

MAY

1 2 3 4 5 6

7 8 9 ASCENSION 10

11 12 13 14

15 16 17 18

19 20 21 22

23 24 25 26

27 28 29 30

31

YEAR B WEEKDAYS II

Wednesday, May 1, 2024
(Lec. 287)

1) Acts 15:1-6

2) John 15:1-8

Or for Memorial (Lec. 559)

1) Genesis 1:26–2:3

or Colossians 3:14-15, 17, 23-24

2) Matthew 13:54-58

Gospel related: **CCC** 495, 500 **CSDC** 39, 259

WEDNESDAY OF
FIFTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Joseph
the Worker)

FOCUS: We remain on the true vine of Jesus by remaining in his love.

The picture Jesus draws for us today in our Gospel from John gives us a great visual image of the importance of staying connected to him at all times. We don't have to be a master gardener or a horticulture expert to understand his point – he is the vine on which we branches depend for life. That source of life is his love that we are called upon as branches to extend to others through our own acts of love.

The more acts of love we initiate, the stronger we, as branches become. In one of her writings entitled *The Dialogue*, Saint Catherine of Siena relayed a message she received in a mystical encounter from God the Father as such: “If you are attached to the vine you will produce much fruit, because you will share the vital sap of the vine. And being in the Word, my Son, you will be in me, for I am one with him and he with me.” It doesn't get much clearer than that (Noffke Sec. 23).

How do we stay connected to Jesus? We stay in communion with our Triune God through prayers and the sacraments. That is the “vital sap” of love necessary for us to spread his love everywhere we go. In his love we can bear great fruit, but Jesus warns us that we can do nothing without him. If we do not remain in him, we will wither and die.

We spend a great deal of time in our daily lives staying connected with others with the aid of technology. Let's spend even more time staying connected to Jesus, and glorifying the Father, by being his disciples.

* * *

Thursday, May 2, 2024
(Lec. 288)

- 1) Acts 15:7-21
- 2) John 15:9-11

THURSDAY OF
FIFTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(OBL MEM
Saint Athanasius,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1823, 1824 **CSDC** 39

FOCUS: Remain in Jesus and keep his commandments.

Today we hear from Jesus how we are called to be: to know and love him, to remain in him, and remain true to what he has taught us.

Drawing us to himself seems to be the focus of Jesus' discourse in this Gospel – keeping his commandments and abiding in him. This is not a passive exhortation, for drawing near to the life of Jesus means *participating* in that life and acting with compassion, grace, and love.

Christians are known by their actions, actions that stem from the very fact of their being Christians. From the earliest accounts of Christians in the world, their behaviors set them apart. Their love of their brothers and sisters and how they lived their daily lives, their care for the poor and widowed, their celebrations on Sunday – all these actions set them apart. The image of the vine and the branches, which immediately precedes today's reading, reveals the result of being a Christian and being part of the vine: fruitfulness (Jn 15:1-8).

Hand in hand with this command "to love" and "remain in this love" is the promise of joy and hope for the future.

In this Gospel, Jesus commands us to live on in his love. In the next chapter, Jesus follows up this command by revealing that he will send the Paraclete/Advocate to guide us to all truth, speaking and revealing more to us (Jn 16:13). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is the Body of Christ on earth, and through her and in her Jesus continues to instruct us and draw us, still, ever closer to himself. If we remain in him now, and follow his commandments, we will remain in him forever.

* * *

Friday, May 3, 2024

(Lec. 561)

1) 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

2) John 14:6-14

Gospel related: **CCC** 74, 459, 470, 516, 1698, 2466, 2614, 2633, 2815 **CSDC** 1, 28, 555

**SAINTS PHILIP AND JAMES,
APOSTLES
- FEAST**

FOCUS: *Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do.*

Today we celebrate the feast of two Apostles, Philip and James. Our readings focus on the fundamental truths of our faith: Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; he died for our sins and rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Philip and James bore witness to these truths, and James is even mentioned by name in Paul's list of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances.

In the Gospel, Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father, likely thinking of how Moses saw God in the Book of Exodus. But Jesus tells the disciples that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father.

Today's readings and feast invite us to consider our own witness, and how our story might be told within the entirety of salvation history. If we profess that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then our faith cannot be merely personal. It must permeate every area of our lives. Jesus is not *a* way, or *a* truth, among many. He is *the* way and *the* truth. Jesus is for everyone. This belief calls us to action. It calls us to build "a social and political culture inspired by the Gospel" (**CSDC** 555).

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the Apostles that *whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these*. What are the works of Christ? Works of justice and mercy. Comforting and peacemaking. Preaching and healing. We are called to do what Jesus would do, offering ourselves for the sake of others. If we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, we must demonstrate that fact in our actions each day.

* * *

Saturday, May 4, 2024
(Lec. 290)

- 1) Acts 16:1-10
- 2) John 15:18-21

Gospel related: **CCC** 530, 675, 765 **CSDC** 39

SATURDAY OF
FIFTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: The Holy Spirit is our guide as we strive to share the teachings of Jesus with others.

There is an old saying that goes: When you are up to your neck in alligators, it is hard to remember that your initial objective was to drain the swamp. The Apostles and other early missionaries may have had similar feelings. As they struggled with hostility and difficult circumstances, they probably had to remind one another that their main objective was to help people get to heaven by following the teachings of Jesus.

The details of accomplishing a goal can sometimes hijack the overall, larger objective. Today's readings remind us of some of the challenges the early Church faced. They were being persecuted. They had to travel large distances. They were dealing with strangers who knew nothing about Jesus. And the list goes on. They were not teachers or organizers. Their leader had been crucified, and now there were largely uneducated people telling others what to believe about God, contradicting those who were supposed to be their religious leaders. It is quite a picture.

But the Holy Spirit prevailed. The "alligators" did not keep the "swamp" from being drained, so to speak. The power of the mission was too strong to stop it from succeeding. Today there are new challenges we face as a Church and as people who work to spread the Good News. There are new alligators and new swamps. Just like those early disciples, we know we are up to the challenge because we have the Holy Spirit with us. Love is still the message. Jesus is still the one we follow. And through our combined faithfulness, the world has not heard the last of us.

* * *

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024

(Lec. 56)

1) Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

2) 1 John 4:7-10

3) John 15:9-17

Gospel related: **CCC** 363, 434, 459, 609, 614, 737, 1108, 1823, 1824, 1970, 1972, 2074, 2347, 2615, 2745, 2815 **CSDC** 13, 29, 39, 580

**SIXTH SUNDAY
OF EASTER**

FOCUS: We are called to friendship with God, living in his example of love.

Each of today's readings puts God's love at the center of its message. Perhaps we can envision our own experiences of God's love in our lives. Each one of us has our own particular encounters where we have felt love from God, including through the love of others. It might be the love we have felt from a parent who carefully passed down the faith to us. It might be the love we have felt from a dear friend who understands us so well. It might be the love we have felt when we take a moment to feel gratitude for the blessings in our lives.

Our Gospel passage from John shines a light on how divine love shows itself to us. Jesus tells his disciples: *As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.* Jesus here is asking his disciples to begin with their experience of his love. They witnessed Jesus' love when they saw him bring healing to those suffering from incurable illnesses. They witnessed Jesus' love when he spoke words of hope to those who were on the margins. They witnessed Jesus' love when he picked them as his followers and empowered them to share his message with others. Now, Jesus is asking them to take the love they have witnessed and practice it in their lives with those around them.

Furthermore, Jesus is not just giving *them* an example to follow with his instructions. It is how he reveals himself to *us*. If we want to grow in understanding of God, then we must begin with love. God invites us into friendship with him; we follow his call when we share his love with others.

The Easter season is 50 days for a reason. Lent was 40 days of preparing our hearts for Jesus' death and resurrection. The message of Easter is an ongoing revelation. We have these days in the liturgical calendar to grow in our understanding of what it means that Christ has risen from the dead. It shapes our whole being and is at the center of our discipleship.

The Easter season is not over; let us continue to open ourselves up to experiences of God's love. Remain in it. Share it with others. As we continue our journey together, partaking of this holy sacrifice, let us pray for the grace to strengthen our friendship with God. May it increase our understanding of him as we are sent into the world.

* * *

Monday, May 6, 2024
(Lec. 291)

- 1) Acts 16:11-15
- 2) John 15:26–16:4a

Gospel related: **CCC** 244, 248, 263, 692, 719, 729, 1433, 2671 **CSDC** 39

MONDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: *The Spirit of truth will testify to me, says the Lord.*

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is telling his disciples of the coming Advocate: the Holy Spirit. He is *the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father*. Jesus is promising a great gift, a gift that will aid all people until the second coming. He is sending the Advocate. An advocate is someone who pleads a cause on behalf of another, or comforts and defends him or her. In reality, an advocate points to what is true. It is in finding what is true that brings comfort, peace, and freedom. This is what the Holy Spirit does.

Jesus is promising his disciples the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, so they may testify to others the truth of who he is. It is the Holy Spirit who shines light in our minds and hearts of who Jesus is and what he came to do on the cross. It is through the power and working of the Holy Spirit that bread and wine are transformed into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus.

This gift is always available to us, and yet at times we can neglect to utilize the great gift and power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. By virtue of our baptism, the Holy Spirit dwells within us, waiting to be unleashed. When we find ourselves confused, alone, frustrated, or angry, a simple invocation of the Holy Spirit can point us to truth: *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Come Holy Spirit.

Only the Holy Spirit can point us to freedom in Jesus. Only he can bring us the comfort we need. Most importantly, a simple invocation of the Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus and the new life we have in him, freed from the shackles of Satan. Perhaps today we might ask the Holy Spirit to set our minds and hearts on the truth of who Jesus is, so we may live in his freedom.

* * *

Tuesday, May 7, 2024
(Lec. 292)

- 1) Acts 16:22-34
- 2) John 16:5-11

Gospel related: **CCC** 385, 388, 692, 729, 1287, 1433 **CSDC** 39

TUESDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: We are set free in and through Christ Jesus.

Today's first reading is the well-known story of the miraculous earthquake that shakes the jail and breaks the shackles of Paul and Silas. But why, exactly, are they there?

In earlier verses of this chapter, Paul had cast out a demon from a slave girl who made money for her masters working as a fortune teller. Once freed from the darkness attached to her, she no longer wanted to predict the future or call upon any power but God. Her masters feared a financial loss, which is why Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned.

Why didn't they leave when they had the chance, after their chains were pulled loose? Because God was still working wonders through them with the conversion of their jailer. It was the very fact that they chose to remain when they could have escaped that convinced the man that he and his whole household should be baptized and converted. Notice that once the man is brought into the faith, he nursed the wounds of those who had been beaten and ordered that they be fed. His encounter with Christ made him a servant of others.

As part of Jesus' Last Supper discourses, in today's Gospel he says, *the ruler of this world has been condemned*. He proved that the next day when he took our sins to the cross. Jesus broke the chains of sin, Satan, and death, forever and for everyone. The cells are open, the chains are gone, all of us are set free in and through Christ Jesus.

Like the jailer in Acts, our encounter with Christ calls us to service, that we who have been freed may do the same for others until all of us are truly free and together forever in the kingdom of heaven.

* * *

Wednesday, May 8, 2024
(Lec. 293)

- 1) Acts 17:15, 22–18:1
- 2) John 16:12-15

Gospel related: **CCC** 91, 243, 244, 485, 687, 690, 692, 729, 1117, 1287, 2466, 2615, 2671
CSDC 29, 39, 104

WEDNESDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Let us proclaim Christ's resurrection.

The Apostle Paul was a master in formal rhetoric. He was skilled at using language to persuade people of the truth of his argument. In Athens, the center of the practice of rhetoric at the time, his strategy was to look for the good and to build upon the truth he had seen there. In today's first reading he finds a common ground on which to step: religious sensibility and their worship of God, as yet to them unknown.

As creatures of God, we all discern a law of conscience "deep within ... ever calling [us] to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil" (CCC 1776). In other words, Paul says, we all have that voice inside that teaches us that *in him we live and move and have our being*.

We would do well to learn this strategy from Paul as we seek to bring the Good News of Christ's resurrection to the world. Instead of always looking for what to correct, we can seek to look for that upon which we can build – for bridges to be constructed to help others understand the joy of the Resurrection.

How do we open ourselves to find these connections, to build these bridges? The answer is not complicated: We ask the Spirit of truth. As Jesus reminds his disciples, the Spirit will always *guide you to all truth* from the Father and the Son. In dwelling within the love of the Trinity, we live and breathe as one body, and we may proclaim the love of God boldly, as we do each time we approach the holy table of the Eucharist.

* * *

NOTE: Regarding the Ascension of the Lord, the ecclesiastical provinces of Boston, Hartford, New York, Newark, Omaha, and Philadelphia have retained its celebration on the proper Thursday, while all other provinces have transferred this Solemnity to the Seventh Sunday of Easter, May 12. If transferred, Thursday, May 9, is observed as an Easter Weekday.

Thursday, May 9, 2024

(Lec. 294)

1) Acts 18:1-8

2) John 16:16-20

Gospel related: **CSDC** 39

THURSDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: We have great hope in Christ: Our grief will turn to joy because death has been defeated.

Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. In today's Gospel, Jesus is telling his disciples, in words that confuse them, that he will be leaving them soon. He is foretelling his upcoming ascension into heaven and the promise of hope in life to come. His ascension completes the paschal mystery – the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord into heaven.

It may seem that grief and hope don't naturally go hand-in-hand. Whether it is the loss of a loved one, a medical diagnosis, family or other relationship struggles, or a trial a child may be going through, the list of things to grieve could go on and on. Yet Jesus offers hope in the midst of this, saying, *You will grieve, but your grief will become joy.* How? Why? Because Jesus has risen from the dead and will soon ascend to the Father.

Jesus is sharing with his disciples the hope of eternal life. Even after he is gone physically, hope remains. For those who believe in Jesus Christ, hope remains. Our end is not physical death, but eternal life with God. We grieve with hope of life eternal.

Through Christ's death and resurrection, we have the assurance that Christ will make all things new. We live with the hope that our grief in the end truly will turn to joy because death has been defeated.

* * *

Thursday, May 9, 2024
(Lec. 58)

- 1) Acts 1:1-11
- 2) Ephesians 1:17-23
or 4:1-13 or 4:1-7, 11-13
- 3) Mark 16:15-20

Gospel related: CCC 2, 156, 161, 183, 434, 659, 670, 699, 888, 977, 1223, 1253, 1256, 1257, 1507, 1673

**THE ASCENSION
OF THE LORD
- SOLEMNITY**
[Holyday of Obligation]

FOCUS: May the Ascension renew our hope and raise our vision.

We all likely have had a moment or two where we felt like we just could not complete some task, or walk a particular road that stretched before us, or carry a burden that pressed us down. We have had moments where we didn't know how to move forward.

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives the Eleven a heavy task: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature*. He also commissions each one of us to this work, through our baptism. In our families, our schools, and in our places of work, Jesus sends us forth to make his presence known.

This is a profound challenge! And if we already feel as if we might be stumbling under our given loads, we may feel questions arise. How can I do this? How could God ask more? Why is this so difficult?

On today's feast of the Ascension, we lift our eyes along with the disciples to behold our risen Lord's glory. In doing so, we have the answers to our questions.

For as soon as Jesus gives his disciples this command, he promises salvation for all who come to believe. His words convey assurance that they will not act on their own, or be alone, but that his power and authority will flow through them.

God invites us to participate in his work, and our Lord carries these burdens with us. He does not take them away, but he lifts them as he walks with us. And in his ascension, Jesus carries our burdens with him to heaven.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians says: *May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened* so that we can see *the hope* that accompanies this great call. So that we can see *the riches of glory* that are the *inheritance* of Christ's followers. So that we can see *the surpassing greatness of his power*. The power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at the right hand of the Father in heaven – this same power has promised to be with us.

Christ does not leave us in the Ascension, but he does lift our eyes, inviting us to behold his power and glory. He reminds us that this power and glory is given to us, in a particular way, through the sacraments. In the Eucharist, Christ gives himself to us. He is with us in our struggles and helps us carry our burdens; he makes this presence known in a way we can taste and see.

May the Ascension renew our hope, fill us with confidence, and raise our vision. May our eyes, as they rise to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, be given clarity to see the promise of Christ's presence in our lives.

Friday, May 10, 2024
(Lec. 295)

- 1) Acts 18:9-18
- 2) John 16:20-23

FRIDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint John of Avila,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church;

USA: Saint Damien de Veuster,
Priest)

Gospel related: **CCC** 2615 **CSDC** 39

FOCUS: God is with us always.

At some point in our lives, we can expect to endure sorrow and face challenges. Yet as disciples of Jesus, we know that we are not facing these difficulties alone – and that sometimes God's loving presence can be experienced in surprising ways.

Today's readings remind us of that unfailing love and support of God. Paul is instructed not to be afraid to speak out in Corinth because of God's many people in that city. Ironically, one of those people is Gallio, a Roman official, who refuses to put Paul on trial for a religious conflict. Paul is set free to continue his ministry to the Corinthians.

Just before his own suffering and death, Jesus reaches out compassionately to his Apostles, assuring them that, even as they mourn for him, they will soon know a joy that cannot be taken from them. As we have been reading in the Acts of the Apostles throughout this Easter season, the early disciples went about the mission of spreading the Gospel with great joy – in spite of the many hardships they faced – because of their assurance of Jesus' presence among them.

Just as we have inherited the mission of the early disciples, so do we enjoy God's presence and strength in our daily lives. Few of us will suffer or face the dangers that Saint Paul did, but we can rest assured that God is with us in the daily challenges we face – sometimes through the help and compassion of family members, friends, colleagues, or even strangers. As we leave church after Mass today, let us continue the mission of spreading the Gospel, knowing that Jesus will be with us through every challenge.

* * *

Saturday, May 11, 2024
(Lec. 296)

- 1) Acts 18:23-28
- 2) John 16:23b-28

Gospel related: **CCC** 661, 2615, 2795, 2815 **CSDC** 39

SATURDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: God is the Lord and giver of all.

Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Jesus' words at the beginning of today's Gospel tell us the attitude and disposition we ought to have in prayer: boldness, confidence, assurance. He instructs his disciples, and each of us, that when we bring our petitions and needs to the Father, with confidence in Jesus' name, that the Father will grant them.

Faith and trust in Jesus' words are what allow us to bring our prayers to the Father with confidence. They offer assurance that nothing we face, no problems we encounter, are too big for God. It can be easy to fall into the mindset of thinking that our problems *are* bigger than God, but Jesus reminds us that Father is the Lord and giver of all. He is the creator – the One who is able to accomplish anything according to his will.

Jesus is encouraging his disciples, and us today, to pray with boldness and confidence that the Father will hear our prayers and grant them according to his will. God is always present, and in his mercy and love he desires to grant what we need and what is best for us.

Satan will try to tempt us away from bringing everything before the Father, in the name of Jesus, to be fulfilled. Satan will try to tell us that God is not capable of giving us what we pray for. But our faith is not one of timidity or fear; rather, it is one of boldness and assurance that God is who he says he is.

Today, let us approach the throne of mercy with confidence that the prayers we make in the name of Jesus are heard by the Father and will be granted according to his holy will.

* * *

NOTE: In those places where the observance of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord has been transferred to this day, the Mass and readings of the Ascension are used.

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024

**SEVENTH SUNDAY
OF EASTER**

(Lec. 60)

1) Acts 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26

2) 1 John 4:11-16

3) John 17:11b-19

Gospel related: **CCC** 611, 858, 2466, 2604, 2746, 2747, 2749, 2750, 2758, 2812, 2815, 2821, 2849, 2850 **CSDC** 18, 39

FOCUS: By his example, Jesus teaches us about prayer.

Prayer is a powerful force. We know that it changes hearts, it sustains in times of difficulty, and as intercession, it binds us to one another in the communion of discipleship. Today's Gospel account begins by saying that Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven. This description reflects the important insight that prayer is rooted in our relationship with God the Father, who abides in and reigns in heaven.

Jesus' relationship with the Father flows from the reality that Jesus is the incarnate Word of God, the second person of the Trinity made flesh. For us, this relationship is established in baptism when the Holy Spirit washes away original sin and any sin, and comes to dwell in our hearts, incorporating us into the Body of Christ and making us sons and daughters of God. Now, with Christ, we, too, can raise our eyes to God the Father in heaven.

Unfortunately, unlike Jesus, we can grow distant from the Father through sin. This means that sin will negatively affect our prayer life. But thankfully the Lord, in his wisdom, knew this about us and gives us the means to address this challenge: the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist. Both these sacraments heal the wounds of sin and strengthen God's grace in our hearts to resist temptation and remain in relationship with him. If we are struggling in our own prayer life, participating in these sacraments regularly will certainly help us.

As we turn our attention to Jesus' prayer, we notice two important points. First, it comes immediately prior to his passion, death, and resurrection. Second, he prays not for himself as he faces this trial, but for his disciples.

Jesus knew what he was about to face, and so he prayed. We, too, know when significant events in our life are coming. In our preparations for these moments, prayer ought to be at the center. The weight we carry – whether these moments are sad or joyful – are greatly lightened when we come to them rooted in our relationship with God and seeking to move through them in the context of obedience to God's will.

When faced with life-changing events, or even our everyday trials, it is easy to focus only on ourselves and what they mean for us. But, as John tells us in his letter today, a marker of our relationship with God is our love for one another. One expression of that love is to pray for our loved ones in difficult as well as joyous times.

As we seek to deepen our relationship with God and persevere in our life of prayer, let us ask the Lord to intercede for us as he did for his disciples, knowing he will give us the grace we need to do so.

Monday, May 13, 2024
(Lec. 297)

- 1) Acts 19:1-8
- 2) John 16:29-33

MONDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(Opt. Mem.
Our Lady of Fatima)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1808 **CSDC** 39

FOCUS: *Take courage, I have conquered the world.*

Imagine what it must have been like for the disciples in today's Gospel passage. There they are, telling Jesus with conviction that they believe he has come from God. It is a bold proclamation, but they have confidently reached this conclusion and are sharing it with him. It would be fair that they might expect an affirming response from Jesus. And Jesus does affirm them ... just not in the way they, or we, might have expected.

Jesus acknowledges their belief, and what it means to be a disciple of faith, by telling them that their faith, and their very lives, will be challenged and tested: *Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived, he says, when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone.* This had to have been disconcerting for his friends. Had they not just professed their faith in him? Had they not been loyal this whole time?

But Jesus does not leave them bereft. His message of foreboding is countered with a message of encouragement and hope. He tells them, *In the world, you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.* It is still a puzzle to his disciples – what all of this means – and it may even be puzzling for us on days when we are more aware of the pain than the hope.

In these final days of the Easter season, let us consider where our faith is at the moment. Perhaps we feel strong as the disciples did at the beginning of today's Gospel passage. Perhaps we feel as though we have left Jesus alone and are distant from him. Perhaps we are somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. Wherever we are, Jesus welcomes us in his peace. We can be fortified in this.

In a few moments, we will celebrate the Eucharist at the table before us. This blessed sacrament is a powerful witness to the paschal mystery. Jesus has made the ultimate sacrifice and is with us always. Let us keep our hearts open to him and take courage in his peace.

* * *

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

(Lec. 564)

1) Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

2) John 15:9-17

Gospel related: **CCC** 363, 434, 459, 609, 614, 737, 1108, 1823, 1824, 1970, 1972, 2074, 2347, 2615, 2745, 2815 **CSDC** 13, 29, 39, 580

SAINT MATTHIAS,

- FEAST

FOCUS: God has chosen us for love.

There seems to be no end to competitions these days: among voices for attention; among ideologies for followers; in sports for championships; even in employment for jobs. One area in which we never have to compete, however, is God's love for us. Amid today's world of competitive tryouts and personal accolades, the story of Matthias in the first reading shows us who God is in that he chooses us out of his desire to be in relationship with us, not based on our ability to perform.

Matthias, whose feast we celebrate today, did not have to "try out" for the job of disciple. Instead, the eleven disciples prayed about who should be added to their number to replace Judas, and then cast lots between Matthias and Barsabbas. In this case, the lot fell upon Matthias, who became the "new" twelfth apostle and foundation for our Church.

The contemporary understanding of "casting lots" is one of gambling – a form of leaving things to chance. But for the people of the ancient near east, it was just the opposite. It was a means of divination, that is, "divining" what God intended. Absent a spokesperson, or a prophet, to tell them, they would pray and then allow the items to speak, as it were, to God's will for them.

As Jesus says in today's Gospel, *It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain.* Matthias was chosen by God simply for being Matthias. He could not earn this relationship with the Father no matter how hard he tried.

As with Matthias, our being chosen is a matter of God's giving. We receive this grace, first outpoured in baptism, embodied in the gift of the Eucharist. We do so with grateful hearts, trusting that we need not prove ourselves to God. We are truly free, free to *go and bear fruit*, to *love one another* and to love God, in return.

* * *

Wednesday, May 15, 2024
(Lec. 299)

- 1) Acts 20:28-38
- 2) John 17:11b-19

WEDNESDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(Opt. Mem.
USA: Saint Isidore)

Gospel related: **CCC** 611, 858, 2466, 2604, 2746, 2747, 2749, 2750, 2758, 2812, 2815, 2821, 2849, 2850 **CSDC** 18, 39

FOCUS: We can confront adversity, assured by Christ's promise to consecrate us in the truth.

The evil one in today's Scripture – Satan – cannot create anything. Only God can create. However, he can take the good created by God and turn it away from the good for which it was intended. Evil can creep into even the good we seek to do if that good is not directed by and toward God.

Today's readings acknowledge these evils. As we walk this road of faith, we will encounter barriers. Both Jesus and Saint Paul recognize this reality.

Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock, Saint Paul says. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away after them. Paul's admonition calls us to reflection, discernment, and much conversation with God.

This call requires that we take time for prayer – to pray for ourselves and one another, as Jesus did. He says to the Father in today's Gospel, *I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the Evil One.* He wants us to be safe. He wants us to be unperturbed by those who may pervert the truth. To be so requires that we invest time in studying Scripture and learning from saints and holy men and women who have come before us. It means setting aside time to reflect, to step back and allow God to guide our thoughts and actions.

We do all of this assured by Christ's promise that he wants to consecrate us. He sends us into every challenge with this promise. He speaks a living word to us and invites us to share in his joy, that we might be consecrated in truth.

* * *

Thursday, May 16, 2024

(Lec. 300)

1) Acts 22:30; 23:6-11

2) John 17:20-26

Gospel related: **CCC** 260, 589, 690, 729, 820, 877, 2604, 2746, 2749, 2750, 2751, 2758, 2821
CSDC 34, 39

THURSDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus wants us to be with him for eternity.

When bad things happen in our lives, it can be easy to think we are being punished for something we have done, whether recent or in the past. However, this is not what the Church teaches. The Lord does not punish us; we, in essence, punish ourselves. It is the natural consequence of sin entering the world.

According to the *catechism*, "Punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin" (CCC 1472). The Lord loves each of us unconditionally and without question. He wants nothing more than for us to spend eternity with him in life after death. That is Jesus' prayer for us that we hear in the Gospel today.

Jesus wants for us what God gave to him. He wants the world to be one in love and in faith. He wants the world to know and understand that the Father sent him and that Jesus loves them as the Father loves his Son. Jesus says: *Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.* Jesus loves us, and we are reminded of his great sacrifice each Sunday when we receive his body and blood.

If we want to be in the presence of Jesus' love and grace until the end of time, we must be willing to make sacrifices. The road is not easy, as Paul showed us in the first reading, but we can walk it courageously because we are loved and aided by God. We will grow closer to the Lord during these times of difficulty, and one day his prayer for us will become reality as we join him in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

* * *

Friday, May 17, 2024
(Lec. 301)

- 1) Acts 25:13b-21
- 2) John 21:15-19

Gospel related: **CCC** 553, 618, 645, 881, 1429, 1551

FRIDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: We are called to share the Good News, even when it is difficult.

Even though it is not a feast day for Saints Peter and Paul, they are the focus of our Scripture readings today. The witness of these two men is the foundation our Church is built upon. But they didn't have an easy road to follow, as we heard in today's readings.

Paul suffered greatly in his efforts to spread the Good News of Jesus in the cities of the Roman Empire. He was shipwrecked, harassed, stoned, and even imprisoned. In his final imprisonment, he used his status as a Roman citizen to appeal to the emperor, as was recounted in the first reading. Even under house arrest in Rome, he continued to witness to the Gospel, until he was eventually beheaded.

Peter had a rocky start to his tenure of early Church leadership. In today's Gospel, Jesus asks Peter three times to profess his love and to feed and tend his sheep. Very possibly this was a reconciliation between Peter and Jesus after Peter had denied Jesus three times.

After Jesus' resurrection, Peter was unwavering in his commitment to tell others about Jesus. He did so without fear until he was crucified upside down in Rome, as foreshadowed at the end of today's Gospel.

Now it's our turn. Each of us is called in our own way to share the Good News with others. We do this even when it is difficult because we have been blessed by the love of God. We share our hope even when we are struggling. We share our love even when we are broken-hearted. We share our faith even when there are so many reasons to doubt. As we are strengthened by the Eucharist today, let us be inspired by the example of Saints Peter and Paul to go forth and share the Gospel.

* * *

Saturday, May 18, 2024

(Lec. 302)

1) Acts 28:16-20, 30-31

2) John 21:20-25

SATURDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John I,
Pope and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 515, 878

FOCUS: Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

To reach the heart of today's Gospel, let's first consider what immediately preceded it. Jesus had just charged Peter with feeding and tending his sheep and foretold with what kind of death Peter would glorify God. In other words, Peter had just found out that he was going to be martyred. At the end of his prophecy, Jesus says to Peter, simply, *follow me*.

That is the context for today's Gospel, which begins with Peter asking Jesus, *What about him?* referring to John, the only one of the Apostles who was not martyred. It's not that unusual of a question – Peter has just been told what is going to happen to him, and now he wants to know about his brothers and friends: What will happen to them?

Jesus' response to Peter is relevant for all of us: *What concern is it of yours? You follow me*. What a fabulous response! How many of us have finished explaining something to someone only to have them come back with, "But what about...?" We can't speak for Peter, but in many cases it means the person wasn't really listening to what they needed to hear. How often are we that person?

It can be easy to look at others and wonder about their journey of faith in relation to or compared with ours. Therefore, Jesus says the same thing to each of us: *What concern is it of yours? You follow me*.

In our lives and in our faith journeys, we will certainly experience moments where we cannot help but look at others. The path meant for others is their path, not ours. Thinking too much about them and not enough about what Jesus is asking of us is a temptation of distraction. Jesus reminds us that we should not keep our eyes fixed on our neighbor, but rather our eyes should always be fixed on him. If we are going to follow the Master, we need to pick up our crosses and follow him.

* * *

SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2024

(Lec. 63)

- 1) Acts 2:1-11
- 2) 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
or Galatians 5:16-25
- 3) John 20:19-23
or 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Gospel related: **CCC** 91, 243, 244, 248, 263, 485, 575, 643, 645, 659, 687, 690, 692, 719, 729, 730, 788, 858, 976, 1087, 1117, 1120, 1287, 1433, 1441, 1461, 1485, 2466, 2615, 2671, 2839
CSDC 29, 104, 491

PENTECOST SUNDAY - SOLEMNITY

FOCUS: With new life in the Spirit, we are able to go forth to love and serve the Lord.

Today is a great feast. It is one of the solemnities – a feast day of the highest ranking – of the Church year. This is the feast of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church. It is a joyous celebration, with special colors and music. We give praise and sing, *Come, Holy Spirit, Come!*, as we recall the story of Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit in our Church and world.

As recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit descends on the Apostles appearing as tongues of fire and with the sound of a driving wind. The Spirit empowers the Twelve to speak the native languages of all those gathered. It says later in this same chapter that about 3000 people are baptized and given new life in the Spirit that day (2:41), and from here the community grows. We celebrate this as the beginning of the Church, borne by the Spirit into the world.

The Spirit has a history of giving life. The Spirit is the mighty wind that swept over the waters at creation. It is the breath of God that gave life to Adam. The Spirit anointed Israel's kings and spoke through the prophets. By the power of the Spirit, Jesus was born of Mary. The Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism and remains with him throughout his ministry.

The Spirit not only gives life, but renews life. Consider the disciples in today's Gospel: hiding out, fearing for their lives, feeling the sorrow and guilt of not only losing Jesus but having abandoned and betrayed him. Locked up in their own misery, Jesus comes to them. He does not condemn or accuse them; rather, he offers them peace. He does not dismiss or deny what happened; rather he shows them his hands and side. He comes in love to be reconciled with his beloved disciples. He breathes the Holy Spirit onto them, speaks words of forgiveness, and sends them forth, just as his Father sent him.

The disciples are renewed. They are relieved of their sorrow and guilt. They are reconciled to Jesus, to themselves, and to one another. Their relationships are restored, and the community is healed. With the comfort and reassurance of the Spirit, they overcome their fear and return to their ministry. The Holy Spirit supports and sustains them, empowering them with gifts for the good of the Church.

The Holy Spirit has given us life, and given life to the Church. But we are not perfect; like the disciples we will always be in need of healing and comfort. Thus, the Spirit continues to be poured out upon us, to heal our wounds and give us strength anew. With every intercession the Spirit makes on our behalf, with every word of Jesus the Spirit reminds us of, and with every sacrament in which we participate, we are renewed. With new life in the Spirit, we are able to go forth to love and serve the Lord.

Monday, May 20, 2024

(Lec. 572A)

1) Genesis 3:9-15, 20
or Acts 1:12-14

2) John 19:25-34

MONDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM

The Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 478, 495, 501, 544, 607, 624, 641, 694, 726, 730, 964, 1225, 2561, 2605, 2618, 2677, 2679

FOCUS: Mary, the Mother of God, is also our mother, the Mother of the Church.

Today, we honor Mary, not just as the mother of God, but also as Mother of the Church. The faith and belief she has in her Son, Jesus, is shared with us who believe that he is the Son of God. "As Saint Irenaeus says, 'Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race'" (CCC 494).

The first time we encounter Mary in John's Gospel is at the wedding reception in Cana. When the wine runs out, she shares her concern with her Son who, as we well know, turned water into wine. His glory begins to be revealed, and Mary is at his side.

The last time we are with Mary in John's Gospel is in the passage we just heard. Mary is faithful to her Son to the very end. At his instruction, she takes the Apostle John as her son, and John takes her as his mother. "The Mother standing beneath the cross accepted her Son's testament of love and welcomed all people in the person of the beloved disciple as sons and daughters to be reborn unto life eternal" (Decree on the celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of the Church in the General Roman Calendar). She becomes the Mother of the Church, and as with the beloved disciple, Christ chooses all disciples to shower his Mother with their love.

As we continue our Eucharistic celebration, let us be respectful that this is a time of thanksgiving. We thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus in order to bring about our salvation. Today, let us also be thankful for the gift of Mary as our mother, "since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church" (CCC 963).

* * *

Tuesday, May 21, 2024
(Lec. 342)

- 1) James 4:1-10
- 2) Mark 9:30-37

TUESDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.

Saint Christopher Magallanes,
Priest,
and Companions,
Martyrs)

Gospel related: **CCC** 474, 557, 649, 1825 **CSDC** 379

FOCUS: Blessed are the humble.

Oh, how difficult it is to resist selfishness and jealousy at times, isn't it? So much of the world we live in revolves around competition and comparison. Even in our Gospel today, the disciples are caught up in a ridiculous dispute over who, among them, was the most important. It is almost humorous, really, these human absurdities that arise even in the midst of the most serious of moments. The disciples are like children, squabbling over who gets to ride shotgun on the family vacation.

Jesus uses this opportunity to teach them about humility and service. These values went hand in hand with what he had already taught them about rejecting pride and loving others. It is not a complicated path we are on, but it is still a challenging one: to live as the Lord taught requires faith, commitment, and grace. The Apostles answered the call to follow Jesus, and they really did want to learn the way of the kingdom. But they were influenced by the ways of the world and the desire for distinction, as we certainly can be.

Saint James speaks of this tendency in the first reading. He exhorts his community to submit themselves to God, for only by God's grace do we have the ability to resist the draw of disordered desires and conform ourselves to the heart of Christ. Quoting Scripture, he writes, *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

Following Jesus should draw us to humility. To even be a Christian is to acknowledge that we are not holy enough to enter heaven without the help of a Savior. Humility is a virtue that can counter the enticements of this world. We cannot simply save ourselves. We needed a Redeemer, and God sent his Son. To confess our faith, we must let go of our pride and recall how much we, as human beings, needed God's mercy to be saved.

* * *

Wednesday, May 22, 2024
(Lec. 343)

- 1) James 4:13-17
- 2) Mark 9:38-40

WEDNESDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Rita of Cascia,
Religious)

FOCUS: In Jesus' name we have the power to heal and comfort.

Hearing today's Scriptures illustrates that humans have not changed much since the time of Jesus. We still tend toward polarization and the illusion that we are in control.

In the Gospel, the Apostles are upset that someone else, who is not one of them, is casting out demons in the name of Jesus. They tell Jesus that they tried to stop him *because he does not follow us*. It is possible the Apostles have forgotten whose power it is that drives out demons in the first place. It is possible they are jealous that someone else has performed a work they recently failed to do (see Mk 9:14-29).

But this passage is less about the Apostles' weaknesses and more about the power of Jesus' name: Jesus assures them that someone who is driving out evil in his name cannot at the same time speak ill of him. He tells them, *whoever is not against us is for us*. To do something in his name is to do good in the world, and it is a mission not confined to those of his inner circle.

It is interesting that the other version of this story, found in Matthew's Gospel, inverts the saying: *Whoever is not with me is against me* (Mt 12:30). The authors of these two Gospels had different audiences and different theological purposes, but the sentiment is the same: The power of Jesus is not confined to his proximity. His power, given by and shared with the Father, is enacted in the movement of the Spirit, and is meant for the salvation of the world.

Calling upon the name of Jesus in prayer is how we change the world; it's how we change ourselves. Performing deeds in his name – corporal and spiritual works of mercy – is how we continue his mission of building the kingdom here on earth. In him we are united, not polarized; in him we are led with clarity, not illusion. All who belong to Christ – those who are with and for him – do any deed, mighty or small, with the confidence that it is Christ himself who works in and through us to heal, to comfort, to forgive, and to bring joy.

* * *

Thursday, May 23, 2024
(Lec. 344)

1) James 5:1-6

2) Mark 9:41-50

Gospel related: **CCC** 1034

THURSDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: As disciples we seek to walk in the ways of justice and peace.

Ultimately, everything we do in our life is directed toward our end: eternal life. God's desire for us, and our greatest aspiration, is for eternal life to be spent in his company in his kingdom.

In today's Gospel, in what can only be described as provocative and sobering words, Jesus says that it is ultimately better to lose or to let go of the things of this world than to lose the promise of a share in his eternal life. The fires of Gehenna await those who do not rid themselves of sin. And while it is understandable that we may falter in our wrestling with temptations, we should never be the cause of another's sin.

To fully understand the impact of Jesus' words, we should note that Gehenna was the city dump for Jerusalem. It was just outside of its walls and was a place of filth and decay; it had strong pungent odors and was constantly on fire. For his audience the image of Gehenna would have been a powerful one.

Thus, the contrast between the kingdom of God and Gehenna could not be more dramatic, nor the exhortation that it is better to lose an eye or a hand or foot than to lose the promise of the kingdom, more explicit. Thankfully, the Lord offers his grace through the Church and her sacraments as the means of helping us overcome sin in ways that are not as dire as the actual removal of limbs.

So how do we embrace and make our own the promise of the kingdom? Wise words from James these past few days give us some insight: A life directed toward eternal life with God begins with justice and the pursuit of fairness in our actions and decisions. Acting unjustly or contrary to the commandments moves us away from God and the promise of the kingdom. In the end, all we have on earth is for naught if it is not used in service of the Lord.

* * *

Friday, May 24, 2024
(Lec. 345)

- 1) James 5:9-12
- 2) Mark 10:1-12

Gospel related: **CCC** 1627, 1639, 1650, 2364, 2380, 2382 **CSDC** 217

FRIDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Sacramental marriage is a reflection of the love and unity shared between Christ and the Church.

Both of our Scriptures today address the topic of relationships and the importance of fidelity and integrity to the life of those relationships. The Letter of James encourages believers in patience – to not complain but to persevere in trials. This letter also speaks to the relevance and necessity of truthful speech, exhorting all to let their "yes" mean yes and their "no" mean no.

In essence, this passage calls us to be people of our word, keeping our promises and speaking truthfully. We are to say what we mean and mean what we say, and ask for the Lord's help when it all seems to be more than we can handle alone. Which, of course, it always is! It is not possible to love another without God's help. We need his grace; we need his guidance. Most significantly, we can look to the example of the love of Christ for his Church.

A visible sign of God's presence and grace in the world, and a reflection of the love and unity shared between Christ and the Church, is a sacramental marriage. In today's Gospel, Jesus draws from the Scriptures to teach the Pharisees that when a man and woman come together in the sacrament of matrimony, the two become one. Living as one flesh is a daily renewal of the promises they made on their wedding day.

However, as with any relationship, finding the path to daily "yes" as husband and wife can sometimes be difficult, and a sacramental marriage isn't simply one that takes place in a church, before God and witnesses. A sacramental marriage is one that places God at the heart of it. Listening to God's nudges, to his leading, can help a couple find the "yes" that aligns them with God's will in their marriage, and it can help each of us find the "yes" that aligns us to our vocation of holiness.

The Lord's faithfulness to us, his fidelity in the face of our every rebellion and rejection, is a constant in this life. As we prepare to meet Jesus in the Eucharist, let us give thanks for that love and ask for the grace to live it.

* * *

Saturday, May 25, 2024
(Lec. 346)

- 1) James 5:13-20
- 2) Mark 10:13-16

SATURDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Bede the Venerable,
Priest and Doctor of the Church;
Saint Gregory VII, Pope;
Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, Virgin;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 699, 1244, 1261

FOCUS: To receive the kingdom of God requires us to have the simple humility of a child.

The word “indignant” is not used often to describe Jesus’ actions, but we hear it in today’s passage from Mark. And it’s a bit surprising because Jesus’ actions are not directed at his enemies, such as the Pharisees, but rather at his very own Apostles.

What causes Jesus to become indignant is not a matter of faith, but is his response to the Apostles doing what they thought was a favor. They believed the children clamoring to get close to him were a nuisance, but as we heard, Jesus wanted to welcome the little ones into his loving arms.

Children in Jesus’ times had even less standing in society than they do now, so it probably caught the Apostles off guard to be rebuked by Jesus as he said: *Let the children come to me; do not prevent them.* Jesus likely further surprised his followers when he said that those who did not accept the kingdom of God like a child would not enter it. How could a message, so far given to adults, be accessible to a child? How could children be responsible for being a model of acceptance?

What Jesus was saying to them, and to us of course, is that it is a child’s purity of heart that he desires us all to have. We need to look at the gift of salvation, and the presence of the kingdom here on earth, with the eyes of a child – before prejudices and biases take hold, when we were without guile.

With the humility of a child who knows herself and knows she is loved and cherished, and the gratitude of a child who feels pure joy at the generosity he has received, we accept the kingdom as God intends it – as a gift. Just as the children willingly went to Jesus for an embrace, so we, too, present ourselves to the Lord with great humility for his embrace – here in this liturgy, and when it is time for us to leave this world.

* * *

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2024

(Lec. 165)

1) Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

2) Romans 8:14-17

3) Matthew 28:16-20

Gospel related: **CCC** 2, 80, 189, 232, 543, 644, 645, 691, 730, 767, 788, 831, 849, 857, 860, 1120, 1122, 1223, 1257, 1276, 1444, 2156, 2743 **CSDC** 52

**THE MOST
HOLY TRINITY
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: *Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

Today, as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we hear about who God is and how he relates to us. In the time of Moses, God did something new, revealing himself to his people and fighting on their behalf. Moses tells the people that God is the Lord of both heaven and earth. There is no other God. Therefore, they should follow his commandments so they can enjoy his promises.

In and through Jesus, God begins to fulfill these promises. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus instructs the Apostles to go and *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. He tells them to teach all that he has commanded and promises to be with them until the end of the age, when all will be fulfilled.

The sending of the Spirit is how God is present to us even now. As Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans, we receive a *Spirit of adoption* at our baptism. We become children of God. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that God is three persons, united in love. We are baptized into this community, this family. We have received the Spirit that makes us sons and daughters of God the Father. God did something new when he revealed his name to Moses, but he did something even more radical when he became a man. Christ became human, so that we might become divine. Through our baptism we share in this divine life, the life of the Trinity.

God the Father is the source and generator of life. He bestows life and sustains it by his breath, otherwise known as the Holy Spirit. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. He exists with the Father from the beginning, but around two thousand years ago, he came to dwell among us, to be Emmanuel, *God with us*.

In Deuteronomy, Moses invites the people to ask themselves: *Did anything so great ever happen before?* We might ask ourselves the same question, recounting all the good works God has done for us, from the birth of Jesus up until this very moment, and the next.

Anything that God did then, God still does today. God still speaks to us, fights for us, and delivers us. God came to dwell among us once, but he also promised to remain with us always. On this Trinity Sunday, let us reflect on how our own lives, our own individual stories, fit into the grand history of salvation. As we prepare to celebrate Christ's presence with us in the Eucharist, may we thank God for the gift of faith that was born in us at our baptism and is nourished by this holy communion.

* * *

Monday, May 27, 2024
(Lec. 347)

- 1) 1 Peter 1:3-9
- 2) Mark 10:17-27

MONDAY OF
EIGHTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Augustine of Canterbury,
Bishop)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1858, 2728

FOCUS: Riches can be a blessing, but can also become a source of downfall.

Today's Gospel encounter between Jesus and a rich man provides a wake-up call for the Apostles, and probably for many people today who have the idea that riches indicate favor from God. Indeed, riches are a blessing in many instances, but they can also become a source of downfall.

When things or money become more important than people, or good health, or even God, they can lead to disaster. Wealth cannot save us. Only God can. The man in the Gospel said he was looking for a way to gain eternal life. Giving up the good things he had for a greater reward was too difficult a choice for him.

Who can be saved?... For men it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God. Our greatest riches are great only when they are directed for the good the Lord desires for all. He takes what we have and multiplies it for his purpose, bringing light to the path of all who seek him. He makes all things possible, including that our sinful, unworthy souls might come to dwell with him for eternity. Let us give thanks for the true wealth we possess, no matter how much money we have: God who loves us, faith that saves us, and hope that guides us.

* * *

Tuesday, May 28, 2024
(Lec. 348)

- 1) 1 Peter 1:10-16
- 2) Mark 10:28-31

Gospel related: **CCC** 1618

TUESDAY OF
EIGHTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *Be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct.*

As human beings, we often spend our days rushing around and worrying about the people and concerns of this life. It is easy to forget why we were put here and for whom we are living. We may forget that Christ is the center of our lives as Christians.

Peter explains in the first reading that we must *gird up the loins of [our] mind[s]* and *live soberly*. In other words, he is saying to be holy and act in holiness in all that we do. We must simplify our lives for Christ. The Lord put us on this earth not just to live, but to live for the eternal life that is to come. Peter also references *the sufferings destined for Christ and the glories to follow them*. We must suffer the pains of this world in order to experience the glory of God following this life.

In the Gospel, Jesus responds to Peter: *Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age ... But many that are first will be last, and the last will be first.*

We must be willing to *be last* on this earth; we must be willing to sacrifice even when the world tells us otherwise. If we can stop prioritizing earthly relationships and goods over our relationship with God, we can start to realize true happiness, peace, and purpose. With God at the forefront of our lives, salvation awaits.

* * *

Wednesday, May 29, 2024
(Lec. 349)

- 1) 1 Peter 1:18-25
- 2) Mark 10:32-45

WEDNESDAY OF
EIGHTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Paul VI,
Pope)

Gospel related: **CCC** 474, 536, 557, 608, 618, 649, 994, 1225, 1551, 1570 **CSDC** 193, 379

FOCUS: Christ enables us to love and serve one another.

Our readings today encourage us to consider one of the most important distinctions of the spiritual life – that of the perishable from the imperishable. It is not that one is good and the other is bad; in fact, God has graciously provided us with many perishable things for our enjoyment and our spiritual growth. The problem is when we confuse the two.

In Peter's letter to his community, for example, he does not say that one cannot do good things with silver and gold, but he does say that we cannot be saved by such perishable things. Only by the imperishable can we see eternal life, through what God in Christ has done for us and through our sincere love for one another. Our physical bodies are a good gift from God, even though they will wither like the grass.

Scripture gives us many examples of what to do as well as what not to do. In the Gospel, James and John are an example of the latter. The cultural values they saw all around them in the Roman Empire were of social climbing, of gaining honor and status, of winning over others – not unlike our culture today. Jesus had to remind them that those values are perishable, and that it will do them no ultimate good to pursue them. Rather, they are to strive for the imperishable values of God: love and service to one another. All of God's gifts to us are to serve those two purposes alone.

As we approach the Lord's table today, let us rededicate ourselves to love and to serve as Christ first loved and served us.

* * *

Thursday, May 30, 2024

(Lec. 350)

1) 1 Peter 2:2-5, 9-12

2) Mark 10:46-52

Gospel related: CCC 548, 2616, 2667

THURSDAY OF
EIGHTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.*

In today's first reading, Saint Peter provides a wonderful definition of the early Christian community. He specifies that once they were *no people*, but by baptism they have become God's very own, and that makes them a *chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation*. By faith, we have become living stones, precious like gems in the eyes of God.

The movement Peter describes is lived out in the story found within today's Gospel. Bartimaeus is blind; he cannot see literally, and metaphorically, due to darkness and sin. He is a "*no people*," living on the margins as he does, unable to work and therefore living in poverty. Bartimaeus sought to obtain something he truly believed only Jesus could give. In doing so, he was seeking to become a part of this royal family made up of Jesus' disciples. As he is precious like gems in the eyes of God, so did he wish for his own eyes to see all that was precious in the eyes of the Lord.

Bartimaeus was seeking more than sight; he was seeking the restoration of his human dignity so he could work to provide for himself. Bartimaeus believed that Jesus could give this to him; he had faith.

It was commonly believed that misfortunes such as leprosy, deafness, and blindness were punishments from God based on sin. Jesus knows Bartimaeus has done no wrong, certainly nothing to deserve a punishment from above. Jesus restores his sight and his dignity.

Bartimaeus could easily have run home to show his family what had been done to him and to see them for the very first time. Instead, he chooses to become a disciple and follower of Jesus. We pray that Jesus, the Son of David, will have pity on us, removing our blind spots and helping us to see ourselves and others as God does, especially those living on the margins, realizing that they, too, are called to be active members of this chosen race and holy priesthood.

* * *

Friday, May 31, 2024

(Lec. 572)

1) Zephaniah 3:14-18a
or Romans 12:9-16

2) Luke 1:39-56

Gospel related: **CCC** 148, 273, 422, 448, 495, 523, 706, 717, 722, 971, 2097, 2465, 2599, 2619, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2807, 2827 **CSDC** 59

**THE VISITATION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
- FEAST**

FOCUS: *Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.*

In today's first reading, we are exhorted: *Let love be sincere*. We are then given some details about what this love should look like: contributing to the needs of others, not being haughty, and exercising hospitality.

It may be that the current cultural trend to make hospitality about showing off our home or making a marvel out of how artistically we present a meal is missing the mark. If we look at today's readings, we may see a different image of hospitality, one marked by blessing others, regarding the needs of others, and receiving the gift that is another person.

Notice there is no mention of having a pristine house or a perfectly planned menu. Much is said of blessing others, of entering into the rejoicing or weeping of others, and of having regard for them. Attending to beauty in our home and putting care into how we nourish our bodies are noble and deeply human endeavors, but hospitality, at its core, is a turning outwards in love to care for those around us.

And what an example of hospitality we celebrate today! In the Visitation, we see Mary and Elizabeth, both with profound struggles of their own, coming together, turning attentively to one another, loving sincerely. And in this turning outwards, in this receiving of the gift of one another, that gift magnifies the presence of Christ. Blessing upon blessing is poured out as Elizabeth and her unborn child recognize the presence of the Lord and Mary's spirit rejoices in God our Savior.

In meditating on the hospitality of the Visitation, we also may come to recognize Christ more clearly. In exercising hospitality in our own lives, we, too, may be reminded of the faithfulness of God. We, too, may be filled with good things and lifted up.

The Almighty *has* done great things for us. Jesus comes to us in a special way in this Mass and we are blessed and invited to believe what is spoken to us by the Lord. May we open our hearts to receive Christ in this Eucharist today.

* * *