



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.

October 2017

Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct 2 | Zec 8:1-8; Mt 18:1-5, 10

Guardian Angels

Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven? Our world is full of images of what it means to be great: the talented athlete or actor, a popular rock star, the powerful CEO, the powerful politician. Not surprisingly, Jesus' understanding of greatness has very little in common with these images. Instead of responding with a parable, Jesus lifts a child into his arms and says, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven." It's another way of saying, "As you did it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." Or, of saying: "The way we treat people is the way we treat God." *Broaden our understanding of what it means to be great in your eyes, Holy One.* JL

Tues., Oct. 3 | Zec 8:20-23; Lk 9:51-56

Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village. This passage is the beginning of a major section of Luke's Gospel. For the next ten chapters, Jesus will be traveling toward Jerusalem. Today, he is on the outskirts of a Samaritan village. Because of the hostile relationship between Samaritans and Jews, the Samaritans refuse to welcome Jesus. Furious, the disciples are ready to destroy the whole village. Jesus, however, refuses to seek revenge. Earlier, Jesus had taught the disciples how to respond to rejection: to wipe the dust from their feet and go on. That's precisely what Jesus does, without any words of condemnation or judgment. *Dear God, when we want to seek vengeance, may we remember the way of Jesus.* JL

Wed., Oct. 4 | Neh 2:1-8; Lk 9:57-62

Francis of Assisi

As Jesus and his disciples were proceeding on their journey, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." It's easy to say we'll follow Jesus, but as Jesus explains, saying "Yes" to him means saying "No" to other things. It means living a life that, by the world's standards, involves some deprivation. Following Jesus is not easy. We can expect hardships. We can expect to make difficult choices and decisions — and not just between good and evil, but sometimes between good, better and best. Jesus is clear: We will be expected to deny ourselves, to put others' needs before our own. *Lord Jesus, may we accept both the joys and the costs of discipleship.* JL

Thurs., Oct. 5 | Neh 8:1-4a, 5-6, 7b-12; Lk 10:1-12

Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals, and greet no one along the way. As I write this, I am in the process of packing and preparing to move. After more than ten years in one place, our family has accumulated a lot of stuff. Luke's account of the sending of the 72 disciples includes a long list of instructions, but the standout is the insistence on traveling light. No clothes, no books, no CDs, no furniture, no pots and pans. Even though we have been donating many things we no longer need, I cannot imagine setting out to follow Jesus with *nothing*. But if we can learn to travel light, we have more time and energy for the work of discipleship and mission. *Send us, God, to speak your peace.* JL

Fri., Oct. 6 | Bar 1:15-22; Lk 10:13-16

Whoever rejects you rejects me. Everyone knows what it feels like to be rejected, and it's not pleasant: the job offer that never came, the relationship that didn't develop the way you hoped it would, the co-worker who rebuffs your friendship. Rejection leads to feelings of inadequacy and failure. These words of Jesus come at the end of his instructions to the 72 disciples before he sends them out. While it underscores the disciples' responsibility to proclaim God's love and peace, it also lets the disciples know that not everyone will accept them and some will actively reject them. When this happens, they are to shake the dust off their feet and move on. *Help us plant the seeds of grace and love, O God, and trust the growth to you.* JL


Sat., Oct. 7 | Bar 4:5-12, 27-29; Lk 10:17-24
Our Lady of the Rosary

Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name. Luke doesn't tell us how long the 72 disciples were gone. But when they return, they seem utterly amazed not only that people listened to them, but that even the demons paid attention. But Jesus counters their enthusiasm: "Do not rejoice at this." Wait a minute! We're not supposed to be glad when our mission and ministry meet with success? We're not to celebrate God working in our midst? How often we forget this word of caution against counting our conquests and rejoicing in our personal power. It's not about us; it's about God's power in us. *Remind us, Great God, that whatever we accomplish is your working in and through us.* JL

Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time
Mon., Oct. 9 | Jon 1:1—2:1-2, 11; Lk 10:25-37

Let us cast lots to find out on whose account we have met with this misfortune. In the first reading, Jonah's shipmates are looking for someone to blame for their troubles. The Gospel passage tells of the priest and Levite crossing the road to avoid the troubles of another. In answer to God's call to love, we are sometimes tempted to respond: "It's not my fault!" or "It's not my problem!" The parable of the good Samaritan teaches us that our response to the concerns of our world should always begin with compassion rather than finger-pointing or claiming ignorance. When we put on the heart and mind of Christ, we might even recognize that our own attitudes and actions have contributed to the problem. *May we not seek so much to be consoled as to console.* MJ

Tues., Oct. 10 | Jon 3:1-10; Lk 10:38-42

There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part. I have two sisters. One whose home is cluttered with the stuff of daily life and half-finished projects; the other one whose house is pristine and organized. One home invites me to be myself, while the other makes me fearful of making a mess. While my own messy habits makes one feel like home, others may prefer a more orderly welcome. Our faith communities can be much the same. Some make welcome and acceptance a priority, while others aim for beautiful decor and impressive ritual. Which community, would Jesus say, "has chosen the better part?" *Lord, may we always make it a priority to welcome those whom you have called us to serve.* MJ

Wed., Oct. 11 | Jon 4:1-11; Lk 11:1-4

Give us each day our daily bread. We Canadians never seem to be happy with the weather no matter what it is. Why, when God is so generous, do we so often wish for something different or complain it isn't more? Dissatisfaction with the present seems to be part of the human condition. It is with good reason that Jesus teaches us to pray for "daily" bread, and not weekly or monthly bread. True joy comes when we can live in the present, recognizing God's goodness right here, right now. Lamenting the past or saving our praises for the future distracts us from living in God's abundant love available right now. It prevents us from sharing that love with others who

may need it today. *Today is a new day, Lord; help me make the most of it.* MJ

Thurs., Oct. 12 | Mal 3:13-20b; Lk 11:5-13

He will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. The overwhelming needs of the world can drain us of optimism. There is a temptation to doubt the existence of God's loving care or the power of prayer to change anything. Funny thing about prayer: It may not instantly change the problems of the world, but *persistent* prayer opens up our fear-filled hearts and minds to light and hope. Hope allows us to believe that change is possible, and this belief gives us the courage to move into action. Change is possible when we allow God's grace to expand our acts of love and mercy into something far greater than we could do on our own. *Lord, may I never stop knocking on your door or give up asking for your grace.* MJ

Fri., Oct. 13 | Jl 1:13-15; 2:1-2; Lk 11:15-26

Whoever does not gather with me scatters. "Divide and conquer" has been a military and political strategy used since the Roman empire. Dissension is created by accentuating differences between groups of people, preventing or weakening their ability to work together toward a common goal. Some Pharisees, blinded by their jealousy of Jesus' power and afraid of losing their authority, look for ways to discredit Jesus in the hopes of creating doubt and distrust among his followers. Jesus assures the people that he works on behalf of their same God. Like Jesus, Pope Francis warns us about the destructive nature of fear and distrust. He reminds us that to become effective disciples of Christ, we need to build bridges, not erect walls. *You judge us with mercy, O Lord, and govern us with equity.* MJ

Sat., Oct. 14 | Jl 4:12-21; Lk 11:27-28

Blessed is the womb that carried you. Impressed by Jesus' ability to perform healing miracles, imagine the woman in the crowd expressing the sentiment, "Your mother must be so proud of you!" My own experience in large social gatherings has been that parents are eager to share the educational and employment successes of their children. Degrees and promotions are embellished to inspire awe. Perhaps, it is to create the sense that the children's success is due to "good parenting." Rarely, do we hear parents brag about their children's accomplishments in forgiveness, humility or compassion. Yet for these, our praises should be given as Jesus tells us that these are the attributes for which we will be most blessed. *Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.* MJ

Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time
Mon., Oct. 16 | Rom 1:1-7; Lk 11:29-32

Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. Some scholars think the Book of Jonah is a fairy tale. But Jesus thought it was real enough to hammer "an evil generation" with its message. So let's not ignore its "sign." With his message of repentance, Jonah shook the city of Nineveh to its foundations before he even



got downtown! Social media never moved so fast. The city's conversion, to what Paul calls in Romans "the obedience of faith," was instantaneous and universal. I would love to hear that preaching, and no doubt I already have, and I probably slept through it. But I dare not miss the call. *O Lord, you have made your salvation known; you remembered your kindness and your faithfulness.* MD

Tues., Oct. 17 | Rom 1:16-25; Lk 11:37-41

Ignatius of Antioch, bishop, martyr

Brothers and sisters: I am not ashamed of the Gospel. In our antiseptic culture, we might be as amazed as the Pharisee that Jesus did not wash his hands before the meal. We might be unprepared, too, for the tongue-lashing that ensued. "Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools!" Well, bon appétit! But this fiery talk probably inspired the saint celebrated today, Ignatius of Antioch, who also accepted an invitation to a meal, in the Roman Coliseum, where he would be the main course! "I am the wheat of God to be ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may be found to be pure bread of Christ." *Through all the earth your voice resounds, O Lord, and to the ends of the world, your message!* MD

Wed., Oct. 18 | 2 Tm 4:10-17b; Lk 10:1-9

Luke, evangelist

Luke is the only one with me. We are reading from Luke every day this time of year, so his feast day is just icing on the cake. I hope no one is complaining. It used to be a common judgment that the Gospel of Luke is the most beautiful book ever written. Paul's affection helps us to remember that Luke was a real person, a Gentile raised in ignorance of the Scriptures but, no doubt, thrilled to be baptized into a real faith, instead of adhering to alternative myths about Jupiter and Juno, et al. No wonder he developed such a taste for history! *O Lord, you are near to all who call upon you in truth.* MD

Thurs., Oct. 19 | Rom 3:21-30; Lk 11:47-54

John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs

[We] are justified freely by God's grace. Controversy swirls over "common-sense" gun control. Jesus is just as frustrated by a pattern of deadly violence throughout history. "This generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah!" What could possibly provoke such fury? Paul sums up the fighting words in the quotation above. So, what's the answer? Jesus bent the arc of history toward mercy with his death and resurrection. My own resistance to mercy must not blind me to the love I owe to God and neighbor. *If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord, who can stand?* MD

Fri., Oct. 20 | Rom 4:1-8; Lk 12:1-7

Beware of the leaven — that is, the hypocrisy — of the Pharisees! The leaven of hypocrisy abounds today! I push it away every time it puffs itself up — unless of course it's my own deceit. Often I rebuke in others the same arrogance I display. On Facebook I expose the inconsistencies of "friends" while

papering over my own contradictions. Could I just be as honest with myself and with others as Jesus is with me? He says, "There's nothing concealed that will not be revealed." Could that include God's mercy? God has such care for me, like a little sparrow. "Even the hairs of your head have all been counted." So, let me count my blessings and be a blessing for others. *Dear Lord, I said, "I will confess my faults," and you took away the guilt of my sin.* MD

Sat., Oct. 21 | Rom 4:13, 16-18; Lk 12:8-12

Everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. You know, I like to think that I acknowledge Jesus in public. But I need to be sure I'm not just making Jesus a conservative or a liberal, heavily influenced by my own prejudices. When you've got a possible charge of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit hanging over your head, as Jesus warns, you better not mess up. Maybe we need to acknowledge a collective blasphemy in wars, abortion, poverty and guns, also political corruption, drugs, consumerism. Paul holds up Abraham as our example: "He believed, hoping against hope." I want to be faith-full! *O Lord, you remembered your holy word to your servant Abraham, who led forth your people with joy, your chosen ones.* MD

Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct. 23 | Rom 4:20-25; Lk 12:13-21

One's life does not consist of possessions. We live in a culture that views wants as immediate needs. Expectations continually rise for what we think is required for a decent standard of living. We excuse our greediness as merely acquiring the necessities of modern living or reaping the just rewards for our hard work. We fail to see this obsession and competition as self-indulgence, allowing us to label our materialism as blessings. While we're richly blessed, it isn't through the material goods we amass. Suggesting otherwise implies that those in poverty and want lack the Lord's goodness and protection. This mindset devalues inherent human dignity. When we put possessions before people, we truly become poor in what matters most to God. *Bless us abundantly in your ways, Lord.* PR

Tues., Oct. 24 | Rom 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21; Lk 12:35-38

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Procrastination is part of a dangerously casual mindset. We become lackadaisical. There's always tomorrow. We'll diet on Monday, start exercising at the beginning of the new year or volunteer when the kids are grown. Those deadlines often come and go unheeded. Early Christians expected Jesus' immediate return. As time passed, their expectations changed and lost urgency. It's understandable that we, too, have become lax in our persistence regarding the end time. There's seemingly no hurry; we bank on having infinite time to become faithful to Jesus' teachings when it's more convenient. Luke warns against counting on having unlimited time to start what we should've been doing all along. We cannot assume nothing will happen on our watch. *Make us diligent in our attentiveness to you, Lord.* PR



Wed., Oct. 25 | Roman 6:12-18; Lk 12:39-48

Much will be required of the person entrusted with much. It's too simplistic to apply this motto solely to wealth. Responsible stewardship and unselfish sharing go far beyond money. We're all entrusted with particular gifts or abilities that enable us to live our Christian vocation in the way the Lord sees fit. We're called to discover and embrace the gifts we've been given, use them responsibly and, to the best of our ability, to give glory to God and build the kingdom. Peter likely knew the answer when he asked Jesus to whom he directed this parable. We receive spiritual gifts to be co-workers with the Lord. We have an obligation to use and share what we've received generously and prudently. We are created for discipleship. These words are meant for us. *Use me, Lord, to do your will.* PR

Thurs., Oct. 26 | Rom 6:19-23; Lk 12:49-53

I have come to set the earth on fire. The Lord desires us to have his same zeal and urgency to kindle a burning flame within us that will set the world afire. Such passion can be seen as divisive and destructive because fire purifies and refines us by destroying anything that might deaden that flame, including negative behaviors and unhealthy relationships. Challenging what is wrong and changing who we are and what we find acceptable can make others uncomfortable. Light demands rooting out and illuminating darkness, which is frightening for those who prefer to hide in the shadows or stick to the status quo, no matter how unjust it may be. Our fiery commitment emboldens us, fueling that fire to light our muted world. *Give me the spark, Lord, to set your church on fire.* PR

Fri., Oct. 27 | Rom 7:18-25a; Lk 12:54-59

Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? Early Christians suffered division among neighbors and practiced litigiousness like people today. Their unwillingness to settle their own disputes prompted Jesus to call out their hypocrisy. He suggested that handing an opponent over to the magistrate showed a lack of desire for true justice and revealed small-mindedness. The nitpicking of seeking a settlement to the last penny is presented simply as a sign of a stubborn and spiteful nature. Jesus decried the pettiness of their infighting and pointed out their readiness to take someone to court as void of Christian unity. Similarly, the Lord calls us to personally resolve transgressions against him before we're called in for judgment. He's open to settling the matter along the way. *Help me, Lord, to make things right with you.* PR

Sat., Oct. 28 | Eph 2:19-22; Lk 6:12-16

Simon and Jude, apostles

When day came, he called his disciples to himself. The very human assembly of the Twelve that Jesus convened reminds us that we're all called in a special way, despite our limitations and weaknesses. Even if like Simon and Jude we're not well known (or easily confused with other followers of similar names), all of us possess some unique quality to contribute to our Lord's mission. Indeed, it's a shared mission, just like this shared feast of these two, forever connected in verses of Scripture, missionary work in Persia, and martyrdom. May we

share the same holy zeal and willingness to suffer for Christ's sake as Simon and the same indignation of Jude toward the actions of those whose lives contradict the pious words they profess. *Call us to yourself, O Lord.* PR

Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct. 30 | Rom 8:12-17; Lk 13:10-17

"Hypocrites!" Crippled women and tax collectors; lepers and possessed; the blind, deaf, mute and the braggadocios who talk too much ... all of these Jesus welcomes with open arms. But hypocrites ... not so much. Hypocrisy is the one sin that makes Jesus impatient. In today's Gospel, Jesus heals on the Sabbath — a woman who was unable to stand erect, yet was brave enough to show her crippled (sinful?) self among the righteous. In today's political climate, hypocrisy is a common charge by left and right. Living the values we profess is the only solution if we don't want to risk Jesus' impatience. If we claim to champion the marginalized, let's be sure we include the most vulnerable unborn. And if we are pro-life, let's be sure we commit to care for every life born into this world. *Lord Jesus, forgive me when I do not live as I profess.* PBS

Tues., Oct. 31 | Rom 8:18-25; Lk 13:18-21

Share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. Isn't that a lovely phrase? What does it look like to be gloriously free? Paul Tillich said there are no atheists because everyone has an "ultimate concern" — something or someone we make into our god. It occurs to me that to be gloriously free is to have as our God that which is worthy of the title. Not only when we're in church or say our night prayers, but every minute as we walk through our day, with every decision we make, every purchase, every word spoken to anyone on our path. Such a person, truly a child of God, would be gloriously free. It's not me yet ... but I long for it. *God in heaven, help me to choose the glorious freedom that you promise.* PBS

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