

The kingdom of heaven

is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls.

When he finds a
pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all
that he has and buys it.

Matthew 13:45-46



**Seventeenth Sunday
in Ordinary Time**

July 26, 2020

Saint Martha (first century)

July 29

Whether you find Martha Stewart admirable or annoying, she has the perfect patron saint. Luke describes Martha—saint, not Stewart—as “burdened with much serving” (Luke 10:40). About Mary, seated, listening to Jesus, Martha complained, “Do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?” Jesus’ response, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things . . . Mary has chosen the better part” (10:41, 42), suggests to some the superiority of the contemplative life, leaving the rest of us, supporting families, earning livings, (helping others?), as second-class Christians. But Luke introduces Martha and Mary immediately after Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, whom Jesus recommends as a model of practical compassion, concluding, “Go and do likewise” (10:37). Go and do! Sit and listen! Discipleship is never either/or but both/and. Jesus ministered in prayerful silence and hospitable service. Monastic calendars add Martha’s sister, Mary, and brother, Lazarus, calling all three “hosts of the Lord,” recalling their welcome of Jesus to their home in Bethany, reminding us Whom we welcome whenever we extend summertime hospitality!

—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



Go

Go forth and set the world on fire.

—St. Ignatius of Loyola

A Share In God's Kingdom

Today concludes a three-week series of Gospel texts in which we have listened to a total of seven parables about the Kingdom. The believer is asked to consider the request that God made of Solomon in today’s first reading: “Ask something of me and I will give it to you” (1 Kings 3:5). Today’s parables about the treasure buried in the field and the pearl of great price should prompt us to answer, “A share in your kingdom, O God!” Today we discover that the kingdom of God is beyond value, a priceless treasure. Unfortunately, our culture bombards us with things that it believes are priceless treasures—the bigger and better SUVs, anti-aging and anti-balding creams and salves, miracle diets, and so much more. Having a share in God’s kingdom and helping to bring about that kingdom are the greatest treasures that we can ever hope to gain.

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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Jer 13:1-11; Dt 32:18-21; Mt 13:31-35
Tuesday:	Jer 14:17-22; Ps 79:8, 9, 11, 13; Mt 13:36-43
Wednesday:	Jer 15:10, 16-21; Ps 34:2-11; Jn 11:19-27 or Lk 10:38-42
Thursday:	Jer 18:1-6; Ps 146:1b-6ab; Mt 13:47-53
Friday:	Jer 26:1-9; Ps 69:5, 8-10, 14; Mt 13:54-58
Saturday:	Jer 26:11-16, 24; Ps 69:15-16, 30-31, 33-34; Mt 14:1-12
Sunday:	Is 55:1-3; Ps 145:8-9, 15-18; Rom 8:35, 37-39; Mt 14:13-21

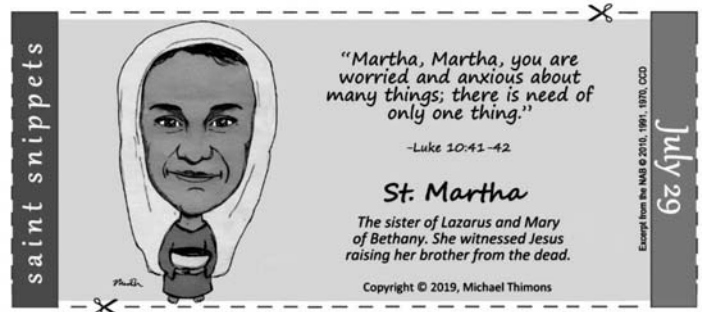
Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Wednesday:	St. Martha
Thursday:	St. Peter Chrysologus
Friday:	St. Ignatius of Loyola
Saturday:	St. Alphonsus Liguori; First Saturday

Wisdom

Nine-tenths of wisdom consists in being wise in time.

—Theodore Roosevelt



Today's Readings

First Reading — Solomon prays for an understanding heart (1 Kings 3:5, 7-12).

Psalm — Lord, I love your commands (Psalm 119).

Second Reading — All things work for good for those who love God (Romans 8:28-30).

Gospel — The one who knows of the kingdom of heaven brings new and old from the storeroom (Matthew 13:44-52 [44-46]).

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Seventeenth Sunday in
Ordinary Time
July 26, 2020
All things work for good for those
who love God.

—Romans 8:28a

Treasures From Our Tradition

Most parishes are now aware of the catechumenate and the journey of new faithful in the RCIA, but this form of sacramental initiation disappeared from view in the thirteenth century along with many other ancient practices. Life back then was hard, and often too short, and priests were increasingly insistent about the responsibility of parents to baptize children in danger of death. Since everyone in that society was under unimaginable threat from famine, warfare, and plague, the liturgical rites changed quickly. Everyone was in danger of death all the time. No longer were babies immersed in fonts, being lowered into the water, although the ritual books never backed down from immersion. Infusion was the new way, a simple pouring of a few drops of water on the child's forehead.

The catechumenate collapsed, being reduced to the recitation of the Creed and an Our Father at every baptism. Amazingly, any provision for adult baptism was shelved, so that as late as the 1950s, a person being baptized was presumed to be an infant, unable to answer for him or herself. Questions of creed and commitment were put to the godparents, not to the person being baptized. Even Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, famous adult converts, remained mute at their baptisms while their sponsors answered for them. In hindsight all this appears strikingly odd, yet it was accepted as the way things were. We have good reason to give thanks for the vigorous reforms of the last fifty years!

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

An old expression admonishes, “Be careful what you wish for.” Another one warns about money “burning a hole in your pocket” as you try and determine all the possibilities about how you will spend it. If God were to grant you a wish, what would it be? Our readings are about making wise choices and following God's ways. When Solomon is given this opportunity, he does not make a rash or selfish decision but requests an “understanding heart” so that he might better govern the people with justice. The responsorial psalm is part of a long acrostic poem about the beauty of following God's law. Saint Paul speaks to the Romans about being God's master plan, in which we each have a special calling and purpose. The Gospel provides several parables about the kingdom of heaven, and how we might take right action and necessary steps in order to obtain it.

The Revelation Of Your Word Sheds Light

Jesus is speaking in parables and offers three different images for the kingdom of heaven. Remember that popular line from a phone commercial: “Can you hear me now?” Jesus is trying to teach and basically says, “Do you understand me now? Do you get it now? Then let me explain it another way.” He is shedding light on just how very important his mission is, that the kingdom of God is the most important thing, and that we must make every choice, every effort to strive for it. To use a sports

metaphor, Jesus is telling us we must not look for immediate satisfaction, but we must “play the long game” because in the end, this is the only thing that really matters.

Giving Understanding To The Simple

This message again seems very countercultural. We live in an age of instant gratification. Consumer debt is at an all-time high. Houses get bigger and bigger and more luxurious. Instead of saying “I can't afford a new car,” people stretch payments out over six or seven years in an attempt to afford the unaffordable. Today we are called to put it all in perspective, to follow the “pearl of great price,” to put all things aside that we might seek the kingdom of God and reach our heavenly goal, our salvation. This may require a paradigm shift and making radical changes in our lifestyle, in how we spend our time, our money, our energy, how we define what is important to us. May each of us find the wisdom of Solomon to guide us in making the right choices.

Today's Readings: 1 Kgs 3:5, 7–12; Ps 119:57, 72, 76–77, 127–128, 129–130; Rom 8:28–30; Mt 13:44–52 [44–46]

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