

Monday, October 1, 2018

Jb 1:6-22; Lk 9:46-50

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, religious and doctor of the church

Jeanne Lischer

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!

Job is a decent, honest, faithful man who “feared God and turned away from evil.” He’s also quite wealthy; he has thousands of sheep, donkeys, oxen and camels plus enough servants to care for them. He’s married and has ten children. But one day everything that could go wrong does go wrong. The animals are stolen. The servants are killed. The sheep are hit by lightning. And Job’s children die when a big wind blows the house down on top of them. It is Job’s response to all this tragedy that sets him apart. In a formal display of grief, Job tears his robe, cuts off his hair, and says, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed by the name of the Lord!” In the midst of unimaginable tragedy, Job is still able to praise God.

Even when we are devastated, O God, you are still God.

Tuesday, October 2, 2018

Jb 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23; Mt 18:1-5, 10

Guardian Angels

Jeanne Lischer

Why did I not perish at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Or why was I not buried away like an untimely birth, like babes that have never seen the light?

Our readings this week skip the second chapter of Job, in which more tragedy is heaped on Job. On top of all the other tragedies that have happened, Job contracts leprosy. He’s covered from head to toe with scaly, itchy sores. This contagious, disfiguring, miserable disease also makes him an outcast in the community. His wife urges him to curse God, but he simply cannot do it. Instead, Job sits on a dung heap on the edge of town and pours his heart out to God with gut-wrenching honesty: Where are you, God? Why are you allowing this to happen? Even though this story is hundreds of years old, Job’s suffering makes it relevant in our time and place. We’ve all been where Job is, at one time or another, or we know someone who has. Job’s questions are our questions.

O God, like Job, we too seek answers when we are suffering.

Wednesday, October 3, 2018

Jb 9:1-12, 14-16; Lk 9:57-62

Jeanne Lischer

God does great things past finding out, marvelous things beyond reckoning.

Three of Job’s friends come to visit him, supposedly to comfort and console him. At first, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar don’t say a word. That’s probably the best thing they could have done: simply sit with Job in his suffering. But after a week, they begin making long-winded speeches in which they try to explain to Job why he is suffering. They tell him he must have done something to deserve all this tragedy. Job pleads his innocence again and again to his wife and his friends. In today’s reading, Job reminds himself (and his friends) of God’s utter greatness and otherness: God moves mountains, commands the sun, stretches out the heavens,

creates the constellations. Like the psalmist, Job wonders why such a majestic God would even listen to him.

Majestic God, you are far more than we can know or describe and yet, you care for us.

Thursday, October 4, 2018

Jb 19:21-27; Lk 10:1-12

Saint Francis of Assisi

Jeanne Lischer

Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call; have pity on me. ... Hide not your face from me; do not in anger repel your servant. You are my helper: cast not me off.

One of the things I appreciate most about the book of Job is his no-holds-barred relationship with God. He feels free to pour his heart out to God — all the grief, all the anger, all the pain. Job speaks for all of us when he shakes his fist at God and cries, “Why is this happening to me? Why?” The psalmists, also, were able to freely express their anger, their cries of anguish, their impatience, their pain, and their longing for answers to God. Where are you, God? Where are you when children die at school? When a baby is diagnosed with a life-threatening disease? When a hurricane devastates an entire island? When the test results come back positive? When people suffer because of war, famine and government policy? God, where are you? And why do you allow your children to suffer so?

Hear our cries, O God, for ourselves and for the world.

Friday, October 5, 2018

Jb 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Lk 10:13-16

Jeanne Lischer

The Lord addressed Job out of the storm.

God’s response out of the whirling storm is one of the most powerful pieces of poetry in the Bible. As you read this passage, think of a voice like James Earl Jones or Maya Angelou: Have you commanded the morning? Have you walked in the depths of the sea? Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? What is the way to the dwelling place of light? In other words, Job, just who do you think you are? Did you create the world? What do you know about running a world? It’s not about you! Like Moses before the burning bush or Isaiah in the temple, Job is humbled before the awesome mystery and majesty of God. He begins to understand that the world doesn’t revolve around him. He is not the center of the universe. Job begins to understand that God’s ways are not our ways, and that we cannot understand everything.

When we have more questions than answers, divine Wisdom, may we know your presence.

Saturday, October 6, 2018

Jb 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; Lk 10:17-24

Jeanne Lischer

I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know.

The final chapter of the book of Job gives an account of the rest of Job's life. Job humbles himself before God and prays for his not-so-helpful friends. His fortune is restored — and then some! He and his wife have ten more children and Job lives long enough to see his great, great, great grandchildren. Sometimes I wish the book ended with Job's final speech, not because I want Job to continue suffering, but because we know that many tragedies do not have a fairy tale ending. And even though Job's suffering is over, we only have to read the newspaper or watch the news to know that suffering never goes away. The challenge is how to keep living when there is not (and won't be) a happy ending, when things don't get better.

Help us remember, God of the universe, that no matter what we may suffer, we never suffer alone.

Sunday, October 7, 2018

Daily Bread for October 7, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." - *Mark 10:14*

Monday, October 8, 2018

Gal 1:6-12; Lk 10:25-37

Mary Joshi

Am I now currying favor with human beings or God?

In the week ahead, St. Paul warns the Galatians that if they wish to be followers of Christ it is not enough to simply follow the laws of the faith, but they must live by a higher law of God's love in all that they do. It is also a lesson Jesus presents in the parable of the good Samaritan.

Were the priest and Levite simply being hard-hearted by avoiding the robbery victim? Or were they more concerned about being perceived as “defiled” according to Jewish purity laws if they cared for the victim? If we find ourselves asking the question “What will people think?” before we consider helping those in need, then perhaps we need to ask Paul’s question of ourselves:

“Am I trying to please God or others?”

Loving God, replace our hearts of stone, that we might love others as you have loved us ... without judgement.

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

Gal 1:13-24; Lk 10:38-42

Mary Joshi

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.

There are times I am both envious and resentful of my husband’s ability to catnap or sit down with the paper after a meal, while I feel it is imperative that I clear the table and do the dishes immediately. If I asked, he would help and has many times. Why does his ability to relax for a moment or two bother me? Like Martha, my life is filled with many tasks, but not all are so onerous that they warrant complaint. Mary may not have been shirking her domestic duties. She simply made the gift of Jesus’ presence a priority. Martha’s weakness lay not in her busyness, but in her inability to see her own service as gift and in her resentment of Mary’s ability to accept God’s offered gift of the moment.

May I never be so preoccupied with duty, gentle Lord, that I fail to see the gifts you offer me daily.

Wednesday, October 10, 2018

Gal 2:1-2, 7-14; Lk 11:1-4

Mary Joshi

Lord teach us to pray.

For much of my youth most of my family and social life revolved around people who, if not Catholic, were raised in a Christian tradition. It wasn’t until I attended university that I met and became friends with people who followed traditions and religions other than my own. Through respectful curiosity, we questioned each other’s beliefs and discussed without criticism the traditions in which we were raised. It was in explaining my own beliefs that I came to discover my own faith more deeply and my vision of God’s humanity was broadened. I like to think that a respectful dialogue arose between Peter, a Galilean fisherman, and Paul, a Greek-educated Pharisee, from which both gained a deeper grasp of Christ’s message. Perhaps our own understanding of the paschal mystery would be enriched through a non-critical dialogue with our neighbors of different faith and traditions.

May your name be held holy in all languages and faiths, O God, and may our hearts hear your voice within them all.

Thursday, October 11, 2018

Gal 3:1-5; Lk 11:5-13

Mary Joshi

How much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

A colleague of mine often says, “Want to hear God laugh? Tell him your plans.” He knows that I’m easily overwhelmed when an unexpected crisis arises in an already busy day. The more tightly planned my projected day, the more frantic I become. Today’s readings are a good reminder to me that my knowledge of faith needs to be open to unexpected experiences of God; that no plan is complete without trust in God’s occasional redirection; and that laws of faith are not life-giving if they do not include the pastoral heart of God’s love. Discipleship rarely offers a black and white agenda or clearly mapped-out path. It does require trust in God’s guiding hand and a courageous heart.

Into your hands, O saving Lord, I leave my work, my worries and my plans.

Friday, October 12, 2018

Gal 3:7-14; Lk 11:15-26

Mary Joshi

When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest.

A long-time friend has been sober for over 30 years, but still refers to himself as a “recovering” alcoholic when offered a drink. “It will always be a part of my life,” he admits; “I can never forget or become complacent.” Anyone who has struggled to overcome destructive or ingrained unhealthy habits knows that relapses are always a tempting reality. If the space left by its absence is not filled with a total commitment to a more positive behavior, the “unclean spirit” will return with an ever-greater vengeance. Vigilance, a commitment to prayer and trust in God’s love and forgiveness, ensures that we will never be alone in our struggles to heal.

Be our rock and redeemer, O God of everlasting hope.

Saturday, October 13, 2018

Gal 3:22-29; Lk 11:27-28

Mary Joshi

Blessed is the womb that carried you.

A woman in the crowd praises Mary for giving birth to Jesus. Much as Jesus admired his mother, he tells the woman that those who hear and live out God’s word for themselves are the ones worthy of praise. Our world often assesses people’s worthiness by their level of “star” power. Admiration is not always based on how they live their own lives, but on their fame, their social connections or the wealth they display; none of which indicates a person’s moral integrity. In the same way, calling ourselves Christian or attending the “correct” church gives us no greater value than another if we do not live the life to which Jesus calls us. Mary does deserve our praise, not only for giving birth to Jesus but for her faith in her son and the life she lived for her faith.

Look to the Lord in his strength; seek to serve him constantly.

Sunday, October 14, 2018
Daily Bread for October 14, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. - *Mark 10:22*

Monday, October 15, 2018
Gal 4:22-24, 26-27, 31—5:1; Lk 11:29-32
Saint Teresa of Jesus, religious and doctor of the church
Miguel Dulick

For freedom Christ set us free, so do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

St. Teresa of Jesus (aka Teresa of Ávila), whose feast is today, was not the first reformer to face contempt, rejection and mockery. But, she submitted wholeheartedly to Jesus in mystical ecstasy (as Bernini famously sculpted). Likewise, Paul has to reform the Galatians as he tries to bring them to their senses. They are already retreating from their newfound Christian faith. “Abraham had two sons,” one by the slave Hagar, the other by “the freeborn woman.” Reversing centuries of tradition, Paul identifies the slave lineage with Mt. Sinai and faith in Jesus with “our mother,” Jerusalem. Pope Francis, too, keeps warning us: How sweet seems a religion all ribboned with rules. But do not be afraid of freedom! Like Teresa, we are all “of Jesus.”

Blessed be the name of the Lord, both now and forevermore!

Tuesday, October 16, 2018
Gal 5:1-6; Lk 11:37-41

Miguel Dulick

For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Paul's graphic language springs, no doubt, from his frustration with the Galatians' juvenile obsession with the external signs of the in-crowd. Galatia was practically the first church Paul founded, and they're already slipping back into the old ways. "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery!" Freedom can be pretty scary when you have to leave your comfort zone. Someone said that when people are free to do whatever they want, they usually just copy each other. But faith liberates us to be "in Christ Jesus," who, we could say, is all heart.

Let your mercy come to me, O Lord, your salvation according to your word!

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

Gal 5:18-25; Lk 11:42-46

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr

Miguel Dulick

If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Just as Marlon Brando in "On the Waterfront," Antioch "coulda been a contender," but perhaps it was forever relegated to provincial status when its bishop, Ignatius, whose feast is today, was hauled to Rome for martyrdom. Paul draws a map for the Galatians: "If we live in the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit." Rejecting "the works of the flesh," everything from "immorality" to "drinking bouts," we are to live by "the fruit of the Spirit," especially love. "Under the law," we are trapped, but, "crucified," we are free! We will always struggle, no doubt, to embrace the risks of freedom rather than resting in the comfort of others' expectations. But, as Pope Francis says, "Do not be afraid of holiness!"

Bless us, O Lord, to follow not the counsel of the wicked, nor walk in the way of sinners.

Thursday, October 18, 2018

2 Tm 4:10-17b; Lk 10:1-9

Saint Luke, evangelist

Miguel Dulick

Do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven!

Would we even have a Luke, whose feast is today, without a Paul? As a Pharisee, "Saul" regarded Gentiles as scum. But once he began his new life in Christ, Paul couldn't get enough of them! At some point, he met Luke and it was hand in glove. Everything Paul received from Jesus fills the pages of Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. As they traveled together, Luke refined his Roman historian skills, drawing the long arc from Nazareth to Jerusalem in one book and Jerusalem to Rome in the other. Paul's hymns, such as, "Love is patient, love is kind," etc., from 1 Corinthians, are fleshed out by Luke as Jesus' own biography.

Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord, and let your faithful ones bless you!

Friday, October 19, 2018

Eph 1:11-14; Lk 12:1-7

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

Miguel Dulick

In Christ we were also chosen, ... so that we might exist for the praise of [God's] glory.

As kids in Sr. Athanasia's third-grade class, we loved the stories of the saints, especially the martyrs, the creepier the better. And no martyrs were as scary as the North American Martyrs. Tongues torn out, flesh scaled off, bones slowly crushed, and finally fire. And such cool names! Isaac Jogues, Jean de Brébeuf, just for starters. I guess we missed the point. Unlike the Jesuit saints, we never gave the Iroquois a chance; they were the devil. Paul wrote Ephesians in prison, faced with the devils of his own day, yet the letter sings! An ecstatic aria of blessing on friend and foe alike. Not as gripping, perhaps, or as gory, but now that I've grown some, it brings me to tears.

Upright is your word, O Lord, and all your works are trustworthy.

Saturday, October 20, 2018

Eph 1:15-23; Lk 12:8-12

Saint Paul of the Cross, priest

Miguel Dulick

I do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

The mini-biography in my missal reports that today's saint, Paul of the Cross dedicated his life to meditating on the mystery of Christ's cross and to evangelizing the countryside. Based on my experience as a missionary here in Honduras, I can say they are pretty much the same thing! The poor hang on a cross of poverty, violence and injustice, not to mention malnutrition and disease. Paul the Apostle is, you might say, the original Paul of the Cross. Thus, his theme never changes: "May you know ... the surpassing greatness of [God's] power ... which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead." The Passionists today multiply the graces of their founder. But shouldn't we all be "passionists"?

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth!

Sunday, October 21, 2018

Daily Bread for October 21, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." - *Mark 10:45*

Monday, October 22, 2018

Eph 2:1-10; Lk 12:13-21

Patricia Russell

For though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions.

Parents and teachers often counsel young people to choose carefully with whom they spend their time, warning them that they can be judged by the company they keep. We may be unaware of the influence, for good or for bad, that those nearest to us have upon our ideas and actions. Our closest companions reflect our personality and our values. The same can be said about our possessions and our spending habits. How much or how little we need to feel content reveals our character. A quick look at a bank statement is especially telling. What we do with our material resources is more revealing than the balance. It's not the amount of the bottom line that makes us rich. How, on what and with whom we share God's gifts is the better indicator of who we are and what we value.

Generous Father, source of all good gifts, help us to see the richness of your love in acts of mercy and charity.

Tuesday, October 23, 2018

Eph 2:12-22; Lk 12:35-38

Patricia Russell

Through him the whole structure is held together...

One need only to listen to the news on any given night to conclude that the whole world is falling apart. While the Father personally, closely keeps loving watch over all his children and all creation, lack of Christian unity tears at the seams of this structure. Our Creator brought the universe into existence, set it into motion and sent his Son for whom all things were made. We exist to magnify him. How is Christ magnified in our bickering and division? What good is judgment and competition among believers? To be a Christian one must love others and work together for the common good. We may have superficial differences, but the love of Christ and his mission must remain as our foundation. Christ Jesus “broke down the dividing wall of enmity.” There’s nothing Christian in trying to put that dividing wall back up.

Jesus, our brother, guide us to true fellowship as members of the one household of your beloved Father.

Wednesday, October 24, 2018

Eph 3:2-12; Lk 12:39-48

Patricia Russell

The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same Body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

While most of us are not specifically descendants of those originally known as God’s chosen people, we’re all called. The first-century Jewish people were stunned that God deemed the Gentiles, whom many equated with dogs, as being included in his plan for salvation. They restricted his reach, grace and mercy to those like themselves. Our awesome God cannot be contained in such a narrow way. We should rejoice at the opportunity to share his immense love. When we question who belongs or when we push people away, we limit a limitless God. We are a universal church not only in our global scope but in our extensive outreach. We must embrace those on the margins, those wounded and questioning, those unique and different, near and far, and include them as one with us just as Christ welcomed all.

Gentle Jesus, who embraced foreigners and outcasts, guide us to break down barriers and build communities where all feel your welcoming love.

Thursday, October 25, 2018

Eph 3:14-21; Lk 12:49-53

Patricia Russell

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength.

Having a truly compassionate heart can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Our world is so broken and needy. Even those passionately committed to charity and justice can find themselves wondering how to sustain their material resources and personal strength. Luckily, we do not have to do this alone. Being truly rooted and grounded in love comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is an experience of the Lord’s love that goes beyond an understanding or a feeling. It is a fixture, a lasting presence, a constant ally, a loving and committed relationship. Established firmly within us, it is the foundation for our interaction

with the world. Henri Nouwen wrote, “God’s heart is greater, infinitely greater, than the human heart. It is that divine heart that God wants to give to us so that we can love all people without burning out or becoming numb.” May we trust that the Holy Spirit is so rooted within us that we can always show others a heart like God’s.

Tender and compassionate Lord, you give us your Spirit to bear the weight of those with heavy hearts.

Friday, October 26, 2018

Eph 4:1-6; Lk 12:54-59

Patricia Russell

I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received.

A popular bumper sticker reads, "If Christianity were illegal, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" Christianity is not an honorary title; it is a lifestyle. We don't follow an idea. We imitate Christ and lead others to him. St. Francis of Assisi, instructing the Franciscans, wrote, “All the Friars ... should preach by their deeds.” What do our deeds say about our beliefs? Do they reflect a radical message of Christ’s love, mercy and inclusion? Do they reveal a commitment to life of discipleship and oneness with Christ and our brothers and sisters? In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis expressed fear that the word Christian was devolving into a meaningless term. To call ourselves a Christian, our actions must reflect the traits Paul urged the young church at Ephesus to practice — humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity and peace. *Christ our teacher, guide our everyday actions to faithfully model what it means to be your disciple.*

Saturday, October 27, 2018

Eph 4:7-16; Lk 13:1-9

Patricia Russell

And he gave some as Apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers.

Christ offers his church many and varied gifts. We are one body in a single Lord that thrives through the diversity of the individual gifts that we’ve received. We are all vital, and while we haven’t all received the same gifts, one is not more significant than another. Each gift is dependent on the others. They interact and take turns leading, supporting, teaching and sustaining each other. We cannot, and need not, go it alone. Where we are weak, others are strong. We minister to each other, build each other up, and show each other how to live together in unity and fellowship. Jesus, who embodies the best of all these gifts, draws us together in union with him and each other. We are made to complement and complete one another. Each individual talent contributes to the ultimate gift of unity as the one body of Christ.

Christ, our head, make us one in you. Draw all your children together, and unite us in a spirit of love and acceptance.

Sunday, October 28, 2018

Daily Bread for October 28, 2018

Mark Bartholomew



"Master, I want to see." - *Mark 10:51*

Monday, October 29, 2018

Eph 4:32—5:8; Lk 13:10-17

Paige Byrne Shortal

Be kind to one another.

Today's passage from the letter to the Ephesians reads like a series of grandma's samplers — Mom wisdom that could be summed up, "Just get along for goodness sake!" Living with two boys and their pile of Lego blocks is a homely illustration of why world peace isn't yet. ("Be kind to one another.") The incessant cry of, "That's mine!" ("Greed must not even be mentioned among you.") And when they are getting along and don't know I'm listening. ("No obscenity or silly or suggestive talk") Thank goodness it's more silly than suggestive at this point. Applying the lessons of Scripture to family life is challenging. On the other hand, what better lessons are there?

Jesus, Savior and Brother, help us live as children of the light.

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

Eph 5:21-33; Lk 13:18-21

Paige Byrne Shortal

What is the kingdom of God like?

Today's first reading is what I call a "nudger." Read a few lines and watch husbands playfully

nudge their wives. Read a few more lines and watch the wives nudge back. It's a tricky reading and if you will, please allow me to offer a bit of advice to the preacher: Unless you are willing to do your homework, please don't go there. You could do more harm than good. Moving on to the Gospel, so what is the kingdom like? Small, unassuming beginnings that flourish into what none could have imagined. And note that good old Luke does his parallel thing with an example of a man planting a seed and a woman leavening her bread. How lovely. We don't know when just a little effort at the right time in the right place will yield abundant blessings.

Ever-living God, give us the grace of mature faith, enlightened by scholarship, inspired by the saints of all times and places.

Wednesday, October 31, 2018

Eph 6:1-9; Lk 13:22-30

Paige Byrne Shortal

I do not know where you are from.

Over the years our children have worn all sorts of Halloween masks. A parent's prayer is that, at the end of the day, they will take them off. You see, none of us is an angel or a devil; a super hero or one of the walking dead; perfect beyond needing help or flawed beyond the help helping. We are put on this Earth to discover our true face and that true face reveals something of the divine. When that true face remains masked by pain, addiction, desperation, fear, disappointment, unreasonable expectations, then that one and only beautiful face may never be discovered. And this is a tragedy, first because the world is poorer if that unique face of the divine is never revealed. And also because, when we finally meet our God, we may hear, "You aren't the person I created you to be ... I don't know you."

Creator God, we pray, strip us of all that is not of you.