

Sunday, Jul 19, 2026

Tell me a story!

"Once upon a time . . ." is second only to "In the beginning . . ." as the greatest opening line. These memorable story starters signal to listeners that they are entering a world of magic and mystery, where things are turned upside down and then set right again. Human beings love stories. Long after we've forgotten the basics of grammar and arithmetic, we remember the stories we heard, read, and lived. That is why Jesus chose parables as his main teaching tool. His stories may not always be easy to understand, but they aren't soon forgotten. Call to mind your favorite parable today and enter into its mystery and magic.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43 (106). *"I will open my mouth in parables."*

Monday, Jul 20, 2026

No qualifications needed

The scribes and Pharisees were "credentialed" religious leaders, and they took offense with this upstart Jesus. Without degree or pedigree, he appeared out of nowhere (or so it seemed) and began teaching with authority. They wanted to "see his papers," to be given some proof, and then they would believe him. The operative phrase here is "and then." How many times in our own faith journey have we uttered that qualifier? Help me get well, "and then" I will believe; find me a job, "and then" I will have faith; answer my prayers, "and then" I will believe. Isn't it time we dropped the qualifier, stopped demanding signs, and let the truth of Jesus' message speak for itself in our hearts? As Blessed Benedetta Bianchi Porro says, "For those who believe, everything is a sign!"

Micah 6:1-4, 6-8; Matthew 12:38-42 (395). *"An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign."*

Tuesday, Jul 21, 2026

Make love your starting point

A theological and biblical scholar, fluent in several languages, renowned preacher, diplomat, and minister general of the Capuchin order, Saint Lawrence of Brindisi (1559-1619) pretty much did it all. Yet he never forgot the purpose of his work. "God is love," he wrote, "and all his operations proceed from love." Saints like Lawrence show us the strength of faith and inspire us to stretch ours. They also demonstrate how all our activity needs the guidance of love.

MEMORIAL OF LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Matthew 12:46-50 (396). *"Whoever loves me will keep my word."*

Wednesday, Jul 22, 2026

Maudlin no more

Mary Magdalene is often depicted weeping (the English word *maudlin*, meaning "excessively weepy and sentimental," is derived from Magdalene). Although in 1969 the Vatican officially separated Mary Magdalene from the sinner in Luke's gospel, centuries of sermons and Christian art depicting Mary as the sorrowful, penitent prostitute have embedded that image into the Christian psyche. But this doesn't do justice to the woman early

Christians called the "apostle to the apostles." Mary Magdalene was the first to see and recognize the risen Lord and announce his Resurrection to the apostles. Let her joyful witness inspire you to see Christ more clearly in your own life.

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE

Song of Songs 3:1-4b or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; John 20:1-2, 11-18 (603). *"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord.'"*

Thursday, Jul 23, 2026

You don't have to look far

Sometimes God seems hard to spot. We may feel we get a glimpse at times, but frequently God can seem to be somewhere else. The presence of God, though, is actually all around us. God's Spirit dwells in each person. Everyone is made in the image and likeness of God—as if we all carry a picture of God around with us in our pockets, to remind us of who we are. We can see God in creation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that scientific discoveries "invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works . . ." Most of all we see God when we love. "God is love," the First Letter of John says. Look for God's presence today. It's really not all that hard to find.

Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13; Matthew 13:10-17 (398). *"Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear."*

Friday, Jul 24, 2026

Let God's word take root

Jesus said that the person who hears the word of God is like a seed: Where it falls makes a difference. In good soil it brings forth life. God knows that people do not always understand his Word, which became flesh as the embodiment of love. But if you seek to understand it, to live by it, to embody it, you will come to know God and you will bear much fruit, like a seed planted in rich soil. Be guided by these words of Saint John of the Cross: "To love is to be transformed into what we love. To love God is therefore to be transformed into God."

Jeremiah 3:14-17; Matthew 13:18-23 (399). *"The seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it."*

Saturday, Jul 25, 2026

You send me

What makes the apostle James different from the many others named James in the New Testament? The word *apostle* comes from the Greek *apostolos*, "someone sent out." The more general meaning of the word is translated into Latin as *missio*, from which we get *missionary*. But it is also used in a more specific sense to refer to the first 12 disciples whom Jesus chose, named, and "sent out" to the world. While we honor James in name today as one of those 12, we can honor him and the other apostles much more by carrying on their work in the world. Ready for your send-off?

FEAST OF JAMES, APOSTLE

1 Corinthians 4:7-15; Matthew 20:20-28 (605). *"Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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