

DAILY REFLECTIONS (WEEK OF 07/31/11 – 08/06/11)

SUNDAY, JULY 31, 2011: It is printed in the bulletin.

MONDAY, AUGUST 1

FEAST OF ALPHONSUS LIGUORI, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Let's not go to extremes

Skeptics abound. Those who retain their faith are tempted toward the fringes: a severe expression of religion that lacks mercy or a laxity that makes everything seem relative and even irrelevant. Does that sound like a description of our generation? Actually, it's how many described the 18th century. In that divided age Saint Alphonsus Liguori became the champion of the middle ground. "Nothing else is required than to act toward God, in the midst of your occupations, as you do toward those who love you and whom you love." In good times and in bad, love knows how to behave.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 11:4b-15 (407); Matthew 14:22-36 (408)*

"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2

Let's hear a shout-out for humility

You have to admire Moses. Two people close to him—Aaron and Miriam—had started asking why *they* couldn't be prophets, too. To settle the matter God called the three of them out for a talking-to: God trusted Moses, God said—end of argument. What's more, God punished Miriam with an instant case of leprosy. But Moses just as quickly asked the Lord to forgive Miriam. We see something similar when Jesus called Saint Peter to walk out on the water to him. Peter's initial faith sank pretty quickly once he was out on the water, but Jesus caught him before he could go under. It's a virtue to keep faith—and to reach out a forgiving hand to others when they have not kept faith with you.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 12:1-13; Matthew 14:22-36 or 15:1-2, 10-14 (408)*

"Why, then, did you not fear to speak against my servant Moses?"

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3

Get a new perspective

The story of Jesus' encounter with a Gentile woman distraught over her daughter's illness is troubling. Not only does Jesus seem reluctant to help, but he even calls her a dog, as if to dismiss her as not worthy of him. The woman is undaunted and persists, and Jesus not only relents but is profoundly impressed. While we may not like seeing Jesus in this unkind light, the point may be that Jesus—human like us in all things but sin—*learns something* in a human way. When the wideness of God's mercy confronts cultural prejudice, Jesus matures in his thinking, just as we all do if we are open to the grace of seeing beyond our assumptions.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 13:1-2, 25-14:1, 26-29a, 34-35; Matthew 15:21-28 (409)*

"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4

FEAST OF SAINT JOHN MARY VIANNEY, PRIEST

The call is here and now

Saint John Vianney was a member of an endangered species—a French Catholic priest in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Times were difficult and persecution of the church had been heavy, yet Vianney found a way to live his vocation with such devotion that the town of Ars where he was posted attracted thousands of pilgrims a year. It is said that in his final years he put in 16 to 18 hours a day in the confessional. Though he yearned for a life of quiet contemplation, he stuck it out. The lesson for all of us: Our call to serve begins right here, right now.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 20:1-13, Matthew 16:13-23 (410)*

"I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven."

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5

DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY MAJOR IN ROME

Let it snow

The longer a building has been around, the more likely it is to attract legends. Few structures have stood longer than the Basilica of Saint Mary Major of Rome, which dates to the fourth century. Perhaps it is no surprise that this beautiful basilica—the largest in the world to honor the Mother of God—has attracted its share of lore. According to one story, a wealthy Roman couple pledged their fortune to Mary, and she responded with a miraculous summer snowfall, instructing them to build a church on the site. Today, the day of dedication for “Our Lady of the Snows” has sometimes been celebrated with a shower of white rose petals released from the basilica’s dome. If a white rose is not at hand, wear something white today to honor the Blessed Mother and the buildings dedicated to her.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 4:32-40; Matthew 16:24-28 (411)*

"What can one give in exchange for his life?"

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

Be all that God wants you to be

The ways faith can transfigure us may not be as dramatic as the Lord’s—whose “face shone like the sun” and “clothes became white as light”—but they are just as real. Step into a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and listen to the stories of how faith has transformed people’s lives. Look at the icons of pop culture who credit their own creative transformations and success to God. During the final episode of her namesake show, Oprah Winfrey said: “Nothing but the hand of God has made this possible for me.” What has the hand of God made possible in your own life? What more needs transformation? Ask and receive!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Matthew 17:1-9 (614)*

"He was transfigured before them."