



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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2012

FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME; WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

Dear sisters and brothers: Thank you!

Today we pray for and give thanks to the men and women who publicly profess to live the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Monks, hermits, contemplatives, and religious priests, sisters, and brothers represent the diversity of consecrated life recognized by the church. Those who choose this life are committed to imitating Christ, engaging in his ministries of spreading the Good News, and showing that “the world can be transfigured with the spirit of the beatitudes” (Catechism 932). Their witness reminds all of us that our lives have purpose and meaning beyond this age, so we’d better choose how we live our present days wisely.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Job 7:1-4, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1:29-39 (74)*

“All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.”

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6

FEAST OF PAUL MIKI, MARTYR, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Keep the story alive

Christianity came to Japan with the arrival of Saint Francis Xavier in 1549. In fewer than 50 years, however, all foreign missionaries had been expelled and 26 Christians were condemned to die, including Paul Miki, a Japanese-born Jesuit priest. The story does not end there. In the 1860s new missionaries to Japan were astonished to discover a hidden but thriving Christian community numbering in the tens of thousands. They had managed to pass along the faith informally for 200 years! Such is the power of the Christian narrative. What is your favorite story from the life of Jesus? Why? In what ways has it influenced your life? How can you pass it along?

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Mark 6:53-56 (329)*

“As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him.”

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

May God rest in peace!

Talk about holy sites: the Temple Mount, where King Solomon is said to have built Israel’s First Temple around 3,000 years ago, has been considered a sacred location by at least four religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and even Roman paganism. Competing claims on the site, and on the area known as East Jerusalem where it is located, are a central element of Arab-Israeli conflict in the region. Surely we can find a way to bring lasting peace to the place where tradition says the Divine Presence rested after creating the world and then gathered the dust to form the first human beings. Add your voice to those calling for a negotiated peace in God’s backyard.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Mark 7:1-13 (330)*

“May your eyes watch night and day over this temple.”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Don’t be late to break-fast

With the season of Lent and its practice of fasting arriving in a couple of weeks, it’s a little puzzling to remember that Jesus was a great *breaker* of fasts and violator of religious food rules—that was one thing that got him into trouble with the authorities. His followers gathered grain on the Sabbath because they were starving. He ate with sinners and outcasts. He simply *did not*

follow the rules, but for a purpose: to show how the rules should not control but rather serve to bring a person into a more loving relationship with God and neighbor. What makes a person holy is not external observance but internal faith and love, which leads to right behavior.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Kings 10:1-10; Mark 7:14-23 (331)*

“Everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile . . . But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles.”

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9

What do you choose?

Being chosen by God seems attractive, but God’s choice is less entitlement to special favors and more being selected for a commission—given a job to do. Further, we find that God does not usually choose as we might. We find God picking, for example, David, the runt of the litter; Mary, an unknown girl from Nazareth; the sinner over the holy man. Try to be aware of how you make choices: how you will treat a troublesome fellow-worker or that driver who is tailgating or how scrupulously honest you will be. Like God, who chose you to be one in Christ, make decisions based not on the obvious but on what is inside the other—and who dwells within you.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Kings 11:4-13; Mark 7:24-30 (332)*

“When Solomon was old his wives had turned his heart to strange gods.”

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10 FEAST OF SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN

What’s between your life’s bookends?

We know few facts about Saint Scholastica: She lived in Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries, was the sister of Saint Benedict, became a nun and a prioress, and helped found Benedictine monasticism. Yet, thanks to two brief comments by Saint Gregory the Great, we know volumes about *how* she lived her life. Of her childhood Gregory wrote: “She was devoted to God from a very early age,” and a few paragraphs later he added that when she died “her soul ascended into heaven in the likeness of a dove.” Though seemingly innocuous, these comments are like bookends of Scholastica’s existence and give us a sense of the rich content of her biography. As you think about your life’s journey, what do your bookends look like?

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19; Mark 7:31-37 (333)*

“He has done all things well.”

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES; WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

God is bigger than our needs

In an hour of crisis it may be impossible to imagine that help will arrive in time, or that your great need might be met with sufficient comfort to make a difference. Yet Jesus once faced a hungry multitude and fed them with next to nothing—and no one went away in want. Today the church remembers those who are sick: all who carry the cross of chronic problems like diabetes, AIDS, or mental illness as well as those struck with a diagnosis of an illness like cancer, heart disease, or stroke. We and our loved ones are not forgotten. Jesus comes to fulfill every need. And his mother Mary’s arms are wide enough for all of us.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Kings 12:26-32, 13:33-34; Mark 8:1-10 (334)*

“They ate and were satisfied.”

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