

JUNE

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Saturday, June 1, 2024
(Lec. 352)

- 1) Jude 17, 20b-25
- 2) Mark 11:27-33

SATURDAY OF
EIGHTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Justin,
Martyr)

FOCUS: We have the freedom to become saints.

Today is the feast of Saint Justin Martyr. An early scholar in the Church, he came to Christianity through the gift of faith, and through reason: He had studied and practiced myriad philosophies but had found all of them wanting for their ability to answer life's deepest questions. In Christ he found truth and the fulfillment of truth. He was killed for defying the Roman rulers and refusing to worship their pagan gods.

So many of our known saints, and multitudes of unknown ones, have stories not unlike that of Justin. He received and accepted an offering of the gift of faith. He pursued a life of holiness as our baptism calls us to do. If we are here today, it means our story has not ended. Therefore, we have another blessed opportunity to hear the word of God and allow it to work in us, that we, too, may pursue a life of holiness.

The first reading says, *Remember the words spoken beforehand by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Every temptation awaits us out in the world, but we are strengthened by the grace we receive in this Eucharist to hear and follow these words of wisdom. We know they are truth; we know they speak of the One who is the *fulfillment* of truth, Jesus Christ, "through whom all things were made."

The chief priests, scribes, and elders had a problem with Jesus' authority, but we who are gathered here find freedom in it. Jesus has saved us. He has redeemed us. He has made it possible for us to be holy – to become saints. It won't always be easy, but it will be beautiful.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2024

(Lec. 168)

1) Exodus 24:3-8

2) Hebrews 9:11-15

3) Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Gospel related: **CCC** 474, 1328, 1335, 1339, 1403

**THE MOST HOLY
BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST
(Corpus Christi)
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: Jesus has won our salvation through his sacrifice.

Today's Gospel recounts the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples. Although we are familiar with this story, there is one detail we can focus in on today. As Jesus is at table with his disciples, he takes the cup and describes it as *my blood of the covenant*. Covenant is a unique term in our religious language, and one we do not usually encounter in our daily lives. It signifies a holy agreement between us and God. It also shines a light on who we are as God's people.

Moses was the leader of the people of the (first) covenant. Bound to God in love and worship, they were his chosen ones; he was their God. Today we heard proclaimed that Moses was following the word of the Lord. To seal his commitment to the covenant, he sacrifices young bulls and uses their blood. This was a serious action that showed unwavering commitment. We know how momentous Moses and this moment was in salvation history.

And yet Jesus goes far beyond this sacrifice. At the Last Supper, he takes the bread and the cup, blesses them, and gives them to his disciples. He proclaims that this is the new covenant. As was proclaimed in our second reading: *For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance*. This is the new holy agreement between us and God. This is what defines us as God's people. This is what we remember and give thanks for with every celebration of the Mass.

As we celebrate the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, let us reflect on how it defines who we are. It is not just about the sacrifice of Mass we take part in on Sundays, but rather it imbues our whole being. We are a Eucharistic people. We give thanks for the abundant blessings God has given to us, especially the salvation won by his Son. We remember his sacrifice and use it to guide us in how we live in the world. How we see ourselves and how we treat others is rooted in our belief that God loves us so much that he sacrificed his only Son. His Son willingly took part in the sacrifice so that we can be part of his eternal kingdom.

In a few moments, we will once again gather around the table, hearing the words Jesus first spoke at the Last Supper. Let us pray for the grace to grow in understanding of the Eucharist and ourselves. We are a people to whom God gave his only Son to save. We are a people called to be a blessing for all. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we remember and give thanks for the new covenant Jesus established with us.

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Monday, June 3, 2024
(Lec. 353)

- 1) 2 Peter 1:2-7
- 2) Mark 12:1-12

MONDAY OF
NINTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Charles Lwanga
and Companions,
Martyrs)

FOCUS: Live in the freedom of God's promises.

In today's first reading, Saint Peter reminds us of the great promise that has been given to us in Christ Jesus: *His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power.* It is through Jesus that we live in the promises of God. In fact, it is God who calls us, who draws us to himself so we may be brought into his eternal life.

Faith in Christ frees us to love him and one another, for in keeping our eyes on him we are able to keep straight our path toward heaven. Indeed, as Scripture and today's Gospel inform us, *the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone* of the new temple of our salvation.

Saint Peter's words, saying our faith is not a one-and-done deal, reflects this scriptural prophecy. Christ is all in all, and eternal. And rather than faith in him being akin to meditating on a still photograph, a living faith is meant to be built upon with virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, devotion, mutual affection, and love. Faith is a journey, a journey that is meant for continual growth and pruning. We cannot achieve this growth and pruning on our own, but with the gift of the Holy Spirit which dwells within us.

Sin encompasses the world; we do not have to look far to prove that conclusion. As Saint Peter writes, *make every effort to supplement your faith.* We profess our faith with our lips, but we strengthen it by our actions toward others – ultimately by the love we have for even our enemies.

Today, let us rely on the promises of God. Let us trust that through the Holy Spirit our faith may be strengthened by invoking him to help us grow in virtue. It is there that we will become fully alive to be who God created us to be in his promises. Living in the freedom of God's promises, by his statutes, we grow in faith by sharing his love with all.

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Tuesday, June 4, 2024

(Lec. 354)

1) 2 Peter 3:12-15a, 17-18

2) Mark 12:13-17

Gospel related: **CCC** 450 **CSDC** 379

TUESDAY OF
NINTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: All things of this world can be used for God's glory and purpose.

In today's Gospel, the Pharisees and people from the court of King Herod approached Jesus with praise and compliments. But their real motive was to dishonor him. They hoped to force him to either side with the Roman empire or take a stand against it. Either response would have been problematic for Jesus. Sensing their hypocrisy, Jesus' answer did not fully support the empire, but neither did it completely reject it.

Doesn't this seem to be the way of every Christian? Navigating between temporal and eternal; having a spirit that is willing but a flesh that is weak; in the world but not of the world. This is the paradox of the already-but-not-yet. That is, we live in this present age, where the kingdom has begun, while awaiting the age to come where the fullness of the kingdom will come to be.

Perhaps this was the cognitive tension Jesus was trying to address. After all, he did not come to condemn the world but to save it, and all things of this world can be used for God's glory and purpose. We are responsible for the gift of creation, and we have been commanded to be good stewards of it. And while what is owed to Caesar seems to be circumscribed by what contains his image – the coins – what is owed to God is likewise what contains his image, and that is everything. Where human boundaries and limitations exist, God has none.

The Pharisees and the others were trying to trap Jesus into incorrectly answering a question about taxes. But the exchange is more than that. Jesus' answer expresses a sort of natural law legitimacy to government, but only as an example of something bigger: Anything and everything that exists within creation is because God wills (or allows) it. Therefore, every responsibility we undertake or fulfill ought to be seen in light of that. No matter how big and important something seems to us, God is bigger and more worthy of what we have to give.

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Wednesday, June 5, 2024
(Lec. 355)
1) 2 Timothy 1:1-3, 6-12
2) Mark 12:18-27

WEDNESDAY OF
NINTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Boniface,
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 993, 1619

FOCUS: Jesus saves us and reconciles us to God.

From today's Scripture, we can draw three summary points of Jesus' mission here on earth. The first is that he came to save us. This is the part of the Good News we hear first and often, and it is easy to grasp. Jesus saves. He did that for us, and all we have to do is accept it. Then Saint Paul points out a very important "and."

He saved us and called us to a holy life. This is the second point: Our Lord calls us to be in relationship with him, and relationships are a two-way street. Because God loves us, because Jesus saves us, we are called to respond to this love in kind. And if we love God, then we should also desire to live the kind of holy life God calls us to live. As Saint Paul says, living a holy life relies not on our own works but rather relies on God's grace, freely given to us.

Jesus' words to the Sadducees are reflective of that grace, reminding us of the truth of the resurrection that awaits us. This is the third point in today's readings: Jesus saved us *and* called us to a holy life *so that* we may have eternal life with him in heaven.

Jesus' death and resurrection were not some kind of final act in the drama of the Incarnation. Instead, they were the means by which humankind has been reconciled to the God who made us and loves us so we can be with him in the next life. Our lives should be ordered with this in mind: We were created by the Father and saved by Jesus so that, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may lead holy lives and one day see God face to face.

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Thursday, June 6, 2024
(Lec. 356)

- 1) 2 Timothy 2:8-15
- 2) Mark 12:28-34

THURSDAY OF
NINTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Norbert,
Bishop)

Gospel related: **CCC** 129, 202, 228, 575, 2196 **CSDC** 40, 112

FOCUS: Help one another to love God and to love each other.

Today's Gospel has a somewhat rare scene: a moment of mutual respect and understanding between Jesus and a Jewish scribe. This is more than just an exchange of niceties, however. In describing this interaction, Mark is declaring some clear principles: First, the God of the Jewish people is the one true God and he has revealed himself in the law. He has claimed them for his own and commands that they love him without reserve – holding nothing back and holding nothing else as equal. And they are to love one another.

Second, Jesus is who he says he is: the Messiah, the only one who could declare the kingdom of God both present and within reach of those who obey God's commandments. The scribe is seen by Jesus to have great faith and understanding, and Jesus affirms him in this.

These two fundamental principles are familiar to us, of course – they are tenets of our faith. Because of Mark's evangelism, and that of the other Gospel writers, we know who Jesus is, why he came, and what he did for us. We know that he himself is the manifestation of God's command to love. He is love incarnate, offering all of Godself to us that we might offer all of ourselves in return.

With this knowledge we are then meant to live out, and not simply recite, the commandments to love God and one another. We see in Christ the living answer to the question the scribe asked, and he is our example to follow. Let us seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us on this journey.

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Friday, June 7, 2024

(Lec. 171)

1) Hosea 11:1, 3-4, 8c-9

2) Ephesians 3:8-12, 14-19

3) John 19:31-37

Gospel related: CCC 478, 608, 641, 694, 1225, 1432

**THE MOST SACRED HEART
OF JESUS
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: The Lord has chosen to remain with us, in our midst, in our own hearts.

The human heart is the source of so many emotions and experiences: love, betrayal, hurt, bitterness, hope, forgiveness, disappointment, joy, and friendship, to name but a few.

God, in becoming human, embraced the experience of having a human heart and its accompanying range of emotions and temptations. Being God didn't make Jesus immune to suffering – whatever he must have felt at seeing all his friends abandon him and his once-supporters either turn on him or remain silent during his passion. In today's society, we talk about being canceled, or about "pile-ons" on social media. But these are not new social phenomena. We can look at Jesus' passion through this lens, and at his response as a model on which to pattern our own hearts.

And what is Jesus' response to the abandonment, the betrayal, the unjust accusations, the condemnation, and the brutal torture directed at him? If we recall the passion narrative, Peter had been ready to fight back with his sword. Jesus could probably understand this inclination – after all, he had a human heart too – but it was not the path he had come to show us.

No, the path he had come to show us was epitomized in today's Gospel. Jesus accepted all the worst the human heart was capable of throwing at him and, rather than respond with justice and giving back what we deserved, he responded with love and mercy. Christ pours out the fullness of his life to redeem us, to save us, and to elevate the human heart into the divine life.

Jesus died on the cross out of love for us, to save us from sin, to redeem us that we might have eternal life. If that were all the Lord had done for us through the cross and resurrection, that would be amazing and life-changing. But Jesus did more. His love for us, epitomized in his sacrifice on the cross for our salvation, isn't simply a historical event that happened a long time ago which manifests God's love for us. Jesus' sacrifice is one whose merits and graces continue to flow forth and upon us from the heart of Christ.

As we heard in the Gospel account, when the soldier pierced the side of Jesus with his lance, *blood and water flowed out*. From early times, Christians have understood this water and blood to signify the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. In baptism, our sins are washed away and we are incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ. And in the Eucharist, Christ's own body, blood, soul, and divinity, the Lord continues to nourish us and draw us into communion. God's love for us is such that despite all the evil the human heart was and is capable of unleashing upon him, he has chosen to remain with us, in our midst, in our own hearts.

As we gather here today, let us open our hearts to this love and allow him to do as Paul writes: fill us *with all the fullness of God*.

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Saturday, June 8, 2024
(Lec. 358)

1) 2 Timothy 4:1-8
(Lec. 573)

2) Luke 2:41-51

SATURDAY OF
NINTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM

The Immaculate Heart
of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

Gospel related: **CCC** 503, 517, 531, 534, 583, 2196, 2599 **CSDC** 259

FOCUS: Mary's Immaculate Heart is the model we try to imitate as we accept God's call to love without limits.

The Gospel today is an interesting choice for a memorial honoring Mary. In this account Mary scolds Jesus. She is his mother and is not happy with his choice to stay in Jerusalem while the rest of the family returned to their rural homes.

The last line notes that Jesus was obedient to his parents after this incident, and that Mary kept all these things in her heart. It is that heart we celebrate today. We call it her "Immaculate" Heart – so full of love, pain, and commitment to God that she endured it all with gratitude. This is a heart that is, indeed, pure and clean, but so much more.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is our mother, our role model, our queen.

Traditionally, the Immaculate Heart is depicted pierced with seven swords or wounds, each sword referring to one of her sorrows. These sorrows are as follows: First, the prophecy of Simeon, in which the old temple elder told Mary a sword would pierce her own heart because of the child. This took place at the purification of the infant Jesus. The second sorrow was the flight into Egypt, again, when Jesus was a very young child. The third sorrow is the one we heard about today, when Jesus was missing for three days. The fourth sorrow is watching Jesus carry his cross. The fifth is watching Jesus undergo his crucifixion. The sixth is watching Jesus taken down from the cross. And the seventh is watching him being placed in the tomb.

We honor Mary's Immaculate Heart today as our model.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024

(Lec. 89)

- 1) Genesis 3:9-15
- 2) 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1
- 3) Mark 3:20-35

Gospel related: CCC 500, 539, 548, 574, 1864

TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We were created for unity, with God and with one another.

The Gospel depicts an eventful day for Jesus, to say the least. His relatives are out to seize him; the scribes are calling him Satan; and on top of it all, he cannot even eat because the crowds are so large.

No doubt, the disunity Jesus felt in this moment pained him. Imagine having the leaders of your faith community and your own family out to get you. If God is a relationship of love, as the Scriptures consistently tell us, then disunity is the antithesis of God. Perhaps this helps us understand the meaning of the Gospel's reference to *blasphem[ing] against the Holy Spirit*, the only sin that Jesus says cannot be forgiven. Jesus tells the crowd *that if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand*. Disunity tears us away from ourselves, from others, and from God. We blaspheme the Holy Spirit, who is God's uniting force, when we cultivate division or independence over unity and interconnectedness.

In today's first reading from Genesis, Adam eats the apple in disobedience, and the immediate result is separation. For the first time, the Lord and Adam are detached, and thus the Lord calls out to Adam, *Where are you?* Adam replies that he hid himself in the garden out of fear. He does not trust God's mercy and love for him, the bedrock of unity, and instead blames his sin on the woman.

This foundational story of our faith tradition reminds us that we were created for unity. It is in our DNA, so to speak; unity is the very essence of who we are, what we were made for, and to which we ultimately will return. In today's Gospel, when Jesus replies *Who are my mother and my brothers?* his intention is not to slight his family, but to widen the circle of connection. He reveals that everyone around him are his mother and his brothers – a revolutionary shift from bloodline to generational relationships.

Jesus came to teach us that the circle of God's love encompasses everyone, making all of us family. Our job is to widen the circle until no one is left standing outside of it.

Is there anyone in our life from whom we are divided? Are there groups of people with whom we would rather not associate? Is there sin in our heart that disconnects us from God? Amid such disunity, the Lord calls out, *Where are you?* He says, "Come, be united to me, be united to those around you, your real brothers and sisters." This unifying work is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the end goal for each of us.

As we come forward to the table with outstretched hands, we recognize that the Eucharist is the "sacrament of unity." May our hearts and bodies long for this transcendent unity, with God and with one another.

Monday, June 10, 2024
(Lec. 359)

- 1) 1 Kings 17:1-6
- 2) Matthew 5:1-12

MONDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
OF ORDINARY TIME

Gospel related: **CCC** 520, 544, 581, 764, 1716, 1720, 2305, 2330, 2518, 2546, 2763 **CSDC** 492

FOCUS: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.*

The great prophet Elijah arose in history to speak truth to power, in this case, to the idolatrous King Ahab. As we see in today's first reading, for his troubles, Elijah ends up in the wilderness. In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples they will be persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and because of their association with him.

At first glance, these Scriptures seem to be a "good news/bad news" situation. The good news: God keeps trying to get the message of loving kindness across to us, across the millennia. The bad news: If we follow along with this loving kindness plan, we will probably be persecuted.

But is that exactly right? Can there really be any bad news with God? A deeper reading brings us a more complex reality: Even our persecution points to the entire world being under God's providential care. Yes, Elijah is in the wilderness, which is no easy place to be in the Mediterranean world long ago. But Elijah survives because God sends ravens to care for him.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the persecution to be endured is almost an afterthought, a "by the way," after a long list of how, if we follow the example of Jesus, we are already blessed. We are blessed because we are *poor in spirit*; that is, we rely completely on God. We are already blessed because loving God with all our heart leads us to be peaceful, always desiring righteousness, and filled with mercy.

So, indeed, there is no bad news, only *the* Good News, because no matter what trials befall us here on earth, we live in Christ who has opened the gates of heaven for us. There is nothing for us to do but rejoice, as we approach this table of our Lord, in the full gift of himself to us.

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Tuesday, June 11, 2024
(Lec. 580)

1) Acts 11:21b-26;
13:1-3

(Lec. 360)

2) Matthew 5:13-16

Gospel related: CCC 326, 764, 782, 1243, 2763, 2821

TUESDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Barnabas,
Apostle)

FOCUS: Let us be the city on a hill that points people in the direction of Jesus.

Our Gospel reading today comes from the Sermon on the Mount in the fifth chapter of Matthew. We hear Jesus point out three things. First, *you are the salt of the earth*. Second, *you are the light of the world*. And third, *a city set on a mountain cannot be hidden*. All three of these examples imply existing not for oneself but for others.

First, Jesus says, *You are the salt of the earth*. Salt does not exist for itself; rather, it exists to give flavor to the food it is put on. Salt is a way to preserve meat. Salt was also used to make sure nothing grew in a particular spot. It is used to enhance, preserve, and to destroy.

Second, Jesus says, *You are the light of the world*. Light is that by which we see other things. It is a means of illumination and makes other things visible.

Finally, *A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden*. This is how people used to navigate. Without a city on a hill to give them a sense of location and direction, people would not have known where they were going.

What is Jesus saying in these three images? He is saying that if we follow him, our lives are for others. We are to be salt that enhances and preserves others, making things better where we can, and preventing things such as sin from growing. We are to be light, helping illuminate the ways in which God has revealed himself to the world. And we are called to be the city on a hill, living self-sacrificial lives with and for others, pointing them to a relationship with Jesus that will lead them to everlasting life.

Since we are meant to live our lives not just for ourselves but for others as well, we must be diligent in growing in our own spiritual life and relationship with Jesus so we can share him with others. By our baptism we have been set apart from the world *for the work to which [God has] called [us]*.

Let us *remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart ... filled with the Holy Spirit and faith*.

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Wednesday, June 12, 2024
(Lec. 361)

1) 1 Kings 18:20-39

2) Matthew 5:17-19

Gospel related: CCC 577, 592, 764, 1967, 2053, 2763

WEDNESDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Strive to abolish false gods and put God first.

When we think of false gods, we normally think of someone similar to Baal, as we heard in the first reading. However, false gods are not always “divine” entities. In today’s world, these “gods” come under the guise of wealth, power, political ideology, or material goods, to name a few. We have a tendency to worship at the altar of consumerism.

When we bow down to these false gods, everything we do is dictated by the goods these pursuits bring us; in other words, we always want to attain more. These false gods can bring out the worst in us and tempt us toward greed and envy. Nothing we work to attain should ever lead us away from God.

If we root everything we do in faith and keep God at the center of all we think, say, and do, then we can say we are truly following him. There is only one true God and he is wholly good. He is love, patience, mercy – everything we need and could ever desire. In order to truly follow him, we must rid our lives of false gods and idols, of distractions and sinful desires.

While this may seem impossible, a great starting point is to refer to the Lord’s commandments. If we keep our sights on the commandments and abide by them, we are working to put God first and love him fully. We will be working toward attaining what is truly important: receiving the Lord in the Eucharist and putting our full trust in him and his plan for our lives.

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Thursday, June 13, 2024
(Lec. 362)

- 1) 1 Kings 18:41-46
- 2) Matthew 5:20-26

THURSDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM

Saint Anthony of Padua,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 678, 764, 1034, 1424, 2054, 2257, 2262, 2302, 2608, 2763, 2792, 2841, 2845

FOCUS: The fifth commandment calls us to love and respect everyone.

“You shall not kill.” What do these four words mean for us? When we examine our conscience, do we simply say, “Hey, I’ve never killed anyone,” and move on? If so, let’s take a closer look. Jesus is teaching us that obeying the fifth commandment requires a whole new way of looking at relationships.

In speaking to the crowds in today’s Gospel, Jesus expands upon the most obvious meaning of the commandments and helps us see the God-centered principles they espouse. He guides us to understand the core values they signify. The commandment “You shall not kill” is about fully respecting the dignity of every human person. In today’s world, we must be vigilant in protecting this value, especially within our own hearts.

Jesus goes on to admonish against harboring feelings of anger, resentment, or revenge. We must admit it isn’t difficult for these sentiments to creep into our thoughts and outlooks. It is certainly tempting to feel superior and righteous, but even if we are in the right, what good do these feelings do us? Jesus knows they often become a trap, an obsession, that keep us locked in an unhealthy spiritual mindset.

The only way to combat this tendency is to extend the unconditional love God has for us to other people. We must see the image of God in other people, even when it’s difficult. Let us ask Jesus today for his help with our efforts.

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Friday, June 14, 2024

(Lec. 363)

1) 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-16

2) Matthew 5:27-32

Gospel related: CCC 226, 764, 1034, 1456, 2262, 2330, 2336, 2380, 2382, 2513, 2528, 2763

FRIDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Seek to grow in genuine love.

During Mass, when we pray together the Confiteor, we say, *I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words ...*

What does it mean to sin in our thoughts? Certainly, we all have the experience of having stray thoughts, distracted thoughts, thoughts that seem to appear in our mind out of nowhere. If one of these is of a sinful bent, well, is that a sin?

To answer that question, let us consider two things. First, there is the definition of a sin as found in the *catechism*: “Sin ... is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor by a perverse attachment to certain goods” (CCC 1849). That is, sin is a failure of love. Second, what is the nature and source of our thought? For example, whether or not we have purposely conjured them; whether we have intentionally sought them out to think, to ruminate, and to entertain. A helpful way of framing it is that we cannot always stop thoughts from knocking on our door. But we do not have to invite them in for a visit.

Jesus’ words in today’s Gospel prompt us to consider the root of whatever thoughts have come into our mind – to ask ourselves whether our thoughts are the fruit of genuine love for God and neighbor or the product of our baser instincts.

If we recognize that at least some of our thoughts are the product of our baser instincts, Jesus wants us to take these sins seriously and to make whatever sacrifices we must in order to put a stop to them. A good spiritual director can help with this.

Fortunately for us, Jesus is here to help us follow his command. In the sacrament of reconciliation, he not only forgives our sins but also strengthens us to resist sin. And in the Eucharist, which we are so blessed to receive, he gives us his own pure, loving heart, that our own might grow in that genuine love which will make sin unthinkable.

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Saturday, June 15, 2024
(Lec. 364)

- 1) 1 Kings 19:19-21
- 2) Matthew 5:33-37

SATURDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 581, 592, 764, 2141, 2153, 2262, 2338, 2463, 2466, 2763

FOCUS: *Incline my heart, O God, to your decrees; and favor me with your law.*

When the great prophet Elijah throws his mantle over Elisha as his choice of successor, Elisha hesitates. Wouldn't we all? The road of a prophet is a hard one; so often, he or she is appreciated by God alone, reviled and even harmed by the very people he or she is trying to help.

But when Elisha does choose to step into Elijah's role, he does so by the most powerful sign possible – not by words but by action. Just as Elijah fed 100 people with 20 loaves (2 Kgs 4:42-44), Elisha sacrifices symbols of his former life to feed others, and he will continue feeding others spiritually for the rest of his days.

The stutter-step of Elisha was characteristic of many prophets. They may have begun with hesitation, feelings of unworthiness, moments of confusion, and even attempts at running and hiding. But once committed to the call they received from the Lord, they were "all-in" and ready to serve as instruments of God's judgment and speaker of his Word.

To use the words of today's Gospel, these prophets *let [their] "Yes" mean "Yes," and [their] "No" mean "No."* They swore no allegiance to anyone but the Lord; they swore no false oaths because they knew that only God had authority over them and gave them that authority to use in his name.

The courage and integrity Elisha showed is something Jesus asks of us as well.

The Sermon on the Mount, as we have been hearing in recent days, is not a set of laws; rather, it is character formation. What kind of person does God expect us to be? The kind of person who everyone knows is honest and trustworthy, whose word is not doubted. It is a high calling – part of our baptismal role as prophets – but we can muster the ability to accept it here at the table of the Lord.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 2024

(Lec. 92)

- 1) Ezekiel 17:22-24
- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:6-10
- 3) Mark 4:26-34

**11TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

Our readings today talk about the kingdom of God – how it is established, how it grows, and how it will reach its fulfillment.

In the first reading, Ezekiel uses the image of a cedar tree planted at the top of a mountain to prophesy that God will restore Israel under a new king from the line of David. We know that Jesus is this new king, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. But his kingdom is not the political dynasty the people hoped for. Jesus came to proclaim the kingdom of God.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells two parables about the kingdom of God. In the first, he says the kingdom is like a man who has scattered seed. He does not know how it grows, but he harvests it as soon as it is ripe. In the second, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. Though it is a small seed, it grows into a large plant that can shelter birds in its branches.

In both parables there is a contrast between small or humble beginnings and great conclusions. There is also an element of mystery in the process of getting from the beginning to the end that suggests divine guidance. Jesus' description of the man sleeping and rising and watching his plants bear fruit of their own accord is not an accurate description of agriculture. Anyone who has grown a backyard garden knows there is weeding and watering and pruning to be done before the plants bear fruit. The emphasis of the parable is that God is the source of growth.

Where are we in these readings? Somewhere between the planting and the harvest. Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection are the seeds that have been planted. These seeds are scattered and sown each time we hear the word of God or celebrate the sacraments. The kingdom of God is already here. But we also know that Christ will come again. As Paul writes in the second reading, *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

Until then, *we walk by faith, not by sight*, knowing that what God has in store for us is greater than anything we could imagine. The work of the present is to build the kingdom of God, trusting that he will provide for its growth, even when we cannot see it. We are called to do good and avoid doing evil so we will be ready when harvest time comes.

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Monday, June 17, 2024
(Lec. 365)

- 1) 1 Kings 21:1-16
- 2) Matthew 5:38-42

Gospel related: CCC 764, 2443, 2763

MONDAY OF
11TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Take only that which is needed to journey on the way to God.

The people we encounter in today's readings present us with a very human struggle: how best to relate to those around us, especially when there are imbalances of power, wealth, and status. The first reading recounts the story of King Ahab, his wife Jezebel, and one of their subjects, Naboth.

Naboth owns a vineyard near the king's palace, and Ahab wants it. Naboth will not sell the land, however, and Ahab is petulant in his response. He goes home and takes to his bed. His despair turns to action, however, as he and Jezebel have Naboth killed and he takes over the land.

Today's Gospel passage, continuing the Sermon on the Mount, also examines relationships and interactions between people. Here Jesus explains what we ought to do, *if anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic*. Rather than encouraging us to maintain our possessions, Jesus espouses an attitude of detachment. Detachment recognizes the value of what we possess, but it also puts the dignity of our sisters and brothers first, ahead of our own needs. It is this attitude that prevents us from turning our backs on the needs of others.

As God's chosen people, we must always be mindful that we are on a journey to God and the fullness of life in heaven. It is by what we, the faithful, have done for those less fortunate that Jesus will recognize us as his chosen ones (CCC 2443). We must refrain from being focused on earthly things and the accumulation of these things, for they pale in comparison to what awaits us in heaven. We cannot be so attached to what we have that we cannot help lift up the lives of others.

Everything we have comes from the Lord. We give thanks for it, and we give thanks for the opportunity to care for our sisters and brothers. Most of all, we give thanks when we celebrate the Eucharist, receiving Jesus and experiencing a glimpse of the fullness of the life he prepares for us in heaven.

* * *

Tuesday, June 18, 2024
(Lec. 366)

- 1) 1 Kings 21:17-29
- 2) Matthew 5:43-48

Gospel related: **CCC** 443, 764, 1693, 1825, 1933, 1968, 2013, 2054, 2262, 2303, 2608, 2763, 2828, 2842, 2844 **CSDC** 40

TUESDAY OF
11TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Love others as our Father in heaven loves us.

A fitness instructor motivated his early morning class by telling them, "We're not here because it's easy. If this were easy, everyone would be doing it. We're here because we are choosing to be strong and healthy." In the Gospel today, Jesus seems to be saying something similar: "We don't love our enemies because it is easy. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it. We love them because we are choosing spiritual health and holiness."

Loving others is a choice. Couples who have been married for many years tell us this. Sometimes the choice to love is easy, sometimes it is very difficult. Even though every person is made in the image of God, we are all wounded. Our wounds are caused by many things, including, of course, the effects of sin. Because of our woundedness, we are not always our best self. Let us remember this when someone hurts us, is dishonest with us, or does not love us as we would like to be loved.

Let's make this challenge from Jesus real. Choose someone who is hard to love. Perhaps it is a family member or a colleague, maybe it is someone we don't know personally but whose actions we disagree with. Then pray for that person every day. But let us not pray for that person to change in the way we want them to change. Instead, pray for their well-being, that they be healed from whatever has wounded them, and that their day be filled with joy. As we come to the Eucharist, let us hold these people in prayer. In doing so, we will move closer to loving others as our heavenly Father loves us.

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Wednesday, June 19, 2024

(Lec. 367)

1) 2 Kings 2:1, 6-14

2) Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

WEDNESDAY OF
11TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Romuald,
Abbot)

Gospel related: CCC 575, 764, 1063, 1430, 1434, 1693, 1753, 1969, 2447, 2608, 2655, 2691, 2763, 2792

FOCUS: The *Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.*

Today Jesus gives us a deep lesson in humility: *Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them.* In other words, do things because they are good and right to do, not because of any recognition or reward for doing them.

Jesus calls us to a life of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer for the sake of those things in and of themselves, and for the sake of the world which is helped by our prayers. A quiet but earnest prayer, heartfelt in intention and utterance, is a sign of integrity and humility. It is done not out of vainglory but rather out of love. Parading around in piety is a sign of hypocrisy, where the *appearance* of love for another is the highest good. God sees all of our actions, even those that are accomplished in our hearts or out of the limelight. We do not have to “earn” our way into God’s heart – we are already there. He loves us even without the righteous actions. He delights in the intimacy we offer to him when we engage in quiet acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

We can look to the lives of the saints for copious examples of exactly what Jesus is calling us to in this Gospel. Our righteous actions are movements of the interior heart for the glory of God and out of love for him. They are not for our own satisfaction.

Today, let us ask the Holy Spirit to shed light on the state of our heart and the motivations for our actions. Do we think and act out of a desire to be seen, known, loved, and praised by the world? Or do we act from a desire in our heart to love God and give him the glory that is due to him?

* * *

Thursday, June 20, 2024
(Lec. 368)

- 1) Sirach 48:1-14
- 2) Matthew 6:7-15

THURSDAY OF
11TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

Gospel related: **CCC** 268, 443, 764, 1165, 1434, 1969, 2608, 2632, 2659, 2668, 2736, 2759, 2763, 2776, 2792, 2841, 2845 **CSDC** 492

FOCUS: *Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues to teach his disciples about prayer. Yesterday we heard about the hidden life of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Today we are given a model of prayer: the Lord's Prayer.

Within this prayer Jesus gives us, we give praise to God for who he is. We ask for his kingdom to come, and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We ask for our daily provisions. And we ask for the grace to be protected from the temptations of the evil one. In this prayer, we become like little children running to our father asking for help and thanking him for what he has done.

Our heavenly Father knows our exact needs before we ask him. And it is important that, even as we go to the Lord with our needs and wants, we ask God what he wants for us. Rather than babbling, as Jesus says the pagans do, with this prayer we can ask for the Lord's guidance to identify the real desires and intentions of our hearts – to pray for what is best for us, even if we do not know what that is, or do not have the words to articulate it.

When we enter into prayer and shift our focus to God, as in the Lord's Prayer, we turn outside of ourselves in humble submission to God's will for our lives. So today, let us turn to the Lord in humble submission in prayer, placing our trust in him that he will provide for our needs, and give us the grace to turn away from evil.

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Friday, June 21, 2024

(Lec. 369)

1) 2 Kings 11:1-4, 9-18, 20

2) Matthew 6:19-23

FRIDAY OF

11TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(OBL MEM

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga,

Religious)

Gospel related: **CCC** 368, 764, 2533, 2551, 2604, 2608, 2729, 2763, 2848 **CSDC** 260

FOCUS: The only treasure worth seeking is with God in heaven.

The term “influencer” has grown in usage these past few years. Those identified as such do exactly that – influence people, young and old alike, through the internet and social media. They attain multitudes of followers and use their celebrity status to bolster interest in specific ideas, brands, products, and even ways of behaving and acting. They generally do this in exchange for sponsorship or payment.

Many have become role models for others, especially young people. For some they are idols, and their influence encourages meaningless, passing fads. Some even fill minds with ideas that directly oppose a saintly way of life, leading many astray. Other influencers have opened minds to goodness (in health, physical fitness, or spirituality) and helped people to grow.

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga is a perfect example of a true influencer. The patron saint of Catholic youth, teens, and seminarians, he turned away from a life of wealth and power in the sixteenth century, joining the seminary at a young age and devoting his short life to the Lord. He practiced penance in many different ways and truly realized what real treasure was. He knew it was not to be found here on earth; real treasure was kept behind the gates of heaven with the Lord.

The Lord has so much to offer us: love, truth, light, warmth, comfort, relief – his gifts are endless. While we try to attain material goods to feel fulfilled here on earth, they will never compare to the intangible treasures Christ has in store for us. We must make the sacrifices now in order to experience true fulfillment after death.

We do not want to act as Athaliah did in today’s first reading, letting earthly desires consume us. We do not want to be influenced by those obsessed by material treasures here on earth. We want to be influenced by those such as Saint Aloysius, who fought against the disillusionment of the world by studying the lives of the saints and seeking heavenly treasure. If we seek this kind of treasure, we will surely find it in heaven with the Lord.

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Saturday, June 22, 2024

(Lec. 370)

1) 2 Chronicles 24:17-25

2) Matthew 6:24-34

SATURDAY OF

11TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(Opt. Mem.

Saint Paulinus of Nola, Bishop;

Saints John Fisher, Bishop,

and Thomas More,

Martyrs;

Saturday in honor

of BVM)

Gospel related: **CCC** 270, 305, 322, 764, 1942, 2113, 2416, 2424, 2547, 2604, 2608, 2632, 2659, 2729, 2763, 2821, 2830, 2836, 2848 **CSDC** 181, 260, 325

FOCUS: Let us trust that God knows what we need.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life ... do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. How often do we find ourselves worrying about things in life that we do not have any control over? How often does worrying about these things cause unnecessary stress and anxiety? Probably more often than we would like to admit.

The good news is that Jesus gives us a remedy, and that remedy is him: complete and total trust and surrender to his care for us. In a world that often preaches false gospels of “your truth is your truth,” it can be easy to fall into the mentality that we have to take care of every little detail in our lives instead of handing them over to God. To surrender every aspect of our life to God – trusting that he will care for us better than we could care for ourselves without him – is our charge.

If we believe that God is who he says he is, then God is aware of all things in our lives. Nothing is hidden from him. He is bigger than even our biggest problem. Perhaps it is easier to trust God when things are going well, and not so easy to keep that faith in his all-knowing, all-seeing power when things look grim. It is in these challenging times that we need to trust that God knows what we need and will lead us to whatever will be best for us.

Having the heart and mind to accept the hard times as part of God's good and loving plan comes easier if we nurture that trust every day, in both good times and bad. Let us strive to turn over our day each morning to God's will for us, and trust in his eternal love and goodness.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2024

(Lec. 95)

- 1) Job 38:1, 8-11
- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:14-17
- 3) Mark 4:35-41

**12TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: We are called to great faith in order to face the challenges before us.

What a scary scene in today's Gospel passage from Mark. A violent squall quickly comes upon the disciples, and they are besieged with wind and rain. There is nowhere to go for shelter, and the waves were *breaking over the boat*.

If we place ourselves in this situation, it is completely understandable that the disciples wake Jesus from his sleep as they face this great storm. We likely would have done the same. In their panic, they ask Jesus if he cares that their lives are in danger. Jesus wakes up and miraculously commands the winds and the waves to stillness once again.

Jesus' response to the disciples is striking as he asks them: *Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?* He does not rebuke them for waking him up but wants to know why they were afraid. He is wondering about their faith.

Although faith is at the core of everything we do and all that we are, we can still underestimate it. Consider what we think we need from God. We might wonder if what we think we need is truly everything we ought to receive, or perhaps we are holding back from asking God for something. There might be situations in our lives that feel like too much of a longshot to ask God for help with.

Perhaps it is the strained relationship that just seems to get worse year after year. Perhaps it is bad health news. Whatever it is, we need not be afraid to ask Jesus for help in these situations. And we certainly should not underestimate his power. The Gospel tells us that Jesus is right there in the midst of our turmoil. Ask him to get involved. Ask him to calm the winds and the waves that shake us. Ask him for whatever healing or need we have in the present moment. Have faith in him. Our God is one who inspires awe in us. He is the One whom even the wind and the sea obey.

Our readings today coax us to have courage – to be filled with awe. Look at what God has already done for us! As we prepare to receive his greatest gift, the Eucharist, we see how God continues to bless us and be here for us. May we not be afraid to have faith.

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Monday, June 24, 2024
(Lec. 587)

- 1) Isaiah 49:1-6
- 2) Acts 13:22-26
- 3) Luke 1:57-66, 80

**THE NATIVITY OF
SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: Like Isaiah and John the Baptist, our words and deeds must point to Jesus.

A good book builds steam as it goes along. It does not reach its climax in the first pages but sets the stage with a rich plot and complex characters. As an accounting of our salvation history, our holy Scriptures follow this literary wisdom, with many characters pointing to the climactic Savior, Jesus.

Isaiah, we learn in today's first reading, is one such character. The Scriptures tell us that Isaiah was chosen from his birth for a special purpose. He is God's servant, fulfilling a prophetic role and announcing God's promise of a Savior, a suffering servant who will be greater than any other. Of this forthcoming servant of Israel, Isaiah prophesies for the Lord: *I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*

As Christians, we read this Hebrew Scripture as prefiguring Jesus, the eternal light and source of salvation for all. It also foreshadows Jesus' statement to his disciples: *I no longer call you slaves ... I have called you friends* (Jn 15:15). Long before Jesus' arrival, Isaiah was a devoted servant of God, pointing beyond himself to life with the Lord.

Today we celebrate the feast of another character whose life points to Jesus – John the Baptist. Unlike Isaiah, John was a contemporary of Jesus. In fact, they were second cousins and met while in their mothers' wombs. John gained quite a following through his religious ministry, which called for repentance, and he baptized countless people in the Jordan River. Yet John's mission was a prophetic one and was not about himself. He always pointed *beyond* himself, to the Lamb of God. In today's second reading he tells his followers about Jesus, saying, *Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.* With great humility, John knew and played his role: to pave the way for Jesus, the *word of salvation*.

Can we see ourselves in this story of salvation? We are not merely observers or readers of the drama, as if it was completed upon Jesus' ministry. Like Isaiah and John, we are participants in an ongoing journey, and our role is to point to Jesus.

It is all too easy to point mostly to ourselves in this life. The Scriptures, however, teach us a different way, a way that points beyond ourselves to something greater and, more precisely, *someone* greater. Because of Christ, we need not be the climax of the story we live each day – a climax we can never fulfill or achieve on our own. Instead, we participate with Christ in God's amazing story of salvation, pointing to a God whose love is eternal.

In today's Eucharist we are nourished by the Lord's body to be strengthened for our task. With this nourishment, we take our place in God's creative redemption, alongside such figures as Isaiah and John the Baptist. We point not to ourselves, but to Jesus.

* * *

Tuesday, June 25, 2024
(Lec. 372)

TUESDAY OF
12TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

1) 2 Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21,
31-35a, 36

2) Matthew 7:6, 12-14

Gospel related: **CCC** 1036, 1696, 1789, 1970, 2609, 2763, 2821 **CSDC** 20

FOCUS: Jesus empowers us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

There are relatively few good Israelite kings recounted in Scripture, and the aptly named Hezekiah, meaning “the Lord strengthens,” is one of them. After a long line of idolatrous kings, Hezekiah instituted religious reforms to re-focus the people on worship of the Lord alone. In today’s first reading we clearly see Hezekiah’s complete reliance on God in the face of one of the most disruptive kingdoms in history – Assyria under the devastating rule of Sennacherib. And seemingly miraculously, the great Sennacherib retreated from his siege of Jerusalem.

Hezekiah’s discernment was immediate and correct, and in the Gospel we just heard, Jesus tries to teach us how to judge similarly between the holy and the unholy. Here he uses symbols easily understandable to his first-century Jewish audience: rare and thus valuable pearls versus the ritually unclean pigs. When we make our judgments, we are to *do to others whatever [we] would have them do to [us]*.

Both of today’s Scriptures inspire a question about a life of faith: Where are we going? There are “two ways” we can go: the one leading to life, the other to destruction. The way downhill, or in Jesus’ terms, the wide road, is easy. Through the narrow gate is another image for the uphill road, which is much harder. Although we all should know from reflection on our own life experiences which one will bear the fruit of life the easy way can still tempt us.

At those times, let us be inspired by leaders such as Hezekiah who were completely focused on the Lord; by the counsel of Jesus to keep in mind the Golden Rule; and most of all, by the gift of Jesus himself at this altar, to enable us to choose our direction, through the narrow gate.

* * *

Wednesday, June 26, 2024
(Lec. 373)

1) 2 Kings 22:8-13;
23:1-3

2) Matthew 7:15-20

Gospel related: CCC 2005, 2285, 2763

WEDNESDAY OF
12TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Good intentions and pure hearts help lead us to eternity in heaven with Christ.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them ... Every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. Jesus' words to us in today's Gospel are a warning against falling prey to the evils of the world.

We know that not everyone in this world has good intentions in their actions, but we cannot allow this knowledge to shake our faith or cause us to doubt the Lord and the goodness of humanity. The Lord made us all in his image, so we know there are good people in this world – many of them! We want to be these good people. We want to be good trees that bear good fruit.

By the grace of God, we have the power to positively affect anyone we encounter. We have the power to evangelize and spread the Good News of the Lord everywhere and anywhere we go. In doing this, we help to grow the faith and the Church. Every relationship we have should be rooted in faith with God at its center. We should strive to bring everyone we meet and know to heaven. This is how we continue to bear good fruit. If we choose to not put God at the center of our relationships and encounters, then we will be like rotten trees, bearing bad fruit. We will meet our demise, being *cut down and thrown into the fire*.

In today's first reading, the king of Judah realized he was not bearing good fruit when it came to leading his people since the covenant with the Lord was not kept. He immediately fixed this knowing that, as Judah's leader, he could not call himself a king if he led the people away from God.

Let us strive to share the Good News when we have the opportunity to do so. We cannot keep something so good and valuable to ourselves. Salvation is a gift and a special treasure that must be shared with others if we want to truly experience its fullness.

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Thursday, June 27, 2024
(Lec. 374)

- 1) 2 Kings 24:8-17
- 2) Matthew 7:21-29

THURSDAY OF
12TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Cyril of Alexandria,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 443, 581, 1821, 1970, 2611, 2763, 2826 **CSDC** 70

FOCUS: Prayer is essential to knowing the will of the Father.

Ora et Labora is the traditional motto of the Benedictine religious community. It is a Latin phrase meaning “pray and work.” These two things are the foundation for Benedictine monastic life, and in today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches that they are necessary elements in the life of anyone who wishes to follow him.

The Gospel passage we just heard has two parts. In the first part, Jesus tells us that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must do the will of our heavenly Father. This implies that there is some work that is ours to do. However, it isn’t just any work. It is work that is in line with God’s will for us, and we come to know God’s will by spending time in prayer.

In the second part of the Gospel, Jesus tells us that if we are wise, we will listen to his words and act on them. Again, this implies that there is some work for us to do and that work is based upon the words of Jesus. And we will hear Jesus’ words in our personal prayer and in the liturgy.

Prayer and work. Even though most of us are not monks, there should be a balance of these two activities in our life. And when we find that balance, our life will be abundantly blessed. And always remember that there is no one-size-fits-all formula. Each person’s prayer life and holy work are unique to them. As we meet Jesus in the Eucharist today, let us draw near to him in prayer and give thanks for the work he has given us to do.

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Friday, June 28, 2024
(Lec. 375)
1) 2 Kings 25:1-12
2) Matthew 8:1-4

FRIDAY OF
12TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Irenaeus,
Bishop, Martyr and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 448, 586

FOCUS: We thank God for the teachings of the Church, helping us know Christ's true message of love.

We know we are an apostolic Church. Our beliefs come directly from those Jesus taught and what the Apostles carried forward after his ascension into heaven. The saint we honor today, Irenaeus, is a major figure in helping us know what Jesus taught. He also helped protect the Church from errors or heresies that might have led her astray early on. Irenaeus, who lived in the first century, was a student of Saint Polycarp. Polycarp, in turn, was a disciple of Saint John the Apostle. Therefore, Irenaeus' work followed directly from those who knew the Apostles.

In today's Gospel, Jesus cured a leper and then demanded he tell no one about the miracle except the priest. Jesus knew that the right words spoken to the wrong people could end in misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or error. We are blessed to have the Holy Spirit protecting us from serious errors in our magisterium, the teaching office of the Church. Saint Irenaeus was one of the early conveyors of Christ's message to the wider world.

The fact that the Mass usually includes lessons from both the New and Old Testament is also part of Irenaeus' legacy. Many people in the Church's early days felt the Hebrew Scriptures – the Old Testament – were no longer necessary. This would not have been in accord with Jesus' mission, and Irenaeus was one of the bishops who made sure those Scriptures were included in the Church's teachings.

As we celebrate the life of Saint Irenaeus today, let us thank God for watching over us and our Church. Let us thank him for giving us the heritage and depth of knowledge that come from having both the Old and New Testaments to deepen our understanding of the love God has for us. Let us be grateful for the men and women who have served God faithfully over the centuries, inspired by the Holy Spirit and helping to ensure our Church remains true in her teachings.

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Saturday, June 29, 2024
(Lec. 591)

**SAINTS PETER AND PAUL,
APOSTLES
- SOLEMNITY**

- 1) Acts 12:1-11
- 2) 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18
- 3) Matthew 16:13-19

Gospel related: **CCC** 153, 424, 440, 442, 552, 553, 586, 869, 881, 1444, 1969

FOCUS: Saints Peter and Paul, intercede for us.

There is a remarkable contrast between our first two readings today. In the first, Saint Peter is miraculously saved from death. In the second, Saint Paul contemplates finishing his race and being poured out like a libation. In the first, Saint Peter is protected from execution by God's mighty hand. In the second, Saint Paul is preparing to lay down his life for the Gospel he courageously preached. The circumstances and immediate outcome of these two stories are different, but as Saints Peter and Paul were both martyred for the Gospel, today's solemnity calls us to contemplate God's glory manifest in both.

In these two passages, God is working mightily for the salvation of the whole world. In both God is present, strengthening these Apostles he has called to his service. In both, God stands by his beloved servants.

Saint Paul reflects: *The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly Kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever.* Even though his witness does not end in a miraculous escape from death, he is still confident that God is with him, protecting and strengthening him.

These two Apostles continue to preach this great truth to each of us gathered here today. Although our paths may look different, they are teaching us that God is with us, that God will strengthen us and guide us. There may be times when God's action looks more like Saint Peter's miraculous rescue from prison. There will also surely be times when God's care looks like the confidence and peace given to Saint Paul as he approaches profound suffering. And yet these Apostles continue to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God who will rescue us and bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom.

Therefore, we, too, are called to respond to Jesus' question: *But who do you say that I am?* We can answer rooted in the witness of the Church, built on the rock of Saint Peter's faith, shared with the world through Saint Paul. We know the answer has been passed down by generation upon generation who have come to know Christ's saving presence just as these two great Apostles did. When our faith falters, as Saint Peter's once did, when we are blinded by confusion, as Saint Paul once was, we can allow ourselves to be carried by the faithful witness of these two great Apostles and the Church rooted in their trust, hope, and faith.

You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This same Christ is present with us today, seeking to draw us more fully into the life he promises through this Blessed Sacrament. May our faith be strengthened in this Eucharistic feast, and may Saint Peter and Saint Paul intercede for us on our journey.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2024

(Lec. 98)

- 1) Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24
- 2) 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15
- 3) Mark 5:21-43

or 5:21-24, 35b-43

Gospel related: **CCC** 548, 994, 1504, 2616

**13TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Approach the Lord with humility and faith.

Today's Gospel account proclaims two connected miracle stories, one embedded in the other. The story that bookends the account is the healing of Jairus' daughter. A synagogue official such as Jairus would be a man of wealth who supported the synagogue. He was therefore a man of prominence and stature.

This man of wealth and prominence had a serious problem: His daughter had a terminal illness and was, in fact, close to death. It is difficult to imagine the agony he and the child's mother must have been going through. He could have been filled with anger or despair.

But Jairus' response was neither: Instead, it is one of humility and faith before the Lord. Mark writes that seeing Jesus, Jairus *fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying ... Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live*. Jairus recognized that Jesus had greater stature and authority than he had; he also believed that Jesus could heal his daughter and restore her to life.

Mark then interrupts the conclusion of the story of Jairus with another episode. In this account, we encounter a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhagic illness for 12 years and had spent all her money seeking help. Mark tells us this woman came to Jesus and touched his cloak, believing that if she did so, she would be healed.

Typically, if an unclean person such as the woman touched someone else, the other person would become unclean as well. But interestingly, this woman believed that the opposite would happen; she believed that Jesus' holiness would make her pure and heal her. This is indeed what happened. She was made pure and healed by Jesus' touch because of her faith. When questioned about the encounter, like Jairus, she fell, in humility, before Jesus.

In today's Gospel, Mark demonstrates how we are to approach Jesus with our petitions. Whether the petitions are for ourselves or for loved ones, whether we are people of wealth, prestige, or the most inconsequential, seemingly invisible people in the world, we are to come to Christ with faith and humility. And how can we come to have the kind of faith that Jairus and this woman had in Jesus? They seem so confident that Jesus could and would do what they asked, as they needed. Let us strive to have such faith, such confidence in the Lord.

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