

Readings for the week of July 16, 2023

Sunday:

Is 55:10-11/Ps 65:1, 11, 12-13, 14 (Luke 8:8)/
Rom 8:18-23/Mt 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

Monday:

Ex 1:8-14, 22/Ps 124:1b-3, 4-6, 7-8/Mt
10:34—11:1

Tuesday:

Ex 2:1-15a/Ps 69:3, 14, 30-31, 33-34/Mt
11:20-24

Wednesday:

Ex 3:1-6, 9-12/Ps 103:1b-2, 3-4, 6-7/Mt
11:25-27

Thursday:

Ex 3:13-20/Ps 105:1 and 5, 8-9, 24-25, 26-
27/Mt 11:28-30

Friday:

Ex 11:10—12:14/Ps 116:12-13, 15 and 16bc,
17-18/Mt 12:1-8

Saturday:

Sg 3:1-4b or 2 Cor 5:14-17/Ps 63:2, 3-4,
5-6, 8-9/Jn 20:1-2, 11-18

Next Sunday:

Wis 12:13, 16-19/Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16
(5a)/Rom 8:26-27/Mt 13:24-43 or
13:24-30



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Gospel Meditation

Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

It's not uncommon to hear people complain that we Catholics often fail in communicating our faith. Fair enough. We can and should improve there. But it's interesting to notice that Jesus himself was implicitly accused by his disciples of a similar failure. This week in Matthew's gospel they are perplexed that he speaks to the crowds in ambiguous parables. The Lord's riddles leave many people more confused than before. He responds by pointing out that his parables have an intentional dual purpose: to hide (for some) and to reveal (for others) his Gospel: "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted" (Matthew 13:11). Is Jesus being unnecessarily difficult, obscurantist, or, worse, elitist?

No. We have to remember that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie hidden in him (c.f., Col. 2:3). He is the word of God from heaven to be planted in the earth of our humanity to bear great fruit. However, like a lover delicately pursuing his beloved, we're dealing with a relationship, not new data. When we aren't willing to personally accept Jesus into our lives, the "info" of the Gospel will simply not make sense to us. It'll seem bizarre, esoteric, or like incoherent religious-speak. But when we are willing to accept Jesus into our lives, everything else starts to make sense. When others don't understand the Church or the Lord, let's be patient. Love is patient. Sometimes it has to hide before it is revealed.

— *Father John Muir*

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

Soil Conditions

I am a hopeless gardener. I never met a plant I couldn't swiftly kill with good intentions and poor understanding of soil conditions.

Because really, it's all about the soil conditions — at least, that's what Google tells me when I helplessly search phrases like "Why aren't any of my seeds sprouting? Please, I tried so hard." I can never seem to match the right type of soil offering the right type of drainage and texture with the right plant. I can't understand why it's not enough to bury the seed in whatever ground is available, sprinkle some water and ask it, very nicely, to grow.

This is also a quality that makes me a poor evangelist to people who do not share my beliefs. How many times have I encountered a friend or loved one who left the faith, and I tried to coax them back by hurling Catechism passages in their direction, offering advice they never asked for and are ill-equipped to understand? I sow these seeds of witness and bang my fists in frustration that they rot where I plant them, never realizing that it's all about the soil.

It is Christ, and Christ alone, who works within the heart. It is Christ who is the sower of the seed, not me. When I leave him out of the equation, when I fail to offer the Person and instead only offer the teaching, I can anticipate that any witness I have to offer will rot where it is planted just as sure as a tulip bulb in a bed of clay.

*"...my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."
— Isaiah 55:11*

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained

Question:

Why do we use incense at Mass?

Answer:

The use of incense in religious ceremonies and worship is a practice that predates Christianity, and which is also found in many other religious traditions today.

Incense, which is made from resin infused with aromatic spices and oils, is one of those fundamentally human symbols that incorporates more than one of our senses, helping us to reflect on realities that transcend the everyday details of our lives.

The use of incense in the Church's liturgy — in the Mass, as well as in devotions to the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours — is inspired by the use of incense in the Jewish tradition. In the writings of the Old Testament, we hear about incense being used in the worship of the temple, and Psalm 141 asks, "Let my prayer be incense before you; my uplifted hands an evening offering" (vs. 2). The image here is that, as the incense gently rises to heaven, our prayers also rise to God as something sweet and pleasant.

Another ancient use of incense that has also become part of our Catholic tradition is the idea that when we incense something, it's because it is something special or sacred. This is why the Book of the Gospel is incensed during the Liturgy of the Word and the bread, wine, priest celebrant, and congregation are incensed at the presentation of the gifts. To this, we can also add the incensing of the Blessed Sacrament during eucharistic adoration and benediction, and the body of the deceased at the end of the Mass of the Resurrection (the Funeral Mass).

And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow...Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

- Mt 13:3, 7-9

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Questions of the Week

Invite Parishioners to Reflect and Respond to Scripture

First Reading

The prophet Isaiah assured the Israelites who were exiled in Babylon that God's word is reliable and purposeful. How might you help friends or family trust more in God?

Second Reading

Paul sees creation itself sharing in the redemption and future glory that awaits all believers — "For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God." What do you imagine earth would look like filled with God's glory, absent any "corruption?"

Gospel Reading

Over the next few Sundays, we will be hearing many parables from Jesus. Today's parable of the sower and the seeds speaks to how people react differently to the Good News of the kingdom of heaven. How would you describe your reaction to Jesus's parables of the kingdom?



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YOU CAN
BURN OUR
BODIES,
BUT YOU
CANNOT
HARM OUR
SOULS.
”

UGANDAN MARTYR

- ST. CHARLES LWANGA