



Daily Bread

*Homiletic starters
and scriptural
reflection points for
each day of the month*

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The Lectionary provides a kind of spiritual script for the universal church that keeps us, literally, all on the same page as we journey through the liturgical seasons. These short reflections, written by five authors, are intended to help daily preachers and others who pray from the assigned Scriptures each day to orient themselves to the living word addressed to the church in the world.

June 2017

Seventh Week of Easter (continued)

Thurs., June 1 | Acts 22:30; 23:6-11; Jn 17:20-26

Justin, martyr

I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one. A friend displays a banner reminiscent of the 1970s, complete with psychedelic flowers and five cut-out felt letters: TAMBO — That All May Be One. While I've retired my bell-bottoms, the sentiment is close to my heart. I've always had a desire to bring people together, facilitate unity, create harmony out of dissonance. It's so strong within me that it's more of an obsession than a virtue. For me that's what writing is about, and choir directing, and worship, and vacations, and family meals. I've not always been successful, and failures grieve me, but common ground is indeed my holy ground. *God of all, make us one.* PBS

Fri., June 2 | Acts 25:13b-21; Jn 21:15-19

Do you love me? ... you know that I love you. In Greek there are different words that translate as "love." Some scholars suggest that to better understand the conversation between Jesus and Peter, we might want to translate it this way — J: "Peter, will you love me unto death?" P: "Lord, you know that I am your friend." J: "Yes, Peter, but will you die for me?" P: "Yes, Lord, you know that I am your friend." (Understanding Peter's limitations, Jesus asked,) J: "Peter, are you my friend?" (And distressed as he realized what love the Lord was asking for, a love that he could not promise, Peter said sadly,) P: "Yes, Lord, I am your friend." Peter's distress indicates the depth of his love and the sincerity of his desire to please even if he cannot. That desire is what makes him great and leads him to love Jesus enough to die for him. *Lord Jesus, help us to grow in love for you and for each other.* PBS

Sat., June 3 | Acts 28:16-20; 30-31; Jn 21:20-25

Charles Lwanga and companions, martyrs

What concern is it of yours? You follow me. I have children and sometimes they can't help but tinker with the balance scales: "He got more!" "But I did the dishes yesterday!" "He didn't make his bed." "How come she gets to (fill in the blank) and I don't?" Apparently, even the disciples of Jesus were not immune to this unattractive trait. Teaching our children — and ourselves — that "fair" does not equal "same" is a life-long task. Instead of looking at life and relationships as a 50/50 proposition, how much better to assume that my share to give is 100 percent (and maybe a little more). And how much should I take? What I need. Only what I need. *Lord Jesus, help me to keep my eyes on you and live simply that others may simply live.* PBS

Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., June 5 | Tb 1:3, 2:1a-8; Mk 12:1-12

Boniface, bishop, martyr

What then will the owner of the vineyard do? Although I live in an area with many vineyards, I know nothing about growing grapes or making wine. Jesus' listeners, however, would have been familiar with vineyards, and especially with the understanding of Israel as the vineyard and God as the owner. This metaphor is most vivid in Isaiah 5, where the vineyard is destroyed because it produced wild grapes. Jesus is reminding the chief priests and elders that they are the caretakers of God's vineyard and must make sure it produces good fruit. It's Jesus' not-so-subtle reminder that faith must lead to action. *May we be dedicated caretakers of your vineyard, Creator God.* JL

Tues., June 6 | Tb 2:9-14; Mk 12:13-17

Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Throughout the Gospels, Jewish leaders frequently encounter Jesus for one reason: to trap him by asking a trick question. Here they begin with flattery, but quickly get to the point: "Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar?" No matter how Jesus answered, he was sure to offend someone, either the religious leaders or the Roman rulers. Jesus



returns the question back to them, saying “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” Paying taxes is one of our responsibilities as citizens, but our ultimate allegiance is to God. *We are your people, Holy One; may we remember that our loyalty is to you.* JL

Wed., June 7 | Tb 3:1-11a, 16-17a; Mk 12:18-27

Whose wife will she be? Once again, religious leaders are trying to trick Jesus with a convoluted question about resurrection. As Christ’s disciples living in the 21st century, we are not as preoccupied with the same matters as the Sadducees were. But, we are preoccupied — with money, success, appearance, power. And so I imagine Jesus saying to us, “Money and success are important in this age, but they won’t be in the age to come. Appearance and power are concerns here, but they won’t be in the resurrection.” God’s new age will be entirely new, something different than this present world, something beyond our world way of thinking, here and now. *This world and the world to come are in your hands, Eternal One.* JL

Thurs., June 8 | Tb 6:10-11; 7:1bcde, 9-17; 8:4-9a; Mk 12:28-34

Which is the first of all commandments? It is not surprising that a scribe asked Jesus this question given that rabbis had long debated which commandment was greatest. Jesus quotes a verse from Deuteronomy (love God with everything you’ve got) and a verse from Leviticus (love your neighbor as yourself). The ancient Greeks had four words for different kinds of love, but in English we “love” everything from our spouses and children to football and cheeseburgers. The “love” of which Jesus speaks is agape — love that is self-giving, unconditional, and compassionate. This kind of love is not an emotion — it is an act of will, an act of faith. This love is something we do, even when we don’t feel particularly loving, because we have known God’s great and gracious love. *Trusting in your divine love, O God, we seek to love you, our neighbors and ourselves.* JL

Fri., June 9 | Tb 11:5-17; Mk 12:35-37

David himself calls him ‘lord’; so how can he be his son? In our readings thus far this week, the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees have asked Jesus all kinds of questions. It’s important to realize that all of this confrontation occurred after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (what we call Palm Sunday) and the religious leaders were working hard to trick Jesus so they could officially arrest him. In this passage, Jesus turns the tables and asks them how the Messiah could be called the son of David. Instead of waiting for a response, Jesus answers his question with words the Pharisees would recognize from Psalm 110, which Jews regarded as a messianic psalm; the fourth verse includes the promise that David and his descendants would reign forever. In this way, Jesus is declaring his identity — which delights the crowds and shakes up the religious leaders. *Lord Jesus, you do not fit our preconceived ideas.* JL

Sat., June 10 | Tb 12:1, 5-15, 20; Mk 12:38-44

Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in syna-

gogues, and places of honor at banquets. I sometimes wonder what happened to this widow after she left the temple that day. Widows were especially vulnerable in a patriarchal culture; even though Jewish law commanded people to care for widows and orphans. If a widow had no sons to care for her, her very existence was precarious. So how would this widow survive if she gave “her whole livelihood” to the temple? Is this really what God expects? Perhaps the larger lesson here is about religious hypocrisy, as Jesus compares the scribes, who abuse their power and position, to the widow who expects no reward. *For a spirit of humility and generosity, we pray.* JL

Tenth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., June 12 | 2 Cor 1:1-7; Mt 5:1-12

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Our faith calls us to always hope, but of late, I struggle to stay hopeful while listening to news reports. I’m filled with a deep sense of foreboding sadness as I perceive a global trend in which leaders, (and those vying to become leaders) propose the building of social, economic and even physical “walls” as they promote a fuzzy notion of “others.” Yet, as children of God, we believe that all humanity is created in the image of God and our baptism calls us to seek out and connect to the risen Christ in all. Jesus taught that this is the way to peace and salvation. *Let us never give up on the hope and the work of your kingdom, Lord.* MJ

Tues., June 13 | 2 Cor 1:18-22; Mt 5:13-16

Anthony of Padua, priest, doctor of the church

[They do not] light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. Children sing with confidence, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine!” With time, however, we can become less confident in the nature or quality of our God-given light. It often takes another person to point out our gifts and to draw it out from where it has been hidden under baskets of doubt or fear of criticism. Sometimes the purpose of our light is to validate and enable others to confidently shine their own light of Christ. New lights can infuse fresh life and new perspectives into the work of a faith community. *May the power of your light in us, nurture the discovery and confidence of your light in others.* MJ

Wed., June 14 | 2 Cor 3:4-11; Mt 5:17-19

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Anyone who has ever worked with independent-minded teenagers soon discovers that there is a big difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Rules meant to guide and protect them can be followed with technical precision, but there is no guarantee that the sentiment behind the rule will be observed. Similarly, I can no more judge a person’s faith in God based on their observances of church rules, than rote practice of rituals and prayer can be judged to be proof of a deep understanding of God in me. Only God sees the heart and a person’s willingness to be transformed. *May your words enliven and strengthen the Spirit within us, Lord.* MJ


Thurs., June 15 | 2 Cor 3:15 – 4:1, 3-6; Mt 5:20-26

... the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that they may not see the light ... of the glory of Christ. Our diocese of Moncton, Canada offers many workshops on spiritual topics. Often, it is the same people who attend them yet, so many more could benefit from their richness. It is the dilemma of evangelization. As one parishioner said, "How do we reach people who don't know that they don't know?" I can describe in detail the benefits I have gained from faith and prayer life, but I cannot give others this inner experience. I can only live my baptism as authentically as possible and hope that others desire and seek out what they see in me, knowing God can satisfy their deepest needs and desires. *Near indeed is salvation to those who seek God.* MJ

Fri., June 16 | 2 Cor 4:7-15; Mt 5:27-32

We hold this treasure in earthen vessels. It is wonderful to observe how many newly pregnant women watch carefully what they eat and drink. Regardless of their habits before this wonderful event, they now take every precaution to ensure the well-being of the treasure they carry within. Regardless of age or gender we, too, are "pregnant" with the risen Christ. We are earthen vessels called to give birth to the light and love of Christ within us. Our words, actions and attitudes influence the integrity of this treasure and influence the perception of those who encounter our attempts to bring God's gift of love to life. *Lord, may we live our lives with the consciousness that we carry the treasure of Jesus' life and love within us.* MJ

Sat., June 17 | 2 Cor 5:14-21; Mt 5:33-37

We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. Much debate has arisen of late concerning the reliability of news provided by social media. Providers are being called to task to check the validity of their sources, yet we also carry a responsibility to refrain from repeating information if we are uncertain of its truth; to put effort into discerning what is true and what is rumor. Within our own lives intertwined within families and communities, gossip has the power to damage and ruin reputations and relationships. If we believe that Christ dwells in us all, then we owe it to each other to consider whether we would repeat the rumor if the subject or the receiver of its consequences, were Jesus himself. *Put my mouth on pause, Lord, while I engage the brain you gave me.* MJ

Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time
Mon., Jun. 19 | 2 Cor 6:1-10; Mt 5:38-42

You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. Jesus says the Hebrew Scripture is all about him. So he re-writes it in the Sermon on the Mount! But, can anyone live like this? It's so "extreme"! Turn the other cheek. They want your tunic, give 'em your cloak, too. One mile? Go two! Give to anyone who asks. You live like this, your life is basically over. The only excuse for such talk is because the Christian Scripture — which really is all about Jesus — finds all these words fulfilled in him! Our life is in Jesus, and that is all. *In the sight of the nations, O Lord, you have revealed your justice!* MD

Tues., Jun. 20 | 2 Cor 8:1-9; Mt 5:43-48

Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. As perfect as God? That's a tall order! But, it's the very core of our Christian life. For God makes the sun shine on the bad and the good, and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. So be the sun, be the rain; say hello to everyone. Is that so hard? And, love your enemy, just like God, who loves us. And, what an enemy I have been to my heavenly Father! "Perfect" is not sinlessness; it's "children" sharing our poor lives together — and praying. We seem to do so little of that, but it matters so much! Jesus will tell us how, on Thursday. *O Lord, you raise up those who are bowed down; you love the just; you protect strangers!* MD

Wed., Jun. 21 | 2 Cor 9:6-11; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
Aloysius Gonzaga, religious

When you give alms ... when you pray ... when you fast ... do not be like the hypocrites! Is it Lent again already? We just did all this solemn giving and praying and fasting a few months ago! But, such discipline is not seasonal; it's our daily Christian life. And, if we don't give spontaneously, pray humbly, sacrifice cheerfully, we're only fooling ourselves. What amuses me is how "the hypocrites" seems to be a familiar group for Jesus' listeners, as maybe politicians are for us. What both groups have in common is their total lack of self-awareness. Everybody — except them! — knows they're fakes. Why, then, would Jesus have to warn me so sternly not to be like them? Hmm. Good question! Your light shines through the darkness, *O Lord, you are gracious and merciful and just!* MD

Thu., Jun. 22 | 2 Cor 11:1-11; Mt 6:7-15

Our Father, who art in heaven... The only art in any modern translation of the Bible! Just shows how custom marks its territory. And that's a good thing, when we all know the same words of our most common prayer. On the other hand, we may lose the sense of surprise, even astonishment, when Jesus shares his Father, his *Abba*, with us. Oh, sure, we have to fall all over ourselves to make the distinction: Jesus is the "natural" Son of God, we are "adoptive" children. That's a lot to unpack from the single word "our," and Jesus himself does not do it. Just as "Jesus," (Yahweh saves), is the one Word of God, so "Our Father" is the whole message of God's creating, sustaining, guarding love for us. *Give us this day our daily bread!* MD

Fri., Jun. 23 | Dt 7:6-11; 1 Jn 4:7-16; Mt 11:25-30
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. Jesus himself gives us the cue for today's feast of the Sacred Heart. Moses anticipated it, telling Israel, "The Lord set his heart on you and chose you." But, Moses could not have imagined that his figure of speech would become a literal fact of God's own life; at the center of the Trinity beats a human heart. John captures it this way: "God is love, and whoever remains in love, remains in God, and God in them." In Honduras, the Legion of Mary visits poor families during June, bringing a framed image of the Sacred Heart to remain, or abide, until the next day. So we pray. *O Lord, you redeem our life from destruction, you crown us with kindness and compassion!* MD



Sat., Jun. 24 | Is 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Lk 1:57-66, 80
Nativity of John the Baptist

What, then, will this child be? Today's feast of the birth of John the Baptist is like a Christmas carol in the middle of summer. The story is dramatic enough, with a mute father who finds his voice again when he names his newborn son "John" (Yahweh is gracious). But, the drama will be played out on the stage of the world itself, as Isaiah's vision revealed: a universal mission, "a light to the nations," because Israel is just "too little" to contain God's love. Even Paul, who never met John, knew the game plan: "John heralded Christ's coming." But, the feast is for us, too. Become the herald angels of today. Tell all the world of God's love. *I give you thanks, O Lord, that I am fearfully, wonderfully made!* MD

Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., June 26 | Gn 12:1-9; Mt 7:1-5

...and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you. Holding others to impossible standards yields the same return. Measuring by earthly standards becomes the final goal. No expectation lies beyond temporal existence, resulting in judgment solely by secular means. Believing that there's more necessitates holding ourselves to higher expectations. Jesus clearly spells out how we should act. The teachings are direct. Our words, choices and actions matter. A Christ-like capacity for compassion, forgiveness and understanding will be reciprocated — maybe not in this life, but that's not our endgame. We know there's more. The fear of harsh judgment disappears because the outcome is entirely our choice, and we're made to choose love. *Help us to be gentle with each other, Lord.* PR

Tues., June 27 | Gn 13:2, 5-18; Mt 7:6, 12-14

Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. The Golden Rule, present in all major religions, is one of our earliest lessons and is a prevalent moral and ethical principle. Like many other childhood teachings, it gets pushed aside as life experiences harden us. People reject the rule as naive. They don't think that others can be trusted to do the right thing, but that attitude misses the point. The rule doesn't say to treat others in a way that protects us from fear of being taken advantage of. It says nothing about basing our actions on others' potential negative behavior. It's about offering others what we want to receive with no guarantee how they will respond. It's entirely about our choices and our actions. The rest we cannot control. *Merciful God, may our living be rooted in your immeasurable love.* PR

Wed., June 28 | Gn 15:1-12, 17-18; Mt 7:15-20
Irenaeus, bishop and martyr

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing. Most people aren't easily fooled by genuine evil or outright lies. The subtle lure or the "too good to pass up offer" gets us. St. Irenaeus said, "Error never shows itself in its naked reality, in order not to be discovered. On the contrary, it dresses elegantly, so that the unwary may be led to believe that it is more truthful than truth itself." Fact becomes irrelevant in the haze of perception. Jesus cautions the disciples, and us, that

only a good tree yields good fruit. We must look past the clever disguise or the smooth talk and examine the outcome. Otherwise, well-intentioned people will be left starving for the word while feasting on rotten produce. *Open our eyes, Lord, to your truth.* PR

Thurs., June 29 | Acts 12:1-11; 2 Tm 4:6-8, 17-18;
Mt 16:13-19

Peter and Paul, apostles

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. When Christ placed Peter as the head of the apostles, he established his ongoing human representation in the administration of sacraments. Jesus gave the apostles authority to forgive sins; their successors still offer us absolution. When we willfully violate God's law, we're separated from him. Reconciliation restores our relationship. Penance demonstrates our gratitude for God's mercy as a concrete sign of our willingness to repair sin's damage. Remembering Sts. Peter and Paul today, let's reflect on the apostles' ability to offer the sacrament of reconciliation, and how in it Jesus himself offers us spiritual healing. *Thank you, Lord, for the gifts of pardon and peace.* PR

Fri., June 30 | Gn 17:1, 9-10, 15-22; Mt 8:1-4

Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean. Jesus' public ministry was marked by his healing of physical and spiritual illness. His desire to heal is an obvious sign of his love and mercy. Jesus touches the leper; this gentle gesture is an integral aspect of the sacrament of anointing of the sick — the laying on of hands — directly imitating Jesus who didn't shy from genuine human contact despite the sickness and diseases of those who came to him. We daily face pain and brokenness. Whether the affliction before us is of mind, body or spirit, we cannot back away. We must stretch out our hands in compassion. A tender touch may be all someone needs to get back on the road to recovery. *Help us, Lord, to bring wholeness to a wounded and suffering world.* PR

Daily Bread Authors

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