

Friday, June 1, 2018
1 Pt 4:7-13; Mk 11:11-26
Saint Justin, martyr
Paige Byrne Shortal

Love covers a multitude of sins.

Mary, a former Daily Bread writer and my dear friend, used to say, “Love covers a multitude of sins ... and so does a good muumuu.” Gosh, I miss her. But what does it mean to “cover sin”? Hide it? Ignore it? Forgive it? Forget it? The early Christians presumed that everyone commit sins and that the antidote for sin is always love. Love takes different forms. Patience, kindness, deference, respect are all acts of love. In his letter, James also refers to covering sin by “bringing back a sinner from error” (5:20). That’s tricky because nothing satisfies us more than pointing out the sin of others. But if we seek to correct another for the well-being of the other and not to make ourselves feel superior, then it is love. Peter simply advises that our love be intense. This is how we’re supposed to live together, to help each other on the path, and to make the journey more pleasant — loving intensely and rendering sin less harmful.

Gracious and loving God, grant me the grace to be alert to opportunities to love every day throughout my life.

Saturday, June 2, 2018
Jude 17, 20b-25; Mk 11:27-33

Paige Byrne Shortal

To the one who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you unblemished and exultant, in the presence of his glory,...

The Letter of Jude, only 25 verses, is addressed generally to all Christians. Although considering the very explicit issues he addresses, it is likely he had a specific community in mind. What strikes me is the doxology. It is so enthusiastic, so passionate that one cannot imagine these words in the context of most of our liturgies today. Sometimes I find myself longing for just a little more of what my first mentor in liturgy called “full-throated praise.” I typically worship in the midst of a choir (and from my experience, there are no mere observers in a choir). But so many in our congregations seem so passive or disinterested. And yet it’s dangerous to assume based on appearances, isn’t it? Common worship is tricky, and one must strike the right balance of enthusiastic conviction and respect for the quieter people of faith among us. That being said, perhaps just for today offer Jude’s doxology as part of the blessing — with enthusiasm!

... to the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority from ages past, now, and for ages to come. Amen.

Sunday, June 3, 2018
Daily Bread for June 3, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"Take it; this is my body." - Mark 14:22

Monday, June 4, 2018

2 Pt 1:2-7; Mk 12:1-12

Jeanne Lischer

But those tenants said to one another, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours."

This Gospel parable has it all: economics, entitlement, greed, and a lot of violence. But it begins with trust: The owner of the vineyard entrusts his land to tenant farmers. For whatever reason, by the time the landlord sends servants to see how the vineyard is doing, the tenant farmers apparently think it belongs to them, and they beat or kill every servant who comes to the vineyard. Finally, the owner sends his son, trusting that the farmers will respect him. But they don't. Instead, they attack and kill him as well. Because Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders, it's easy to assume that Jesus' not-too-subtle criticism is only for them. But we, too, are keepers of God's vineyard—and we, too, will be called to account for our behavior.

May we be wise and faithful stewards of your vineyard, O God.

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

2 Pt 3:12-15a, 17-18; Mk 12:13-17

Saint Boniface, bishop and martyr

Jeanne Lischer

Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?

None of us really likes taxes, and for Jews in Roman-occupied Palestine, paying taxes to the ruling government was especially onerous. For some Pharisees, just touching a coin with Caesar's image was offensive; to pay the tax was an act of treason. Jesus answers the Pharisees' question with a question, and then says, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." In other words, taxes imposed by the state or nation, really aren't the issue here. Yes, as citizens we pay taxes, because that is our responsibility toward the common

good. But our first loyalty is to God.

Created in your image, Holy Creator, our ultimate allegiance is to you.

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

2 Tm 1:1-3, 6-12; Mk 12:18-27

Jeanne Lischer

I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have...

It's unfortunate that our reading proclaimed today from 2 Timothy leaves out two important verses, passages which connect Timothy's faith to the faith of his mother Lois and his grandmother Eunice. If Lois and Eunice had not taught and shared their faith with Timothy, he surely would not have become a trusted friend and colleague of Paul's or a leader in the early Christian church. Even as Paul encourages Timothy to keep his faith alive and growing, he acknowledges that such faith does fall out of the sky. Who taught you, by word or deed, what it means to be a person of faith? Who were the Loises and Eunices in your life? Perhaps even more important, are you a Lois or Eunice to the Timothys you know?

For the faith we have learned and the faith we share, we give thanks.

Thursday, June 7, 2018

2 Tm 2:8-15; Mk 12:28-34

Jeanne Lischer

The word of God is not chained.

I am a lifelong member of the United Church of Christ, and I've been a UCC pastor for more than thirty years. Several years ago, the UCC began using a comma as a way of reminding us that "God is still speaking." The comma comes from a Gracie Allen quote, "Never place a period where God has placed a comma." This is not a new idea; even Paul understood God's continuing revelation. Our ancestors canonized the books of the Bible, but God continues to speak and act in this world. The challenge always is to recognize God at work in our lives and in our world. Only then will our faith be a growing, life-giving, meaningful, important part of our lives, something we can depend on when we are uncertain or struggling.

Holy One, help us listen for your still speaking voice.

Friday, June 8, 2018

Hos 11:1, 3-4, 8c-9; Eph 3:8-12, 14-19; Jn 19:1-37

The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Jeanne Lischer

For this reason I kneel before the Father...

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, probably written from prison, follows the form of many of his letters: greetings, thanksgiving for blessings, and then discussion of specific theological or pastoral issues. But if you read this entire epistle, one of the things you might notice is that Paul seems to get rather distracted. He first starts to give thanks for the Ephesians' faith in Chapter 1 (v 15) and again at the beginning of the third chapter. Finally, at verse 14, he gets to the point: He prays that Christ might dwell in their hearts, that the Ephesians may have the strength to comprehend the love of Christ, and that they may be filled with all the fullness of God. Because Paul's letter was saved and circulated, now for nearly 2000 years, his prayers for the Ephesians become his prayers for each of us.

For faith that grows, we pray.

Saturday, June 9, 2018

2 Tm 4:1-8; Lk 2:41-51

The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Jeanne Lischer

When he was twelve years old, they went up [to Jerusalem] according to festival custom.
We eagerly celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas, but then we almost immediately jump to his public ministry. Luke is the only Gospel writer who includes a story about Jesus' childhood when he was twelve years old. I admit, it's somewhat easier to imagine Jesus as a toddler than as a pre-teen, but at 12, Jesus would have been preparing for his bar mitzvah, the Jewish ritual signifying the transition from childhood to adulthood. When Jesus stays behind at the Temple, Mary and Joseph get a glimpse of the adult he would become.

God of life and love, we pray for the faith and patience to become who you call us to be.

Sunday, June 10, 2018

Daily Bread for June 10, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"Who are my mother and my brothers?" - Mark 3:33

Monday, June 11, 2018

Acts 11:21b-26; 13:1-3; Mt 5:1-12

Saint Barnabas, Apostle

Mary Joshi

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

There are so many books and apps available that teach us how to become more assertive and more confident in order that we may reach our goals and become more successful in life. The beatitudes seem so counterintuitive to these standards. They tell us that in order to be blessed and to experience true joy, we need to become aware of and embrace our vulnerability. For it is only when we recognize our weaknesses that we also begin to recognize that we are nothing without God, and that our greatest achievements in this world have little meaning or give little satisfaction if they are not rooted in God's will.

Help me to recognize, O Saving Lord, that even in my weakest moments, you are the fiber that holds me together and gives my life meaning.

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

1 Kgs 17:7-16; Mt 5:13-16

Mary Joshi

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?

If salt loses its taste, we are asked, of what use is it? We can recite many prayers, attend every available liturgy, but if we do not allow these practices to open our hearts and minds so that God may enter and shape us into more loving and forgiving people, the prayers we say and the rituals we do can become empty practices. Jesus calls us to be salt of the earth so that we may improve the flavor of the world around us by putting God's love and mercy into action.

Help me to be salt, O Lord, that I may infuse all that I do and say with your light and love.

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

1 Kgs 18:20-39; Mt 5:17-19

Saint Anthony of Padua, priest and doctor of the church

Mary Joshi

I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

A young woman asked her mother for the recipe of an oven-roasted ham she had always enjoyed. At one point in the recipe, her mother told her to cut a thin slice from both ends of the ham before placing it in the pan. "Why?" asked the daughter. Her mother related how her mother had always done it and it had always turned out perfectly. Years later when she asked her grandmother the same question, she replied, "So it would fit in my roasting pan."

Sometimes, rituals which have been passed down for many generations can become an end in themselves because we have lost their original meaning. Taking the time to understand why we do what we do in our sacred rituals can deepen and enrich our understanding of faith.

May you dwell in the heart of our laws and worship, Lord God.

Thursday, June 14, 2018

1 Kgs 18:41-46; Mt 5:20-26

Mary Joshi

Go first and be reconciled with your brother or sister.

One of the characteristics of modern technology is that if we find a situation to be objectionable, we have the means at our fingertips to voice our criticism instantly, effortlessly and anonymously from distance. Would our media news be filled with such vitriolic rhetoric if, before one was allowed to post an accusation, one would first be required to sit face-to-face with the person who they wished to critique? Would angry impulses have time to mellow into clearer thinking before being acted upon? Jesus' advice is still relevant today: Before we lash out on an angry impulse, we need to step back and attempt every means possible to find a peaceful solution.

May our lives be modeled on yours, Prince of Peace, in being slow to anger and abounding in love.

Friday, June 15, 2018

1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-16; Mt 5:27-32

Mary Joshi

Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Today's Gospel is part of a longer dialogue on how we must obey the commandments not just with technical precision, but with an underlying attitude of love, mercy and respect. This reading has new meaning in light of the many allegations of sexual misconduct now emerging into public view. For too long, it has been an accepted perk for some to exploit their positions of authority over those they deem as inferior, either because of their sex, place of origin or economic disadvantage. We may not be the ones breaking the commandments, but as disciples of Christ, we cannot turn a blind eye when the spirit of the law is being broken. Jesus reminds us that we show obedience to the commandments when we value the life and dignity of others as equal to our own.

Emmanuel, may we seek out and defend your dignity that lives within us all.

Saturday, June 16, 2018

1 Kgs 19:19-21; Mt 5:33-37

Mary Joshi

Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'

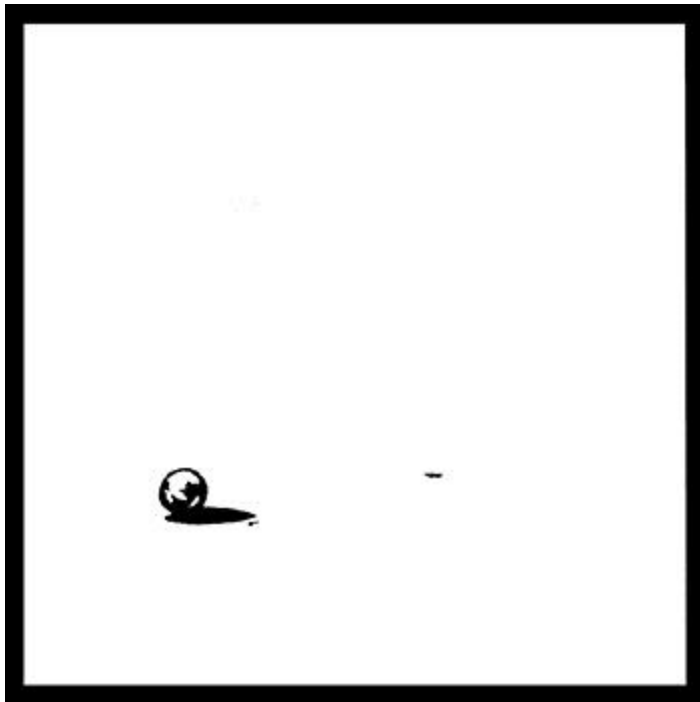
I've always been a bit amused by pharmaceutical commercials that wax poetic about the miracle-like results of their drug and then in the last five seconds of their ad, a voice lists all the disclaimers at a speed no human brain can process. It reminds me of my children when they would create elaborate stories to explain their misbehavior, hoping to distract us or at least decrease their punishment. I, too, have been guilty of giving vague or long-winded answers when asked difficult questions of faith by people who may be critical of my beliefs or religion. Yet, I am aware that I am more likely to trust the integrity of someone who is honest and straightforward in their speech, either in clearly stating difficult truths or in their admission of wrongdoing.

May our lives be a bold and clear message of your Gospel, our Rock and Redeemer.

Sunday, June 17, 2018

Daily Bread for June 17, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



“To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it?” - Mark 4:30

Monday, June 18, 2018

1 Kgs 21:1-16; Mt 5:38-42

Miguel Dulick

Get two scoundrels to accuse Naboth of having cursed God and king; then take him out and stone him to death!

Today’s readings are a real mashup: Jezebel and Jesus. [Consider other encounters with women:] Maybe the “worst” woman Jesus ever met was a poor adulteress he saved from stoning when he applied Pope Francis’ dictum: “Who am I to judge?” Or maybe the polyandrous woman at the well who became the first apostle to Samaria. Or the woman of “ill repute” who bathed Jesus’ feet with her tears because “she loved much.” Or Mary Magdalene, from whom he cast out seven demons. Jezebel is in a class by herself. Every virtue perverted, every human instinct strangled, every grace chewed up and spat out. But Jesus serenely says, “Offer no resistance to the one who is evil.”

At dawn I bring my plea before you; for you, O Lord, delight not in wickedness.

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

1 Kgs 21:17-29; Mt 5:43-48

Miguel Dulick

The Lord said to Elijah: “Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before me?”

Faced with God’s impending vengeance for the murder of Naboth and the theft of his vineyard, King Ahab repents. “He fasted, he slept in sackcloth, he went about subdued.” Our sins, I guess, aren’t as public as Ahab’s, and certainly our penance is not. So, do we just assume God’s forgiveness? Do we soothe our conscience with Christian privilege because the “Old Testament God” is now passé, meanwhile indulging our own appetites for humiliating enemies? Jesus

says: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father." You know, that actually requires more discipline than any sackcloth! *Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.*

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

2 Kgs 2:1, 6-14; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Miguel Dulick

A flaming chariot and flaming horses came between Elijah and Elisha, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

Elijah's departure is spectacular! No wonder those standing by the cross assumed Jesus' cry, "Eli, Eli," was a call for rescue to Elijah, not a lament of abandonment. After all, doesn't God always rescue the just? If Jesus doesn't deserve a fiery chariot, who does? But Jesus has a whole different standard for the Father's interventions. "Your Father sees in secret." So, give alms in secret, pray in secret, and hide your fasting with a happy face. I think I'm actually scared of such intimacy with God! Maybe tomorrow's reading about Elijah will help us understand.

How great is the goodness, O Lord, which you have in store for those who take refuge in you!

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Sir 48:1-14; Mt 6:7-15

Miguel Dulick

In praying, do not babble like the pagans.

The first reading is a rhapsody on the exploits of Elijah, "whose words were as a flaming furnace." No wonder Israel always longed for his return. Jesus saw in John the Baptist a worthy successor to the prophet. John, for his part, seemed to wish that Jesus would have been a bit more flamboyant himself. But Jesus preferred a lower profile, often telling recipients of his miracles not to say a word to anyone. (How did that work out for him?) So even our most public prayer, the Our Father, is reverent, subdued yet pleading, no babbling. "Give us this day our daily bread." Our Father, and no other.

The heavens proclaim your justice, O God, and all peoples see your glory.

Friday, June 22, 2018

2 Kgs 11:1-4, 9-18, 20; Mt 6:19-23

Miguel Dulick

For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

The first reading is a "Game of Thrones" I wouldn't even try to summarize! Suffice it to say, reality is stranger than fiction. Meanwhile, Jesus is still taking us by the hand through the Sermon on the Mount. And he's in no hurry. Every phrase is a jewel, life-changing if we would just take it to heart. What is my treasure? Being able to share these reflections with the "Daily Bread" readers is certainly near the top of my treasure. You hold me accountable for my own heart day after day. The words of Scripture are like precious pearls that anyone would give up everything they own in order to possess. Thank you for giving me a place in your hearts; you help me discover my treasure.

O Lord, you have chosen Zion; you prefer us for your dwelling!

Saturday, June 23, 2018

2 Chr 24:17-25; Mt 6:24-34

Miguel Dulick

No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon.

The first readings this past week have been full of “teachable moments,” including treachery, robbery, assassinations, idolatry, all in the attempt to keep Israel faithful to the one, true God. In today’s scriptural passage, Zechariah, the last prophet, is slaughtered “in the court of the Lord’s temple.” After centuries of silence, Jesus picks up the prophetic theme: God or mammon, which should be capital “M” because Mammon is a Syrian deity. You cannot serve both — choose. But if you choose God, in contrast, Jesus offers the lilies of the field. “They do not work or spin, but I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them.” Get behind me, Mammon, I’m picking flowers!

Your mercy take not from us, O Lord, nor belie your faithfulness.

Sunday, June 24, 2018

Daily Bread for June 24, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"What, then, will this child be?" - Luke 1:66

Monday, June 25, 2018

2 Kgs 17:5-8, 13-15a, 18; Mt 7:1-5

Patricia Russell

...they did not listen, but were as stiff-necked as their fathers...

Jesus told his disciples: "Stop judging, that you may not be judged. For as you judge, so will you be judged ..." Hatred is learned. Prejudice is modeled. Hard heartedness is developed. Children repeat the values and beliefs of their family and those closest to them. When they begin to socialize outside the home, they also pick up attitudes and behaviors that their friends and others around them display. From their earliest days, children are also powerfully

influenced by the media. Social learning theory states that we learn our behaviors from the environment through the process of observation. Our words and actions are powerful. Little, and not so little ones, are watching. If don't want our children to mimic stiff-necked, stubborn or hurtful behavior, we need to be aware of what and who influences them and to what effect. *Gentle Teacher, you modeled how to love and serve. Help me to be aware of the impact of my words, attitudes and actions.*

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

2 Kgs 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36; Mt 7:6, 12-14

Patricia Russell

Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.

What do I want from life? How do I want to be treated? In the Gospel, Jesus tells us: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." How would this make me feel? We know how we want to be treated. The next step isn't as easy — act that way. All the time. Without exceptions or conditions. Don't focus on how others behave. Stop pointing fingers and justifying retaliation with arguments about who did what first. These things cannot dictate behavior. This time it truly is all about us. Ultimately, no one else affects our actions. Each of us alone determines how we act and react. If we would find what we do unwelcome, hurtful or mean-spirited, we alone have the power to do something about it.

Gentle Jesus, give me the grace to remove all conditions, expectations and limitations from my treating others with love, dignity and kindness.

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

2 Kgs 22:8-13; 23:1-3; Mt 7:15-20

Patricia Russell

"So by their fruits you will know them."

Poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and Horace Smith both wrote poems entitled "Ozymandias," the Greek name for pharaoh Ramesses II, as part of a friendly competition. Both works highlight how even the greatest men and empires decay; neither humans nor anything man-made is permanent. All earthly things fall victim to the ravages of time. What concretely remains of this once legendary civilization is a shattered and half-sunk statue that the British Museum eventually acquired. One can assume this isn't the great legacy imagined by the man who called himself the King of Kings and taunted others with his mighty works. In today's Gospel, Jesus warns about false prophets and leaders: "By their fruits you will know them." Only in God so we place our trust.

Mighty Creator, may all my works give glory to you.

Thursday, June 28, 2018

2 Kgs 24:8-17; Mt 7:21-29

Saint Irenaeus, bishop and martyr

Patricia Russell

"I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers."

Similar to how Jesus outlined true discipleship, attacked false prophets and called out hypocrisy, St. Irenaeus attacked heresy and defended the Catholic faith. His significant work, *Adversus Haereses*, a treatise in five books also known as "Detection and Overthrow of the False Knowledge," combated gnosticism and other heresies surfacing in various Christian communities. His works fiercely defend and promote the authority of apostolic succession and adherence to orthodoxy. His writings provide significant foundational and theological

documents which emphasize the authority of the church of Rome and the necessity of recognizing all four Gospels. While often called to point out others' errors, his primary motivation was to teach and defend the truth.

Wise and loving Teacher, help me to follow the example of St. Irenaeus in promoting what is right without gloating over others' wrongs.

Friday, June 29, 2018

Acts 12:1-11; 2 Tm 4:6-8, 17-18; Mt 16:13-19

Saints Peter and Paul, apostles

Patricia Russell

"Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Sin constrains us. The chains of guilt and shame restrain our moving on. Jesus demonstrates the powerful effect of forgiveness. When loosing what binds sinners, Jesus receives them at his table, restores their relationships and welcomes them back into communities in which they felt alienated, unwelcome, unworthy or rejected. In sharing his power to forgive sins with Peter and the apostles, Jesus also looses our limited understanding of our personal role in the power of forgiveness. While we don't have the ecclesial authority of absolution, we possess an individual responsibility to support those who contritely seek healing. We each have a unique power to bind and loose. Both personally and as a church we must embrace repentant sinners. Denying forgiveness, even to ourselves, poses an insurmountable barrier to reconciliation with God and the church.

Merciful Father, thank you for your gifts of forgiveness and healing.

Saturday, June 30, 2018

Lam 2:2, 10-14, 18-19; Mt 8:5-17

Patricia Russell

He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases.

Yesterday's Gospel focused on spiritual healing; today we have three very different but equally powerful stories of physical healing. A centurion needs only Jesus' word to trust that his intercession has been honored. Jesus, of his own initiative, touches Peter's feverish mother-in-law, and she's healed. This simple gesture enables her to get up and resume her duties of hospitality. Later, others bring the possessed to Jesus, and he drives out demons, fulfilling the prophecies. Each story illustrates Jesus' desire to comfort us in our times of spiritual or physical illness. We're never alone in our pain and distress. In the sacraments of penance and anointing of the sick, our loving God and his church offer healing and hope when human frailty and illness test us.

Thank you, Lord of compassion, for the gift of good health and the assurance of your presence and comfort for those suffering from all forms of illness.