

## **CELEBRATE SABBATH**

### **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.**

(Psalm 136:1)

#### **Sirach 15:15-20**

The wise man advises his readers not to trust the counsel of the contemporary world that avoids human responsibility and turns to evil ways. Man must trust God, who gives him the grace and the wisdom that he needs to make good and right choices. He must prayerfully discern his choices with the wisdom of God and be faithful and loyal to the will and purpose of God.

#### **Psalm 119**

This Psalm is the longest Psalm in the Book of Psalms. It praises God for giving such splendid laws and instruction for people to live by. The author glorifies and thanks God for the Torah, prays for protection from sinners, delights in the law's consolations, begs for wisdom to understand the precepts, and asks for the rewards of keeping them. The Psalm is fascinated with God's word directing and guiding human life. The poem is acrostic. Its twenty-two stanzas, of eight verses each, are in the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight verses within a stanza begins with the same letter. Each verse contains one word for "instruction." There are nine words for "instruction," - law, statute, commandment, precept, testimony, word, judgment, way, and promise.

**Blessed are they whose way is blameless,  
Who walk the law of the Lord.  
Blessed are they who observe his decrees,  
Who seek him with all their heart.**

#### **I Corinthians 2:6-10**

Paul speaks of the wisdom of God hidden in the heart of all who love God. God has given us his Holy Spirit to inspire us, guide us and help us discern his will and purpose. We must turn to the Holy Spirit dwelling in us for the wisdom that we need. This wisdom is available to us to help us make good and right and wise choices. The experiences of the spiritually mature can help us in this process of choosing what the loving thing to do is in a given situation. It is not enough for us to make good choices and right choices and do the loving thing. We must also make wise choices. It is up to us to prayerfully seek the wisdom of God and discern our choices.

## **Mathew 5:17-37**

Jesus told the disciples that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law. He also told them that greatness in God's kingdom depended on faithfulness to God's law.

Jesus came to bring out the meaning and purpose of the law, to fulfill it, to realize it, to achieve its purpose. The real purpose of the law which Jesus came to fulfill is at the heart of the Ten Commandments and the beatitudes. One word that could identify this purpose is REVERENCE or deep respect – reverence for God, for self, for other and for all of God's creation. It is this reverence, deep respect, intimate love that Jesus came to fulfill, to show us in actual life what reverence for God and God's creation means.

Keep searching for the wisdom of God! Be faithful to God and God's law! Learn to fulfill God's law, to achieve its purpose!

In this excerpt, Mathew also offers us very challenging teachings of Jesus:

Your holiness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees! You are called to live higher standards of life. You are called to live virtuous lives!

All forms of prayer and worship call forth reconciliation. Sacrifice and worship assume genuine confession of sin, true penitence and forgiveness from the heart. Be reconciled with others! Be reconciled now!

Be aware of the words you speak. Be sensitive and speak affirming, encouraging, healing, supporting, empowering words!

Be aware of words that may insult or hurt others. Words could alienate you from the community - they break down relationship. Speak words that bring life and not death.

Make peace in time and make it now! Now is the time for reconciliation and peace!

Genuine Forgiveness is Unconditional. Learn to forgive from the heart!

## **Saint of the Day, February 12 St. Apollonia and 19 other saints are remembered this day.**

We have no knowledge of the early life of Apolonia. She was martyred in the year 249 for not renouncing her faith during the reign of Emperor Philip. The persecution of Christians began in Alexandria during the reign of the Emperor Philip. The first victim of the pagan mob was an old man named Metrius, who was tortured and then stoned to death. The second person who

refused to worship their false idols was a Christian woman named Quinta. Her words infuriated the mob and she was scourged and stoned.

While most of the Christians were fleeing the city, abandoning all their worldly possessions, an old deaconess, Apollonia, was seized. The crowds beat her, knocking out all of her teeth. Then they lit a large fire and threatened to throw her in it if she did not curse her God. She begged them to wait a moment, acting as if she was considering their requests. Instead, she jumped willingly into the flames and so suffered martyrdom.

The account of the life of St. Apollonia was written by St. Dionysius to Fabian, Bishop of Antioch. She is considered the patron of dental diseases and is often invoked by those with toothaches. Ancient art depicts her with a golden tooth at the end of her necklace. Also in art, she is seen with pincers holding a tooth.

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