

DAILY REFLECTIONS (WEEK OF 07/24/11 - 07/30/11)

SUNDAY, JULY 24, 2011: It is printed in the bulletin.

MONDAY, JULY 25

FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE

Become a saint in one word

What makes an apostle or saint? Look at the words of Saint Paul in his letter to the Christian community at Corinth and there you will find the essence of any apostle or saint in one lowly conjunction: *But*. Afflicted, perplexed, persecuted—*but!* Paul reminds us that true apostles and saints of God are ordinary people who struggle with the contradictions in life *but* who do not let themselves be defined by them. Saint James, like his fellow apostle, Paul, lived these words to the max. Jesus had given James the heads-up that he'd be facing many an obstacle, but James remained true to his identity in God. Try this fill-in-the-blank spiritual exercise: "I am [e.g., afflicted] *but* [e.g., not constrained]."

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605)*

"We hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us."

TUESDAY, JULY 26

FEAST OF JOACHIM AND ANNE, PARENTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Pass along your hand-me-downs

We know nothing for certain about the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but it doesn't matter. In the same way that we know God through his Son Jesus, we can know Anne and Joachim through their daughter Mary. It was through these two that Mary learned about prayer and work, family and community. It was Anne and Joachim who taught their daughter to love and trust God enough to say, "May it be done to me according to your word." Faith, like the color of our eyes and hair, is passed down from generation to generation. Today may we remember that our words and actions will continue to reverberate for years to come, even to our children's children's children. Let us speak and act accordingly.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus 33: 7-11, 34:5b-9, 28; Matthew 13:36-43 (402)*

"The righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27

What's it worth to you?

Jesus' metaphor that the kingdom of God is a "pearl of great price" so precious that a person would sell all their possessions to have it may seem extreme. However, Jesus is not giving out financial advice. He is exaggerating to make a point about which he has no doubt: that God and God's reign over us is all that matters. Often it's only when we are pushed to the brink, when we're confronted with losing it all, that we realize what really matters, what the "pearl" is and what it means. Furthermore, *you* are such a pearl to Christ; he laid down his life to possess you. Breathtaking, isn't it?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus 34:29-35; Matthew 13:44-46 (403)*

"The Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls."

THURSDAY, JULY 28

Travel light

Most tabernacles these days are pretty fancy places, far removed in size and style from the original dwelling place of God, which was a tent in the desert. Moses built it, but the master architect was God, who delivered the blueprint on Mt. Sinai. It served as the dwelling place of the Most High but it had to be lightweight and portable if it were going to accompany the Israelites on their wanderings in the wilderness during the Exodus. It does us well to remember that God does not need a fancy house to feel at home and travel among us. We are a pilgrim people, and it is good to stay in touch with our roots. Anyone up for camping?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus 40:16-21, 34-38; Matthew 13:47-53 (404)*

“Moses . . . spread the tent over the Dwelling . . . and the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling.”

FRIDAY, JULY 29

FEAST OF MARTHA

The work of prayer

Twice in the gospels we hear of Saint Martha: once, in Luke, when she complained to Jesus that her sister Mary was spending too much time at his feet while she was doing all the cooking and serving, and the other, in John, when she went out to meet Jesus after the death of her brother Lazarus. In Luke Jesus reminded Martha of how being attentive to his presence has to accompany serving others—something she seemed to recognize in John: “I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” Martha’s message to us: Prayer without action leads to an incomplete faith life, but so does action without prayer.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34b-37 (405); John 11:19-27 or Luke 10:38-42 (607)*

“Jesus told her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.’ ”

SATURDAY, JULY 30

FEAST OF PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

A case of mistaken identity

Unlike Saint Peter Chrysologus, the fifth-century bishop who parlayed his friendship with an emperor into striking examples of early Christian art in Ravenna, Jesus’ encounter with the government was not so happy. Herod Antipas had heard of someone called Jesus who was going around doing mighty deeds. Herod’s only experience with such a figure, however, was John the Baptist, who was dead, so, he thought, might “Jesus” be John come back from dead? Of course Herod was wrong on that count. He not only failed to recognize Jesus at first but also the fact that all power comes from God. How it’s used is up to human beings.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 25:1, 8-17; Matthew 14:1-12 (406)*

“This man is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him.”