



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2017 SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Right neighborly of you

It's easy to love our neighbors when they are friends or family. It gets a little dicier, however, when our neighbor is particularly unpleasant or has wronged us. Jesus invites us to sidestep the temptation of repaying violence or unpleasantness with more of the same and instead to do the unexpected. He calls us to be creative and take a fresh look at the situation and respond with our best selves. Does this mean we become doormats for another's aggression or irrationality? No, but it does mean being willing to love, trusting that love can make a difference even if it is not returned in kind.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Matthew 5:38-48 (79)*. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20 Share the dream

We honor great presidents today who enabled the dream: a land of opportunity for tired, poor, huddled masses "yearning to be free" as the Statue of Liberty proclaims. The United Nations has also designated today as the World Day of Social Justice. Nations must work toward creating a new "economics that respects planetary boundaries," recognizing that our well-being depends "on social relations and fairness." Catholic social teaching calls this goal the "common good." Decide with others in mind.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 1:1-10; Mark 9:14-29 (341)*. "Jesus said to him, 'If you can!' Everything is possible to one who has faith."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

MEMORIAL OF PETER DAMIAN, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH Sit quietly in God's salon

Peter Damian (1007-72), doctor of reform and renewal, theologian, cardinal, and trusted counselor to popes, was above all a man of prayer. He preferred the hermit's life of austere fasts, detachment, and solitude, in which his cell became the "salon" where he conversed with God. In commenting on Peter Damian, Pope Benedict XVI said: Peter's love of monasticism "is also important for us today, even though we are not monks: To be able to be silent in ourselves to hear the voice of God; to seek a 'salon' where God speaks to us; to learn the Word of God in prayer and meditation is the path for life."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 2:1-11; Mark 9:30-37 (342)*. "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF PETER THE APOSTLE

Thou art Peter

The church celebrates a couple of feast days for buildings, but today is the only one dedicated to a piece of furniture! Of course the "chair" of Peter is a symbol of the pope's authority, much like a "chairperson" has charge of a meeting. Peter and his successors, the popes, ensure the unity of the church. Because the pope is the "rock" of Matthew's gospel, it is he who affirms what is believed. He holds the "keys to the kingdom" in that he teaches the world the way of life that leads to fulfillment.

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23

MEMORIAL OF POLYCARP, BISHOP AND MARTYR

Faith creates the future

A passage from Philippians says that, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (4:13). Faith in God and communion with God in Christ unites us so closely with the Creator that God creates a future to accommodate our faith. God's creative power is without limit and God's love for us is infinite. Trusting in God we can literally accomplish anything. Saint Polycarp (d. 155) was so convinced of the power of faith that he chose death rather than renounce his belief. We make the same choice every day when we opt for hope rather than despair.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 5:1-8; Mark 9:41-50 (344)*. "Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24

We're only human

In a 1976 interview that created quite a stir, then-President Jimmy Carter said: "Christ set some almost impossible standards for us." Falling into that category would be the gospel teaching that remarriage after divorce is equivalent to adultery. In an age where divorce and remarriage are quite common, how are we to understand this teaching? Perhaps by referencing a phrase President Carter used just before the above-quoted line: "Because I'm human . . ." Because we are human, our promises—including those exchanged in matrimony—are not always fulfilled. Our imperfect lives are clear evidence of our humanity, just as God's infinite ability to forgive is clear evidence of God's divinity. Forgive someone who has fallen short—and start with yourself!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 6:5-17; Mark 10:1-12 (345)*. "Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25 MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Don't leave hungry

Some folks will always set out food when you visit their homes no matter what time of day it is. If you're smart you learn to drop by when you're good and hungry! Jesus never let anyone walk away hungry either—even if it meant setting the table for 5,000. His mother foretold that fact in her great song, the Magnificat: "He has filled the hungry with good things." When tired of the junk food the world has to offer, pray Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:47-55) in faith that God will fill you with good things.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 17:1-15; 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."



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

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