



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2017 FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Sometimes more is better

Today we say yes to two important groups of Catholics observing special days. The first Sunday of Black History Month is the National Day of Prayer for African American Families, who courageously uphold and honor what our history once devalued. Black families matter. The first Sunday after the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas) is also World Day for Consecrated Life. Just as we bless candles to recall Christ our light, we recognize those who consecrate their lives in witness to that light. Pray for families. Thank religious women and men.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:7-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16 (73)*. "Light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6

MEMORIAL OF PAUL MIKI AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS
An unchanging creed

Paul Miki (1562-97) was baptized at age 5. A man of his culture with a profound knowledge of Buddhism, he made an effective and affectionate preacher among the Japanese. When his fellow Jesuits were expelled from Japan, he remained and was eventually crucified with 25 others in Nagasaki. For each generation of Christians the demands of faith and the promises of Christ remain the same: Love God and love one another and you will live in love eternally.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 1:1-19; Mark 6:53-56 (329)*. "Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Be intentional

Whenever we begin something, it is always a good idea to start with an intention. Take a few breaths and ask yourself, "What do I intend to get out of this day, this meeting, this work, this experience?" The dictionary defines *intention* as the "act of determining mentally upon some action or result." In Latin *in-tendere* means "to stretch toward." One way to think about intention is to ask yourself what you are willing to stretch toward. Then imagine that our compassionate and loving God is also stretching toward you, intending what is best for you. Now you're praying. Plan to get up 15 minutes early and write your intention for the day.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 1:20—2:4a; Mark 7:1-13 (330)*. "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8 MEMORIAL OF JOSEPHINE BAKHITA, VIRGIN
Sudan's daughters persecuted, then and now

Many in Italy still call her "our Black Mother." Bakhita (b. 1869) suffered great misfortune in her native Sudan. Kidnapped, sold, and persecuted, she knew no mercy until she wound up the property of the Sudanese Italian consulate. Migrating with the consul's family to Italy, she eventually received baptismal instruction from the Canossian Daughters of Charity. After receiving her Christian name, Josephine often kissed the baptismal font, saying, "Here, I became a daughter of God!" Tragically, Christians in Sudan are still persecuted and sold today. Raise your voice for global religious freedom.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-17; Mark 7:14-23 (331)*. "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Loving your enemy is hard work

There was a time not that long ago when Catholics believed that anyone who wasn't Catholic was going straight to hell in a handbasket. The Jews during Jesus' time held similar views toward other religions. Syro-Phoenicians, who were enemies of Israel and didn't share in the same faith, were, in the minds of Jesus' disciples, unworthy of God's help. But Jesus turned that attitude on its head. For Christians, all human life has sacred dignity and is beloved by God, even the lives of our enemies. Stepping up to that truth sometimes requires repentance on our part.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 7:24-30 (332)*. "Jesus said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.'"

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10 MEMORIAL OF SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN

Storm heaven with your prayers

How to be sure God knows our needs? Imitate Saint Scholastica, who knew God can't resist the prayer of a holy person. Near the end of her life, Scholastica enjoyed the usual annual visit from her brother, Saint Benedict, who was anxious to return home at the appointed time. Scholastica entreated him to stay but he refused. So she literally "prayed up a storm" whose ferocity made travel impossible. "What have you done?" her brother asked. Scholastica answered, "I asked and you would not listen; so I asked my God and he did listen." Storm heaven with your prayers!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 3:1-8; Mark 7:31-37 (333)*. "People brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11 MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Wishing you well

For 150 years visitors to the shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes have believed in the healing power of water that flows from a natural spring there. Closer to home, some parishes commemorate World Day of Prayer for the Sick by asking pastoral care ministers and ministers of Holy Communion to visit the homebound and hospitalized; by placing the names of the sick in a special book displayed in church; or by writing the names of the sick on pieces of paper and asking parishioners to take a name, pray for the person, and send him or her a card. What can you and your community do today?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 3:9-24; Mark 8:1-10 (334)*. "They ate and were satisfied."



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

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