



SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2016 SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Finer than the finest wine

Wedding miracles? At the reception, the groom, a young man with the build of a linebacker, surprised the crowd with the simplicity and power of his words of gratitude to parents, guests, and even the priest who'd witnessed the marriage. He and the crowd had tears in their eyes, but no one was embarrassed to be so moved by love. And after dinner, before the dancing began, suddenly the entire University of Wisconsin marching band paraded into the hall thunderously playing "On Wisconsin!", a gift arranged by the groom's parents for the football-fan newlyweds. Wedding miracles? Just hearts intoxicated—not by water changed to wine but by the change that love creates!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 62:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11 (66)*. "You have kept the good wine until now."

MONDAY, JANUARY 18 Mercy holds all things together

Pope Francis continually invites us to consider mercy as the guiding principle of actions and decisions. Often his challenging words of change are met with confusion or resistance. Yet as Irish writer Brian McKee, director of Seedlings, a program for pastoral renewal, points out: "Every tenth line in the New Testament demands that we reach out to the physically poor; in the gospel of Luke it is every sixth line; in the epistle of James it is every fifth line. Without a lived commitment to the poor, the Bible, and the church, falls apart." Find the courage to commit to the poor for all of our sakes.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 15:16-23; Mark 2:18-22 (311)*. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak."

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19 Get happy

"We all want to live happily," Saint Augustine wrote. "How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life . . ." For the answer, look to the Beatitudes—a word that means "ultimate happiness" or "bliss"—in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus explains how to be comforted, shown mercy, filled, even to inherit the earth and see God. Happiness doesn't come from money or power or fame, as tempting as they might be, but from humility, purity of heart, faithfulness—all the virtues Jesus extols. When happiness eludes you, it can be recovered by recalling the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas: "God alone satisfies."

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 16:1-13; Mark 2:23-28 (312)*. ". . . the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF FABIAN, POPE, MARTYR; SEBASTIAN, MARTYR

Find your own way to serve heroically

Fabian was a pope who died a martyr in 250, the first layman to be elected pope (no, you do not have to be a priest or bishop). We also remember Sebastian, a Roman soldier who kept his faith secret so that he could more easily be of assistance to persecuted Christians. But his love for Christ broke through and he himself was martyred in 288. A Roman soldier who was a secret Christian, a layperson who became pope. Do something heroic for Christ today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51; Mark 3:1-6 (313)*. "They watched Jesus closely to see if he would cure him on the sabbath so that they might accuse him."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

FEAST OF AGNES, VIRGIN, MARTYR

Take a stand for interfaith tolerance

According to legend, Saint Agnes was born into a wealthy Roman family and was so beautiful that many young men wished to marry her. Agnes, however, was totally devoted to her faith and refused to consider marriage. This angered her suitors. They told Roman authorities that she believed in Christianity, a religion whose followers were being persecuted at that time. Consequently, Agnes was treated brutally, resulting in her death. Although Agnes lived many centuries ago, the great need for understanding and respect across religions continues today. In the spirit of Agnes, let us pray for interfaith dialog and peace.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 18:6-9; 19:1-7; Mark 3:7-12 (314)*. "In God I trust, I shall not fear."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

Disagree without being disagreeable

Our faith as well as our common humanity calls us to treasure and protect all of life, from womb to tomb. Yet our country remains deeply divided and unable to agree on how to protect the gift of new life, the life in the womb. In a culture in which dialogue is rarely attempted, let alone achieved, how do we bring people together to listen to one another and then work collaboratively to ensure a consistent ethic of life? On this Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn, let's renew our efforts to listen with generosity to those with whom we differ, seeking common ground and calling them not enemies, but friends who disagree.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 24:3-21; Mark 3:13-19 (315)*. "May the Lord reward you generously for what you have done this day."

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23

FEAST OF MARIANNE COPE, VIRGIN

Every little bit helps

In the 19th century, medicine was primitive. A hospital offered no more than "a bed to lie in and to die in." Franciscan Mother Marianne Cope strove to offer one thing more to the sick in upstate New York: hope. Hearing of the plight of those afflicted with leprosy in the Sandwich Islands, later known as Hawaii, she didn't hesitate to join the cause. Introducing one simple change to the procedure of their care—hygiene—Cope and her sisters immeasurably improved the lives of those afflicted. However small, make your contribution.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27; Mark 3:20-21 (316)*. "This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'I will deliver your enemy into your grasp.'"



Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

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