



SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 2016

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Seen any “undeserving poor” lately?

In George Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion*, ne’er-do-well Alfred P. Doolittle laments, “It’s always the same story: ‘You’re undeserving; so you can’t have it.’ But my needs is as great as the most deserving widow’s that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband. I don’t need less than a deserving man: I need *more*.” Compassion is not compassion if it has to be “deserved.” A Christian *owes* mercy and leaves the judgment to God. Is there a person, ethnic group, or race you think undeserving? Then you’re not thinking like Jesus.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10; Hebrews 12:1-4; Luke 12:49-53 (120)*. “Persevere in running the race, while keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus.”

MONDAY, AUGUST 15

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
Crowned in heaven, her feet firmly on earth

As with the feast of the Lord’s Ascension, Mary being taken to heaven evokes the image of heaven being *up*. But Mary’s glory derives from her life on earth: her faith, her trust in God even when confused, her love for her son, her compassion for embarrassed wedding hosts, the horror of seeing her son crucified. Mary had her feet firmly on the good earth, where we live. When we “Hail” her, she responds, “Do whatever my son tells you,” and when we do so, to paraphrase her son’s Sermon on the Mount, our “reward in heaven will be great.”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Vigil: 1 Chronicles 15:3-4, 15-16; 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:54b-57; Luke 11:27-28 (621); Day: Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56 (622)*. “Now have salvation and power come, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed One.”

TUESDAY, AUGUST 16 MEMORIAL OF STEPHEN OF HUNGARY God works through imperfect vessels

Stephen of Hungary may be a saint, but he was no angel. He was good to the church, it is true, firmly establishing the faith in modern-day Hungary a millennium ago. However, the age was one of warfare, and Stephen engaged in his fair share of it. Once he had eliminated his competition, he did usher in an era of relative peace, and Hungary became a preferred route for pilgrims traveling between Europe and the Holy Land. Each age has its accomplishments—and its sins.



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

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Do the best you can to leave a legacy of good works.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Ezekiel 28:1-10; Matthew 19:23-30 (420)*. “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17

Where charity ends

“Charity begins at home.” Few of us doubt the wisdom and the primary duty of taking care of our families, neighborhoods, and communities. But for many, the obligation of charity can often appear to end at home as well. We may be reluctant to put our funds at the disposal of another needy parish, or to assist someone else’s family with our limited resources. But what if we took seriously the human family as genuine sisters and brothers? When *home* and *family* are expansive notions, then charity at home goes a long, long way.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Ezekiel 34:1-11; Matthew 20:1-16 (421)*. “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep?”

THURSDAY, AUGUST 18

For the love of money

It doesn’t take a spiritual genius to know that, as the Beatles put it, “money can’t buy me love.” Pope Francis uses his most moving appeals to divert a consumer-obsessed world from its vain pursuits: “Do not fall into the terrible trap of thinking that life depends on money and that, in comparison with money, anything else is devoid of value or dignity. This is nothing but an illusion! We cannot take money with us into the life beyond. Money does not bring us happiness.” Do your choices today prove that you want the kind of things that money just can’t buy?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Ezekiel 36:23-28; Matthew 22:1-14 (422)*. “I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you.”

FRIDAY, AUGUST 19 MEMORIAL OF JOHN EUDES, PRIEST Embarrassed into holiness

John Eudes was drawn to many kinds of service: some conventional, such as improving seminary education, and some less so, such as easing the dire needs of prostitutes. But he needed a little prodding. Madeleine Lamy, who had cared for several such women, one day challenged him to address the problem. “Where are you off to now, John? To some church, I suppose, where you’ll gaze at the images and think yourself pious. And all the time what is really wanted of you is a decent house for these poor creatures.” Red-faced but inspired, he began a religious community to meet those needs. Sometimes we have to be embarrassed into holiness!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Ezekiel 37:1-14; Matthew 22:34-40 (423)*. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20

MEMORIAL OF BERNARD, ABBOT, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
Creation is our teacher

Saint Bernard once said, “What I know of the divine sciences and the Holy Scriptures, I have learned in woods and fields.” A year ago, the Catholic Church announced that it would join the Orthodox Church on September 1 each year for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, a day to contemplate God in the beauty of creation. On this Saturday in August, make some time to contemplate God’s creation and be with God in nature.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Ezekiel 43:1-7a; Matthew 23:1-12 (424)*. “The greatest among you must be your servant.”