



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

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2009

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Practicing faith

Did you ever go searching all over the house for your car keys only to find them right where you left them on the kitchen table? We tend to expect what we believe. When we're looking for those keys, there's a little voice in our heads chanting the mantra: I have to find my keys, I have to find my keys. And so it is. Faith is to believe despite all evidence to the contrary. Our single task as Christians is to practice our faith, to train our minds to believe, even when the evidence suggests otherwise. "I will find my keys" is a good start.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 2:2-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Mark 6:1-6a*

"And he could do no deed of power there . . . And he was amazed at their unbelief."

MONDAY, JULY 6 FEAST OF MARIA GORETTI, VIRGIN, MARTYR **Forgiveness lives on**

One of the marks of sanctity is that it inspires radical change in the lives of those who encounter it. Such was the case with Maria Goretti, murdered in 1902 by a would-be rapist when she was only 11 years old. She forgave her killer, Alessandro Serenelli, on her deathbed. Serenelli, however, was unrepentant until he had a dream in which Maria gave him lilies that immediately burned his hands. After his release from prison decades later, Serenelli visited Maria's mother and begged her forgiveness. They attended Mass together the next day, receiving Communion side by side. On June 24, 1950 the repentant Serenelli was present for Goretti's canonization. Change someone's life today through forgiveness.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 28:10-22a; Matthew 9:18-26*

"My daughter has just died. But come, lay your hand on her, and she will live."

TUESDAY, JULY 7 **Wrestlemania**

When you think of an encounter with God, what's the first image that comes to mind? Wrestling? Maybe not, but it's a powerful biblical image. Think of Jacob, who grappled with the angel of God. At the time, Jacob feared for his life because he was in dangerous territory. Would God remain with him in his hour of need? For Jacob, a crisis of faith followed. So did a wrestling match. How often do we wrestle with God? In illness, financial hardship, and other troubles, we may wonder if God is with us. Jacob reminds us that holding fast to God in a crisis can be difficult. We may feel bruised and battered but also emerge with greater self-knowledge and stronger faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 32:23-33; Matthew 9:32-38*

"But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.'"

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8 **Hardly your dream job**

We tend to think that the word *apostle*—which means "one who is sent"—appears only in the gospels, yet the term is also used in Saint Paul's letters to mean "one who has seen the risen Lord and has been commissioned to proclaim the resurrection." However they are defined, the 12 apostles had no easy task before or after Christ died. They were scoffed at, scolded, beaten, and tortured for delivering a message that frightened and confused many even as it liberated and heartened a few. Try spreading a little Good

News yourself, but be prepared to be reviled more often than embraced.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 41:55-57; 42:5-7a, 17-24a; Matthew 10:1-7*

"Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them."

THURSDAY, JULY 9 FEAST OF AUGUSTINE ZHAO RONG, PRIEST, MARTYR, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

God's ways are mysterious

Grace doesn't move in a straight line. It's more like the Yellow Brick Road to spiritual success, winding through both friendly cornfields and haunted forests and adding companions to the journey along the way. So Joseph, Jacob's favorite son, was sold into slavery by his brothers and later rescued his family from famine as a result. Evil intent turns to good in God's hands. So Chinese soldier Augustine Zhao Rong once accompanied a bishop to his execution. As a result of that encounter, the soldier became a Christian, priest, and martyr himself—later on down the road.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 44:18-21, 23b-29; 45:1-5; Matthew 10:7-15*

"And now do not be distressed . . . for God sent me before you to preserve life."

FRIDAY, JULY 10

Lead us into temptation?

The third-century theologian Origen once asked a very important question about the Lord's Prayer: "How is it that our Savior commands us to pray not to enter temptation, since God somehow tempts everyone?" Indeed temptation appears to be the hallmark of many biblical trials, coming even to Jesus himself. If being put into the midst of harm can be a sign of God's loving will, we can understand that entering into temptation means to become part of it. So Origen says that what one prays for is the strength and discipline to withstand temptation without sinning. Consider what temptations are before you today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30; Matthew 10:16-23*

"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves."

SATURDAY, JULY 11 FEAST OF BENEDICT, ABBOT

A good rule to follow

Saint Benedict's famous Rule was originally written as a guide for those living in monastic communities he had founded or had gathered around him. Ever since, though, the Rule of Benedict has been a source of guidance and inspiration for many kinds of people seeking to live a better and more faithful Christian life. "To you," Benedict wrote in the Prologue to the Rule, ". . . my words are now addressed, whoever you may be, who are renouncing your own will to do battle under the Lord Christ, the true King, and are taking up the strong, bright weapons of obedience." Many paths can lead to holiness. Which path are you on?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 49:29-32; 50:15-26a; Matthew 10:24-33*

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."

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