



SUNDAY, JULY 24, 2016 SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Come to my assistance

"If at first you don't succeed . . ." As you read these words, you likely have already completed the proverb in your mind with the words, "try, try again." And there are others: "Don't give up the ship." "Never, ever give up." We know that persistence is usually the better way. Parents and teachers, coaches and mentors have encouraged and reminded us that simply giving up rarely solves a problem. That seems to be God's opinion as well. No matter the difficulty, the hopelessness, the apparent silence, never stop talking to God and never stop asking for God's help.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 18:20-32; Colossians 2:12-14; Luke 11:1-13 (111)*. "He will give him whatever he needs because of his persistence."

MONDAY, JULY 25 FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE Front and center

The scallop shell is the emblem of Saint James because, with grooves that radiate out to the edges, the shell symbolizes the journey of faith. James was with Jesus through thick and thin: He was one of the first disciples to be called at the Sea of Galilee and one of the few to witness the Transfiguration. His mission eventually took him to the ends of the earth, and he was the first of the apostles to be martyred. But remember, just as the grooves of the scallop shell lead out, they also point back to the center. On your own journey, like James, center yourself in Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605)*. "The one who raised the Lord Jesus, will raise us also with Jesus."

TUESDAY, JULY 26 FEAST OF JOACHIM AND ANNE, PARENTS OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS Mary's good upbringing is apparent

Mary is so important in the life of Jesus and in our own lives that we naturally are curious to know who her parents were and what they were like. Trouble is, there is no mention of Mary's parents in the New Testament. In the second century, however, a document known as the [Gospel of James](#) describes Anne and Joachim as an older couple whose longing for a child was fulfilled in the birth of their daughter, Mary. What we *do* know is that Mary's parents raised a faithful daughter who was filled with courage and grace. Mary said yes to the unknown. She trusted God's word. Have you said yes to the sacred unknown in your own life?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 14:17-22; Matthew 13:36-43 (402)*. "Through God's covenant . . . their family endures."



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

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 27 Experiment with holiness

Frederick Banting was a Canadian medical scientist who, along with his colleagues, isolated insulin in a lab at the University of Toronto on this day in 1921. He then became the first person to use insulin on human beings. Banting shared the Nobel Prize at age 32 for this discovery and is the youngest Nobel laureate in the area of physiology and medicine. What drives a scientist is similar to what can drive everyone to holiness. Want to make the world a better place? How hard are you working on it?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 15:10, 16-21; Matthew 13:44-46 (403)*. "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls."

THURSDAY, JULY 28 Earn your wings

Angels are represented in scripture as superior spiritual beings who act as intermediaries between heaven and earth. Even though they "appear" in biblical stories, they don't have physical bodies, as Pope John Paul II pointed out in a [1986 address](#): "[T]he angels have no 'body' even if, in particular circumstances, they reveal themselves under visible forms because of their mission for the good of people." In art, however, angels have often been depicted in bodily form, with wings. That doesn't mean they are busy flying around us. As Saint John Chrysostom [explained](#), wings represent the sublime nature of the angelic mission, to serve as a messenger of the divine. You, too, can participate in this mission by bringing God's love and care to others. Now be an angel, will you?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 18:1-6; Matthew 13:47-53 (404)*. "The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous."

FRIDAY, JULY 29 FEAST OF MARTHA Remarkable Martha

Martha, sister of Lazarus and Mary, is mainly remembered because she wanted Mary to help her prepare and serve a meal for their guest, Jesus. But scripture also describes Martha as a strong woman who repeatedly speaks her mind: She tells the Lord he should have come earlier to prevent the death of Lazarus; she tries to tell Jesus what to do when he summons Lazarus from the tomb; and, perhaps most amazingly, she is a woman who admits to the Lord that she knows he is the Messiah. She could be the patron of women and men who yearn to speak the truth that is borne of faith and to trust in God's power to do all things.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 26:1-9 (405); John 11:19-27 or Luke 10:38-42 (607)*. "I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

SATURDAY, JULY 30 FEAST OF SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS Helpful homilies

You have to be a pretty great homilist to earn a name that means "golden-tongued." Such was Saint Peter Chrysologus, a fifth-century bishop in the north of what is now present-day Italy, who was renowned for his reflections and declared a Doctor of the church by Pope Benedict XIII in 1729. Catholics today are fortunate to have another great homilist for enrichment: Pope Francis. He is oft-quoted and his news bites are gems, but you can dig deeper into his words by reading his homilies daily at [Vatican Radio](#).

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24; Matthew 14:1-12 (406)*. "This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him."