



# Daily Bread

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

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The Lectionary provides a 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.

## August 2017

### Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Tues., Aug. 1 | Ex 33:7-11; 34:5b-9, 28; Mt 13:36-43**

**Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor**

*Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field. What is a weed? At a nearby nature reserve we are told that a weed is anything that grows where it's not supposed to. This means that the tiny redbud that sprouts in the middle of my flower bed is a weed. Corn growing in the middle of a soybean field is a weed. In Jesus' parable, the wheat and weeds grow up together in the same field, and the field is a metaphor for both the church and the kingdom of God. The good and bad are all wrapped up together, and it is not our business to decide who does and who doesn't belong in God's realm. *Forgive us, God, when we decide others do not belong in your kingdom.* JL*

**Wed., Aug. 2 | Ex 34:29-35; Mt 13:44-46**

*When Aaron ... and the other children of Israel saw Moses, and noticed how radiant the skin of his face had become, they were afraid. One of the strangest images ever created of Moses may be a statue by Michelangelo. Carved out of pure white marble, Moses is seated, holding the tablets of the law — and he has two horns on his head. Why? It has to do with the Hebrew word for “radiant,” which is almost identical to the word for “horn.” Michelangelo evidently decided that Moses' face had sprouted horns, not light, during his encounter with God. When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, his face was shining so brightly that the people were afraid of him. The light, the radiance, was seen as a sign of God's presence and glory. *Open our eyes to the shining sacred moments of life, we pray.* JL*

**Thurs., Aug. 3 | Ex 40:16-21, 34-38; Mt 13:47-53**

*The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel is almost entirely parables of the kingdom — the sower, the wheat and the weeds, the mustard seed, yeast, the pearl of great value, and finally, the fishnet. Some images convey the idea that the kingdom starts small but will grow and grow and grow. Others are about separating the good from the bad — or determining who is in God's kingdom and who is not. Jesus is trying to teach the disciples — and us — that God's kingdom has room for everyone. *God of love, keep us from deciding who fits in your kingdom.* JL*

**Fri., Aug. 4 | Lv 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34b-37; Mt 13:54-58**

**John Vianney, priest**

*A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house. It's safe to assume that word of Jesus' teaching and healing had made it back to Nazareth. You'd think they'd be proud and happy: “Come and see — local boy, now a preacher!” But that isn't what happens. The people recognize that Jesus speaks with authority and power, but they can't get beyond the fact that they knew him when he was a baby. They know his parents, his family. In the same way, it is difficult for us to truly hear words of challenge and prophecy when they come from someone we know. *Help us listen, O God, even to familiar voices.* JL*

**Sat., Aug. 5 | Lv 25:1, 8-17; Mt 14:1-12**

*Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist. This is one of those Gospel stories that makes us wonder why it was ever included in the Scriptures. John confronted King Herod for marrying his brother's wife and it cost him his life. To be fair, Herod was distressed when Herodias told her daughter to ask for John's head. But, Herod doesn't want to be seen as lacking in power or authority in front of his guests. Even though this event is not about Jesus, Matthew is telling his audience that doing what God calls us to do can be difficult, even dangerous. Doing God's work is no guarantee that we will be loved and respected; indeed, we may be treated the way Jesus was. *Faithful God, help us to follow where you lead.* JL*



## Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

### Mon., Aug. 7 | Nm 11:4b-15; Mt 14:13-21

*I cannot carry all this people by myself, for they are too heavy for me.* In frustration, Moses cries out to God for help to deal with the endless demands of the Israelites. His cry is echoed by those who feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of caring for troubled or disabled children, parents with Alzheimer's disease, or spouses with addictions. God answered Moses' cry by appointing others to help carry his load. We, too, need to recognize that we are connected to the well-being of each other and to be ready to lend a hand to those who struggle with the burdens of daily life. *Heighten our awareness, O Lord, that we may recognize when our loaves of hope and fishes of compassion need to be shared.* MJ

### Tues., Aug. 8 | Nm 12:1-13; Mt 14:22-36 or 15:1-2, 10-14 Dominic, priest

*Throughout my house [Moses] bears my trust. ... The presence of the Lord he beholds.* Out of jealousy, Miriam and Aaron accuse Moses of being an unworthy leader because of his marriage to a Cushite woman. The Pharisees claim Jesus has no authority because his disciples do not follow Jewish dietary laws. Pope Francis has been accused of abandoning church laws because he calls for a more merciful response to divorced Catholics. Just as God stands by the choice of Moses as the leader of his people, so too, does Jesus remind his disciples that only those laws rooted in the love of God and neighbor have authority in God's kingdom. *Carve your laws on our hearts and not in stone, O God.* MJ

### Wed., Aug. 9 | Nm 13:1-2, 25-14:1, 26a-29a, 34-35; Mt 15:21-28

*O woman, great is your faith!* Jesus chooses to heal an "outsider" to remind us that God's salvation is meant for all, not just a chosen elite. This Canaanite woman would be deemed "unclean" by Jewish laws, as she is a Gentile and an unaccompanied female. Yet, unlike the Pharisees, she approaches Jesus with great respect, fully aware of her impure status. Jesus is impressed by her frankness and deference to his traditions. We could all gain a richer understanding of our faith and others by imitating Jesus' openness to dialogue; being neither too arrogant nor too intimidated to listen to different perspectives. *O that today you would listen to God's voice, harden not your hearts.* MJ

### Thurs., Aug. 10 | 2 Cor 9:6-10; Jn 12:24-26 Lawrence, deacon and martyr

*God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that... you may have an abundance for every good work.* Each day we encounter situations that call us to respond with generosity and mercy. Sometimes it's easy to be kind, but sometimes the call evokes a desire in me to pretend I didn't notice or to create excuses preventing a charitable response. When I view the call to love as a hurdle I *should* overcome, the response can feel onerous. When I see it as an opportunity to share some of the many gifts with which God has graced my life, the choice becomes easier and often carries a bonus of actual enjoyment. *Let your splendor rest upon us, O Lord, and direct the work of our hands.* MJ

### Fri., Aug. 11 | Dt 4:32-40; Mt 16:24-28

#### Clare, religious

*Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.* It seems to be human nature that the more prosperous we become in this world, the more we worry about preservation of that prosperity. When we become overly focused on our possessions or on an image of ourselves that we hope the world will approve, we lose our ability to live honestly and freely as the person we really are and who God created us to be. Nothing promotes a more fulfilling life than discovering and living out our truest selves as God's beloved children. Being true to ourselves also gives us courage to help others become their truest selves. *May confidence in your love for us give us the freedom to live more generously, O Lord.* MJ

### Sat., Aug. 12 | Dt 6:4-13; Mt 17:14-20

*If you have faith the size of a mustard seed ... nothing will be impossible for you.* My mother was a woman who lived life with her "glass half full." Throughout her 93 years, she had an unwavering faith that God answered her prayers; once she placed her petition before God, she rarely worried over the outcome. She believed that if God didn't provide the answer for which she had originally hoped, she had complete trust that God would provide her with the tools she would need to handle the answer she did receive. Her trust in God's goodness was never disappointed. She taught me that, like all life-giving habits, trust comes with commitment and practice. *My heart is glad and my soul rejoices; my body rests secure.* MJ

## Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

### Mon., Aug. 14 | Dt 10:12-22; Mt 17:22-27

#### Maximilian Kolbe, priest and martyr

*The Lord ... executes justice for the orphan and the widow and befriends the alien, feeding and clothing him.* Deuteronomy has lots of law (the *nomy* part), but its heart and soul is the *deutero* part — Moses' loving re-do of the covenant with the God of mercy. Moses even anticipates Paul's revision: "Circumcise your hearts!" Maybe Jesus thought of Deuteronomy when the Pharisees told him to pay the temple tax. He sends Peter with a hook to the lake. The first fish that bites has a coin in its mouth worth twice the temple tax. "Give that to them for me and for you." Call it a *deutero*, a reminder of how intimate is God's care for us, even in the smallest things. *O Lord, grant us peace within our borders, fill us with the finest wheat!* MD

### Tues., Aug. 15 | Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Cor 15:20-27; Lk 1:39-56

#### Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*Christ [is] the firstfruits.* Is the Assumption the most "Catholic" feast on the calendar? The Virgin Mary, after completing her earthly life, was "assumed" body and soul into heaven. Some people don't believe in miracles. Other people, like Pope Francis, are realists. Be like Mary, he says, who at Cana, saw a problem and went about solving it with "discretion, efficacy, and determination." Paul hints at the Assumption when he says, "Since death came through a man, the resurrection of



the dead came also through a man." And guess what: That man came through a woman! *We are borne with gladness and joy, O Lord, as we enter the palace of the King!* MD

**Wed., Aug. 16 | Dt 34:1-12; Mt 18:15-20**

*Since then no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.* Jesus says, if errant Christians don't shape up, "Treat them as you would a Gentile or a tax collector." But some of Jesus' favorite people are Gentiles and tax collectors! When Matthew finds rigidity, even bigotry, in his source, he pushes back with words he remembers of the merciful, inviting, inclusive Jesus who saved him from a life of self-loathing as a tax collector. And what beautiful words they are! "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *Hear now, all of you who love the Lord, while I declare what God has done for me!* MD

**Thurs., Aug. 17 | Jos 3:7-10a, 11, 13-17; Mt 18:21-19:1**

*Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him?* A servant, who owes a fortune to his master, is forgiven, but then jails a fellow servant who owes him for something trivial, brutally rejecting the man's cries for mercy. The story ends with the merciless servant in the hands of "the torturers." Jesus warns: My Father will treat you the same way unless you forgive each other "from your heart." If only there were an "Occupy Forgiveness" movement! Self-righteousness is indeed a torture. Only forgiveness actually changes reality. Today's psalm has a great image of what forgiveness might look like. *The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like the lambs of the flock!* MD

**Fri., Aug. 18 | Jos 24:1-13; Mt 19:3-12**

*Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator "made them male and female"?* Sometimes Jesus sounds indeed like a man of the first century, such as today when he goes on about eunuchs, whom our delicate translation calls "some are incapable of marriage." But, let's apply Jesus' own criterion, namely, "the beginning," which established equality as the standard for living our lives together. The Declaration of Independence was bold enough to make it the basis of the U.S. nation: "All men are created equal." And "men" became an ever-expanding category — slaves, women, refugees, foreigners, gays, the poor, prisoners. *We give you thanks, O Lord, for you are good and your mercy endures forever!* MD

**Sat., Aug. 19 | Jos 24:14-29; Mt 19:13-15**

*As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!* Joshua's stirring words are a challenge that needs constant updating. The apostles thought they were "serving the Lord" by creating child-free zones lest they trigger any discomfort for the dear Lord. Instead, Jesus gave the kids priority seating — on his own lap! "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Catechists and teachers do such holy work, preparing children to come to Jesus in the sacraments, hopefully while sparking the child's curiosity and wonder. Such is the work of the kingdom of heaven. *I bless you, Lord, who even in the night exhort my heart!* MD

**Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Mon., Aug. 21 | Jgs 2:11-19; Mt 19:16-22**

**Pius X, pope**

*The children of Israel offended the Lord.* The Israelites stubbornly clung to their false gods. They knew the commandments but only grudgingly obeyed when the Lord raised up judges to protect them. Left alone, they repeatedly returned to their destructive ways. Like the young man who questioned Jesus about which commandments to follow, they gave up. Doing the right thing is difficult; it's not always obvious what's truly good. Such wisdom requires humility, obedience and willingness to change. One of the greatest reforming popes, Pius X, diligently battled heresy and the evils of Modernism, and achieved codification of the Code of Canon Law. He encouraged frequent Communion and strove to "restore all things in Christ." *Give me the grace, Lord, to accept your commands.* PR

**Tues., Aug. 22 | Jgs 6:11-24A; Mt 19:23-30**

**Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

*For God all things are possible.* Jesus' words echo Gabriel's message to the expectant virgin. Mary is told her son will take David's throne and rule forever. Her queenship expresses her communion in God's love and responsibility for the world. Hers is a throne of grace and mercy. We reverently approach, knowing Mary awaits us with peace and consolation. The feast was established in 1954 by Pope Pius XII. His encyclical "To the Queen of Heaven" reflects on Mary's perfection and preeminence, her role in Jesus' work of redemption and her intercessory power. *Holy Queen, most faithful follower of our Lord, we seek your intercession and place our worries into your loving care.* PR

**Wed., Aug. 23 | Jgs 9:6-15; Mt 20:1-16**

*My friend, I am not cheating you.* Human ideas of fairness are conflicting. We desire everyone to be treated the same, yet feel that some people, ourselves included, deserve special treatment. We rationalize our reasons, but generally they are arbitrary, petty and self-serving. The laborers in Jesus' parable grumble about unfairness, yet all do exactly what they're hired to do; each receives exactly what's been promised. There's no deceit, only an expectation of receiving more despite the fact they did only what was agreed upon. The Lord's justice is not a matter of what we deserve, but what we need. He doesn't rationalize; he simply gives. The choice is ours: whine like the misguided laborers or share God's gifts without envy or greed. *Generous Lord, forgive my selfish grumbling.* PR

**Thurs., Aug. 24 | Rv 21: 9b-14; Jn 1:45-51**

**Bartholomew, apostle**

*There is no duplicity in him.* Bartholomew was completely without deception. He knew Scripture well, notably what it said of the coming Messiah. When his friend Philip invited him to meet Jesus, Bartholomew sincerely questioned the likelihood of Jesus being the Messiah. On Philip's word, however, Bartholomew trustingly accepted the summons and never looked back. Bartholomew's sincerity opened him immediately to see and accept Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus told Bartholomew he would



see even greater things, which he did when he witnessed the risen Savior on the Sea of Galilee. After the first Pentecost, Bartholomew traveled widely — preaching, baptizing and performing miracles. He was martyred in Armenia, crucified upside down, flayed alive, and beheaded. Though regularly persecuted, he steadfastly professed the good news with an undivided heart. *Help us live the truth, Lord.* **PR**

**Fri., Aug. 25 | Ru 1:1, 3-6, 14b-16, 22; Mt 22:34-40**

*Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?* The Pharisees purposely posed a seemingly impossible question. Rabbis and scribes continually debated the complexities and severity of the 613 letters in the Hebrew text of the Ten Commandments and 613 laws in the Pentateuch, ranking their significance and disagreeing about which laws were binding. Asked to single out the most significant, Jesus saw their trick. He answered their intricate argument simply. Love of God comes first, but it necessitates love of neighbor. If we love God primarily and wholly, everything else naturally follows. Love of God demands doing the right thing in all situations out of thanks and praise, not because it's a command. *May our love for you, Lord, guide our hearts, minds and actions.* **PR**

**Sat., Aug. 26 | 1 Ru 2:1-3, 8-11; 4:13-17; Mt 23:1-12**

*For they preach but they do not practice.* Jesus warned his disciples that the Pharisees were blind guides; their deeds a stark contrast to their teachings. They put on a show, widening their phylacteries and lengthening their tassels, but these were dramatic gestures to flaunt their supposed piety. This isn't the first time Jesus warned the disciples about engaging in pious actions to earn praise. Jesus taught them to observe the Pharisees' example not to imitate it but to avoid it. It's a lesson on how not to act. Going through the motions to impress others doesn't work. People see through pompous displays. Similarly, we can get so robotic in our practices that they hold no meaning. We must be conscious not only of what we say and do but also the reasons why. *Help us speak and live your truth, Lord.* **PR**

**Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time**

**Mon., Aug. 28 | 1 Thes 1:1-5, 8b-10; Mt 23:13-22**

**Augustine, bishop, doctor of the church**

*We give thanks for ... your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope.* There is a striking difference between how Paul addresses the Christians in Thessalonica and how Jesus speaks to the scribes and Pharisees. I shudder at the thought of being a "blind guide." I want to practice what I preach. I want to have my eyes open to God's abundance, to the daily miracle of life, to not be one who misses it. Is there greater suffering than to get to the end of one's life and realize, "I missed it!"? *God, open my eyes, stretch my mind, soften my heart, that I may see you in all things, in all work, in all on my path this day.* **PBS**

**Tues., Aug. 29 | 1 Thes 2:1-8; Mk 6:17:29**

**Passion of John the Baptist**

*We drew courage through our God to speak to you the Gospel of God.* Both readings today are about having the courage of our convictions. Paul, after what he deemed a failure in Philippi,

draws on divine courage to preach the Gospel to yet another community. John the Baptist tells truth to power, costing him his head. Perhaps the Gospel has always been inconvenient. Today Christians may quote, "Whatsoever you do to the least of them" and then argue about who is the "worthy least." The child who is unborn? homeless? refugee? uninsured? Preaching the Gospel takes courage and patience, and a large dollop of kindness because no one hears truth from someone who doesn't love them. *Gracious God, give us courage, patience and kindness, that we might show a face of you to the world.* **PBS**

**Wed., Aug. 30 | 1 Thes 2:9-13; Mt 23:27-32**

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites.* Jesus seems to have patience with every kind of sin and weakness except one. He is gentle with Peter's timidity, James and John's envy, Thomas's doubt, Martha's frustration, the sinful woman's transgressions. But with hypocrisy — no way! That pretense of virtue when we are as sinful as anyone. Demanding goodness of others we don't demand of ourselves. Saying one thing and doing another. Perhaps we should stencil on the side of every pulpit (and cantor stand, organ bench, teacher's desk, parents' mirror, etc.) that famous quote often attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Your actions speak so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying." *Give us the gift of sincerity, Lord, and help us to live what we believe.* **PBS**

**Thurs., Aug. 31 | 1 Thes 3:7-13; Mt 24:42-51**

*Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant?* Faithful servants are those who honor the work given to them, care for the people who depend on them, take responsibility for their failures, are grateful for their successes. People of authority — pastors, preachers, parents, politicians, teachers, coaches, counselors — may have enormous influence to affect lives. The failure to use that influence for the good is to fail as a faithful servant. Just writing that makes me want to examine my life and be sure that I am using my energy where I can be most effective instead of spending that precious energy where I cannot make a difference. Will you join me? *For wisdom and generosity, we pray.* **PBS**

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