

Sunday, Aug 17, 2025

Make no small plans

“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire,” says Saint Catherine of Siena. But who is it that God wants you to be? The search for that answer is what the church calls the “process of discernment.” At various points in our lives, each of us must pause to ask: Where am I being called? What will ignite a fire within me—and set the world ablaze? As you determine your fiery course, consider this exhortation from Pope Francis: “We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for little things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals.”

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10; Hebrews 12:1-4; Luke 12:49-53 (120).

“I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!”

Monday, Aug 18, 2025

Check your security system

Why does having many possessions stand in the way of our spiritual freedom? If that is the case, why do we go to such great lengths to acquire things, and why is it so difficult to part with them, even when their usefulness to us is long gone? Perhaps it’s because we all need something we can hold onto, and holding onto things we can see and touch is certainly an understandable response to insecurity. But ultimately perishable things will fail to deliver the hoped-for security, as each of us learns sooner or later in life. Our relationships with God and our fellow human beings are the only sources of security that can endure. As spiritual giant Thomas Merton put it, “In the end, relationships save everything.”

Judges 2:11-19; Matthew 19:16-22 (419). *“He went away sad, for he had many possessions.”*

Tuesday, Aug 19, 2025

Believe in the big picture

“With God all things are possible” is surely one of the most well-known of Jesus’ statements. It’s short, optimistic, and, most important, we want it to be true. But when we look at the world around us, the words of the ancient Israelite Gideon more likely capture what’s on our minds, “If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened?” What Gideon didn’t know and we forget is that God holds the entire picture of creation, while we see only a very small piece. It’s like viewing a corner of a painting and wondering why we can’t make sense of the whole canvas. What’s a believer to do? Believe. Believe in a loving, merciful God who makes all things possible. That’s what Gideon did.

Judges 6:11-24a; Matthew 19:23-30 (420). *“Alas, Lord GOD, that I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”*

Wednesday, Aug 20, 2025

Cultivate your calm

Bernard of Clairvaux, a French abbot of the 12th century, had a profound influence on the course of Catholicism at a time of great strife and intrigue in the church. He reformed monastic life, brought Marian devotion to the forefront of popular piety, and mediated between princes and popes. He was also instrumental in the founding of the Knights Templar, who came to embody the medieval ideal of a Christian knight. Amid the tumult of his age, he held fast to the conviction that the “three most important virtues are humility, humility, and humility.” Our own time is no less turbulent.

Perhaps a touch of Saint Bernard’s contemplative spirit—and his humility—could help us find calm today

MEMORIAL OF BERNARD, ABBOT, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Judges 9:6-15; Matthew 20:1-16 (421). *“Go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.”*

Thursday, Aug 21, 2025

Turn the table on tyrants

The concept of freedom is intrinsically linked with the struggle against tyranny. In the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Abraham Lincoln explores two principles that, he says, have stood face to face from the beginning of time: the common right of humanity and the divine right of kings. It is an eternal push and pull of right and wrong, of a spirit that says, “You toil and work and earn bread, and I’ll eat it.” Whether in the context of a ruler or enslaver, “it is the same tyrannical principle,” says Lincoln. Jesus describes a different type of reign where the king invites everyone to the table and defies norms by making the last first and the first last. This upside-down world is the one our Baptism in Christ calls us to espouse.

Judges 11:29-39a; Matthew 22:1-14 (422). *“Behold, I have prepared my banquet.”*

Friday, Aug 22, 2025

The royal we

Though Mary was never crowned Queen of Heaven in scripture, she has long reigned as queen in the hearts of the faithful. Still, the question remains: In what way is her queenship *real*? Mary’s royal stature holds meaning for us, apart from whatever it signifies in the divine realm. “She is a most tender and kind Queen,” writes Saint Alphonsus Liguori, “eager to help us in our miseries. So much so that the church wants us to call her a Queen of Mercy.” We, too, are invited to be a holy and royal people, shaped by divine mercy and loving-kindness. What Mary already possesses is a vision of what we can be. Give yourself and others the royal treatment. Start with a touch of love.

MEMORIAL OF THE QUEENSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Ruth 1:1, 3-6, 14b-16, 22; Matthew 22:34-40 (423). *“Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”*

Saturday, Aug 23, 2025

Mary, most honored

You may be familiar with the 16th-century Litany of Loreto, which gathers wonderful images of Mary such as Mother Admirable, Mystical Rose, Tower of Ivory, Gate of Heaven, and Morning Star. Saint Francis of Assisi in the 13th century had a similar litany, his “Salutation of the Virgin,” which hails Mary as Christ’s Palace, Tabernacle, Home, and, perhaps the most striking, Mary as “Virgin made church.” Mary is the model for Christian discipleship. “Let it be done unto me according to God’s word,” she prays. Listen to Mary. She is always directing us toward her son, saying again and again, “Do what he tells you.”

MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11; 4:13-17; Matthew 23:1-12 (424). *“The greatest among you must be your servant.”*

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



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