

Sunday, Feb 17, 2019

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Good news in bad times

Forget the headlines for a blessed minute. Stop attending to pop-up dramas of breaking stories, and avert your eyes from news flashes that dazzle with the world's misery and villainy. We know human nature like the back of our hands, because we know the contents of our own hearts: how petty we can be, how self-serving and critical. The difference between the evil geniuses of the globe and us is often a matter of reach and opportunity, or one too many grievances that finally topple our humanity and make the descent to darkness all the more compelling. Resist self-righteousness!

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; Luke 6:17, 20-26 (78). *"Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh."*

Monday, Feb 18, 2019

Seek signs of mercy

Generations still seek a sign. But sometimes we look for signs in the wrong places. Jesus must still heave a sigh whenever we're blind to the divine inklings all around us. When the brokenhearted take heart and the hard-hearted show some mercy—those are signs that God has gotten through. Let's give God—and each other—the benefit of the doubt.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 4:1-15, 25; Mark 8:11-13 (335). *"The Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, asking him for sign from heaven, to test him."*

Tuesday, Feb 19, 2019

Looks like rain

Big floods tend to produce stories. Folks can recall much about the "flood of 2008 or 1996 or 1956 . . ." People in biblical times had heard flood stories, too. But the flood Genesis described was the Big One, the flood to end all floods—almost. God was angry and decided all of creation was pretty much corrupt and the only solution was to wipe it all out. But in an almost human way God left the door open a crack. Noah got to be the ark that preserved a righteous few, including handy mating pairs of all creatures in order to repopulate the earth once the waters receded. So God's wrath was not final. There's always the possibility of return to God, constantly offered. When the waters of despair, regret, and cynicism threaten to inundate you, remember there's a dove on the way.

TODAY'S READINGS: Today's readings: Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10; Mark 8:14-21 (336). *"Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.'"*

Wednesday, Feb 20, 2019

It's all part of the process

Our journey toward health, wholeness, and conversion stretches across the span of our lives and, ironically, doesn't prevent our deaths. But the more fully we embrace life and live in God's Spirit, the less significant our deaths become. Dying is just part of the process toward life in Christ. For a time we will see as in a mirror—through a glass darkly. But if we follow Jesus' instruction of forgiveness and love, we will eventually see clearly—even with our eyes closed and even beyond our deaths.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 8:6-13, 20-22; Mark 8:22-26 (337). *"The man looked up and said, 'I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.'"*

Thursday, Feb 21, 2019

MEMORIAL OF PETER DAMIAN, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Courage to do what is right

Peter Damian was a Benedictine 11th-century monk who is frequently described as an austere and holy man. He loved the study of scripture and was extremely devoted to his monastic life. But his holiness and moral clarity brought him to the attention of more than one pope and he often was called upon to settle contentious debates within the church. With great courage, Peter called the church to moral reform, confronting issues of simony (buying or selling of church jobs) and clerical abuse of power. Though he was never officially canonized, most people of his time considered him a saint and he was named a doctor of the church in 1828. Let him inspire your study and devotion today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 9:1-13; Mark 8:27-33 (338). *"You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."*

Friday, Feb 22, 2019

FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF PETER THE APOSTLE

The chair has the floor

For a chair to get its own feast day, it's got to be a pretty special chair. Today's is just that, because Saint Peter himself, the very first pope, sat upon it. The relic in St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City is a wooden throne, which Pope Benedict XVI described as a "symbol of the special mission of Peter and his successors to tend Christ's flock, keeping it united in faith and in charity." Ponder that our church's leaders stand in a line going all the way back to the apostles, and pray for each one who holds this esteemed position.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19 (535). *"Upon this rock I will build my church."*

Saturday, Feb 23, 2019

MEMORIAL OF POLYCARP, BISHOP AND MARTYR

Living memory

We can be sure that the practice of venerating the relics of saints began very early in the church. The first evidence for it comes from a letter dated around 150 A.D. concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp. The letter relates that following Polycarp's execution the Romans refused the Christians his body, deciding rather to burn it. The Christians then gathered together his bones, church fathers related, "being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold." They put these bones in a place of distinction where they would gather together and revere them, especially on the anniversary of Polycarp's martyrdom. Remember the sacrifices of Christian martyrs and give yourself wholeheartedly to a life of faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hebrews 11:1-7; Mark 9:2-13 (340). *"They kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant."*

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



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