

21st SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - AUGUST 26, 2018

SUNDAY'S READINGS - EXCERPTS TO PLACE IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

First Reading:

"Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God." (Jos 24:18b)

Psalm:

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. (Ps 34)

Second Reading:

For no one hates his own flesh  
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,  
even as Christ does the church,  
because we are members of his body. (Eps 5:29-30)

Gospel:

And he said,  
"For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me  
unless it is granted him by my Father." (Jn 6:65)

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

The English translation of Psalm Responses from Lectionary for Mass © 1969, 1981, 1997, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved.

WEEKLY READINGS AND OBSERVANCES - ENGAGE PARISHIONERS IN DAILY MASS AND PRAYER

Readings for the Week of August 26, 2018

Sunday: Jos 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b/Ps 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23 [9a]/

Eph 5:21-32 or 5:2a, 25-32/Jn 6:60-69

Monday: 2 Thes 1:1-5, 11-12/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5 [3]/Mt 23:13-22

Tuesday: 2 Thes 2:1-3a, 14-17/Ps 96:10, 11-12, 13 [13b]/Mt 23:23-26

Wednesday: 2 Thes 3:6-10, 16-18/Ps 128:1-2, 4-5 [1]/Mk 6:17-29

Thursday: 1 Cor 1:1-9/Ps 145:2-3, 4-5, 6-7 [1]/Mt 24:42-51

Friday: 1 Cor 1:17-25/Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11 [5]/Mt 25:1-13

Saturday: 1 Cor 1:26-31/Ps 33:12-13, 18-19, 20-21 [12]/Mt 25:14-30

Next Sunday: Dt 4:1-2, 6-8/Ps 15:2-3, 3-4, 4-5 [1a]/Jas 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27/Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Observances for the Week of August 26, 2018

Sunday: 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Monday: St. Monica

Tuesday: St. Augustine, Bishop & Doctor of the Church

Wednesday: The Passion of St. John the Baptist

Thursday: - - -

Friday: - - -

Saturday: World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

Next Sunday: 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

GOSPEL MEDITATION - ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

August 26, 2018 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

"This saying is hard; who can accept it?" The words of Jesus' disciples in today's Gospel must sound familiar. At some point in our lives, you and I have said it about some article of our faith. Christianity makes firm demands on our ethical behavior and gives no easy answers for suffering. Many disciples were confused and dismayed by Jesus' words in the Bread of Life Discourse. Not all of them, however, had the same reaction.

When the disciples question Jesus' teaching, he confirms its truth. "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life." For some, Jesus' reassurance was not enough. These disciples do not question Jesus further or wrestle with their lack of understanding. The mighty deeds Jesus has done fade to the background. "Many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." For them, their doubt proves too much.

Jesus turns to the Twelve, knowing that confusion lives in their hearts as well. Peter answers. "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God." Notice this is not a confession of perfect understanding. It is a confession of faith in Jesus. The precise words may still confuse them, but they believe the One who said them.

In our own lives, we face doubt, confusion, and disillusionment in our Christian faith. The same choice available to the disciples is available to us. Do you have faith in Jesus, even when you lack perfect understanding? Will you stay or will you go? What do you do with your doubt?

#### LIVE THE LITURGY - INSPIRATION FOR THE WEEK

Jesus' teaching is hard and challenging. In fact, many who originally believed in him left and returned to their former way of life. They were not able to accept what he had to say or to make the changes that are necessary to conform their lives to the Gospel. We often water down our faith and make it more about securing our place in heaven than leading a life in pursuit of the kingdom of God. Following Jesus and living the Gospel require action now. The Gospel demands that we change the way we conduct the business of our lives. Sadly, many are still afraid of taking risks and cannot accept change. Are we really ready to venture forth into the unknown, or would we prefer to simply return to our old ways of doing things?

#### EVERYDAY STEWARDSHIP - RECOGNIZE GOD IN YOUR ORDINARY MOMENTS

My wife has a hope chest filled with items from her past. Some memories contained in there are joyous, while others are painful and filled with sorrow. However, all those memories helped to make her the person she is today. They have become a part of her very being.

Traditionally, a hope chest contained linens and clothing for a woman's wedding day. It was a chest filled with the hope for the future. As time goes by, many of our hopes are fulfilled. However, life never goes exactly as planned. Some hopes are dashed by unfortunate circumstances or bad choices we have made.

Our hearts are like hope chests that long for the day when we are joined for eternity with our God. Along the way, our chest may accumulate additional items that we collect on our life's journey. If we are gracious and generous along the way, our chest will fill with fruit to abundance. If we live more with a focus on ourselves, we will find our hope chests nearly barren. We will, in fact, lose hope. May the hope chest of your heart be overflowing with love that you have freely given and that has come back to you tenfold. May your generosity provide hope for the hopeless, and may your hope always remain strong.

--Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

#### QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - INVITE PARISHIONERS TO REFLECT AND RESPOND TO SCRIPTURE

##### First Reading

Just prior to his death, Joshua (who succeeded Moses in leading the Israelites into the Promised Land) declared his complete fidelity to the God of Israel: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." How do you bear witness to your faith to family and friends?

##### Second Reading

In the closing part of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul addresses household codes of conduct for believers. In this regard, Paul speaks of the love between husband and wife as analogous to the love between Christ and the Church, concluding "this is a great mystery." What do you find compelling in Paul's words on marriage?

##### Gospel Reading

The Bread of Life Discourse concludes with John reporting that many of Jesus' disciples "no longer accompanied" him. How do you react to family or friends who choose to walk away from Jesus?

#### CATHOLIC QUOTES - WORDS TO INSPIRE THE FAITHFUL

God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them.

-- St. Augustine

#### WHY DO WE DO THAT? - CATHOLIC LIFE EXPLAINED

##### Question:

Our prayer group has been reading the lives of some saints, and we were struck by how some of them thought they were such sinners. Why would such holy people think they had such serious sin?

Answer: Professional athletes practice the fundamentals of their sport over and over again, reaching for better form, consistency, and better performance. They focus on the basics, review past performances, and visualize greater success. Practice makes better, if not perfect!

Spiritual masters such as the saints also looked for perfection. They practiced their faith in the search for holiness, grace, and virtue. Through sacraments, prayer, study, good works, and penance, they raised their level of awareness, their sensitivity to the presence of God, the demands of the Gospel, and the workings of the Holy Spirit. They examined their consciences daily, reviewing the day for moments of failure and times that they could have been more virtuous in one way or another. They resolved to do better, be more attentive and alert!

Therefore, anything that would distract them or interfere with their relationship with God would be like a small black spot on a bright white wall -- you can't miss it! The great saints were aware of sin and the presence of evil because they were so tuned in to the struggle between good and evil that was fought in their own lives, hearts, and souls. We must guard against becoming desensitized to sin in our lives and unaware of the harm it causes us. A goal of any spiritual practice is to become more aware of our sinfulness so that we seek God's forgiving and healing love.