



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2017 SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Celebrate marriage

Marriage isn't for everyone, and current trends may point to a declining appeal. But for those who have said, "I do," the rest of us say, "Thank you." Your bold act of casting lots together for better or worse until death offers all of us insight into the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of divine love and the nature and power of God, who is love. Whether or not you're married, do what you can to support the marriages in your midst—today, World Marriage Day, and every day.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 15:15-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37 (76)*. "Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13 In the world but not of it

Everyone experiences difficulties at some point in their lives. No matter how fortunate a person may be, going a lifetime without adversity is next to impossible. The early church went through trials of a different sort: hostility, persecution, and the general tension of living in a world that did not share its beliefs. These days there is still friction between a life of faith and an increasingly secular world. The response of some is to condemn that world rather than engage it. Contemporary Christians can learn from the first ones, who saw in trials the opportunity to grow in virtue and develop their faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 4:1-15, 25; Mark 8:11-13 (335)*. "He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, 'Why does this generation seek a sign?'"

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14 MEMORIAL OF CYRIL, MONK, AND METHODIUS, BISHOP In their own words

There's a small detail in the gospel story of how Jesus fed 4,000 people with a few loaves and fish: "Some of them have come from a great distance." "Great distance" here was a code word for "outsider." Even outsiders, like Gentiles, were welcome at God's table. Eight centuries later the brothers Cyril and Methodius were called to be missionaries. They not only evangelized, at great distances, but also translated scripture and liturgy into the language of the people. These saints recognized that truly welcoming everyone to God's kingdom called for moving out of established boundaries. And that's a miracle we, too, can be part of.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10; Mark 8:14-21 (336)*. "Do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand?"

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15 Knowing God is the moment of truth

As any teacher can attest, not everyone comprehends a lesson on the first teaching: Instructions need to be repeated. The same holds true for Christian enlightenment: Some people have a sudden moment of clarity when they know Jesus as their savior; others need continual signs before they realize that through Jesus their lives have been restored. No matter how a person reaches this moment of truth, conversion is the central message of Christianity. We must come to know God, feel the presence of the divine in our lives, and strive for holiness in which we give glory to God and are of service to others.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 8:6-13, 20-22; Mark 8:22-26 (337)*. "Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16 Take a united stand against being divided

At a time in our country when we most need unity, we are divided. We face many difficult issues at one time—war and national security, healthcare, immigration, fiscal policies—each demanding serious attention. Yet our political debate has become toxic. We no longer seem willing to listen carefully, argue dispassionately, or disagree respectfully—much less reach for a compromise of any kind. The internet plays an important role here. In both bread and politics a little yeast goes a long way. Remember, then, to read widely and pay attention to your sources. Where are your "facts" coming from?

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, FEBRUARY 17 MEMORIAL OF THE SEVEN HOLY FOUNDERS OF THE SERVITE ORDER Do you want to know a secret? Pray.

A good number of religious orders started out as a small group of people looking for a simpler life of prayer and fellowship. Originally a group of seven successful cloth merchants from Florence, the founders of the Servite order started to meet in 1233 to pray and do penance. In time they left their wealthy lifestyles to reside in a dilapidated structure outside the city. Because of their holiness, though, people started coming to them for prayers and spiritual advice. Eventually the community grew into an order that today serves around the world. Make time for an inner life of prayer—and then live out that prayer in the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 11:1-9; Mark 8:34—9:1 (339)*. "What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18 MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Be not afraid!

Children often ask why Mary, the mother of Jesus, stands on a snake in many of her images—they're afraid of snakes; why isn't she? Tradition has long interpreted the divine saying to Eve in Genesis as a prophecy that one day a woman would come to wage war on the serpent who tricked her weaker sister. This woman would have no fear of the snake because she would never experience the bondage of sin. This story explains the origin of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Offer the traditional prayer today:

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.
TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 11:1-7; Mark 9:2-13 (340)*. "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."



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

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