



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 28, 2016

God's Abundant Grace

By Janel Esker

Labor Day is quickly approaching, and stores will soon be in full Halloween mode with plenty of costumes and candy on display. I grew up in St. Louis, where tradition demands costumed trick-or-treaters to tell a joke at each door before receiving the sweet reward. As children, we'd pore over joke books for a month to discern the highest-quality riddle to spring on the neighbors. I now realize this tradition is unique to certain cities and regions. In most locales you don't have to do anything—just say "trick or treat," and

you get free, undeserved candy. What? Free candy for no work? The injustice! I tease that St. Louis has it right—you ought to earn your Snickers and Starbursts.

Thank goodness God doesn't follow St. Louis in his distribution of gifts. What if we were required to perform a song and dance to prove our worth, to receive God's abundant generosity? We're undeserving of God's extraordinary goodness, yet he showers us with his grace.

We ought to hear, with humble hearts, the same challenge from today's Gospel. We can be stingy with our money, time, and patience—seeking first to determine whether the recipient is deserving, has done something for us lately, or will use our gifts well.

What if God applied those same standards to us? Would we be worthy? I doubt it. Jesus challenges us to be generous—especially to those who are undeserving, cannot repay us, and seem unworthy of our love and time. We are those people in God's eyes, yet God gives without need of return. †

"God showers us with his grace, even though we are unworthy."

Sunday Readings

Sirach 3:17–18, 20, 28–29

"Conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts."

Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24a

"You have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, ...the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all."

Luke 14:1, 7–14

"When you are invited..., take the lowest place."

A Word From Pope Francis

[Regard] every man and woman, even those of different religious traditions, not as rivals, less still enemies, but rather as brothers and sisters. When a person is secure of his or her own beliefs, there is no need to impose or put pressure on others: there is a conviction that truth has its own power of attraction. Deep down, we are all pilgrims on this earth, and on this pilgrim journey, as we yearn for truth and eternity, we do not live autonomous and self-sufficient individual lives....We need each other, and are entrusted to each other's care."

—Address to Leaders of Other Religions and Other Christian Denominations (Tirana, Albania), September 21, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can I make my lifestyle more simple and holy?
- How can I reach out to someone in need this week?



Monica and Augustine: A Saintly, Mother-Son Summertime Duo

By Norman J. Muckerman, CSsR

Saints Monica and Augustine, mother and son, lived in North Africa. Most of what we know about Monica comes from the writings of Augustine himself. In *The Confessions*, he tells how for more than thirty years, Monica prayed, suffered, and sacrificed for the conversion of her pagan husband, Patricius. Finally successful in this mission, she turned her attention to her three sons. It took a while, but eventually one of them, Augustine, came back to both family and the faith.

By his own admission, Augustine had been a serious sinner from his teen years on. Although he was a brilliant youth, he had decided at age nineteen to leave all restrictions aside and to set out on a path of pleasure, living a carefree and dissolute life. He soon had a mistress and a son, whom he ironically named Adeodatus, which translates to “gift from God.”

In the year 383, Augustine moved from Tagaste, Africa, where he had been a teacher, to Rome. There he was helped by a young ecclesiastic named

Ambrose, who eventually became bishop of Milan and ultimately a saint. Ambrose brought Augustine back to the Catholic faith, baptizing him at the Easter Vigil in 387 in the cathedral of Milan.

Augustine then returned to Africa with his happy mother in tow. She, however, never made it all the way back, dying in the city of Ostia in Italy after exhorting her son to remember to pray for her especially at holy Mass. She must have been given a revelation of what was to come, because shortly thereafter while on a visit to the city of Hippo in Africa, Augustine was essentially drafted by the local Christian community to become their priest. He was proclaimed bishop of Hippo in 395 and lived there the rest of his life.

In Hippo he took on all comers in discussions about religion. He preached, wrote, administered the sacraments, and helped all his people, especially the poor. He founded a community of clerics there and became known as the founder of Western monastic life as well as one of the four great doctors of the Church. His writings are classics. He died in 430. His feast day is August 28; his mother’s is the day before, August 27. †

Life Links With St. Joseph: Humility

Joseph was chosen for the amazing responsibility of raising God’s Son and yet was humble as he surrendered himself to God’s will, despite the mystery that surrounded Mary’s giving birth as a virgin and all that followed in their life together. In his humility, Joseph shows us tremendous power, strength, and virtue.

- Compare your life to Joseph’s. Nothing was more important to Joseph than following the will of God, living a devout life, and serving the interests of Jesus and Mary. How about you?
- Choose one area of your life that you would like to offer more completely to God. Ask St. Joseph to pray for God’s help so that you’ll be able to change, grow, and live as he did.
- Place yourself under the protective care of St. Joseph and seek his fatherly love, protection, and guidance. His intercession can help you become a light to the world and an image of Christ to others. †

Adapted from *Husband, Father, Worker: Questions & Answers About St. Joseph* by Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ; Fr. José Antonio Bertolin, OSJ; and Rick Sarkisian, PhD, © 2012 Liguori Publications



Lord, you came to be the humble Servant of God to all people. Give me a humble heart so I may be a selfless, compassionate servant to the poor and vulnerable.

—From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 29–
September 3

Mon. The Passion of St. John the Baptist:
1 Corinthians 2:1–5 / Mark 6:17–29

Tue. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 2:10b–16 /
Luke 4:31–37

Wed. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 3:1–9 /
Luke 4:38–44

Thu. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 3:18–23 /
Luke 5:1–11

Fri. Weekday: 1 Corinthians 4:1–5 /
Luke 5:33–39

Sat. St. Gregory the Great:
1 Corinthians 4:6b–15 / Luke 6:1–5

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