



Daily Bread

*Homiletic starters
and scriptural
reflection points for
each day of the month*

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The Lectionary provides a kind of spiritual script for the universal church that keeps us, literally, all on the same page as we journey through the liturgical seasons. These short reflections, written by four authors who meet weekly to share the readings, are intended to help daily preachers and others who pray from the assigned scriptures each day to orient themselves to the Living Word addressed to the church in the world. Authors are identified by their initials, with short bios provided on the last page.

September 2006

Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time (continued)

Fri., Sept. 1: 1 Cor 1:17-25; Matt 25:1-13

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Where do I go to seek wisdom? Wisdom — not information. That's a different thing. Of course we need information obtained from many sources if we are to work our way slowly, sometimes painfully, toward the truth. But information and opinion provide at best only small hints of the whole, great Truth, and at worst confusion, misdirection and downright lies. St. Paul tells us that above and beyond the great debates of any age is this: the seeming foolishness of the cross of Jesus Christ and the enormous prodigality of God's limitless, unconditional love for all people. Lord, mold me in the image of Jesus, your Son and our crucified, risen Lord. MEW

Sat., Sept. 2: 1 Cor 1:26-31; Matt 25:14-30

God chose the lowly and despised of this world, those who count for nothing ... so that no human being might boast before God. St. Paul urges us to be humble. True humility is not a pose, a pretense of being less than or other than we are. Humility requires unflinching honesty when we look at ourselves. If we have the courage to know ourselves, no pretense is necessary or even possible. We can accept ourselves with humor and grace and give our best service to God and neighbor, relying fully on God to understand and supply what we lack. In contrast, the servant in the Gospel to whom only one talent is given is not an example of humility, but of laziness and cowardice. Lord, may everything I do today be done for the glory of God. MEW

Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Sept. 4: 1 Cor 2:1-5; Luke 4:16-30 Labor Day (U.S. and Canada)

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.' Each of us is called to discover the work we are anointed to do. Labor Day was initially established as a workers' holiday to be used for labor organizing. In the late 19th century there was violence in the streets as striking workers demonstrated and federal troops were brought in to quell the riot. Such demonstrations develop when people feel there is no other way for them to be heard. One Christian response is to create ways for people to be heard before such violence erupts. Another holy labor is to develop a personal economy based on the concept of "enough." When enough is always around the corner, after the next raise or the next debt payment or the bigger house — then enough never arrives. Enough is that place where there is comfort without luxury; freedom without indulgence; security without sloth; purpose without frenetic busyness. *That we may recognize the work we are called to do today, we pray. PBS*

Tues., Sept. 5: 1 Cor 2:10b-16; Luke 4:31-37

'Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!' The demons recognize Jesus. There are two misconceptions about evil. One is that the idea of evil is old-fashioned and we don't need to pay attention to sin. What does it matter if we lie a little, cheat a little, sound off when we're offended, take more than our share, avoid our duties, eat or drink too much, forget to pray? We're not bad people, are we? Our saints and wise ones know that sin creeps in, beginning with slight self-indulgence, and before we take notice, it "possesses" us. The other misconception is that evil is more powerful than good. We read of the terrible things people do to each other — of genocide, of random and senseless violence, of the abuse of little children — and we despair and forget what the demons knew when they saw Jesus. "Have you come to destroy us?" they asked. The answer is "Yes." *Lord, give me a sensitive conscience and faith in your power over sin. PBS*

Wed., Sept. 6: 1 Cor 3:1-9; Luke 4:38-44

We are God's coworkers. The Christian community in Corinth was beset with divisions. Earlier in his letter, St. Paul chides the community for boasting: "I



belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." What is the significance of these divisions? Apollos, a brilliant Jewish scholar, appealed to the educated members of the community who wanted a more sophisticated presentation of the Gospel. The Jewish Christians from Palestine boasted of their attachment to Cephas (Aramaic for Peter). The majority of the community was poor and less educated and they compensated for their lack of social status by aligning themselves to Paul, who brought the Gospel to Corinth. Less is known about the "Christ party," but some scholars think it might refer to the "Gnostics" — those who follow no disciple, but claim to receive divine revelation directly from Christ. Paul begs them to understand that Christ cannot be divided. Contemporary Christian community isn't so different from the church in first-century Corinth. We are still divided. *For the unity of all Christians, we pray.* PBS

Thurs., Sept 7: 1 Cor 3:18-23; Luke 5:1-11

'Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.' And they caught so many fish they needed help just to get them into the boat. The lesson: Listen to the Lord and cast out your nets. Peter forgot this lesson many times. We forget, too. We get tired and discouraged. Our efforts seem fruitless or even ridiculous. The lesson remains. *Lord, help us to listen and continue in your service.* PBS

Fri., Sept. 8: Mic 5:1-4a or Rom 8:28-30; Matt:1-16, 18-23 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

God is with us. We celebrate birthdays, acknowledging the gift that each person is to the world, that particular and unique face of God among us. There are some whose entrance into this world is so precious that we celebrate their birth long after they have entered into the next world. So it is with Mary and John the Baptist and, of course, Jesus. Today is a good day to remember that Mary is our model in faith, and, as such, what we do in her honor, we should do for all those we love. *We pray for those models of faith who serve to increase our faith, and for all those whose birth into this world has enriched our lives.* PBS

Sat., Sept., 9: 1 Cor 4:6b-15; Luke 6:1-5

Peter Claver, priest

God has exhibited us apostles as the last of all, like people sentenced to death. St. Paul made himself a servant to the Christian communities he founded. St. Peter Claver vowed to be a slave of slaves, and he spent his life in the service of those Africans brutally sold into slavery. Sainthood is about living at the service of one's convictions, and this service always involves crucifixion. *In gratitude for those who live and die for the faith; for the courage of our convictions, we pray.* PBS

Twenty-Third Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Sept. 11: 1 Cor 5:1-8; Luke 6:6-11

Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough. Sept. 11 is a painful day for Americans. Can it be five years since we witnessed such horror? The wound is

raw. Our efforts to heal only yield small consolation amid profound grief and anger. We aren't who we were before that day. We cannot hope to move forward, however, without "clearing out the old." Hatred and vengeance take their toll. Open wounds rankle and putrefy. In preparation for the Festival of Unleavened Bread, old bread was discarded; only new bread was served at the festival. Paul urged the people to mark the event "not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with ... sincerity and truth." Today we are reminded of our call to be leaven in this dark, wounded world. *That we mark this solemn day not with hatred or vengeance, but with faith and healing, we pray.* PR

Tues., Sept. 12: 1 Cor 6:1-11; Luke 6:12-19

Why not rather put up with injustice? No matter how much we want it to be, life isn't fair, so we take it upon ourselves to level the playing field. No one enjoys fraud, but seemingly everyone cuts corners or tells white lies, trying to balance the unfairness. Paul chastises the Christians at Corinth for their infractions against one another and their inability to reconcile their differences without the pagan courts. Paul asserts it is better to be cheated than to exact so-called equity through revenge. We don't attain justice for ourselves through injustice to another. *That we show integrity in our justice, we pray.* PR

Wed., Sept. 13: 1 Cor 7:25-31; Luke 6:20-26

St. John Chrysostom, bishop and doctor

For the world in its present form is passing away. Those aware of their own fleeting nature live differently from those immersed in the present. St. John Chrysostom called St. Paul the one he most wanted to emulate. Called "Chrysostom" (golden-mouthed) for his eloquence, he preached and wrote, explained holy scripture, encouraged practices of justice and charity and criticized the selfish rich. He powerfully reflected on the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Though he was reluctant to be ordained bishop of Constantinople, this position allowed him to fight for reform. His fervent preaching sparked powerful enemies, hardship and exile, but he never lost his cheerfulness or regard for others. *That our lives may proclaim St. John Chrysostom's words 'Glory be to God for everything. Amen,' we pray.* PR

Thurs., Sept. 14: Num 21:4-9; Phil 2:6-11; John 3:13-17 Exaltation of the Holy Cross

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. Belief in the risen Christ demands that believers take great risks. An act as radical as conquering crucifixion requires a radical response. The triumph over the cross is the triumph over the power of sin. We're challenged to put to death the weakness of the flesh while still retaining our bodies. We're called to put complete confidence in the saving power of Jesus Christ and complete trust in his mercy. Life in the Spirit calls us to holiness. Then we too will attain victory over the cross. *In thanksgiving for the gift of redemption through your holy cross, O Christ our redeemer, we pray.* PR



Fri., Sept. 15: Heb 5:7-9; John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35

Our Lady of Sorrows

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. One of the greatest gifts of our humanity is our ability to feel deeply. Jesus wept with Mary and Martha, he wept for Jerusalem and he called those who mourn "blessed." His tender heart and boundless love reflect his own mother's. Indeed, Jesus was truly human, born of Mary, whose compassion for the sufferings of her divine Son we honor today. She was his first and most ardent disciple, and she agonized — as only a loving parent could suffer — at the foot of the cross, sharing in his torment. Mary faced tremendous grief, but she surrendered entirely to God's will. She nurtured and cradled our salvation. O sorrowful Mary, be at our side in our suffering, we pray. PR

Sat., Sept. 16: 1 Cor 10:14-22; Luke 6:43-49

Sts. Cornelius, pope and martyr, and Cyprian, bishop and martyr

"Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," but not do what I command?" Many loudly proclaim the name of God, but their actions belie their words. They are divisive and self-serving. Others quietly make grand sacrifices at the Lord's command, bringing the people of God together. Cornelius and Cyprian humbly served the church. After a year without a pope, Cornelius accepted the role, knowing it would cost him his life. Bishop Cyprian encouraged him. Both suffered immensely; Cornelius died in exile, and Cyprian was beheaded. Each in his own way worked to bring unity to the church, ever mindful that Jesus is its center. Let us strive to follow their example of pastoral ministry.

For the pope, bishops, priests and lay people who work for church unity, we pray. PR

Twenty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Sept. 18: 1 Cor 11:17-26, 33; Luke 7:1-10

Do this in remembrance of me. St. Paul was clearly pained by divisions within the church at Corinth. Was it brazen hypocrisy, or did they just not get it? Paul knew this much: The Corinthians were making a sham of the Lord's Supper. The scathing rhetoric flies, but invective gives way to compelling instruction: "Listen," he tells them, "the sacred meal — the very heart of what we do and who we are — is about remembering Jesus." Divisions plague the church yet today. We, too, would do well to remember who we are in Christ. In the Eucharist, we find Jesus present in the new covenant in his blood. If only temporarily, our differences fall away. May we learn to bring this holy Communion into all of life. For greater unity in Christ, we pray. ECW

Tues., Sept. 19: 1 Cor 12:12-14, 27-31a; Luke 7:11-17

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Many a good deed will go undone for one simple reason: It was ours to do and we failed to do it. We may sense a call to do important things, and yet the opportunity to lead the masses or move mountains just doesn't present itself. Instead, our days are marked by an uninspiring stream of the mundane — phone calls to make, dishes to wash, appointments to

keep, trash cans to empty. Today, let us see our call in whatever is in front of us that needs to be done. Let us bloom where we're planted, bringing Christ to every corner of the world we touch, being inspiration for others to do the same. For humility, gratitude and wholeness, we pray. ECW

Wed., Sept. 20: 1 Cor 12:31 — 13:13; Luke 7:31-35

At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. Paul's great hymn to love resounds within us. We know how necessary love is, how ineffectual are all other powers without it. We've been humbled and awed by it and by the patience and kindness that arise from it. We've been cradled in its gentle embrace. Love, we know, is goodness par excellence, the be-all and end-all of Christian living. We never go wrong by choosing love. Let us always strive eagerly, then, for this greatest of spiritual gifts, seeking to experience it more fully, choosing to be love for others more consistently, ever hoping in its wondrous power to heal and to save. For patience, kindness, humility, generosity and understanding ... for all that is of love, we pray. ECW

Thurs., Sept. 21: Eph 4:1-7, 11-13; Matt 9:9-13

Feast of St. Matthew, evangelist

'I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.' How can you tell a "religious" from a "spiritual" person? As the joke goes, "religious" people are trying to stay out of hell; "spiritual" folk have been there. Jesus befriended notoriously sinful people, those shunned by the upright, people who'd had a taste of hell. St. Matthew would have been despised, presumed an extortionist in league with the Romans. But for all we know, seeing the poverty of the people up close while also experiencing the contempt and isolation of his post may have taught Matthew compassion. Let us ponder today the place from which Jesus has called us and find gratitude for how it has shaped us to serve the world. For gratitude for our past, we pray. ECW

Fri., Sept. 22: 1 Cor 15:12-20; Luke 8:1-3

If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. We don't like to think about death. Indeed, dying generally involves much that is unpleasant: separation from loved ones, physical pain and suffering, perhaps mental and emotional anguish as we come late to the horrifying realization that our faith is not rock-solid — we still have big questions, big doubts. Rather than looking forward with hope, we could find ourselves looking back with remorse on a life that seems more sinful than saintly. Let us earnestly ponder death, then, not as the end of life but as the transition into eternity. And let us anticipate this transition with renewed hope, always remembering who we are in Christ: the people of the Resurrection. For those who are dying, we pray. ECW

Sat., Sept. 23: 1 Cor 15:35-37, 42-49; Luke 8:4-15

But someone may say, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come back?' The Corinthians' skepticism about the resurrection of the dead runs deep and prompts a diatribe from Paul in which he blasts them as fools for the questions he imagines they have. But then he



offers a useful image. Like a planted seed, the physical body must die. But a plant will emerge, not just another seed. We don't know what our resurrected body will be like, only that it will be different from the physical body. Certainly, though, we can look at the marvels of this world and trust that our Creator has great things in store for us in the next. *For the ability to let go of our need to be certain about things beyond our grasp, we pray.* ECW

Twenty-Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Sept. 25: Prov 3:27-34; Luke 8:16-18

Say not to your neighbor, 'Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give,' when you can give at once. The Book of Proverbs, a collection of "wisdom sayings," may seem obvious, until we realize that we need continually to be reminded of the basic truths they express so succinctly. One such saying warns against any delay in answering the call to love our neighbor in practical ways. If we learn of someone in need and we can help in any way, we are to consider this a call from God to act ... now. As Jesus teaches us in today's Gospel, we are to be a light of hope to all people, and a worthwhile light doesn't hide. *Lord, when I put off going to the aid of those in need, will you please give me a nudge?* MEW

Tues., Sept. 26: Prov 21:1-6, 10-13; Luke 8:19-21
Cosmas and Damian, martyrs

Those who shut their ears to the cry of the poor will themselves call and not be heard. Today's saints, Cosmas and Damian, evidently took this proverb to heart. According to legend, they were skilled physicians, known as the "moneyless ones" because they treated the poor without charge, as Jesus did. Even though I may not be a doctor, I may still have the opportunity to provide a healing word or touch to someone who is suffering. Do I accept the challenge to show that I am a brother or sister of Jesus by remaining sensitive and responsive to these opportunities? *Lord, help me to be aware of the pain of others and to be an instrument of your healing grace wherever I can.* MEW

Wed., Sept. 27: Prov 30:5-9; Luke 9:1-6
Vincent de Paul, priest

Give me neither poverty nor riches; provide me only with the food I need. Today's readings urge us to do the work of God in whatever form it is presented to us, confidently trusting God to provide for our needs. This is not a naïve expectation that we do not have to do our daily work to earn our daily bread. Rather, it warns us against allowing anxiety about material concerns to distract us from our primary calling, which is to continue the work of Jesus. Today's saint, Vincent de Paul, had a conversion experience that led him to make the love and care for the poor his life's work, and God never failed to provide what was needed. *Lord, you hear the cry of the poor; help me to hear them, too.* MEW

Thurs., Sept. 28: Eccl 1:2-11; Luke 9:7-9
Wenceslaus, martyr; Lawrence Ruiz and companions, martyrs

Who then is this about whom I hear such things? Herod's question about Jesus may seem rhetorical, its answer obvi-

ous. But, do I know who Jesus is? I must continually confront this question to keep my perceptions sharp and fresh. I must remain attuned to the world and its problems, if I am truly joined to Jesus in his ministry. St. Wenceslaus, duke of Bohemia (today the Czech Republic and Slovakia), supported the evangelization of his people at the cost of his life. My own Christian witness may be more ordinary, but it too involves concern for the good of the people — all the people in our global village. Do I include this concern in decisions about my lifestyle? *Lord, may I learn to live simply, that others may simply live.* MEW

Fri., Sept. 29: Dan 7:9-10, 13-14 or Rev 12:7-12a; John 1:47-51

Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, archangels

Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back. But they did not prevail. We oppose war, and rightly so, among members of the human family, yet we must engage ourselves every day in spiritual conflict against that which tries to lure us from Christ. The battlefield is my heart and will, and many of the enemy forces answer to the name of "self": self-righteousness, self-centeredness, self-promotion and just plain selfishness. Let's not forget to seek the intercession and support of Michael, the guidance of Raphael (the angel of happy meetings), and to welcome those who, like Gabriel, bring us God's messages. *St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; protect us against the deceit and wickedness of the forces of evil.* MEW

Sat., Sept. 30: Eccl 11:9-12:8; Luke 9:43b-45
Jerome, priest, doctor of the church

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come. If I find it difficult to seek God's help when I am sick, troubled or tempted, it may be because when my loved ones and I are healthy, when the refrigerator is well-stocked and the sun is shining, I forget all about God. Let's not be God's "foul-weather friends," so that when the bad times come, as they surely will, we may turn to God as to an already familiar friend. Today's saint, Jerome, gave us many commentaries on the scriptures and translated the Hebrew Bible into the Latin (Vulgate) text. Although Jerome's translation is not without flaws, it was a prodigious task, and it made the Bible more universally available. *Lord, lead me to you in your Word and in prayer.* MEW

Daily Bread Authors

Patricia Russell graduated from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich., with degrees in English and secondary education.

Paige Byrne Shortal earned a bachelor's degree in theology at Saint Louis University and a master's degree in pastoral studies at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis.

Mary E. Waldron received her bachelor's and master's degrees in theology from Marquette University in Milwaukee. She later earned a doctorate in American studies from Saint Louis University.

Elizabeth C. Williams has a bachelor's degree in education from Southeast Missouri State University and a master's degree in theology from Aquinas Institute of Theology.