



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2016

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Lift up your emptiness

In her poem “If You Have Nothing,” poet and Carmelite nun Jessica Powers wrote, “The gesture of a gift is adequate.” No matter what you have to give, it is the act of giving that is a gift unto the giver. As the Prayer of Saint Francis says, “It is in giving that we receive.” To recognize the true gift we have to offer we need to empty ourselves, step aside, and see what God is offering through us. “If you have nothing,” Powers concludes, “gather back your sigh / and with your hands held high, your heart held high / lift up your emptiness!”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Wisdom 9:13-18b; Philemon 9-10, 12-17; Luke 14:25-33 (129)*. “Anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

Prayer works

In most countries, May 1, the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, is the day when workers are celebrated. In the United States, however, the first Monday in September is recognized as Labor Day. Ten thousand workers marched in the first Labor Day parade in New York City on Sept. 5, 1882. Today, let’s remember all those who work, those who are unemployed and underemployed, and especially those who are not able to work due to disability or illness. Through the intercession of Saint Joseph, may those without work find hope and work, and may those with work find the joy of labor in all they do and strive to offer others the gifts they’ve received from God.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Corinthians 5:1-8; Luke 6:6-11 (437)*. “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?”

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

Hands-on holiness

When someone becomes your hero, you want to have a tangible experience of that person to capture and take home with you. So you go to the concert, attend the lecture, buy the book, see the play ten times. Secretly you hope to have a moment alone with this exceptional person, to get an autograph or selfie, maybe even to touch them—as if their specialness might be transferred to you by association. Jesus never invited this kind of celebrity from his followers. What he wanted was for us to realize that the Holy Spirit’s power lives in us, too.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Corinthians 6:1-11; Luke 6:12-19 (438)*. “Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.”



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

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

Be happy

The word *beatitudo* comes from the Latin word for “happiness.” God knows how much all of us want to be happy. In fact, as the Catechism says, “this desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart” in order to draw us “to the One who alone can fulfill it.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus listed the blessings that lead to happiness. But they’re not what the world considers blessings. The beatitudes are a revolutionary moral call. Not easy, but take heart, and follow the heart’s desire.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Corinthians 7:25-31; Luke 6:20-26 (439)*. “Behold, your reward will be great in heaven.”

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Seeing the light

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the oldest Marian feasts on the liturgical calendar. Marking the birth of the Blessed Mother, this day is a celebration not only of Mary but of the gift her life is to our salvation. The Marian hymn “Mary, the Dawn” speaks beautifully of this relationship by declaring, “Mary the dawn, Christ the perfect Day.” It is the light that dawned in Mary that is brought to fullness in Jesus. Today, as we celebrate her birth, let us hold high the gift of life, finding the Light in all we meet.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Micah 5:1-4a or Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 (636)*. “Behold, the virgin shall . . . bear a son, and . . . name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

MEMORIAL OF PETER CLAVER, PRIEST

Let my people go

Pope Pius IX branded slavery the “supreme villainy” at the end of the 19th century. Some 300 years earlier, Spanish Jesuit Peter Claver was ministering to slaves brought to the Americas as part of a flourishing slave trade and plantation economy. This villainy is still very much alive as human trafficking continues today. Catholic Relief Services says you can help by urging Congress to act, supporting the work of CRS, and praying for your sisters and brothers who are enslaved. Visit their website at CRS.org and search on slavery and human trafficking.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22b-27; Luke 6:39-42 (441)*. “Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible.”

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

There’s always time for reconciliation

Today in the year 422, Saint Celestine I began his papacy. He was pope for 10 years and is remembered as the pope who founded the papal diplomatic service. He is also known for saying that “absolution or reconciliation should never be refused to any dying sinner who sincerely asked it; for repentance depends not so much on time as on the heart, which can be changed in a moment when God so wills.” Today, as we continue in this Year of Mercy, let’s pray for all who will die this day, for transformed hearts, repentance, and an acceptance of God’s will.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Corinthians 10:14-22; Luke 6:43-49 (442)*. “The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good.”