

Sunday, Jul 16, 2023

Pause before speaking

Words are deeds, as theologian Peter Kreeft astutely reminds us. When we speak our thoughts into the air, we are doing something. So many words circulate in the machinery of our media that we tend to take them for granted and view them as cheap or even meaningless. But words matter. They take root in our minds and hearts, as well as in the thoughts and feelings of people who receive them from us. Before you utter the response, make the call, or hit the send key, pause to contemplate what impact your words may have on someone else.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 8:18-23; Matthew 13:1-23 (103). *"My word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."*

Monday, Jul 17, 2023

Heartfelt holiness

Like any family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph experienced misunderstandings, disagreements, and hurt feelings within the family unit. Some of those experiences are told in the gospels, but there were surely others we never learned about. The Holy Family is a model for all families in the struggles and joys of family life. There are many devotional prayers to the Holy Family, including a litany and even a devotion to the hearts of the Holy Family. Most Catholics are familiar with the images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but perhaps less so with the Chaste Heart of Joseph. Consider adorning your family home with artwork of all three.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 1:8-14, 22; Matthew 10:34-11:1 (389). *"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."*

Tuesday, Jul 18, 2023

Instituting a better bedside manner

Hospitals in Rome and throughout Europe were abysmal in the 1500s, when Camillus de Lellis was admitted—twice—with an infected leg. Hospital workers were poor, often beggars and prisoners, who showed up mostly for free meals. Some even stole food from patients! Saint Camillus was so disgusted by this treatment that he got up from his bed to provide comfort—and cleanliness—to other patients. Thus his vocation was born, along with the Servants of the Sick, the religious institute Camillus founded after becoming a priest. A great Catholic tradition was likewise born: not just spiritual solace but clean and professional care as well. Visit the Catholic Health Association website to pray for hospital workers.

MEMORIAL OF CAMILLUS DE LELLIS, PRIEST

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 2:1-15a; Matthew 11:20-24 (390). *"She was moved with pity for him."*

Wednesday, Jul 19, 2023

Mercy me

Our tradition contains a variety of words to describe "missing the mark" when it comes to personal conduct: sin, transgression, and iniquity, a word used hundreds of times in scripture. Iniquity describes willful harming, where we choose to hurt or act with malice. It gets at the character or quality of our intentions. In a sense, our actions are all we really ever own. We carry them with us and we fall short at times. Thankfully, God's mercy is greater even than our iniquity. Examine your conscience, make amends

where possible, and call upon the Lord's mercy. Ask God to crown you with kindness and compassion, as today's psalm promises.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12; Matthew 11:25-27 (391).

"The Lord is kind and merciful. He pardons all your iniquities, he heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, he crowns you with kindness and compassion."

Thursday, Jul 20, 2023

Inspiration for a dangerous mission

Today's saint, Apollinaris, was a bishop during the first century of the church, a dangerous time to be a Christian. Roman authorities and others disliked the followers of Jesus for disrupting social norms and threatening a social order that gave Roman emperors God-like authority. Christianity was also a new movement, making it even more untrustworthy. Apollinaris was bishop of Ravenna, Italy, and for that public role he was savagely beaten, later dying of his wounds. His martyrdom inspired early disciples. Who inspires you to live dangerously in faith?

MEMORIAL OF APOLLINARIS, BISHOP, MARTYR

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 3:13-20; Matthew 11:28-30 (392). *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart."*

Friday, Jul 21, 2023

A beautiful work in progress

God is the creator par excellence and invites all of creation, especially human beings, to share in the gift of creating. God enables us "to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony" (Catechism §307). There is a beauty in the incompleteness or "unfinishedness" of creation. Not only does it give us the opportunity to follow God's lead, but, according to distinguished professor and theologian Sister Anne Patrick, S.N.J.M., it reveals a beauty of its own and stirs us to gratitude for creation's patient unfolding. What gifts do you find in your own acts of creating?

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 11:10—12:14; Matthew 12:1-8 (393). *"I say to you, something greater than the temple is here."*

Saturday, Jul 22, 2023

Who do you say she is?

No biblical figure is surrounded by more mystery than Mary Magdalene. Who was she, really? What we know from the texts, says Catholic writer James Carroll, is that she was a leader in the community of Jesus' followers. While the men abandoned Jesus in his hour of need, Mary was one of the women who stayed with him even through the Crucifixion. She was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his Resurrection and the first to preach that Good News, and her status as an apostle in the early church rivaled even that of Peter. Over time, her status was questioned, her reputation tarnished. Powerful women have contended with such treatment throughout the ages. Mary Magdalene stands as a symbol for gender equity and justice as well as faithful witness.

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE, APOSTLE TO THE APOSTLES

TODAY'S READINGS: Song of Songs 3:1-4b or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; John 20:1-2, 11-18 (603). *"On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb."*

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



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