

This Week's Calendar of Saints

Thursday 3rd – St. Gregory the Great, pope and doctor of the Church. Gregory (540-604) was a Roman noble who was Prefect of the City before becoming a monk. As Pope he established a pattern for the papacy in years to come, calling himself servant of the servants of Christ. He sent missions to Lombardy, Sardinia and England. Patron of musicians.

Friday 4th – St. Mac Nissi, bishop. Oengus Mac Nissi took his name from his mother Cnes or Ness. It is claimed that Patrick baptised him and taught him the psalms. He chose the district of Connor for his hermitage, but later became bishop of his clan. He died early in the 6th century.

Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – John 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23:

1. Certain sections of the Jewish people put great store on the importance of rules and conventions as a measure of the goodness of a person. Jesus challenges this view. How have you found that getting appearances right did not necessarily make you a good person?
2. Even fidelity in religious practice is not enough. 'This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' How have you experienced the importance of carrying your faith beyond attendance at Mass on Sundays? When have you seen that in others? What brought this home to you?
3. What Jesus seeks are followers whose faith is whole-hearted and warm, people whose religion is not primarily in dutiful observance but in their enthusiasm for life and their care for one another. It is good to be with them. Think of the contrast between a dinner party, at which everything is just right but very formal, and another party which is rather haphazard and casual but full of great warmth.
4. 'It is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come.' It is also from within that good intentions come. We have choices. When have you been faced with the choice between good and evil? When did you realise the importance of accepting responsibility for your own life and choices? How has this helped your growth as a person?

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Questions people ask:

- Q. I used to have a regular prayer life but it's a thing of the past. What would you advise me to do to get started again?
- A. A humble and thorough confession would be a good start. Since there are so many ways of praying it is hard to give specific direction without knowing more about you. Can you find a wise spiritual director with whom you can talk? In general, make a workable plan regarding place and time. See what works for you – reading, adoration, petition, rosary, time alone or the support of others. One last bit of advice – pray the way you can and don't worry about the way you can't.

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The Deep End – Give-and-Take:

To paraphrase Benjamin Disraeli: There are rules, damned rules and commandments. Whatever about the rules, damned or otherwise, the commandments must be observed diligently according to today's First Reading (Deut 4:1-2, 6-8). Doing so shows wisdom and discernment (v 6). What a pleasant and peaceful way of looking at someone else's orders to you! Not characteristic of today's ethos. I wonder what goes wrong to give the impression that God's commandments are burdens to be borne, better yet ignored, rather than gifts to be cherished.

Why do some people worship money, power and sex instead of the one true God? Why can't they see the tyranny that servitude to these produces? Why can't they see the freedom that having only the one true God in one's life endows? And why can't they see God's commandments as guiding lights to help them travel life's convoluted course in safety? There are so many 'whys'.

God created us to live in community. At family level community living calls for give-and-take. If members make demands regardless of how it affects others, then the quality of life degrades. If all are equally demanding, then you have a dysfunctional family.

At world level, community living also calls for give-and-take: individually, collectively and nationally. God's commandments wise us up to the need for justice, generosity, and respect for all people. They help us to adapt to life out there in the real world. They prevent us from expecting that life to adapt to us. That's why many don't like them. But, if we didn't have them, would we not have to invent them?

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As little children, they went to mass each week, and every day in the summertime. "We always had a rosary on our beds; and then, of course, [Mother would] hear our bedtime prayers and do our catechism with us," said Patricia, the sixth of Joseph and Rose Kennedy's nine children, in her mother's memoir, *Times to Remember*. They thanked God for the food on their table, and at Sunday dinner they discussed the sermon they'd heard that morning.

From an article in this week's 'Newsweek' on the faith of the late Senator Ted Kennedy who died last Tuesday.