



SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2017 SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Pearls come with a price

Pearls are unlike other precious materials: Metals and gems are formed in the earth; pearls come from a living creature. Also, pearls do not need to be cut or polished—they're beautiful just the way they are. The actual science of how they are formed is profound: Pearls begin as an irritant inside the heart of the oyster, which secretes layer upon layer until the source is encased in lustrous coatings. What a perfect Christian metaphor for the redemptive value of suffering—that trials leave one with treasure.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Kings* 4:5, 7-12; *Romans* 8:28-30; *Matthew* 13:44-52 (109). "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls."

MONDAY, JULY 31 MEMORIAL OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, PRIEST The order of the day

Before he came on the world stage as Pope Francis, Jorge Mario Bergoglio had already put in 53 years of service to the church as a Jesuit. The Society of Jesus founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola has served the church for nearly 500 years, with Jesuits currently working in 112 nations in a variety of apostolic ministries. The election of Bergoglio to the papacy allows for greater visibility for all religious orders. Give thanks for all the women and men in consecrated religious life who have dedicated their lives to the People of God.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus* 32:15-24, 30-34; *Matthew* 13:31-35 (401). "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast."

TUESDAY, AUGUST 1

MEMORIAL OF ALPHONSUS LIGUORI, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH A whole lot of love

Saint Alphonsus (1696-1787) practiced law for a time, became a priest, and eventually founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (the Redemptorists). His clear and reasoned thinking—a remnant from his days as a litigator—served him well as a moral theologian. His persuasive and hope-filled preaching drew many to the church. "Has not God in fact won for himself a claim on all our love?" argued Alphonsus. "From all eternity he has loved us." Remember to love God back just as much.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus* 33:7-11; 34:5b-9, 28; *Matthew* 13:36-43 (402). "Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness."

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2 MEMORIAL OF EUSEBIUS OF VERCELLI, BISHOP Don't sweat the small stuff

Saint Eusebius of Vercelli (d. 371) lived at a time when bishops were elected by acclamation of the people. The people of Vercelli, in modern-day Italy, chose Eusebius because of his humility and his commitment to unity at a time of great division in the early church. Eusebius emphasized the faith that unites us rather than the opinions that divide us. When you find yourself in a disagreement with someone, ask if you are clashing over fundamental truths or merely over personal opinions and preferences. If we pray for humility, we will be able to find a way to reconcile our differences.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus* 34:29-35; *Matthew* 13:44-46 (403). "When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3 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.

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, AUGUST 4 MEMORIAL OF JOHN VIANNEY, PRIEST Hang in there

Saint John Vianney (1786-1859), known as the Curé of Ars, started out as a farmhand and catechist who needed extra time in his studies for the priesthood because he wasn't the most brilliant student. He was not at first authorized to hear Confessions, but later he would spend 10 to 16 hours a day hearing the Confessions of the 100,000 people a year who trooped to visit him. Sometimes it's necessary to struggle, even fail, before you find your true calling. When you get to the place where your gifts match what's needed, though, you'll know. There, in the words of author Frederick Buechner, "your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus* 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34b-37; *Matthew* 13:54-58 (405). "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house."

SATURDAY, AUGUST 5

MEMORIAL OF THE DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF MARY MAJOR Build on your faith

Exploring architecture is a great way to grow in your Catholic faith. Not only are there different styles of Catholic church buildings but there are also different classifications. The type of structure you may know best is the parish church, but there are also oratories, crypts, cathedrals, and basilicas. Each has its own particular characteristics. A basilica, for example, signifies a church that has a place of honor because of its historical and religious importance. Look up a church like the Basilica of Mary Major and see what light it can shed on your Catholic faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus* 25:1, 8-17; *Matthew* 14:1-12 (406). "It shall be a jubilee for you."



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

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