

Sunday, Jan 14, 2018

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

It's your call

Most of us are leery about accepting calls from unknown sources. In the happy age of caller ID, it's as if a virtual butler brings each visitor's card on a silver tray into our drawing room. We can decline to be "home" to any undesirable contact. Still, people of faith *do* want to be present when it's God who comes calling. How do we learn to distinguish that special voice from all the internal chatter clamoring for our attention? Veterans in discernment are helpful mentors, including pastors, spiritual directors, and the blueprint stories of past saints. Seekers, take the call!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20; John 1:35-42 (65). *"Here I am. You called me."*

Monday, Jan 15, 2018

Stick with the routine

How many of us have tried to get in shape for a big event, like a reunion or wedding? We eat less, exercise, and hope to make a good impression. Once the big day arrives, there's little more to do than enjoy ourselves. That's what the apostles were doing while Jesus was in their midst. After years of praying for a savior, Christ finally arrived, so there was nothing more to do than savor the moment. The real challenge is to continue healthy practices once the big event is over so that we're more prepared for the next event. What exercises will help you prepare for the next big spiritual event in your life?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 15:16-23; Mark 2:18-22 (311). *"Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"*

Tuesday, Jan 16, 2018

Sabbath prayer

While the Pharisees may have overemphasized strict observance of the Sabbath, perhaps we have swung too far in the opposite direction. Look around you on any Sunday afternoon—you'll see people shopping, working, rushing about. And most of us are right in the thick of things. While having options on how to spend our free time is a good thing, what seems to be getting lost is the notion of a qualitative difference in the pace of life, the "quiet Sunday afternoons" of times past. We all need a space in our crowded lives for time apart, time to reconnect with ourselves, our loved ones, and our God. Whatever your own Sunday choices might be, make sure you find a way to "keep holy the Sabbath." After all, as Jesus taught, the Sabbath was designed for our benefit. God doesn't need a day of rest—we do.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Mark 2:23-28 (312). *"The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath."*

Wednesday, Jan 17, 2018

MEMORIAL OF ANTHONY, ABBOT

Go for broke

At one point in the gospels, Jesus says, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). Saint Anthony, the fourth-century Egyptian considered the founder of Christian monasticism, would have easily qualified as Jesus' "family." Sitting one day in church, he

heard the gospel passage, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). He immediately sold what he owned, arranged for the financial support of his sister, gave the rest of his money to the poor, and went into the desert to live as a hermit. Sometimes we need a "here I am Lord" faith that gets up and does the will of God before we can talk ourselves out of it.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51; Mark 3:1-6 (313). *"Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?"*

Thursday, Jan 18, 2018

Touch the pain

When people are hurting, they seek the healing power of physical touch, just as those who followed Jesus did. Perhaps that is one reason why healing massage is one of the fastest-growing phenomena in our society. We seek to be healed physically, emotionally, and spiritually of what ails us, what causes us "disease," and the power of touch can help in all these areas. Be a healer yourself, by offering a comforting hug or shoulder to cry on, a handshake of praise, a kiss to a loved one. To touch and be touched in healing, healthy ways is as natural and human as to breathe and walk. Reach out and make the connection today!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 18:6-9; 19:1-7; Mark 3:7-12 (314). *"He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him."*

Friday, Jan 19, 2018

Jesus chooses his teammates

When it comes to Christian unity, Jesus points us in an odd direction by his example. When he calls his 12 closest followers, it's not pretty: Roman collaborators, men smelling of fish, a political agitator, and a thief, among others. Many of these will never distinguish themselves beyond their denial, betrayal, and doubt of the one whom they follow. Why does Jesus make such eccentric choices? We might as well ask why Jesus wants you and me. Jesus calls whom he calls, and if we don't all go to the same church, is that his problem or ours?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 24:3-21; Mark 3:13-19 (315). *"Jesus called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him."*

Saturday, Jan 20, 2018

MEMORIAL OF FABIAN, POPE, MARTYR

Serve when called

Can a layperson be chosen pope? It happened in the year 236, when it is said that those who had gathered to elect a new bishop of Rome saw a dove alight upon the head of Fabian, an unknown layman and farmer who happened to be visiting the city. He was at once proclaimed bishop of Rome by acclamation. Fabian made important contributions to the church, including his decision to send seven bishops to Gaul to evangelize the region we know today as France and Belgium. Be prepared for service both great and small at any time of day or night.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27; Mark 3:20-21 (316). *"Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?"*

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



©2017 TrueQuest Communications. TakeFiveForFaith.com; mail@takefiveforfaith.com. All rights reserved. Noncommercial reprints permitted with the following credit: Reprinted with permission from TakeFiveForFaith.com. Scripture citations from the New American Bible Revised Edition. For more information about TAKE FIVE and our regular contributors, go to PrepareTheWord.com. **Free daily email and app available online at TakeFiveForFaith.com/subscribe.**