



SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2017 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Dollars and sense

Twenty billion dollars a year. That's how much it's estimated Catholic schools save the United States annually. As we observe Catholic Schools Week, celebrate the accomplishments behind these statistics: 6,600 parochial schools are staffed by more than 150,000 dedicated teachers K-12. The graduation rate from our schools is 99 percent. The percentage of our students who go on to college is 84 percent. Just as our teachers make sacrifices to create these "communities of faith, knowledge, and service," so too do parents surrender comforts to ensure their kids learn faith and character along with the facts. Support our schools!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 5:1-12a (70)*. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

MONDAY, JANUARY 30 Lord, come to our assistance

The expression "inner demons" captures something of the helplessness that those in the grip of negative behaviors feel. The ancients took that phrase literally, believing that illness was due to divine punishment for sin or demons taking up temporary residence in a person. The remedy was to seek forgiveness or a healer who could rid you of the bad spirits. While most people nowadays don't believe that sicknesses and personality problems come from evil spirits or God's wrath, there is still the need for reaching out to others for help when you cannot help yourself. Medical and other professionals, counselors, family, friends, and especially Jesus the Healer in prayer provide that assistance.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 11:32-40; Mark 5:1-20 (323)*. "Go home . . . and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you."

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31 MEMORIAL OF JOHN BOSCO, PRIEST, RELIGIOUS FOUNDER Give your all

Saint John Bosco was born in Italy in 1815 into a family of farm workers. He became a priest and a teacher, devoting his life to the care and education of abandoned and neglected children. His approach was considered novel at the time: He used love instead of the threat of punishment to shape the behavior of his students. How can you support teachers and those who care for children? What are some ways you, in the spirit of John Bosco, can extend love, compassion, and respect to children, especially those most in need?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 12:1-4; Mark 5:21-43 (324)*. "Jesus took the child by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha koun,' which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise!'"



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

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1 Drop everything, it's the Lord!

Would you ever consider stopping all you are doing and going in an entirely different direction? With obligations to family and jobs it's unlikely you would suddenly turn your back on your responsibilities to pursue something else, but in a way that's what the first apostles did. Their recognition of Jesus as the savior was immediate and their decision to literally drop everything was just as abrupt. They saw something so compelling and necessary for their lives that they had no hesitation in following him on the spot. You might not imitate their footloose example to the letter, but their actions do show how quick disciples of Jesus should be, whatever their situation, to respond without hesitation!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 12:4-7, 11-15; Mark 6:1-6 (325)*. "They left everything and followed him."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2 FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD Let Christ light up your life

In addition to being the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Jerusalem Temple, the church also calls today Candlemas. From early times the church has blessed candles for the year on this day. Your parish may be blessing candles sometime this week. If so, take some candles to church to be blessed. Their light will warm your home, especially in the darkness of winter, and remind you of Christ, the Light of the World. Even the lowly groundhog gets into the act today, emerging from his hole to look for the sun.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Malachi 3:1-4; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 (524)*. "My eyes have seen your salvation . . . a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3 MEMORIAL OF BLAISE, BISHOP, MARTYR; ANSGAR, BISHOP A full-throated blessing

People instinctively turn to friends for help in difficult times. Because Catholics believe that in the communion of saints all believers, living and dead, are connected in Christ, we turn for help to saints who may intercede for us. Today is the feast of Saint Blaise, fourth-century bishop of Sebastea, Armenia. Legend has it that before his martyrdom he healed many, including a boy choking on a fish bone. In churches around the world today, Catholics will be getting their throats blessed and hearing, "Through the prayers of Saint Blaise, may God free you from ailments of the throat and from every other evil." Amen.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 13:1-8; Mark 6:14-29 (327)*. "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4 MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Take it to heart

The monk and author Thomas Merton wrote: "There is no true solitude except interior solitude." Solitude does not have to be a physical place, though it can be, nor does it have to involve silence, though it might. Rather, as Merton said, solitude is an inner space where you can rest quietly and alone in God's presence—with no expectations and perhaps no words either—and experience the grace of God for what it is: a freely given gift you do not have to earn. Today, a Saturday and the traditional day for remembering Mary, join her in solitude to keep "all these things in your heart."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 13:15-17, 20-21; Mark 6:30-34 (328)*. "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."