



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

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2009
TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Great expectations

It is perhaps a coincidence (or the work of an unknown editor) that in Mark's gospel the story of the disciples arguing over "who was the greatest" directly follows Jesus' revelation of his impending death. But looked at another way, squabbling that follows immediately upon news of a death is an all-too-common pattern when someone dies and his or her heirs quarrel over who deserves the greatest share. Humans often instinctively react to a shock by "looking out for number one." Jesus, however, instructs his disciples to rise above their ego-preserving instinct and instead devote themselves to selfless service. Are we up to the challenge?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Wisdom 2:12, 17-20; James 3:16-4:3; Mark 9:30-37*

"What were you arguing about on the way?"

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

FEAST OF MATTHEW, APOSTLE, EVANGELIST

Disciple—who, me?

We can presume Jesus had no illusions about who Matthew was. The dude was sitting right at the booth where taxes were gathered for the Roman occupiers. A traitor! A man willing to compromise plenty to make sure he and his family didn't go under in tough times, even if his friends and neighbors weren't so lucky. Yet when Jesus looked at Matthew, he saw beyond all that. Jesus saw a disciple in the making. Where does Jesus find you? And what do you suppose he sees?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:9-13*
"[Jesus] saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.'"

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Family first

People like to say that the most important thing in life is family. That may be true for some people. But for others, family is their worst nightmare. We're not all graced with perfect parents. And our relationships with relatives can be much more problematic than our dealings with friends. That is why, in Christ, we have a Heavenly Father, a Blessed Mother, and countless brothers and sisters both on earth and in heaven. That is real family we can truly rely upon for understanding, support, and help in times of trouble. When it comes to family, God knows what is most important.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezra 6:7-8, 12b, 14-20; Luke 8:19-21*
"Jesus said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.'"

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

FEAST OF PIO OF PIETRELCINA, PRIEST

Car talk

A few years ago Padre Pio's old car came up for auction at a major European auto show. Pio—the Capuchin monk famous for hearing confessions, miracles, and bearing the wounds of Jesus—had received the 1959 Mercedes-Benz 190 D as a gift. The padre didn't drive. In fact, he rarely left the monastery. When he did get in a car, someone else would be behind the wheel and it was usually to go a little ways up the hill to inspect the state-of-the-art charity hospital Pio was building. While for many of us cars are something of a necessity, the Ex Padre Pio Mercedes, as it

became known at the car show, which spent part of its life sitting in a monastery garage, testifies to the fact that most of us probably need much less than we have.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezra 9:5-9; Luke 9:1-6*

"Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money."

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Harvest of shame

The people of Israel, it seems, had more important things to do than rebuild the temple of the Lord—there was wealth to be made, food and drink and fine clothes aplenty, and comfortable homes to build. Sort of reminds you of recent economic history, where fortunes were being amassed hand over fist while basic ethical practices fell to the wayside. Prosperity has a way of undermining core values and making people forget the promises they have made—to their God and to one another as a society. Will economic recovery bring moral recovery this time around? Not unless we attend to the things that matter most to God.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Haggai 1:1-8; Luke 9:7-9*

"You have sown much, but have brought in little."

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Words at work

Considering the enormous flow of words we can encounter with nothing more than the movement of a finger, it is difficult to imagine the ordeal required for a library in the Middle Ages to acquire even a single new book. Monks would often spend their entire careers travelling between monasteries and at each stop transcribing by hand whatever text their home library was in want of. The English monk Saint Ceolfrith (642-716) was renowned in his time for his tortuous travels and prolific transcribing efforts. His protégé, the famous Saint Bede, writes that Ceolfrith alone doubled the holdings of their monastery's library, which was already considered sizeable. How can you treasure the written word?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Haggai 2:1-9; Luke 9:18-22*

"Take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you."

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

FEAST OF COSMAS AND DAMIAN, MARTYRS

Medical drama

In the national discussion about health care policy, doctors, health care corporations, insurance companies, politicians, and the businesses and ordinary people who pay the bills wrangle over how services are provided and where the money goes. Seventeen centuries earlier the twin brother-physicians Saints Cosmas and Damian traveled Syria, sharing the good news of Christ by treating the ill for free. What would happen if into the health care debate walked Drs. Cosmas and Damian, known as "the penniless ones," who without regard for payment or liability put sick people ahead of everything else?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Zechariah 2:5-9, 14-15a; Luke 9:43b-45*

"I looked up and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand."

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Scripture quotes come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
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