



SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2016 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Calling all Christians!

As Christians, we strive to be attuned to God's calling in our lives. But what if God's calling seems to take us in unexpected and even unwanted directions? Scripture offers many examples of this. Moses initially resists God's invitation. Mary's "yes" is preceded by perplexed astonishment. Jeremiah argues that he just isn't capable of what God has in mind for him. These are understandable reactions, ones we too may have felt in response to situations God seems to be calling us to. Walk with the saints and prophets today, reflecting on and celebrating God's calling in your life.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:31-31:4-13; Luke 4:21-30 (72)*. "Ab, Lord God! I said, 'I do not know how to speak. I am too young!'"

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1 Thank you to our spiritual "first responders"

In every society since the beginning of recorded history spiritual experts such as clergy and holy men and women were the go-to healers when someone in the community was troubled and having difficulties coping. Religious men and women continue to play an important role in mental healthcare, typically as first responders. As we close the Year of Consecrated Life, it is good for us to remember the important work of our men and women in religious life who are often active on the margins reaching out to the most vulnerable and helping "cast out the demons" that keep good people from living full, productive lives.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13; Mark 5:1-20 (323)*. "They caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2 FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD Happy Candlemas!

The Presentation of the Lord, or Candlemas, marks the ritual presentation of Jesus in the Temple 40 days after his birth, as was the Jewish custom. On the day the infant Jesus was presented, Simeon, a devout and just man, couldn't help but declare Christ's glory at the sight of the child. "My eyes have seen your salvation!" Traditionally, Candlemas is marked by a blessing of and procession with candles, an act that signifies the light brought into the world by Christ. Simeon witnessed that light firsthand; today, why not be a walking celebration of Candlemas? Shine Christ's light for the world to see!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Malachi 3:1-4; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 (524)*. "And suddenly there will come to the temple the LORD whom you seek."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3 FEAST OF BLAISE, BISHOP, MARTYR May your words bring healing

Tradition has it that fourth-century Armenian bishop Blaise once saved the life of a boy who had a fish bone caught in his throat. Thus it came to be that for centuries, and still in many parishes today, Catholics honor this martyred saint by having their throats blessed on his feast day. Perhaps you will have the chance to participate in this age-old ritual today. But if not, you might pause and ask God to protect not only your throat but also your tongue and the words that flow from it. Ask for the grace to work in tandem with God so that the words you speak will be marked by love and compassion.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17; Mark 6:1-6 (325)*. "What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4 God heals us in the dark days

The ministry of discipleship is one of healing that is as old as scripture and endures for all time. To that end, the church offers the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to all who are seriously ill or who face major surgery. Those partaking of the sacrament are anointed with oil as they hear the words: "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit." It is sacramental grace that assures you when you are ill and suffering that the One who suffered for all people will not leave you alone in your own dark time.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12; Mark 6:7-13 (326)*. "They expelled many demons, anointed the sick with oil, and worked many cures."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5 FEAST OF AGATHA, VIRGIN, MARTYR Save our children

The World Health Organization estimates that 150 million girls under the age of 18 have experienced sexual violence. And U.S. studies estimate that one in four girls and one in six boys experience some form of sexual abuse before age 18. Further studies indicate that 93 percent of reported sexual assaults of juveniles in the United States are committed by someone known to the victim. Indifference to these tragic statistics, which the Centers for Disease Control warn have severe health and social consequences, is a sin of the gravest order. Ask for the intercession of Saint Agatha, patron of rape and torture victims, to spur action among all of us to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 47:2-11; Mark 6:14-29 (327)*. "When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6 FEAST OF PAUL MIKI AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS Be happy even in times of trial

For those who live in a 21st-century democracy, it is difficult to grasp that in some times and places, death has been the punishment for those who preach their Christian faith. Yet the cruelty of martyrdom is part of our history. In late 16th-century Japan, Jesuit brother Paul Miki was crucified along with other Jesuits, Franciscans, and laypeople for sharing the Good News. It is said that from the cross Miki reminded his followers to "ask Christ to help you to become happy." That simple prayer, if asked and answered by each of us, will have a profound effect on our lives.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Kings 3:4-13; Mark 6:30-34 (328)*. "They returned to Jesus and reported all that they had done and what they had taught."



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

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