where you focus your eyes as a passenger, you can see either the relatively motionless interior of the car or the scenery outside passing by in a blur. This “double vision” reflects the duality of time and your human experience. There is the unchanging, eternal now where God resides

and the rush of encounters and experiences in which you usually live. Just as passengers on the train can choose which side of the window to observe, you also have that same choice in your daily life. Where will you focus your attention today?

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Peter 1:18-25; Mark 10:32-45 (349).* “*The grass withers, and the flower wilts, but the word of the Lord remains forever.*”

Thursday, May 31, 2018 **FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY** **You visited me**

Where is the presence of God? In celebration of the Eucharist, certainly, in the transformed bread and wine, the word proclaimed and preached, the people gathered. When we pray, yes, God is there, too. And each of us bears the image of God, our creator, so we can “see” God in another, even in the hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, imprisoned, and stranger. In all of creation we can see the traces of God's intricate handiwork. Today we recall the story of the pregnant Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, who was expecting John the Baptist. It is through the presence of Jesus in Mary that we have our faith. Remember Mary, who visits us with the presence of God.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Zephaniah 3:14-18a or Romans 12:9-16; Luke 1:39-56 (572).* “*The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst.*”

Friday, Jun 01, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF JUSTIN, MARTYR** **Life lessons**

“There are three kinds of people,” wrote Blaise Pascal, the famous religious philosopher: “Those who have sought God and found him . . . these are reasonable and happy. Those who seek God and have not yet found him . . . these are reasonable and unhappy. And those who neither seek God nor find him . . . these are unreasonable and unhappy.” Justin Martyr appealed to reason, trying to persuade Roman rulers that it was pointless to persecute early Christians. He kept stressing the lessons of Jesus, most notably: “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.” Which of Jesus' lessons do you quote the most?

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Peter 4:7-13; Mark 11:11-26 (351).*
“*Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours.*”

Saturday, Jun 02, 2018 **MEMORIAL OF MARCELLINUS AND PETER, MARTYRS** **Gone but not forgotten**

We hardly know the names of Marcellinus and Peter from the early fourth century (d.304), who were persecuted during the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian. But in their day, these men were honored by poems and feast days, and over their tombs a church was built. Their bones were prized relics as late as the ninth century and miracles were attributed to them. The gift of our lives is the greatest gift we can offer to God. Though our names may be all but forgotten on earth, our fidelity is eternally rewarded.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jude 17, 20b-25; Mark 11:27-33 (352).* “*Was John's Baptism of heavenly or of human origin? Answer me.*”