

## October 2015 Prepare the Word Weekday Reflections

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

#### FEAST OF THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS, VIRGIN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

##### God revealed in the little things

Thérèse of the Child Jesus is held in beloved esteem for her simple spirituality. She lived a sheltered life and died young (24), so perhaps we may fail to see the strength that belied her years. Rooted and nurtured by scripture and prayer, Thérèse knew that Jesus was present with her in all things. She forged a new spiritual way, her “little way,” in a time of great formalism in spiritual life, and in doing so she opened the door for all to see the gift of personal relationship with God who is love. Saint Thérèse, pray for us.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 7b-12; Luke 10:1-12 (458)*. “I believe I shall see the good things of the Lord.”

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

#### FEAST OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS

##### Angel of God, my guardian dear

At the time of our birth, it is believed that we each receive a guardian angel to accompany us on life's journey. This companion remains at our side for our whole life. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls ‘angels’ is a truth of faith.” The word *angel* means “messenger, especially of God.” Angels can help us in daily activities and choices, during times of joy and hardship. As you go about your day today, turn to your heavenly companion on earth for encouragement, support, and friendship.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Baruch 1:15-22 (459); Psalm 79:1b-5, 8-9; Matthew 18:1-5, 10 (650)*. “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.”

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

##### The mystery of our joy

October is Rosary month. On this first Saturday we recall with Mary the many pleasures of parenthood: anticipating the baby, sharing the news, seeing the child for the first time, dedicating this new life to God. The final Joyful Mystery celebrates the deep relief parents feel every time their worst fears about

their children's safety are proven mistaken. These gentle, simple moments are meant to be savored. Pray the Joyful Mysteries today for expectant parents, new parents, and parents on a learning curve everywhere.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29; Luke 10:17-24 (460)*. “Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

#### TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

##### Bless man's best friend

On this day, the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron of animals, many parishes celebrate the Blessing of the Animals, a special ceremony for beloved pets. In Saint Francis' Canticle of the Creatures, an ode to God's creation, he called animals his brothers and sisters. From the Book of Genesis to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which says God surrounds animals with providential care, tradition prescribes that you give back to pets all the love they give to you. One way to care for animals in the wild is to care for their habitat. Be a good steward.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16 (140)*. “The LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air.”

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

##### Watching out for the neighbors

“We Christians are called to go out of ourselves to bring the mercy and tenderness of God to all.” These words from @Pontifex (the pope's Twitter account) remind us that faith has a claim on our actions. Pope Francis continually urges us to look to the needs of our neighbors, whether they live right next door or halfway around the world. As you go about your day—at home, at school or work, in your timelines or newsfeeds—be watchful for the needs of others. How might you express the compassion of God to all you encounter today?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jonah 1:1-2:1-2, 11; Luke 10:25-37 (461)*. “And who is my neighbor?”

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

#### FEAST OF BRUNO, PRIEST

##### Find your balance

Saint Bruno was the founder of the Carthusians, a 900-year-old order of contemplatives, often known for the austerity of their lives. Yet the heart of their vocation is not austerity, but contemplation, a way of prayer available not only to monks or nuns, but ordinary Christians. Take up a book by Father Basil

Pennington or Thomas Keating and discover a simple and profound way to balance your hectic way of life with sitting at the Lord's feet, loving and being loved. Or go to Chartreux.org to hear from Carthusians themselves.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 10:38-42 (462)*. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing."

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

### FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

#### Dwell with the rosary

"For Daniel and Mary O'Malley / after supper came the beads. / He would Hail Mary the first part: / she would Holy Mary him back / and the rote prayer rose to chant, / word ran upon word, a marriage sound, / the Catholic trick for ecstasy." The poet John Shea calls the rosary the "Catholic trick for ecstasy," perhaps partly because it launches us into a timeless place, lifts us out of our ordinary concerns and into the presence of God. With minds and lips occupied, the heart is free to dwell on Jesus' life, death, and glory. Say the rosary today and tap into eternity.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jonah 4:1-11; Luke 11:1-4 (463)*. "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples."

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

#### Take heart!

"Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are anger and courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain as they are," Saint Augustine once wrote. Living a life of faith requires courage. That can be a scary as well as invigorating reality. Nothing is static. The world can change just as well as we can. In fact, to change the world we might need to change ourselves. Less gossip and conscious consumption of goods, more time in prayer—these all make more room for courage, which brings hope. And where hope is, God is at work.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Malachi 3:13-20b; Luke 11:5-13 (464)*. "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

### FEAST OF DENIS, BISHOP, AND COMPANIONS

#### Faith unchained

Among the martyrs, surely no account is as dramatic as that of Saint Denis and his two faithful companions who never left his side. This martyr and patron of France is regarded as the first bishop

of Paris. It is said that after Denis was beheaded, he picked up his head and walked six miles, all the while still preaching! Karl Rahner says, "Martyrdom is part of the church's nature since it manifests Christian death in its pure form, as the death of unrestrained faith, which is otherwise hidden in the ambivalence of all human events." Draw on the perseverance of Saint Denis to keep your faith from getting buried in the business of your day.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2; Luke 11:15-26 (465)*. "Whoever is not with me is against me."

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

### FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

#### The mystery of illumination

In the play *Godspell*, the disciples pray for the blessing to "See thee more clearly." How can we see Jesus in a clearer light? The Luminous Mysteries offer us five distinct lenses through which to view Jesus: the revelation at his Baptism, the miracle at Cana, the proclamation of the Kingdom, the Transfiguration, and the Eucharist. What can we expect from contemplating these events? "Expect a relationship," according to scripture scholar Stephen Binz. We don't read scripture to learn about Jesus. We encounter Jesus. Pray these mysteries and be transformed!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Joel 4:12-21; Luke 11:27-28 (466)*. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

### TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

#### Wisdom for all ages

In parts, the Book of Wisdom is written as if King Solomon is the speaker, although his name appears nowhere in the text, and in fact, the book was written only about 50 years before the birth of Jesus. Wisdom belongs to the Apocrypha, which are seven Old Testament books that are accepted by Catholics but not Protestants. While it may seem ironic that there's some fuzziness about Wisdom, the writing itself provides poetic clarity by personifying wisdom with characteristics of God, reminding us who is the final arbiter. Dip into this wise book for a few moments today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Wisdom 7:7-11; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30 (143)*. "I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me."

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

### Heeding the signs

Think about the last time you drove somewhere. When you reached a stop sign, you applied the brake and stopped the car. Now imagine that the sign itself made the car stop! Imagine it made present the thing it signified: stopping. Of course many signs in everyday life—"walk," "yield," "wait," to name a few—don't have that power. But in our life of faith, signs do! The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the sacraments as "efficacious signs of grace" that "bear fruit in those who receive them . . ." (1131). Consider today the ways that the sacraments are bearing fruit in your life!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 1:1-7; Luke 11:29-32 (467)*. "Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

### A letter of introduction

Saint Paul's letters were most often sent to the Christian communities he helped establish and addressed problems he'd encountered firsthand. But not so with the Romans. Paul's letter to them was a form of introduction. They didn't know each other but they were created by the same God. By Christ we are united to each other; that type of connection doesn't require having met before. It's rooted in the heart of God, drawing us together no matter what might stand between us. Remember that during your daily encounters with others.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 1:16-25; Luke 11:37-41 (468)*. "I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

### FEAST OF CALLISTUS I, POPE, MARTYR

### Take a second chance on God

If ever there were a patron saint of second chances . . . and third chances, it would have to be third-century Callistus. He was imprisoned several times for money-related problems and only then changed his ways and became a servant of the church. Perhaps it was his genuine repentance that marked him as a distinguished leader, which led to his ascendancy to the papacy. It is never too late to turn things around, no matter how dire the situation you might find yourself in. Think of Callistus, our patron saint of second chances!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 2:1-11; Luke 11:42-46 (469)*. "You impose on people burdens hard to carry."

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

### FEAST OF TERESA OF JESUS, VIRGIN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

### Put some prayer in your action and vice versa

Saint Teresa of Ávila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, was a dynamo who lived in dynamic times. She was a charismatic Spanish Carmelite during the Counter Reformation—not an easy era to be a woman, much less one leading a reform movement. But as outgoing as she was, she knew the importance of time spent in thought and prayer. After all, she was a contemplative, as well as a theologian and a mystic. Restoring your spirit makes you a stronger force for good. But don't think you need to be cloistered to pray properly. As Teresa herself said: "It would be extremely difficult if you could only pray in secluded places." Pray any which way you can.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 3:21-30; Luke 11:47-54 (470)*. "We consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

### The bread of life

World Food Day challenges us to take action to eradicate hunger within our lifetime. It's a daunting challenge. According to the United Nations, 805 million people live with hunger as an ongoing reality. There are many ways on World Food Day and throughout the year to help overcome hunger, such as food drives, advocacy efforts, and meal preparation at local outreach centers. As a church, we're called to bring Christ—the bread of life—to those hungering for spiritual nourishment. What action might you take today to help bring bread to those who suffer physical hunger as well?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 4:1-8; Luke 12:1-7 (471)*. "There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed."

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

### The mystery of grief

In disappointment, suffering, and loss, we're obliged to "hope against hope," as Saint Paul says of Abraham, a great Hoper-in-Chief. Paul invented this idiom of a hope so farfetched, it was like betting against luck. When we pray the Sorrowful Mysteries, we acknowledge the pain of life so undeniable that it can't be theologized away. Fear of death, physical torment, public humiliation, bearing heavy burdens, and the anguish of final surrender—all of this belonged to Jesus, as it does

to us. Pray these mysteries for those who hope against hope.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 4:13, 16-18; Luke 12:8-12 (472)*. "[Abraham] believed, hoping against hope, that he would become the father of many nations."

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Render what is due

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching establish that faithful citizens have a "right and duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable." Pope Benedict echoed this sentiment when he wrote: "To desire the common good and strive towards it, is a requirement of justice and charity . . ." (*Caritas Veritate* #7). On this Mission Sunday we share our treasure to maintain the work of the church. But we do so with the clear understanding that faithful citizenship also requires us to pay the taxes that support society's efforts to promote the common good.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45 (146)*. "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's . . ."

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 19

FEAST OF JOHN DE BRÉBEUF AND ISAAC JOGUES, PRIESTS, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

### Trust and let go

Today we remember martyrs, missionaries to our own continent, patron saints of North America. Isaac Jogues wrote, "My confidence is placed in God who does not need our help for accomplishing his designs. Our single endeavor should be to give ourselves to the work and to be faithful to him, and not to spoil his work by our shortcomings." For some, accustomed to being in control, getting out of God's way and allowing God to be God can feel like a martyrdom. Be brave!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 4:20-25; Luke 12:13-21 (473)*. "Take care to guard against all greed."

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

### Let's get to it

Quite frequently, funeral eulogies provide opportunity for a genuine examination of conscience. As the virtues of the deceased are sincerely extolled, it seems natural to wonder: What in the world will they say about me? How have I loved and how have I failed to love God and neighbor? Burdened by memories of failures aplenty, faults seem glaringly obvious and

sinfulness is the source of a deep regret. Is there time to change? Can amends be made? Yes, but we best start today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21; Luke 12:35-38 (474)*. ". . . so that when he arrives and knocks, you will open for him without delay."

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

### A true security system

Warnings of God's coming like a thief in the night aren't meant to be scary but are more precautionary. Jesus used parables as a means of teaching, but sometimes these stories can be just as much a reality check as a lesson. Be prepared, he tells his disciples. Like a good security system, Jesus wants to make sure we're living at the ready, ensuring our safety today and for all eternity. As the prophet Micah said, that means acting justly, loving tenderly, and walking humbly with God, so that we might live in peace, knowing we'll be ready to rejoice, not cower, when God comes calling.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 6:12-18; Luke 12:39-48 (475)*. "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much."

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

FEAST OF JOHN PAUL II, POPE

### When the going gets tough

Four years before his death, Saint Pope John Paul II was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder of the nervous system. The way he courageously shouldered his illness in those last years of his life and bore suffering for so long until death was a powerful witness. Even with all the responsibility of his office, he carried on as best he could. Physical decline is an inescapable part of life and not easy to accept. Follow the model of John Paul II and keep living to the end.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 6:19-23; Luke 12:49-53 (476)*. "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!"

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

FEAST OF JOHN OF CAPISTRANO, PRIEST

### Don't sweat the small stuff

We live in challenging times, no doubt. But consider what John of Capistrano, growing up in 1400s Italy, had to contend with. One third of the population was wiped out by bubonic plague. Schism shook the church. Emerging nations went to war. Yet Capistrano took it all in stride, confident in the Franciscan mission and ministry to which he was called. Rather than bemoaning the state of

affairs, he went about alleviating suffering and making things better wherever he could. Embrace the challenges you face, see them as opportunities rather than obstacles. See if you can leave things a bit better than you found them.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 7:18-25a; Luke 12:54-59 (477)*. "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

### Glory days

We talk about "glory days" as if we lived them all before we were out of our teens. But there's glory in the death experience that brings about a new sense of self. There's glory in being lifted up from devastating times and set on a new path. There's glory in the wisdom years, when the pieces of life's puzzle start fitting together. There's glory in knowing that we're meant for more than this limited existence, and for that we give glory to God. Pray the Glorious Mysteries with gratitude.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:1-11; Luke 13:1-9 (478)*. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

### THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

#### Make a bold move

"Holiness is heroic," says Father Robert Barron in his 2014 documentary film *Heroic priesthood*. Indeed, Christ's invitation, says Barron, "is an invitation to an extraordinary life." On this Priesthood Sunday, give thanks for the ordained men who have said the great yes to God's invitation to serve. Then take time to discern the noble purpose to which God is calling you.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52 (149)*. "You have nothing . . . to fear . . . Get up! He is calling you!"

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 26

### Go on sabbatical each week

In times past, adherence to "blue laws" kept a lot of businesses, beginning with liquor stores, as well as certain forms of entertainment, off limits on Sundays. Remnants remain, but most of these laws are long gone. While we might celebrate our new freedom to shop, work, and play to our heart's content seven days a week, was there any wisdom behind some of those laws, even if it was expressed rather clumsily? Do you ever slow down—really slow down, really rest? Busy, busy, busy doesn't leave much room for the God who

often speaks in a whisper in the wind. Devise your own Sabbath so you can keep holy!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:12-17; Luke 13:10-17 (479)*. "Woman, you are set free of your infirmity."

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27

### Muster some faith!

With healthy food and miracle grains all the rage, it should not surprise us to learn that the venerable mustard seed has been discovered to be an excellent source of all sorts of nutrients, minerals, and vitamins. But long before we focused on their benefits for our physical health, Jesus focused on their benefit to spiritual health. Is your faith in God at least as strong as your faith in antioxidants? It's OK to start small—look at all the tiny mustard seed accomplishes!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:18-25; Luke 13:18-21 (480)*. "What is the kingdom of God like? To what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed."

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

### FEAST OF SIMON AND JUDE, APOSTLES

#### An inconvenient truth

Simon and Jude were first-century apostles who are counted among the original twelve. Not to be confused with Simon Peter or Judas, tradition holds that these two men brought the gospel to Egypt (Simon), Mesopotamia (Jude), and Persia or modern-day Iran (both). Although Jude is the more famous patron saint of hopeless causes, each of these men accepted the risk of preaching the Good News. Their courage and perseverance eventually cost them their lives. Ask yourself today: What have I sacrificed to follow the Lord?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ephesians 2:19-22; Luke 6:12-16 (666)*. "He called his disciples and selected twelve."

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29

### Leave all stones unturned

Though we look upon the practice of stoning someone to death with horror, it was a punishment practiced in ancient Israel for a number of infractions. Thankfully over time it, and all capital punishment, was marginalized in Jewish thought. In the Middle Ages, prominent Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides wrote, "It is better and more satisfactory to acquit a thousand guilty persons than to put a single innocent one to death." That's as true today as it was at the time of Christ. As Pope Francis stated in 2015, the death penalty "is an offense against the inviolability of life and the

dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society, and his merciful justice, and impedes the penalty from fulfilling any just objective. It does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance." Always have mercy at the ready.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 13:31-35 (482)*. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you."

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

### Relax about Sunday

There's a lot of debate in the Bible about how the Sabbath should be observed. Jesus was concerned with the spirit, not the letter, of the law. So how are Catholics to spend their Sundays? Sunday—the day Christ rose from the dead—is the day Catholics are obligated to gather to celebrate the Eucharist at Mass. But the church acknowledges that some people have to work on Sundays and that other labors also might be necessary. As you plan your week, remember what's most important is giving rest, leisure, and worship their due.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 9:1-5; Luke 14:1-6 (483)*. "Who among you, if your son or ox falls into a cistern, would not immediately pull him out on the sabbath day?"

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31

### Bridge the gap with care

Today concludes Pastoral Care Week. How often—in the face of illness or disaster—do we literally reach out for the hand of someone who cares? In the case of a chaplain, that healing care of Jesus takes the shape of a fellow human being dedicated to bringing comfort and strengthening faith and hope, often by sharing their own. Consider becoming part of your parish's ministry of care: hospital visits, visits to the house-bound, a minister of the Eucharist. Even a simple visit or phone call to a neighbor or relative offers the healing of knowing one is not alone.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 11:1-2a, 11-12, 25-29; Luke 14:1, 7-11 (484)*. "Do not recline at table in the place of honor."

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