

JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER 2025

# Living Faith

Daily Catholic Devotions

bayard

... ask and you will  
receive;  
seek <sup>and you</sup>  
will find...

LUKE 11:9





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Mary kept all these things,  
reflecting on them in her heart.

— LUKE 2:19

Dear Readers:

The words of Jesus on our magazine cover describe the power of prayer within a living faith. Prayer is talking to Jesus in a two-way conversation. Jesus invites us to tell him our hearts' desires. He longs to know our supplications, to satisfy our spiritual hungers. "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find" (Luke 11:9).



If we were talking with Jesus right now, right here, what might we be saying? Are we asking? Are we seeking? When was the last time we took the time to unpack our hearts before the One who loves us, the Maker of Our Hearts?

Each day in *Living Faith*, you are invited to receive the Word of God and then to pause to reflect and ponder. Let me suggest one additional step: After that, tell Jesus exactly what's there in your heart. In your own words. You already have his invitation.

■ PAT GOHN, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

**Have you ever made a pilgrimage? Maybe it's time to consider one. See page 102.**

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# Living Faith®

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David Dziena, Publisher

Pat Gohn, Editorial Director

Kasey Nugent, Assistant Editor; Ben Kupiszewski, Editorial Assistant

James E. Adams, Founding Editor

*Living Faith* provides daily reflections based on a Scripture passage from the daily Mass. With readings for daily Mass listed with each devotion, this booklet helps Catholics pray and meditate in spirit with the seasons of the Church Year. Citations are from the Mass Lectionary, which is based on the *New American Bible*.

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 1  
St. Alphonsus Liguori

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Leviticus 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34b-37 + Psalm 81:3-6, 10-11  
Matthew 13:54-58

## Prayer Unites Us to God

*There shall be no strange god among you  
nor shall you worship any alien god.* PSALM 81:10

St. Alphonsus Liguori took the worship of God and daily prayer seriously: “There is a practice that is most powerful in keeping us united with God. That practice is the constant recollection of his presence.” He preached the nearness of God, extolling God’s approachability: “Acquire the habit of speaking to God as if you were alone with him, familiarly and with confidence and love, as the dearest and most loving of friends.”

Alphonsus considered adoration of the Blessed Sacrament a very special opportunity: “You may be sure that of all the moments of your life, the time you spend before the divine Sacrament will be that which will give you more strength during life and more consolation at the hour of your death...”

Finally, Alphonsus suggests keeping sight of the hope of heaven: “The brightest ornaments in the crown of the blessed in heaven are the sufferings which they have borne patiently on earth.”

St. Alphonsus Liguori, pray for us!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2

St. Eusebius of Vercelli, St. Peter Julian Eymard

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Leviticus 25:1, 8-17 + Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 7-8 + Matthew 14:1-12

## Bad Decisions

*...and [King Herod] had John beheaded in the prison.*

MATTHEW 14:10

We've all made promises that we failed to keep. Perhaps we made the promise in haste, under duress or under the influence of alcohol. It looks like King Herod's decision-making was compromised by all three factors. He was living in sin, and John the Baptist would not stop reminding him of that. The king is throwing a big party. Everyone is looking on as he tells Herodias' daughter that she can have anything she wants. Herod felt that he simply had to keep his promise. Even though Herod had come to like John, the prophet still enraged him. The king's conscience would not allow him any peace. And so, he makes a promise that he never should have made and has John killed.

When we are not at peace with God, we make poor decisions—decisions that often push us even further from God's grace. If we have sinned and not sought forgiveness, may we reconcile with God and avoid future sinful behaviors.

■ TERENCE HEGARTY

SUNDAY, AUGUST 3  
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23 + Psalm 90:3-6, 12-14, 17  
Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11 + Luke 12:13-21

## What Matters to God?

*Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God.* LUKE 12:21

A cartoon showed an armored truck, one that transports cash and other valuables, following a hearse through the gates of a cemetery. A bystander says, “I guess he’s taking it with him.”

Jesus’ parable reminds us that we cannot take our things with us when we die—not our money, nice home, fancy car, jewelry or whatever other things we value. The only “thing” we can take into eternity is the person we have become through the life we have lived on earth. Says Jesus, we must be “rich in what matters to God.”

And what matters to God? Jesus answers that question through his life and teachings: Love, compassion, humble service for others, forgiveness, justice, trust in God, to name a few.

Jesus, help me to become rich in those things that matter to God.

■ SR. MELANNIE SVOBODA, S.N.D.

MONDAY, AUGUST 4

St. John Vianney

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Numbers 11:4b-15 + Psalm 81:12-17 + Matthew 14:13-21

## Food Lessons

*Where can I get meat to give to all this people? ...I cannot carry all this people by myself, for they are too heavy for me.* NUMBERS 11:13A, 14

Moses' complaint-prayer comes out of his anguish at hearing his people weeping. What parents do not feel anguish when their children cry in pain they cannot remedy? In his prayer, Moses finds wisdom: He cannot carry them; only God can—or rather, God and he together.

Perhaps it's their difficulty believing that Jesus is God that causes the disciples to reject a similar plea for help in today's Gospel. Thousands of people are hungry and in pain. Instead of following Moses' example and asking Jesus' help, they propose a practical plan to solve the problem. But Jesus wants the people near; he knows how to feed them and how his disciples can feed them.

We're taught this lesson and given this food in every Eucharist. It's the gift that is God, giving us himself for our food, and teaching us to give ourselves as food for one another.

■ MARY MARROCCO

Numbers 12:1-13 + Psalm 51:3-7, 12-13  
Matthew 14:22-36 or 15:1-2, 10-14

## Where We Look

*But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened.* MATTHEW 14:30

When I was learning to ride a horse, the instructor taught me that a horse is inclined to go where we look. Believe it or not, horses can feel the subtle shift in our bodies when we move our eyes, and they respond accordingly.

Peter lived this when he stepped out of the boat. He *was* walking on water, miraculously defying gravity, when he was focused on Jesus. But the minute he looked at the strong wind, fear became his focus. That subtle shift of taking his eyes off of Jesus is what caused him to sink.

What is your wind? What strips you of your confidence, faith and focus on Jesus right when you're about to use your God-given gifts to be a walking miracle?

Lord, keep my focus riveted on you so I live out the miracle you want to work through me.

■ CLAIRE MCGARRY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6  
The Transfiguration of the Lord

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Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 + Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 9  
2 Peter 1:16-19 + Luke 9:28b-36

## What We Have Seen and Heard

*We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...* 2 PETER 1:16

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Jewish and Christian faiths is that they rest on historical events—not stories and myths from “a long time ago” such as the ancient Greek or Egyptian mythologies. St. Peter attests that he is an eyewitness to “the power and coming of our Lord...” His faith rests on what he has seen of God’s works and heard from God’s own lips.

We, too, have seen and experienced the power of Jesus Christ! When we share our faith with others, a good place to start is by recounting how God has helped us in our lives by comforting us in our grief, raising us up when we were low and connecting us to others when we were alone.

Take a few moments to recall the incredible things God has done for you, and pray for an opportunity to share them with someone else today.

■ JONATHAN F. SULLIVAN

Numbers 20:1-13 + Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9 + Matthew 16:13-23

## The Light Within

*...Moses struck the rock twice with his staff...* NUMBERS 20:11

The only rocks that have ever caught my attention were the ones I stepped on or tripped over. Rocks are just rocks, right? That's what I thought until I learned about geodes. These special rock formations are not rare, but a keen eye is needed to find them. Once a geode is split open, a sparkling crystalline formation is revealed inside.

I can't help but wonder if we aren't all like those geodes. We're not rocks, that's for sure. God gifts each one of us with a luminous soul. It's easy to overlook that truth when our own impressions cloud our sight. Elsewhere Scripture tells us that "...God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). There's a light inside every person who's ever crossed paths with us—those we know and those we've never noticed.

Keeping that in mind, whose inner light will you affirm today?

■ GAIL GOLEAS

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 8

St. Dominic

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Deuteronomy 4:32-40 + Psalm 77:12-16, 21 + Matthew 16:24-28

## Taking Up the Cross

*Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.* MATTHEW 16:24

Today the Church celebrates the memorial of St. Dominic de Guzmán, who founded the Order of St. Dominic in 1216. St. Dominic is often depicted in works of art carrying a staff with a cross on top; in other words, *he took up his cross*—both figuratively and literally—as he made his way around medieval Europe to spread the Good News and fend off heresy, which is a ministerial focus of the Dominican Order.

Striving to follow Jesus and his sacred example will always be challenging and never easy. However, difficult does not mean impossible. Thankfully, the Lord dispenses grace in abundance to help us to follow him as his disciples. With perseverance, prayer and steadfast love for God, taking up our cross is that much more feasible.

Heavenly Father, inspired by the example of St. Dominic, may we work for truth. We ask through the name of your Son, Jesus, who is Truth Incarnate.

■ MR. JUSTIN MCCLAIN, O.P.

Deuteronomy 6:4-13 + Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51 + Matthew 17:14-20

## ‘As a Sign’

*Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.* DEUTERONOMY 6:8-9

I’m often scribbling notes as ideas come to me. I can’t tell you, though, how many times I’ve returned to those notes later and found them indecipherable. I’d been so confident in the moment that I wouldn’t, couldn’t, forget what I meant. But then I do.

So it is with faith sometimes. In the glow and peace of the good moments, we might assume it will always be this way, that we could never forget God’s love or presence in our lives. But then we do.

And so our tradition rooted in those of the Jewish people, helps us out—encouraging us to surround ourselves with images, make a habit of prayer, to be careful and intentional about it—so that we may remember and not forget God’s great love.

Lord, may I live in your love, remembering.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10  
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Wisdom 18:6-9 + Psalm 33:1, 12, 18-22  
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19 + Luke 12:32-48

## On Faith

*Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.* HEBREWS 11:1

Faith is one of the most basic virtues necessary for our spiritual lives. The meaning of faith, however, can be challenging to understand. The above verse about faith is classic and well known. Another translation reads that “faith is confident assurance...and it is conviction about things we do not see.” The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews encourages us with numerous examples of faith.

I also like the concept expressed by the Bengali poet, Tagore. He says: “Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings while the dawn is still dark.” With faith, we often walk in darkness, trusting the light will be waiting.

We trust a person for three reasons. The person knows the truth, speaks the truth and will not deliberately deceive us. Jesus eminently fulfills those three conditions. On that foundation we can, with confident assurance, base the entirety of our lives—both here and the hereafter.

■ FR. JAMES MCKARNS

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Deuteronomy 10:12-22 + Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20 + Matthew 17:22-27

## The Choice

*Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and be no longer stiff-necked.* DEUTERONOMY 10:16

Have you ever experienced the pain of a stiff neck? There have been times when the throbbing ache is so intense that I can't function. I am unable to think about anything else. No position, therapy or posture makes it better, and I start believing that it will never end. Whether from injury or from a chronic condition like mine, the suffering of a stiff neck is downright debilitating, no matter how long it lasts. So, when I read, "be no longer stiff-necked" in today's Scripture, I take the directive a little personally. Who would choose to have a stiff neck on purpose?

The truth is, however, that there's always a choice to be made. When I allow God to "circumcise [my] heart," to open it and remove barriers and obstructions, I become receptive to the One who's my "glory... [my] God" (v. 21). My choice, in the words of Fr. Walter Ciszek, is "to accept all things, come what may, as from his hands."

■ MARÍA RUIZ SCAPERLANDA

*Maria is author of numerous books. Visit  
DayByDayWithMaria.blogspot.com.*

TUESDAY, AUGUST 12  
St. Jane Frances de Chantal

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Deuteronomy 31:1-8 + Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 7-9, 12  
Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14

## God's Persistence

*If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?* MATTHEW 18:12

I'm no shepherd, but from an economic perspective, this parable makes little sense. "No," I want to scream, "think of the ninety-nine! Think of the wolves that might attack them while you go off in search of one straggly lamb! What are you thinking?"

But Jesus' message is clear: My ways and thoughts are not always God's ways. What makes sense to us often falls short of God's wisdom. God does not give up just because there are so many of us. God sees each of us as distinct and beloved creatures and born with a unique meaning and purpose that can change the world and help grow God's Kingdom.

Never let go of me, Lord. Never give up.

■ STEVE GIVENS

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 + Psalm 66:1-3, 5, 8, 16-17 + Matthew 18:15-20

## That Others May Know God

*[The LORD said to Moses,] “I have let you feast your eyes upon it, but you shall not cross over.”* DEUTERONOMY 34:4

God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery and into the Promised Land. Moses fulfills his calling faithfully, yet, he is not allowed to enter the land with them. Moses’ life is characterized by his willingness to suffer for the good of God’s people—not uncommon for those called to be prophets.

Similarly, the saints honored today (Sts. Pontian and Hippolytus) also chose to suffer the loss of earthly rewards for the greater good of the Church. Indeed, the job description for prophets and saints begins with the willingness to be self-giving so that others may know God more deeply during life and rest eternally in God’s love forever.

We are all called to be saints and even prophets in this world. Our sacrifices may not include poverty or martyrdom. But every act of humility and our willingness to put others’ needs first tell the Gospel story and bring others closer to Christ.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14

St. Maximilian Kolbe

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Joshua 3:7-10a, 11, 13-17 + Psalm 114:1-6 + Matthew 18:21—19:1

## Forgiving in Faith

*Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?* MATTHEW 18:21

It didn't seem fair to Peter, and it often doesn't seem fair to us. Forgive those who have wronged us, when there's no evidence of a change of heart? That's the stuff of saints: Maximilian Kolbe urging his fellow prisoners in Nazi camps to forgive the guards who beat and starved them; Josephine Bakhita saying she would kiss the feet of those who tortured her because without that experience she wouldn't have found Christ.

Can the Lord really expect us to do the same for those who harm us? Well, yes.

But to be redeemed, the offender must also repent. Did Kolbe's guards and Bakhita's enslavers repent? Did the spouse who cheated, the executive who swindled, the politician who lied? We may never truly know. But we know this: Jesus asks us to forgive.

That is all we can do, releasing the other person's future path to the miracle of faith.

Jesus, help me release the resentment I feel against those who have wronged me, and help me repent of my own sins.

■ MELANIE RIGNEY

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab + Psalm 45:10-12, 16

1 Corinthians 15:20-27 + Luke 1:39-56

## Our Destiny

*Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.* LUKE 1:45

More than once over the years—and I date myself here—I have used the estimable singer Peggy Lee as a foil in my homilies. After running through a series of life's experiences that failed to live up to expectations, Peggy croons, "*Is that all there is my friend, is that all there is?*" Her sad resignation is at the opposite end of the hope elicited by celebrating Mary's Assumption. This song is definitely not on the soundtrack of heaven.

Today's Marian feast hangs on the question: To what or to whom are our lives ultimately directed? The answer, surprising as it may seem amid whatever troubles may beset us, is bliss—complete and utter bliss. It's beatitude, pure and simple.

Mary is taken up into heaven after placing her life entirely at the service of God's Word. Holding fast to that Word, this is our destiny as well. Beatitude and bliss.

■ FR. DENNIS GALLAGHER, A.A.

Joshua 24:14-29 ✦ Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 11 ✦ Matthew 19:13-15

## Stones

*Then [Joshua] took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was in the sanctuary of the LORD. JOSHUA 24:26*

I love the symbolism of stones in the Bible, like in this passage or the stone rolled from the entrance to Jesus' tomb. I love the tradition of the Israelites stacking stones to commemorate significant events, to remember God's covenant with them.

On running treks, I have passed by where runners and hikers stack stones. I like thinking about what it meant to each of them to stack a particular stone at a particular moment in their journeys.

I save stones. I find them on the beach or in the mountains. I carry them for as long as I need to feel the weight of them in my palm. Some I carried for months, as I was working through something significant. When it is time, I let them go. I stack them on piles made by other adventurers on the trails. Sometimes I throw them back into the ocean. We all need reminders of God's promises. He carried us before, and he will carry us still.

■ KRISTIN ARMSTRONG

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17  
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10 + Psalm 40:2-4, 18  
Hebrews 12:1-4 + Luke 12:49-53

## Choosing Sides

*Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.* LUKE 12:51

Did you hear that?

Jesus' followers must have been shocked. The rabbi who had worked miracles and spoke of building treasure in heaven was talking about upheaval, conflict, division. Say *what?*

But Jesus had a point. When he described families being torn apart, he spoke of them being divided by generations—the old against the new. He offered a radical way of life. He expected resistance.

The fact is, the way of Christ is hard, even extreme. Loving your enemies? Praying for your persecutors? How can someone live like that?

This passage reminds us that following Christ isn't easy; choosing sides rarely is. In our own day, it challenges us: Which side are we on? Are we prepared to be countercultural, even radical?

When it comes to choosing a side, can we go against the tide and choose the most radical way of all, the way of love?

■ DCN. GREG KANDRA

Judges 2:11-19 + Psalm 106:34-37, 39-40, 43-44 + Matthew 19:16-22

## Rescue Me

*They served their idols,  
which became a snare for them. PSALM 106:36*

What are your idols? Your newsfeed or a celebrity you may follow? Your political party? Your appetite for food and drink? Maybe it's your critical comments that come out of your mouth more often than do your positive ones?

Our idols, even the small pesky ones can ensnare us. Today's readings are replete with human stubbornness and waywardness. The Israelites fell away from right living and offended God again and again. The Lord raised up judges to set them straight, but they continually wandered away into selfishness.

What about us? What would it take to change even the small habits and compulsions of our everyday lives? The Lord knows our struggles and sends us the Holy Spirit to give us courage and perseverance, to free us from our idols.

What habit or attitude is ensnaring you today? With Holy Spirit's help, resolve to begin to free yourself.

Rescue me, O Lord, from all that ensnares me and keeps me from following you.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 19

St. John Eudes

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Judges 6:11-24a + Psalm 85:9, 11-14 + Matthew 19:23-30

## God With Us

*...if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?*

JUDGES 6:13

The raids of the Midianites were a constant threat to the survival of the Israelites. These nomads would descend on the land after the Israelites had sown their crops and were preparing to harvest the produce that would sustain their families. Israel was reduced to utter poverty by these incursions. We can read between the lines to see that Gideon, after seven years of experiencing the oppression of the Midianites, had had enough.

Perhaps at some time in our lives, especially when confronted with the mystery of human suffering, we have heard ourselves uttering words similar to Gideon's. Chronic pain, a terminal diagnosis, the heartache of a relationship ended not by our choice and so many other challenges can shake our sense of God's presence. Yet, the promise Gideon heard so many years ago is the same reassurance the Holy One speaks to us today: "I will be with you. Do not fear."

■ SR. CHRIS KOELLHOFFER, I.H.M.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20

St. Bernard

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Judges 9:6-15 + Psalm 21:2-7 + Matthew 20:1-16

## Overflowing Generosity

*Are you envious because I am generous?* MATTHEW 20:15

I sometimes call the parable of the generous landowner the most un-American of Jesus' parables. The idea that those who work only an hour in the fields are paid the same as those who worked all day in the heat seems grossly unfair in our materialistic calculus. How would we respond? Would we go on strike or file a complaint?

The key to the parable, however, is the landowner's response when the early workers grumble. "...Am I not free to do as I wish with my money? Are you envious because I am generous?" (v. 15). He rewarded everyone with what he had promised.

The truth is that God's ways are not man's ways. The parable shows in fact that God is generous with everybody in his loving kindness. Those who serve him all their lives and those who come to him late in life—all recipients of God's mercy that is overflowing and without limit. That is to be celebrated!

Jesus, help me to be grateful for your Father's overflowing generosity.

■ GREG ERLANDSON

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21

St. Pius X

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Judges 11:29-39a + Psalm 40:5, 7-10 + Matthew 22:1-14

# Bring Others to the Feast

*...invite to the feast whomever you find.* MATTHEW 22:9

We have all received invitations to events and not wanted to go. If you're anything like me—an introvert times a zillion—you find the task of socializing incredibly daunting. There have been many times, however, that I could not turn down an invitation and complained about going until the very moment of the event only to find that upon going, I was beyond glad that I chose to attend.

Today's Gospel is about a wedding banquet, where all are invited but not all will attend. The Lord reminds us that the generous feast of his love and goodness is for all. And God does not want anyone to miss it! Jesus makes clear that many will turn down the opportunity to receive his love, but that we who believe should not stop exhausting ourselves to extend Love's invitation to all, to help others to get there.

Lord, lead me to welcome others to the feast of your love!

■ SARAH HART

*Sarah Hart of Nashville, TN, has been a singer, songwriter, music producer, and given retreats and keynotes for more than 25 years.*

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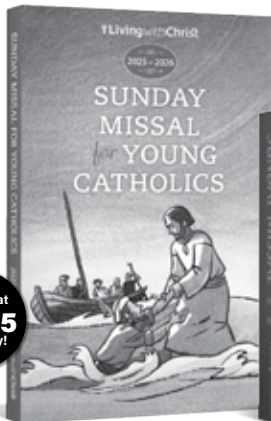


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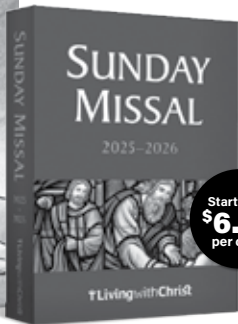
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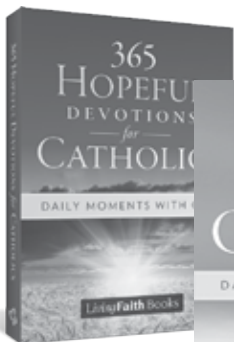
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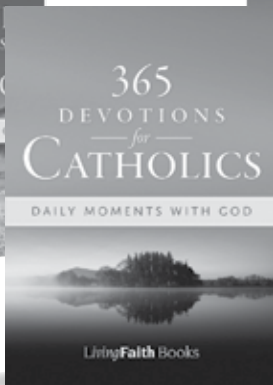
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FRIDAY, AUGUST 22

The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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Ruth 1:1, 3-6, 14b-16, 22 + Psalm 146:5-10 + Matthew 22:34-40

## Pray for Us, Mary

*Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died...* RUTH 1:3

As Catholics, in our popular prayer addressed to Mother Mary, we ask her “pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” This request, made to the Mother of God, is one that I often place a lot of hope in, for myself and for others. For the people whom we loved who have died, I’m hopeful that Mary prayed for them at the hours of their deaths, just as I trust she will pray for me at my death.

In today’s reading from Ruth, three men in a family have died: Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion. The women who mourn them in sadness must also figure out the future without them. They turn to one another for help and support.

Today, we look to Mary’s Queenship as we celebrate the octave day of her Assumption into heaven. We recall the Apostles who mourned her departure from this earth. Then, as now, from heaven, Mary prayed for them and their labors, and she prays for us today.

■ FR. EDWARD LOONEY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23

St. Rose of Lima

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Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11; 4:13-17 + Psalm 128:1-5 + Matthew 23:1-12

## Ruth's Legacy

*I have had a complete account of what you have done for your mother-in-law after your husband's death; you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know previously.* RUTH 2:11

Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, had come with her husband and two sons to Moab from Judah where there was famine. Her husband and two sons died there. She wanted to return home. Ruth felt Naomi's vulnerability and, with loving compassion, made the journey with her.

When Boaz spoke to her, she had been gleaning after the harvesters in his field. Boaz was a prominent man of the clan of Naomi's husband. He married Ruth, and they had a son named Obed, who became the grandfather of David. Because of Ruth's kindness, she changed from a foreigner to an ancestor of David, Israel's first dynastic King.

God, thank you for this story showing the life-giving power of kindness. We give thanks for your great kindness to us.

■ PATRICIA LIVINGSTON

*Pat Livingston is a writer, speaker and retreat director. A wife, mother and grandmother, she lives in Tampa, FL.*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 24  
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Isaiah 66:18-21 + Psalm 117:1-2  
Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13 + Luke 13:22-30

# The Surprising Kingdom of God

*...some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.* LUKE 13:30

God's love transcends human measures of fairness and justice. With human scales, we judge, calculate and measure out love, compassion and justice. But God *is* love.

Jesus challenges human standards of fairness and righteousness. When the crowds think they have figured out the ways of God, Jesus challenges them to look deeper from God's perspective.

Taking on God's viewpoint marks the transformative journey of living faith. The question posed to Jesus in the Gospel expresses the human desire to know with certainty who will be saved. But salvation cannot be fully known or understood precisely because it comes from God, not from us. And God's desire to save all in the mystery of divine measures of mercy and justice transcends our limited vision and narrow calculations.

So, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last. Only complete and trusting faith in God matters.

■ JEM SULLIVAN, PH.D.

MONDAY, AUGUST 25  
St. Louis, St. Joseph Calasanz

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1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 8b-10 + Psalm 149:1-6, 9 + Matthew 23:13-22

## Affirming the Good We See

*We give thanks to God always for all of you...*

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2

Paul begins his first letter to the Thessalonians with beautiful words of affirmation. Then he gives specific examples of the Thessalonians' praiseworthy actions, namely, the ways they are living out their faith, love and hope. How encouraging his words must have been for them. Don't we all need some acknowledgement at times of the things we are doing right or well?

Today, we can reflect on the role encouragement has played in our lives. I, for one, would never have become a writer if I hadn't received encouragement from teachers, friends, editors and readers along the way. Next, we can take stock of the ways we are affirming others right now—our family, friends, coworkers, the people we serve, the people who serve us. Remember, no one ever died from too much affirmation, but some people are shriveling for lack of it.

■ SR. MELANNIE SVOBODA, S.N.D.

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1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 + Psalm 139:1-6 + Matthew 23:23-26

## Gnats and Camels

*Woe to you...you hypocrites.* MATTHEW 23:23

The closer Jesus gets to his death, the more fiery his preaching becomes. For a whole chapter, Jesus attacks every pretense and posture of the scribes and Pharisees, the very people who have already sworn to kill him. They micro-measure every aspect of the Law, usually the least important elements, like tiny “tithes of mint and dill and cummin.” Useless! Hypocrites! They run from “judgment and mercy and fidelity” that give the Law real meaning. They polish a cup while contaminating it with their own filth and, get this, “self-indulgence”! (See verse 25.)

But I just hope we don’t think we’re any better. Speaking for myself, I strain out lots of gnats and swallow lots of camels. Do I think I’m something special? Jesus died for all our sins too! Can I see clearly enough to find my way to Jesus amidst a list of woes that describe me?

Mint is nice, but mercy is infinitely better. That is where our True Guide, Jesus, is leading us.

■ MIGUEL DULICK

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27

St. Monica

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1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 + Psalm 139:7-12 + Matthew 23:27-32

## Hidden in Plain Sight

*From your presence where can I flee?* PSALM 139:7

My husband and I always knew when our dog Tascha did something wrong. Hearing us coming, she'd hide her face underneath the sofa. We'd laugh as her classic husky ears, fluffy body and curly tail extended into the room, completely giving her away!

The futility of Tascha's antics is easy to see. But what about me when I do something wrong? Where do I turn? Our Lord already sees me—all of me. And he loves me too much to leave me there.

Today, we celebrate St. Monica, who for years faithfully prayed for her son Augustine to turn his face back to God. And, what a conversion when he finally did!

Is something causing you to turn away? God already sees you—all of you—and loves you too much to leave you there. Fully present, he's here, especially in Confession and the Eucharist!

Thank you, Precious Lord, that no matter where I attempt to hide, your presence is with me always.

■ KATHLEEN SWARTZ MCQUAIG

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

St. Augustine

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1 Thessalonians 3:7-13 + Psalm 90:3-5, 12-14, 17 + Matthew 24:42-51

## Live Today As If Your Last

*Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.* MATTHEW 24:42

A common admonition to priests sometimes found printed in sacristies of churches is: “Celebrate this Holy Mass as if it were your first Mass, your last Mass, your only Mass.” The priest is thus admonished to live and pray as if this day was his last.

The Gospel today affirms that we do not know when the Lord will come for us. So, we must be “awake” and ready.

If you were told that today would be your last, what would you do? One of the most common things people say is that they would tell someone how much they love them. Why not do that today? (And tell Jesus you love him too!)

Live today as if it was your last day. One day, it will be.

■ MSGR. STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

*Share your thoughts in the comments section  
for the daily devotion at [LivingFaith.com](http://LivingFaith.com).*

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 + Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 10-12 + Mark 6:17-29

## Clear-Eyed

*For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness.*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7

Once I was testing out my new camera, and I took some random photos of a room in my house, a room I thought was decently clean. I was shocked at how dirty it looked through the lens. There was a difference between what my easy assumptions had led me to believe and perhaps a more objective view.

As Paul says, God calls us to holiness—a “clean room” of my soul, my whole person—every day. My sense of where I’m at—how “clean” I am—is a start. But it’s not enough, is it? Others, family, friends, spiritual advisors, God’s Word, all help me to see myself with more clarity and honesty than perhaps my personal, biased, protective vision can on its own.

The truth is, sometimes, we do indeed only see what we want to see—outside and in.

God of Wisdom, may I see myself with clarity.

■ AMY WELBORN

SATURDAY, AUGUST 30  
21st Week in Ordinary Time

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1 Thessalonians 4:9-11 + Psalm 98:1, 7-9 + Matthew 25:14-30

## Putting Yourself Out There

*Well done, my good and faithful servant.* MATTHEW 25:21

Sometimes, when showering, I like to belt out show tunes, a Taylor Swift song or two and perennial favorites such as Billy Joel's "Piano Man." I've sung in church choirs, too, but ask me to perform a solo? My throat constricts, and I forget all the notes. So when the music director from my home parish once asked me to serve as cantor over a college Christmas break, it took a lot of courage to not bury my talent. I asked God to help me find my voice. And he did. I showed up as a good and faithful servant, and since then, I've tried to put my singing self out there as well as to encourage my musically inclined children to do the same.

St. Augustine is attributed with saying, "He who sings prays twice." Perhaps that could be said of any talent we share for the greater glory of God—using it is both as a gift and a prayer.

■ KATE WICKER

*Kate Wicker is a wife, mom of five, speaker and author of Getting Past Perfect: Finding Joy and Grace in the Messiness of Motherhood and Weightless. Visit [KateWicker.com](http://KateWicker.com) for more.*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 31  
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29 + Psalm 68:4-7, 10-11  
Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a + Luke 14:1, 7-14

# His Way of Humility

*Humble yourself the more, the greater you are...*

SIRACH 3:18A

They say you can tell the measure of a man by watching how he treats a person who can't do anything for him. Affirming the dignity of another can be as simple as pausing, paying attention or making eye contact. Yet, we often tend to hurry on our way or ignore those around us, forgetting that they are walking images of the divine.

If anyone would be justified in overlooking others without a second thought, it would be God. “What is man that you are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:5). After all, we can't add anything to God's glory! Yet, it was Jesus—God in the flesh—who humbled himself: being born in poverty, befriending outcasts, washing feet and going to the Cross. Jesus invites us to follow in his way of humility knowing that it is the only path to glory.

How will you help elevate another person today?

Jesus, help me to see you, my neighbor and myself with true humility.

■ STEVE PABLE

# Prayers & Blessings

## Morning Prayers

Father in heaven, draw me near to you today. You are my origin and my true destination. Thank you for making me your beloved child with a home in your family. I greet this day with the knowledge that you love me. May I be led by your divine Providence every hour, and every moment, confidently trusting in your love today. **AMEN.**

Good morning, Jesus! You are the way, truth and life. Your way is the perfect path for my day. Your truth is all I need to know. Your life offers me salvation and the promise of heaven. May I make my life a gift to you and to the people you invite me to serve today. Help me to avoid temptations and walk in virtue, guided by your Presence. **AMEN.**

Come, Holy Spirit, shine your light on me in the morning. Help me to rise and give glory to God. Then, send your help so that I may serve God with joy by loving and serving others this day. Let my smile be your radiance. Let my words be your kindness. May my actions reflect your goodness. **AMEN.**

# Prayers & Blessings

## Evening Prayers

Father in heaven, I come to take my rest. You saw everything about my day today. Allow me to lay it all before you. You know my strivings, my good actions and my failings. Help me to grow and learn from my mistakes and give you the glory for what went right. Send me your peace and restore me by sleep to wake and serve you anew tomorrow. **AMEN.**

Jesus, Lord of the Day and the Night, I come to you with all that is in my heart. As evening comes, I seek your blessing and help: to reflect on the day and bring to light what was profitable for my growth and those moments that hindered it. Help me to release any worries to your care and sleep in peace. **AMEN.**

Holy Spirit, you are my silent Advocate. Thank you for working in my day. Watch over all my loved ones and all the situations that I bring to you now. Inspire in me the desire to be renewed in love and grace, and to live for Christ more fully, as I look forward to the hope of a new day and the beauty of the life to come. **AMEN.**

# Prayers & Blessings

## For Families

St. Maximilian Kolbe, you gave your life so that a family might not be deprived of a husband and father. By your heroic martyrdom of charity, teach us that the value of family life is worth our sacrifices also. Just as you found in Mary the channel of those graces that strengthened you to be faithful to her Son, help us to rejoice also in her who was given to us as a mother by Jesus from the Cross. Be with us, St. Maximilian, as we pray for the special needs of our family [insert petitions here]. **AMEN.**

## Lord, Take Me...

Lord, take me where you want me to go; let me meet who you want me to meet; tell me what you want me to say; and keep me out of your way. **AMEN.**

**FR. MYCHAL JUDGE, FDNY, who died 9/11/01**

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# Prayer Prompt

## Make a Spiritual Pilgrimage

Making a pilgrimage is a time-honored spiritual practice. During this Jubilee, many Catholics are embarking to Rome to pray, reflect and seek God's will in their lives by visiting the famous basilicas and other religious sites. Well-known pilgrimage sites include Jerusalem and the Holy Lands, walking the Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James) in Spain and Marian shrines such as Guadalupe in Mexico, Fatima in Portugal or Lourdes in France.

A pilgrimage is more than a vacation or tour. Here's why!

**A pilgrimage brings spiritual benefits.** Begin with the end in mind: How might your pilgrimage bring you closer to God? Think of it as a specialized retreat, an opportunity to come away and encounter God and his love. It's also a time to share your faith and experiences with fellow pilgrims.

Discover what opportunities for the sacraments might be available not only at your destination but also along the way. Look for opportunities for prayer and penitence: go to confession, attend Mass, make sacrifices and pray in unique and sacred spaces as you make the journey.

**A pilgrimage opens our minds and hearts to learning.** Maybe the site or location has biblical significance, like the Holy Lands being where Jesus walked the earth. Or perhaps the site is a shrine or basilica dedicated to a special event in history or a particular saint, like St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, or the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in New York or one the missions founded by St. Junípero Serra in California? Learning about our heroes in faith—the communion of saints—and the places they lived and traveled offers inspiration for our own lives.

**A pilgrimage offers discernment and reflection.** It can offer the time and space to ask God about some of our big questions. And to seek what God might be asking of us. Walking a pilgrimage path invites us to grasp hold of priorities and release things we no longer need to carry.

**A pilgrimage can be long or short, far away or local.** See what your means and state in life allows. Travel to a different country might be worthwhile, but the cost of such may take years to save for. In the meantime, ask God to point you in the direction of local destinations. There are hundreds of potential shrines and churches in the U.S. that would be good pilgrimage destinations for a weekend or a day trip.

*Did you know that Living Faith now sponsors pilgrimages?  
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## 'You are a sign of Christ's nearness to those in need of hope'

When Pope Francis addressed a group of prison chaplains, he asked them to let prisoners know that he prays for them. The Holy Father went on to remind chaplains that they "are a sign of Christ's nearness to [those]...in need of hope."



We encourage you, too, to pray for incarcerated women and men. The *Living Faith* Foundation also aids: Families in Need and Military Personnel. By supporting the work of the *Living Faith* Foundation, you will also be "a sign of Christ's nearness" to those in need.



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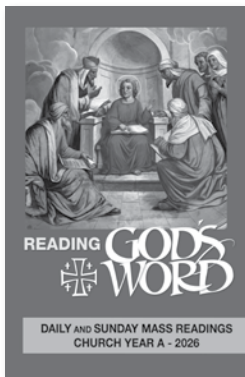
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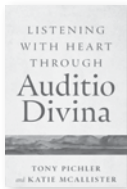


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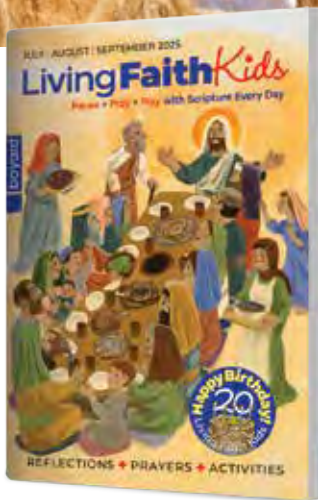
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