

Sunday, Jul 26, 2026

It's kind of like . . .

Jesus mentions the kingdom of heaven 38 times in Matthew's gospel. Clearly he wants us to understand exactly what it is. Yet the kingdom is mysterious; it is not something that can be defined once and for all. The best Jesus can do is to describe what it is like, not what it is. The kingdom is like a treasure buried in a field . . . it is like a merchant searching for valuable pearls. In other words, the kingdom of heaven is both that which we find and that which is searching to find us. Hmm. Jesus wants to know if his disciples understand. Today would be a good day to contemplate the kingdom of heaven so that our answer, like that of the disciples, will be "yes."

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13:44-52 (109).

"Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes."

Monday, Jul 27, 2026

Deep dive into mystery

Similes, metaphors, parables, all are literary techniques used to describe the indescribable: the ineffable, intimate, and uniquely personal relationship God has with each of his beloved creatures. God is close to us as clothes on a body; God is the vine and we are the branches; God's kingdom is the tiny seed that grows into the largest plant that provides life, comfort, and shelter for all. Try as we might through every literary device, we will never fully comprehend the mystery, but we will find great purpose in trying. "You are a mystery as deep as the sea," says the great mystic Saint Catherine of Siena. "The more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for you. . . . In our hunger you are a satisfying food, for you are sweetness and in you there is no taste of bitterness, O triune God!"

Jeremiah 13:1-11; Matthew 13:31-35 (401). "For, as close as the loincloth clings to a man's loins, so had I made the whole house of Israel."

Tuesday, Jul 28, 2026

Tune in to the word

Jesus never wastes words in the gospels, but we know he wants to make absolutely sure we are paying attention when he concludes his comments with "whoever has ears ought to hear." Jesus knows that we humans have a tendency to tune in and out of our surroundings. Sometimes we are so captivated by our thoughts—last night's conversation, a repeating song fragment, the stories we continually tell ourselves about the past and future—that although we believe we're listening, and have every intention of listening, we aren't really listening. Make the decision today to pay attention to your thoughts. Are you tuned in or out of your surroundings most of the time? "Listen in silence," says Saint Teresa of Calcutta, "because if your heart is full of other things you cannot hear the voice of God."

Jeremiah 14:17-22; Matthew 13:36-43 (402). "Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Wednesday, Jul 29, 2026

Imperfect family reveals perfect faith

The siblings Martha, Mary, and Lazarus together give us a full portrait of faithfulness. As a family, they try to support one another in their witness, though they sometimes fall short. Who can forget Martha's complaint that Mary was too busy hanging on Jesus' every word to help in the kitchen? Yet Martha redeems herself when she seeks Jesus' help in bringing her brother back to life.

Each family member reveals an important lesson about how to receive Jesus in friendship: Martha offers hospitality, Mary listens attentively to Jesus, and Lazarus follows Jesus' commands—even to the point of rising from death itself. How do you welcome Jesus into your life?

MEMORIAL OF MARTHA, MARY, AND LAZARUS

Jeremiah 15:10, 16-21; John 11:19-27 or Luke 10:38-42

(403/607). "Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."

Thursday, Jul 30, 2026

Cultivate a discerning heart

This time of year, peaches in the market may look delicious, yet we have all tasted some that were flavorless. Too often, we focus on externals and fail to consider what lies at the core of a person, philosophy, religion, or promise. For Christians, this is why the practice of discernment is essential. We must take time to uncover the truth about ourselves and the world around us through prayer, spiritual reading, and wise counsel. The more we seek God, the more likely we are to recognize what is true, good, and worthy of our embrace. Let the words of Saint Ignatius of Loyola guide you: "Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me."

Jeremiah 18:1-6; Matthew 13:47-53 (404). "The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous."

Friday, Jul 31, 2026

To give, and not to count the cost

If you did not have a horse in the 16th century, you walked to get where you were going. You had to be sure your destination was worth it, because it was going to take significant time and effort to get there. That was particularly true for Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), who had a severe limp from a war injury. It was during his recovery from battle that he went through a conversion. Ignatius chose to live a life of poverty and become a pilgrim of God seeking enlightenment. As he walked, he pursued his studies, preached, and provided spiritual direction. He eventually made his way to Rome to put his newly minted group, later to become the Jesuits, at the service of the pope. Pray for the clarity of mission Ignatius was blessed to receive.

MEMORIAL OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, PRIEST

Jeremiah 26:1-9; Matthew 13:54-58 (405). "Whatever I command you, tell them, and omit nothing."

Saturday, Aug 01, 2026

Live in the moment

When Saint Alphonsus (1696-1787) was a bright young lawyer, he made a critical mistake in a case, and his law career was ruined. He later became a priest and founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. For the rest of his life, he endured conflicts within the order and with the government, even while being recognized for his intellect and compassion. When he was 85, he was tricked into signing a rule for the order that contained elements he did not support. As a result, the community was divided, and Alphonsus was at odds with the congregation he had founded. Though the Redemptorists emerged from their troubles later, Alphonsus did not live to see it. But in his wisdom, Alphonsus wrote: "The past is no longer yours; the future is not yet in your power. You have only the present wherein to do good."

MEMORIAL OF ALPHONSUS LIGUORI, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24; Matthew 14:1-12 (406). "Reform your ways and your deeds; listen to the voice of the LORD."

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



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