

Sunday, May 14, 2023

What keeps us faithful

Catholics tend to be leery of words like "testimony" and "witness" when it comes to the business of sharing our faith with others. We may prefer to keep our profession of faith in a more formal key: say, with a group recitation of the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. Many of us may feel ill-equipped to give a defense of the faith in the debate style known as apologetics. Yet each of us should be prepared to give the reason for our hope to anyone who asks. What keeps us faithful? And how does what we believe influence who we're becoming?

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21 (55). *"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope."*

Monday, May 15, 2023

A patron of plentitude

Isidore, the patron saint of farmers, was a peasant farm worker in Spain around the year 1100. There's a theme of abundance surrounding the stories of his miracles. It's said that at times, an angel was seen doing his work while he prayed, and other times, two angels worked beside him, increasing his output. He made water burst from dry earth to quench the thirsty, and there was always enough in his wife's pot of stew to feed however many hungry people he brought home. When he fed starving animals from his bag of wheat, the same bag produced double the expected amount of flour. When you work, and when you give from the fruits of your work, do so with a prayerful, plentiful heart and think, there's always more where that came from!

MEMORIAL OF ISIDORE, FARMER

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 16:11-15; John 15:26—16:4a (291). *"And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning."*

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Love triumphs

Joan of Arc was canonized on this day in 1920—making her the only person in history ever to be both condemned and canonized by the Catholic Church. Her triumph: leading the French army to victory over the British. Her tragedy: being burned at the stake, the power of her faith mistaken for witchcraft. Joan's resolve caused Mark Twain to insist, "She is easily and by far the most extraordinary person the human race has ever produced." The centennial of her canonization caused Pope Benedict XVI to insist the "name of Jesus invoked by this saint in the last instants of her earthly life was like the continual breath of her soul." She "understood that Love embraces all things." Love like Joan today.

EASTER WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 16:22-34; John 16:5-11 (292). *"Jesus said to his disciples: 'Now I am going to the one who sent me.'"*

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Stop the traffic

Saint Josephine Bakhita, the first black female saint of the modern era, was beatified on this day in 1992, part of a push within the Catholic Church to honor both black Catholics and to signify the horrors of human trafficking. This practice, also known as modern slavery, accounts for the bondage of an estimated 50 million people today, spread over every continent and present in every country. Bakhita herself was kidnapped as a child in Sudan and

later held against her will in Italy before essentially suing for freedom in 1889 and becoming a nun. Her legacy is now global, as she is the patron of all human trafficking survivors. May she inspire us to recognize the silent suffering of so many and work for the freedom of all God's children.

EASTER WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 17:15, 22—18:1; John 16:12-15 (293). *"In him we live and move and have our being, 'as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'"*

Thursday, May 18, 2023

A family reunion

Although Americans tend to not do much beyond Mass to celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, in some parts of Europe (Germany, most notably), the day involves special festivities. Because the day celebrates Jesus returning to his Father, it is the German Father's Day, usually celebrated with picnics or outings. Take a moment today to return in prayer to your heavenly Creator.

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD (HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION)

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20 (58) or Acts 18:1-8; John 16:16-20 (294). *"This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."*

Friday, May 19, 2023

Lessons in hope

Christians are a hopeful people—an Easter people, if you will. In encouraging young people to hold on to hope, Pope Francis advises: "Dream of a world still not seen, but will certainly come one day. Think of those who sailed oceans, scaled mountains, conquered slavery, or made life better for people on earth." Hope allows us to trust in Christ's promises that his Holy Spirit lives within us, that our lives have purpose, and that we can make a difference. Start small. As Saint Augustine advises: "You aspire to great things? Begin with little ones."

EASTER WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 18:9-18; John 16:20-23 (295). *"I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice."*

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Preaching to the heart

Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444), a Franciscan priest, lived at a time in Italy when most preachers proclaimed their sermons from the pulpit during the liturgy and to cloistered clerics. Bernardine was among the first to preach to the public. He was so effective a preacher that cynical civil authorities would invite him to their towns because of the money to be made from the large crowds that gathered to hear him. No matter, Bernardine touched hearts and minds in a priceless way. Seek out preaching that feeds your soul.

MEMORIAL OF BERNARDINE OF SIENA, PRIEST

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 18:23-28; John 16:23b-28 (296). *"Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you."*

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



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