



SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 2016 THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Make lasting connections

Pope Francis has more than 7 million followers on Twitter and loves to take selfies. But while he's harnessed social media to broaden his reach as he spreads the Good News, he worries about the "radical loneliness" in a society that chases validation online and fears making real commitments. Jesus didn't need the Internet to accumulate "followers" or for his message to "go viral," and the Holy Father urges everyone not to worry about getting "likes" on Facebook but instead to forge close bonds. "Friending" people in real life means investing in meaningful relationships. Make a down payment today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21 (69)*. "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region."

MONDAY, JANUARY 25

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE Patron saint for the conversion of religious zealots

We live in an age of religious extremism—on the one side Taliban and ISIS, on the other home-grown extremists who shoot at synagogues, attack Muslims at prayer, or firebomb churches. Saint Paul towers over our tradition with his early and vast contribution to Christianity. But the part of his story that came before he was a saint is also noteworthy, as a case study in how *not* to express your faith! Saint Paul, pray for us and our divided world!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 22:3-16; Mark 16:15-18 (519)*. "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it."

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26 FEAST OF TIMOTHY AND TITUS, BISHOPS Faith has no minimum-age requirement

Both Timothy and Titus were companions of Saint Paul. At a young age, Timothy was entrusted with serious responsibilities in the early Christian community but apparently was not taken seriously because of his youth. Paul wrote "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." Titus may have been born a Gentile, but Paul led him to Christ and they became fellow missionaries. Paul addresses Titus with affection: "Paul to Titus, my own true child in our common faith." Two early Christians remind you that we can't journey to Christ alone. Today, encourage a young person.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Timothy 1:1-8 OR Titus 1:1-5; Mark 3:31-35 (520; Gospel 518)*. "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

FEAST OF ANGELA MERICI, VIRGIN, RELIGIOUS FOUNDER Love is blind

Can you imagine if you set out on the trip of a lifetime—a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, no less—lost your eyesight on the way there and regained it on the way back? Most people would feel cheated. But not Saint Angela Merici. She didn't need to see the holy sites to experience them in her heart. What she did see, back in her hometown in Italy, were poor, uneducated girls. She founded the Ursulines to serve them. The next time you volunteer, ponder what Saint Angela told her sisters of the poor: "You have a greater need to serve than they have of your service."

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 7:4-17; Mark 4:1-20 (319)*. "... some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28

FEAST OF THOMAS AQUINAS, PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH Know your own measure

In the canon of great theologians and Doctors of the church, none outshines Thomas Aquinas, who has influenced thinkers of all disciplines, religious and secular alike, since the 12th century. Yet this great man left his greatest work, the *Summa Theologiae*, unfinished. When asked why he stopped working on it, he said, "I cannot go on. . . . All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me." It is good to strive to create works of lasting significance. It is also good to realize that in the end, in the pure light of the Divine, our greatest works do indeed pale.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 7:18-19, 24-29; Mark 4:21-25 (320)*. "A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29

Live on the edge

Farmers have to have a high tolerance for uncertainty, and that hasn't changed since the time of Jesus. An unpredictable storm, an early frost, an unseen blight could ruin a crop, a season, a livelihood, then and now. Yet farmers keep farming (and the rest of us hungry souls are grateful they do!). Where in your own life is the edge of uncertainty, the scary place where you can no longer fool yourself into believing that you are fully in control? That is where you are likely to find God, who comes at what theologian and storyteller John Shea called the "hour of the unexpected." Embrace your uncertainty, God will meet you in the midst of it.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 11:1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17; Mark 4:26-34 (321)*. "If a man were to scatter seed on the land . . . the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how."

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30 FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Your life is an act of God

According to the Genesis creation story, God made the natural world with loving, deliberate care. And indeed, the earth is a delicately balanced ecosystem, in which even destructive natural forces—what insurers call "acts of God"—can serve a necessary purpose. The same goes for human experience. When your life is hit by storms, you may not know God's intentions, but rest assured that by trusting God you will find the strength to weather whatever comes your way. And when the clouds break, open up to the possibility of seeing new horizons.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 12:1-7a, 10-17; Mark 4:35-41 (322)*. "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"



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

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