

## Sunday, Jan 28, 2018

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Deliver us from every evil

Even the best of us harbor within ourselves an unclean spirit or two. “Unclean” simply means not compatible with the holiness of God. This isn’t a condition any of us can afford to be in! Consider the garden variety of dirty spirits that routinely board with us: self-absorption, unforgiveness, envy, judgment, arrogance, hard-heartedness, cynicism. Identify your familiar demons, practice their counterpoint virtues, and fill your interior house with grace.

TODAY’S READINGS: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Mark 1:21-28 (71). “*Jesus rebuked [the unclean spirit] and said, ‘Quiet! Come out of him!’*”

## Monday, Jan 29, 2018

### Use your freedom well

The story of Legion in Mark’s gospel is quite sad. Doctors today might diagnose him with multiple personality disorder. To him, it was only apparent that he lived with his demons in torment. He caused such harm to himself and others that he couldn’t live in town but was forced to stay in the cemetery, a man buried alive by his pain. Once Jesus delivered him, his natural desire was to stay with Jesus. But Jesus told him to take his freedom home with him to his family and community. Every person made whole becomes a living, breathing gospel.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13; Mark 5:1-20 (323). “*Jesus asked, ‘What is your name?’ The man replied, ‘My name is Legion, for we are many.’*”

## Tuesday, Jan 30, 2018

### Have faith

How can a woman be healed from her hemorrhaging by only touching the cloak of Christ? He tells her that the sincerity of her faith had saved her. The church confirms the power of faith through its place as one of the three “theological virtues,” along with hope and charity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that faith is when “a person freely commits his entire self to God,” and by which he or she can accept everything given by God. But unlike the “cardinal virtues,” faith is truly not of our own accord; rather, it is a grace both from God and toward God. How often do we stop to ask for faith?

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30—19:3; Mark 5:21-43 (324). “*Jesus said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.’*”

## Wednesday, Jan 31, 2018

MEMORIAL OF JOHN BOSCO, PRIEST

### Good is the best teacher

With some notable exceptions, throughout much of history the default position for disciplining children was punishing them harshly when they were bad. One of the notable exceptions was the 19th-century Italian priest John Bosco. As a young priest in Turin, he encountered masses of boys the industrial conditions of the city had left out in the cold. In response, he established youth clubs, hostels, and boarding schools. What was especially unique was his “preventive system” of dealing with the boys, which was based on reason, religion, and kindness. It appealed to their intelligence and their desire for God and the good. Saint John Bosco also founded religious orders for men and women, the

Salesians, to expand and continue this work. You can try to force the bad out of a person, or you can appeal to the good in them.

TODAY’S READINGS: 2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17; Mark 6:1-6 (325). “*Where did this man get all this? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?*”

## Thursday, Feb 01, 2018

### Do the math

Teachers who have students work in pairs see many benefits to this strategy: The students take more responsibility for their learning; they mentor and encourage their partners and engage in creative problem-solving techniques, such as brainstorming; and they are less likely to become isolated and disillusioned. Surely Jesus was mindful of these benefits when he sent the 12 apostles out two by two to preach the Good News—and when he promised his presence wherever two or more are gathered in his name. Today’s lesson: Work together to multiply the good.

TODAY’S READINGS: 1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12; Mark 6:7-13 (326). “*He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two.*”

## Friday, Feb 02, 2018

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

### You are dismissed

Simeon recognizes the infant Jesus as the promised savior and calls him a “light for revelation.” Simeon joyfully exclaims that he is now free to go to his death in peace. His beautiful prayer, commonly called the Canticle of Simeon, is sung in monasteries and religious communities around the world as part of Night Prayer. Like Simeon, we, too, are the servants of God who, upon recognizing the light of Christ in the people we meet, may ask to be dismissed at the end of each day to go in peace—freed, at least for a time, from our responsibilities and anxieties.

TODAY’S READINGS: Malachi 3:1-4; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 (524). “*My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.*”

## Saturday, Feb 03, 2018

MEMORIAL OF BLAISE, BISHOP, MARTYR

### A full-throated blessing

In the 14th century when the plague was devastating Europe, people desperate for a cure or to be spared the disease called upon the Fourteen Holy Helpers, a special group of saints whom they believed protected them from symptoms of this dreaded disease, like fevers, headaches, the deaths of animals, and in Saint Blaise’s case, throat ailments. If you go to church today, chances are there will be a blessing of throats through the intercession of Blaise. While we need all the help we can get in cold and flu season, the crossed candles and the words of the blessing are more symbols of our faith in God to protect us from whatever ails us. Take advantage of this unique once-a-year custom.

TODAY’S READINGS: 1 Kings 3:4-13; Mark 6:30-34 (328). “*As Jesus went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them.*”

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



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