

JUNE

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**YEAR C
WEEKDAYS I**

Saturday, June 1, 2019
(Lec. 296)

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

SATURDAY OF
SIXTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(OBL MEM
Saint Justin,
Martyr)

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

FOCUS: The Father answers our prayers in ways that will one day make our joy complete.

Jesus often said startling things. Today, we hear him teach that whatever we ask for in his name, the Father will give us. Wow! That is pretty great. But some of us may think, “we have asked for lots of things, and it seems that many of them have not been granted to us.” How can we rectify this seeming contradiction?

Reading further helps us get the full picture. Jesus is showing his followers the Father in terms we have never known before. He is giving us a deeper appreciation of who the Father is and what he wants for us. We also are being given a new relationship with the Father. Since we have come to love his Son and live by his teachings, we can have a better understanding of what we should be asking of the Father.

Jesus tells us we will not need him to speak for us, but that we will be close enough to the Father to make our requests ourselves. The purpose of this new relationship, according to Jesus, is so our *joy may be complete*. What a beautiful sentiment! However, it does give some context to our understanding of our prayers to God and his response. What he gives is only that which will make our joy complete. And, really, only he knows what that is. We know what will make us happy now, at this moment, but the Father has the longer view. He knows what will truly make our joy complete.

So, how best to incorporate this promise of Jesus? We can, of course, ask for a better job or that our loved one be cured, or that we have prosperity in our endeavors. But Jesus’ words give us, perhaps, a new way of looking at how the Father answers our petitions. When we do not get the outcome we were hoping for, we can recognize that the Father’s plan is different from ours, and know that whatever the outcome is, it will be a means of moving us closer to a fullness of relationship with him. It will bring us joy.

There is something quite comforting in knowing that God loves us so much that he is not content to just have us “feel good,” especially if the moment is fleeting. God desires the absolute best for us, and in giving us his Son, he has ensured that we have a way to obtain a life that is more than one of happiness. We may not be spared the depths of grief here on earth, but for those of us baptized into the life and death of Jesus, we will experience the happiness and joy of eternal life.

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: Acts 1:1-11/Ephesians 1:17-23/Matthew 28:16-20 (Lec. 58)

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019

(Lec. 61)

- 1) Acts 7:55-60
- 2) Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20
- 3) John 17:20-26

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

**SEVENTH
SUNDAY
OF EASTER**

FOCUS: In Jesus and his first martyr Stephen, we see how trust in God frees us from our fears.

Stephen the Deacon is the first martyr of the Christian faith, and we celebrate his feast the day after Christmas. As the Church continues celebrating the Resurrection and as we reflect on the Ascension that we just witnessed in Scripture this past Thursday, we find here the moving account of Stephen's death – a sentence carried out for crimes he did not commit. What stands out most is the faith and grace with which Stephen accepted his fate. It is a humbling lesson for all of us in this world, where so many seek revenge and are so angry at those with whom they disagree. One might argue that Stephen was so serene in the face of torture and death because he believed that better things awaited him beyond the horizons of this life.

The Book of Revelation had yet to be written when Stephen was giving his life for the faith, but the truth and beauty of the vision of heaven recorded in Revelation by John the Beloved Disciple was in evidence long before, ever since Jesus used his cross as a key to open heaven's gate. Jesus is portrayed here as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, but also as the Groom, beckoning us through the Spirit and the Church: *Come*.

Stephen, faithful to the end, now wearing the martyr's crown, has washed his robe in the blood of the lamb, that he might enter the heavenly city through the gate. Jesus is the one whom Stephen saw when he saw *the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*.

These same sentiments and selfless love are found in John's Gospel today, in the words prayed by Jesus at Gethsemane. Sweating tears of blood, awaiting Judas and the centurions coming to carry him away, Jesus' last thoughts were not those of self-concern or pity; he was not asking for an escape route. Jesus spoke of unity, that we might be one with him just as he is one with God the Father. In unity, Jesus prayed we might *be brought to perfection*. He was not praying for himself that his life might be spared, he was praying for us that *our* lives might be.

In Jesus and his first martyr Stephen, we see how trust in God frees us from fears of both life and death and all that comes between. During the storms of our lives and all the upsets we experience – all the rejection that may come our way – we turn to the Lord and trust in his word, his will and his work. For it is all for us and for our salvation. May we be one with Jesus and his Church just as Jesus was one with the Father. With Jesus and Stephen, let us forgive those who wrong us, in hopes that they, too, will be with us one day in the Father's house, for *the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come."*

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HOMILY FOR THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

(Lec. 58)

- 1) Acts 1:1-11
- 2) Ephesians 1:17-23 or
Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:19-23
- 3) Luke 24:46-53

Gospel related: **CCC** 112, 627, 652, 659, 730, 981, 1120, 1122, 1304 **CSDC** 52

- SOLEMNITY
(Holy Day of Obligation)

FOCUS: Jesus has prepared the way for us, and sent the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Today's celebration of the Ascension of the Lord can get lost. It comes between two other significant moments in the life of a young Church. A few weeks ago, we celebrated the greatest day on the liturgical calendar, the Resurrection of the Lord. In a few days, we will celebrate another important event for a fledgling Church, the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

Today, the Apostles are less afraid than they were when Jesus came to them on that first Easter, but losing him today for a second time could not have been easy. In our first reading, they are left staring up at heaven. In the Gospel, they leave rejoicing filled with great joy. So which is it? Are they bewildered or joy-filled? Actually they are both.

The Apostles have journeyed with Jesus for three years. They have witnessed the miracles and the parables. They have also witnessed the resentments and the ridicule. They have just witnessed his torturous death and his glorious Resurrection. It has truly been a rollercoaster ride of giant proportions.

Such is the life of discipleship we live even today as we gather to celebrate the moment between Easter and Pentecost. We are a people living in a kingdom established here on earth, but not yet part of its fullness found in the next life. It is an in-between moment for the Church, and in our own lives. How we choose to face such moments tells us how resilient our faith is, or whether there is work to be done to strengthen our reliance on Jesus and on his promises.

It is always going to be easier to have faith when things are going well. It is in those in-between moments that we learn a great deal about ourselves. It is okay to stop and stare at what is unclear or confusing – as long as we find joy in the journey, as the disciples in both readings eventually did [even though we don't hear about it in the first reading]. It is here we discover the need to go deeper in our trust in Jesus' promise not to ever leave us orphaned.

It is in these in-between moments we also realize we are never alone in facing any challenge that is before us. For though Jesus' human form ascended into heaven, he is here present in word and sacrament. The Holy Spirit dwells within and among us. By God's grace, may we have all that Saint Paul prayed for, for those who lived in Ephesus: *May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe.*

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Monday, June 3, 2019
(Lec. 297)

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

MONDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(OBL MEM
Saint Charles Lwanga
and Companions,
Martyrs)

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

FOCUS: We need the Holy Spirit in order to remain faithful to Christ and his Gospel.

In less than a week, we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost. For many, Easter is now no more than a memory, a holiday that has come and gone. But for the faithful believer it is more than a one-day event, or even a whole season, but the central feast of our faith – the feast that defines us and inspires us in our worship and our service. So in our readings today, we have an opportune moment to take stock and to assess the depth and reality of what we truly believe.

In our Scripture readings, we are presented with two different expressions of commitment to Christ's message: one from before the Resurrection and the other from after. The one before the Resurrection is in the Gospel, and comes from what is referred to as the Farewell Discourse in John's Gospel. Here Jesus, in response to a profession of faith by his disciples and knowing what lies ahead and how they will be tested by those events, tries to encourage them. He reminds them that he has conquered the world and that while *in the world [they] will have trouble*, they are to take courage, and have peace in him.

Of course, as we know today, these are the same disciples who despite their best intentions and easy words will deny and desert him later. We know they will need the promised Advocate, or Holy Spirit, to teach and remind them and to give them courage to be faithful to Jesus.

In the first reading from Acts, we hear of a commitment to the Gospel, where the Holy Spirit is present and at work. Having been transformed, Paul – with courage and conviction – is doing more than making empty declarations of faith. He is boldly proclaiming the Gospel, baptizing and engaging whole communities in debate and dialogue.

In these two examples, we who hear today's readings have an opportunity to review the level of our own faith commitment. After all, we have received the Holy Spirit in baptism (and in confirmation if we have participated in that sacrament). Indeed, the Holy Spirit is always at work through the sacramental life of the Church, and always present in and to the heart that seeks to be fully present to God and faithful to his word.

So let us ask ourselves if we are using the gift of the Holy Spirit to draw us more deeply into the mystery of Christ and to empower us to live a Gospel life with courage and conviction. As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost, let us ask for the Spirit to bestow upon us anew the seven gifts, that our lives of faith might be filled with wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, holiness and a reverence for the Lord. Then may we go forth and proclaim the Good News, for the good of the world.

Tuesday, June 4, 2019
(Lec. 298)

- 1) Acts 20:17-27
- 2) John 17:1-11a

Gospel related: **CCC** 217, 589, 684, 730, 1069, 1085, 1721, 1996, 2604, 2746, 2747, 2749, 2750, 2751, 2758, 2765, 2812, 2815, 2849 **CSDC** 39, 122

TUESDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Jesus prays for eternal life for his disciples.

If we knew that we had only days or weeks left to live, what would we want to leave behind for our loved ones? What wisdom would we want to make sure that we passed on?

In today's Gospel passage, we hear Jesus' intimate prayer to the Father. Jesus has been preparing his disciples for his imminent death and return to the Father, and now he turns to God in prayer to intercede for his disciples. Jesus is asking to be glorified only so as to glorify his Father. He prays for two things for his disciples who have become his friends – one, that they know of the Father, and, two, that this knowledge will lead them to eternal life.

Jesus desires that his disciples receive eternal life, saying, *I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.* Jesus has been glorified in his disciples, but as Jesus leaves this world, his disciples – including us – remain in the world. So it is good and loving that Jesus prays and intercedes for us. For the world is not a friendly place.

Those who trust the word of Jesus know there is no treasure, no piece of advice or wisdom, no inheritance that can be better than this: the gift of intimate friendship with the Lord, and eternal bliss with God and the communion of saints in heaven. And so we have a part to play, here, in response to Jesus' prayer: helping others come to know him.

We can commit to learning truth and relating to our family, friends and neighbors with understanding, compassion and generosity. We can be mindful in passing on the truth of our faith. We can glorify the Lord by living lives that lead others to know and love God more deeply. We can encourage in our friends and family the same love for the Lord that we have in our hearts.

Within the context of honest and dependable friendship, hopefully those around us will see that our hope, strength and unselfish love have their source in Christ the Lord. Let us approach the Eucharistic table, humbly opening our hearts to all the grace that God wants us to share with others.

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Wednesday, June 5, 2019
(Lec. 299)

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

WEDNESDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(OBL MEM
Saint Boniface,
Bishop and Martyr)

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

FOCUS: The joy of the Gospel is to be one with the One who has conquered death.

We often hear about the joy of the Gospel. Indeed, in today's Gospel Jesus tells us that he wants us to *share [his] joy completely*. What a wonderful promise, and a true promise! Yet Jesus also tells us (and shows us) that his joy is not the comfort and pleasure that this world is selling. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once offered to a group of German pilgrims: "The ways of the Lord are not easy, but we were not created for an easy life, but for great things, for goodness" (Address to German Pilgrims, April 2005).

We may be tempted to think that when we decide to follow Jesus, he will take care of us – "guard" and "protect" us – in such a way that everything will be easy. But Christ does not promise us an easy way. Instead, he offers us greatness by consecrating us in truth. To be consecrated is to be set-apart, marked out, set-aside for God. This is why we say that church buildings or sacred vessels are "consecrated" – set aside for God's use. Both Jesus and Paul today remind us that we, too, the followers of Jesus, are consecrated. We no longer belong to this world. We belong to Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, the Life. This is a great gift, as it means that we now belong to the only one who knows and loves us completely.

It is also a great challenge. It means that we no longer belong to this world – that we are not comfortable in it, that we do not receive fully the things that it offers.

This challenge is behind Paul's words to the priests of the ancient Church at Ephesus, that we just heard. He says that they, like him, should *never [want] anyone's silver or gold or clothing*, and that instead *by hard work ... we must help the weak*. Paul promises that trouble will afflict the Church – that wolves will come among them, that the flock will not be spared. But they, and we, are commended to God. And God will *give [us] the inheritance among all who are consecrated*.

Jesus, too, in his prayer to the Father, tells him that *I gave them your word, and the world hated them*. This is what will happen when we are set-apart, removed from this world, consecrated to God. A beautiful quote from the constitution of the Congregation of Holy Cross says this: "If we drink the cup each of us is poured and given, we servants will fare no better than our master. But if we shirk the cross, gone too will be our hope" (8, Para. 121).

This is the joy of the Gospel – to be one with the One who has conquered death. This will also mean a share in his cross, but we are promised that we will find both the dying and the rising equally assured.

Thursday, June 6, 2019

(Lec. 300)

- 1) Acts 22:30; 23:6-11
- 2) John 17:20-26

THURSDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Norbert,
Bishop)

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

FOCUS: Love is how we come to know Christ.

Jesus' words of prayer in the closing verses of the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John highlight the unity he shares with the Father, and the love he has for us. In his love, he desires for us to be unified with him. It is comforting to know that Jesus is praying not only for us, but for those who will believe in him *through* us – praying for those who will take up their responsibility as disciples and continue to grow in their relationship with Christ.

How can we *know* Jesus? How can we be united to him? The last verse of this chapter tells us clearly. Jesus says to the Father: *I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.* Love. That is the virtue, the action, the essential characteristic of the disciple of Christ, and it comes through Jesus from the Father. It is a sacrificial love. It is a saving love. It is a love that comes from the grace of God poured out upon his people. *Love* is how we come to know Christ.

The unconditional love of Christ revealed from the cross is a challenge to us. Our ability to love others – especially those whom we find difficult to love – depends on our unity with God the Father. It depends on a unity which Jesus demonstrates is a source of strength, giving clarity to the mission. It arises through prayer, and is fostered in the sacramental life.

We can see all of this in the way we are called to worship. As the catechism states, "Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is 'the sacrament of unity'" (CCC 1140). In our coming together, God is present. In word and sacrament, and with sanctifying grace, we are united ever more to God. All because of love. It is God who first loved us, and through love we come to know him.

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Friday, June 7, 2019

(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 show our love for the Lord when we welcome all of our brothers and sisters.

. . . *do you love me more than these?* A strange question for the risen Jesus to ask Peter after they both had breakfasted by the Sea of Tiberius with six other disciples. The common interpretation of Jesus' words is that he was asking whether Peter loved him more than the other disciples did. And Jesus asks Peter this question three times. It is as if this is a counter-action to, a reversing of sorts, of Peter's threefold denial of Jesus during his passion.

Numbers have a great deal of meaning in Scripture, and the number three has particular emphasis at times. This is the number that exemplifies the Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the perfect relationship of love given and received. Jesus three times directs Peter to feed his flock, to tend his sheep and his lambs, to care for the ones he ministered to so tenderly when he walked the roads of Palestine.

It may be, then, that the Lord is asking Peter right from the start if he is willing to put aside his own faith life with his fellow disciples and enter into the chaos of a needy world, even at the cost of his own life. And Peter does!

So did Saint Paul, without having the benefit of a face-to-face relationship with the pre-resurrected, flesh-and-blood Jesus. Paul chose to proclaim the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in defiance of his fellow Pharisees – his brothers in faith – culminating in his eventual martyrdom.

Today the Lord asks us the same questions he asked Peter, and gives us encouragement as we know he did Paul. We can choose how we respond. That we are here to celebrate a sacred meal with Jesus – the Holy Eucharist – as his disciples did, indicates that we have chosen the way of Peter and Paul. May we have the grace and fortitude to stay the course as they did, regardless of what comes our way.

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Saturday, June 8, 2019

(Lec. 302)

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

2) John 21:20-25

Gospel related: CCC 515, 878

SATURDAY OF
SEVENTH WEEK
OF EASTER

FOCUS: Today is the first day of the rest of our Christian mission.

It is noteworthy that the two readings today both end the Scripture books in which they are found. In the first reading, we hear the last verses of the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospel reading comes from the last few verses of John's Gospel. Also, today is the last day of the Easter season.

Yet, with all these endings, the focus of what we just heard seems to be on beginnings. Our readings, combined with the shifting liturgical calendar, give us a twist to the old axiom of "today is the first day of the rest of your life." We could amend it to, "today is the first day of the rest of our Christian mission."

First, we read the end of the Acts of the Apostles, concluding Saint Paul's ministry. Then in the Gospel we experience the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Both appear to be handing over the work of the kingdom to us, those who believe in and follow Jesus.

We can see in these readings some ideas on how to be the ones to keep the faith going. In our first reading, Paul is under house arrest but still manages to spread the Gospel. He writes letters and encourages people to come to him, instead of going out and searching for people to convert. From this, we can learn that we may face obstacles in our own evangelizing, but that we can be creative and persistent in overcoming them. This is our job, just as it was for Paul.

In our efforts to bring Jesus' teachings to others, we may have been ridiculed, or been bashful about speaking out. Perhaps we felt inadequate to tell others what we believe. Whatever the difficulty, this reading helps us see that we are not to use these occurrences as excuses, but as ways to help us move forward.

The Gospel gives us something else to consider. As our reading begins, Peter sees the *beloved disciple* and asks Jesus about this man's fate. Jesus tells Peter not to worry about that person, but to pay attention to his own actions. *You follow me*, he tells Peter.

This does not indicate that we should not be aware of or concerned about others, but that we can only do what Jesus asks of us if we are first paying attention to our own faith and our own actions. We are called to follow Jesus to the best of our own ability. Jesus will see to the rest.

So, let us move forward, overcoming obstacles and focusing on our own commitment to spreading the faith and helping God's kingdom reign on earth.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2019

(Lec. 63)

- 1) Acts 2:1-11
- 2) 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
or Romans 8:8-17
- 3) John 20:19-23
or John 14:15-16, 23b-26

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 643, 645, 659, 730, 788, 858, 976, 1087, 1120, 1287, 1441, 1461, 1485, 2839 **CSDC** 70, 104, 491

**PENTECOST SUNDAY
- SOLEMNITY**

FOCUS: The Holy Spirit is here and dwelling among us.

There are numerous paintings of the Pentecost scene. Often they artfully depict Mary and the Apostles, gathered in the Upper Room. Tongues of fire neatly appear on top of each head.

But let us listen carefully to the Scriptures. In our first reading (Acts 2:1-4 and the passages that precede it), Luke depicts a much larger group of disciples – Mary and the Apostles (including the newly-chosen Matthias), men and women, young and old, all followers of Jesus – perhaps as many as one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15). These were all followers of Jesus – they had witnessed his miracles, loved his message, grieved at his death and rejoiced at his Resurrection. They must have been bewildered. Jesus had promised to be with them always, but they felt very alone. They were sticking together; they were crowded into a house, and they were praying.

This was no quiet scene. *And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*

This Spirit had been promised by Jesus. He had said that he would not leave them orphaned: *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you* (John 14:26). And in today's Gospel, he had breathed this Spirit of grace upon his Apostles and given them power to forgive sins.

Jews from every nation were outside of that crowded house. They had gathered in Jerusalem for the ancient feast of Pentecost – fifty days after Passover (it was a celebration of God's giving of the Law to Moses). Yet each heard the disciples speaking in their own tongue, and over time, thousands were converted.

Two thousand years later, we gather in this house of God. Like those early followers of Christ, we find solace in communal prayer. Like them, we crave the words of Jesus and we feast at his table. Like them, we exist in a world of uncertainty and opposing rhetoric. Like them, we find strength in a Christian community. Most important, like them, we have been redeemed by Christ's sacrifice and have been baptized and sealed in his Spirit.

We may not feel the strong driving wind nor see the tongues of fire, but the Spirit is here and dwelling among us. He has given us varied gifts in order to build up God's kingdom. That same Spirit of Jesus is empowering each of us to go out and boldly proclaim the Good News – that Jesus Christ has died for all, that he has forgiven our sins, that he has destroyed death's power over us, and that in all things, Jesus loves us. Now *that* is something to shout about in any language.

Monday, June 10, 2019

(Lec. 572A)

- 1) Genesis 3:9-15, 20
OR Acts 1:12-14
- 2) John 19:25-34

MONDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM.)

The Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of the Church)

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

FOCUS: Mary, the New Eve, is the mother of the Church and of us individually.

What does the first reading about the Fall have to do with Mary, Mother of Jesus, standing at the foot of the cross? Everything.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is sometimes called the “New Eve,” because her obedience to God’s will resolved Eve’s disobedience. Saint Jerome summarized it thus: “Death through Eve, life through Mary” (Epistle 22).

Part of today’s first reading, in which God tells the serpent *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel*, is sometimes called the first Gospel, or *protoevangelium*. This is because within it is a message of hope for humanity (that is, there will be offspring!). Blessings on future generations have not been removed. Redemption is possible.

Indeed, God fulfilled this promise of redemption through another woman who was created without sin. Consider Mary’s life: when the archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she was to be the mother of the Savior, her response was *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word* (Luke 1:38). Mary, in her humility, submitted herself to the will of God.

So, too, do we see her humble submission to God’s will at the crucifixion in today’s Gospel. How it must have torn her Immaculate Heart to see her only beloved son tortured and killed. But she stood by her son, accepting the will of the almighty God.

But there is another similarity between Eve and Mary, the New Eve, as well. The end of the first reading tells us that Eve *became the mother of all the living*. In the Gospel, the dying Jesus tells Mary, *Woman, behold, your son*. He then says to John, the beloved disciple, *Behold, your mother*.

In the Gospel of John, scholars see a link between Jesus referring to his mother as “woman,” and “the woman” in Genesis, but there is also a parallel that is especially important for each of us as Christians.

Just as Eve *became the mother of all the living*, Mary is the mother of the Church, and she is the mother of each of us. Our spiritual mother, Mary, loves each of us as her child, and promises to lead us to her beloved Son if we let her. Through her, salvation came to the world to redeem us from original sin.

Today, let’s pray especially for Mary’s intercession as our mother, asking her to help us better follow her Son. As a true mother, she will never turn her back on her children. Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us!

Tuesday, June 11, 2019
(Lec. 580)
1) Acts 11:21b-26; 13:1-3
(Lec. 360)
2) Matthew 5:13-16

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

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

FOCUS: *You are the salt of the earth ... the light of the world.*

The Church in Antioch was growing by leaps and bounds. Many had *turned to the Lord*, but still needed to be instructed in the faith. So the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to encourage them in the faith. *Barnabas was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith*, and through his efforts, *a large number of people was added to the Lord*.

Barnabas then went to Tarsus to look for Saul (also known as Paul), and bring him back to Antioch. Barnabas and Paul stayed in Antioch for a year, and it was here that *the disciples were first called Christians*. After this year of initiation and instruction in the faith, the Church of Antioch co-missioned Barnabas and Paul to go and spread the Good News to the island of Cyprus – Paul’s first missionary journey.

We talk a lot about being “missionary disciples.” But in order to be such, we first have to attend to our own faith formation to respond to the basic saving message of the Christian faith. If we have experienced the Gospel as Good News, how can we contain it as a private possession? The seed of the word that we have received in the ground of our hearts is bursting with generosity to give itself away. Good News needs to be shared.

Jesus teaches his disciples, *You are the salt of the earth ... the light of the world*. Barnabas and Paul are salty disciples who don’t want to keep the light under a bushel! Let’s be clear about what it means to be salty. It has to do with the apprenticeship of being disciplined to Jesus. The word disciple means learner, student, apprentice – one who is being initiated into a practice, a way of life. To be salty means to be savoury, flavourful, tasty.

If we expect others to be attracted to the person of Jesus and his saving message, to hunger for the bread of his word, then the message we proclaim cannot be a bland and lifeless thing, a set of truth statements to which they are expected to assent. It must be the same salty word, saturated with light, which set the world on fire. A living word that can transform us like it transformed Barnabas, and that changed Saul from a persecutor of Jewish disciples of Christ into an apostle of the Gospel.

Through the gift of the Eucharist, we are transformed so that we can take this salt and light into a bland, tasteless, homogenized culture. Let us go forth.

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Wednesday, June 12, 2019
(Lec. 361)

- 1) 2 Corinthians 3:4-11
- 2) Matthew 5:17-19

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

WEDNESDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The Spirit of the law is love, not condemnation.

Saint Paul speaks so beautifully today in his Letter to the Corinthians about the attitude followers of Jesus need in order to use their God-given gifts in a way that is beneficial to all. It is so easy as a Christian to begin to give ourselves credit when something good is accomplished in the name of Jesus, but reflecting on this passage is a solid reminder that we are simply cooperating with God. Saint Paul is very clear when he says, *Not that of ourselves we are qualified to take credit for anything as coming from us; rather, our qualification comes from God.*

That makes sense and we can see that it reveals something about our relationship with God. He is our Creator, and we are those whom he has created; he is the one Giver of all that is good. Paul goes on to reveal a proper understanding of the new covenant brought about by Jesus, when he speaks of the letter and Spirit. What does he mean, letter and Spirit? What is our appropriate response to this understanding?

Imagine a reading of the Ten Commandments where, when reflecting upon the fifth commandment, "Thou shall not kill," we free ourselves from any responsibility since we have not killed anyone. That would be an example of "letter" of the law. Now what if, in the Spirit of the law, this commandment was understood to be broader. Whereas I am not guilty of killing anyone, I may be guilty of "killing" my neighbor's reputation by gossiping about him. The Spirit of the law provides for an expanded understanding and helps us to see why Paul was saying that the letter brings death and the Spirit gives life.

Living only by the letter of the law, we may become very rigid and hardened to the sins of ourselves or our neighbor, but when we look at the Spirit, it opens us up to see that the Spirit of love gives life to all. So then, our appropriate response as *ministers of a new covenant* is the way of love, even in the face of sin. Jesus, indeed, did not come to abolish the law, as we heard in the Gospel of Matthew, but to fulfill it in the new covenant of love. When he says that *whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven*, our understanding of Spirit of the law injects a fullness into the old covenant that does not take away the old, but brings about the new.

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Thursday, June 13, 2019

(Lec. 362)

- 1) 2 Corinthians 3:15–4:1, 3-6
- 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 glory of God is revealed in the righteousness of perfect love.

One of the gifts small children offer the world is their capacity to wonder. A rock, a tree, an insect – all things that adults might not even notice – can be sources of wonder for a child. Children can be more aware of God’s glory in the world around them than adults. In today’s Gospel, Jesus draws our attention to another source of wonder we can miss: the glory of healthy relationships.

We participate in a number of relationships every day – intimate relationships with close friends and family members, work relationships, the relationships we perhaps unknowingly have with those who make our food or clothing, even global relationships that are difficult to understand, but that exist.

Today, Jesus calls us to perfection in all these relationships, to a righteousness that surpasses expectations. We are instructed to not simply avoid outward hostility, but to be attentive to our inner attitudes as well.

Jesus is pointing to something common: the tendency to allow a lack of outward aggression to be enough for us to assume that our relationships are fine. If we examine the reality closely, we can find many examples in our experience where things were outwardly fine, but hurt, mistrust or resentment existed beneath the surface.

Jesus calls us to go deeper, to seek true health in all our relationships. He instructs us to examine not only our outward actions, but to seek genuine love: that inner attitude which recognizes the indescribable good – the dignity – in every person. The dignity of those around us is often veiled in a busy and superficial world. To truly live in the reality of the glorious goodness of every person made in the image of God is a high call.

Today’s Gospel is paired with a reading from Second Corinthians that is vital as we contemplate such a challenging call. Saint Paul reminds us that *whenever a person turns to the Lord the veil is removed*. The Holy Spirit is given to help us see and live in truth – the truth of who God is and how we are made to live, the truth of the goodness and dignity of every person.

With the aid of the Holy Spirit, we can see the wonder of a rock or a tree made by our generous Creator. The Spirit also helps us to see the inherent dignity of those with whom we are in relationship. We can see the glory of God in those closest to us, in those we may be tempted to label as “them,” in those with whom we struggle to understand our relationship. And in this Spirit, we can be bound together in a love that truly reveals the glory of God.

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Friday, June 14, 2019

(Lec. 363)

1) 2 Corinthians 4:7-15

2) Matthew 5:27-32

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

FRIDAY OF
TENTH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Jesus Christ is at work in us, who are earthen vessels of his dying and rising.

“We are down, but not out.” This cliché and catch-phrase may not be the best theological way to summarize Paul’s message to the Corinthians today, but it is an effective one. We understand what it means to be “in the middle”: not as young as we were, but not as old as we will [hopefully] be; not where we want to be in something, but not where we were, either. Not within the fullness of the kingdom of God, yet, but no longer standing outside of it. And all of this, experienced in our human bodies: earthen vessels, subject to pain and death. With human hearts, subject to suffering and despair. Like the psalmist, we call out to God in our affliction, crying out in alarm that *no man is dependable*.

Indeed, in today’s Gospel Jesus imparted to his disciples that even faithfully following the Mosaic law does not create an idyllic world or a reign of right relationship. So he expounded on this time-honored teaching to illustrate how to act so as to bring about the kingdom of God. His calling out of the *participation* in adultery as being only one aspect of its sinfulness highlights another aspect – the objectifying of another human being to satisfy our own desires. For loving others requires seeing the dignity of, and having respect for every person, female and male, as beloved children of God. It requires justice within our relationships, and faithfulness to our commitments.

These are hard sayings; hard truths. But they are not beyond our capabilities. As Saint Paul says, *For we who live are constantly being given up to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but also life in Christ!*

The graces received in the sacraments, like that of marriage – about which Jesus speaks today – help us manage the faults and cracks of ourselves as earthen vessels. We carry within us the dying and rising of Jesus, and these can both shine through, and seal, those cracks. We are not alone in our attempts to live faithfully in the kingdom.

These earthen vessels that are our bodies, that are our very selves, are temples of the Holy Spirit, and made in the image and likeness of God. In our physical pain or mental anguish, we can experience the overflowing grace of God at work in us. *We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.* We are down, but not out.

* * *

Saturday, June 15, 2019

(Lec. 364)

1) 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

2) Matthew 5:33-37

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

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

FOCUS: As ambassadors for Christ, we are called to reach out to those in need.

We are ambassadors for Christ. We just heard that proclamation in our first reading. If we really start to dissect the meaning of this statement, we possibly may come up with some interesting concepts. Let's consider them for a few moments.

Ambassadors are people who represent others, whether a government, a leader or an organization. While they are not the *actual* leader or government, they are standing as an embodiment of that for which the organization stands.

As Christians, we represent Jesus Christ to those who do not know him. It is a huge calling when we think about it. We might ask ourselves if we are representing Jesus well. For the world desperately needs Christ. It is sobering to think that as his ambassadors, we may be the only image of Jesus that some may ever see.

We have Jesus and his disciples as our perfect models of ministry. He did not sit in the Temple waiting for people to come in. Jesus went out to the people and met them in their own environment. He healed those who were ill. He delivered them from demons. He went to their homes and ate with them. Jesus was not afraid to be seen with the undesirables of that time.

As ambassadors for Christ, we also can follow Jesus' example and go to the people. It can be as simple as bringing dinner to the ill, comforting the bereaved or providing transportation for someone who has none. The opportunities are endless. And we should be aware, as Christ's ambassadors, that the world is watching. Our actions must be exemplary and above reproach.

Our calling to be Christians is an honor. We must always remember that the Holy Spirit will lead us and guide us if we allow him. God is the source of our salvation and hope. He has not left us, but will guide us in all things. Let us resolve to listen to God and stay sensitive to the needs of others. We never know whose life could be changed as a result of our obedience to God.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 2019

(Lec. 166)

1) Proverbs 8:22-31

2) Romans 5:1-5

3) John 16:12-15

Gospel related: **CCC** 91, 243, 244, 485, 687, 690, 692, 729, 1117, 1287, 2466, 2615, 2691 **CSDC** 29, 104

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

- SOLEMNITY

FOCUS: Our faith in a Triune God offers us a pathway home to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Today, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. As we profess in our creed, we believe in one God, the Father almighty, in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. One God in three persons, in perfect, right relationship with one another.

The three Scripture texts for our liturgy give us insight into that Triune God, and demonstrate some of how they relate to us: the Wisdom of God, the human and divine natures of Jesus through whom *we have peace with God*, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from them both and is the Spirit of truth. In the totality of Scripture, we can see the hand of our Triune God as he loves and cares for us.

All of the Hebrew Scriptures guide the people of Israel in coming to terms with the reality that there is but one God. God is seen as the Creator, as the Protector and as the Judge of all creation, especially the greatest of all of his creation – us. In the New Testament, we witness God's promise to bring about salvation become a reality in the person of Jesus Christ. As Jesus, the Son of God, is completing his mission on earth he makes another promise. He promises to send the Holy Spirit. The promise is kept, the Holy Spirit comes upon us and a new Church is born.

We believe in one God, a Trinity of Persons, working in perfect unison to offer us a way home. As rational beings we want to fully understand things, and from a theological standpoint the doctrine of the Trinity can be difficult to grasp. But having faith in, and being in a relationship with a Triune God need not be: for God is a God *for us*. He created us in his image, dwelt among us, and remains with us in truth and as our strength and guidance. Everything he does, *he does for us*. How could we not respond in kind to such a love?

So as we celebrate this doctrine of our faith, let us give thanks for the mystery of our redemption by God, through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us give thanks for this divine outpouring of pure gift for our sake. And may we respond by glorifying God by living in right relationship with him and with one another.

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Monday, June 17, 2019

(Lec. 365)

1) 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

2) Matthew 5:38-42

Gospel related: CCC 764, 2443, 2763

MONDAY OF
11TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God's law goes beyond our understanding of fairness and calls for a reconciliation centered in love of our neighbor.

To go the extra mile, what does that mean? We typically associate that phrase with the things we do for our loved ones, the sacrifices we make because we truly care about someone. Jesus, in today's Gospel, does not use this phrase to talk about those with whom we are in relationship. Rather, Jesus is talking about those with whom we are in conflict.

Both an *eye for an eye* and a *tooth for a tooth* refer to situations where someone has wronged us, and where retribution equal to, but not greater than the way we were treated would be justified. Jesus is calling us not to retribution, but to reconciliation – a new kind of justice and a new law.

Saint Paul's Letter to the Corinthians also addresses reconciliation. Here, he means being reconciled *to God*. The urgency of being so is evident in much of Paul's work, including what we heard today. Paul writes in detail that as a minister of God, he is being treated unfairly; he has been beaten and imprisoned. His words and faith have been questioned and ridiculed. He could have given up, he could have declared war on those who hurt him, he could have lied about his beliefs. But he bore all of that, because Christ bore all for us so that we could be reconciled to God.

God's people, over time, have treated God the same way: questioning God, disobeying, lying, breaking the commandments, etc. God could easily have demanded from us an *eye for an eye*, or a *tooth for a tooth*. Instead, he offered himself up for all of us, demonstrating in his grace and mercy the very thing that Jesus calls *us* to: a reconciliation and justice far beyond what we deserve.

Paul tells us that instead of meeting the hardships he has endured with hatred, he says to meet the injustice with love. To meet those who have caused us harm with love is not our first instinct, but his words reflect Jesus' law as a new vision for justice. It is only by the grace of the Holy Spirit that we can be bearers of kindness, peace and patience in the midst of such hardship – that in the dying there can be life, or in the lies told there can be truth.

When injustice is met with love, when hardship is endured with love, when enemies are met with love, through God's grace justice is created out of injustice, and reconciliation replaces conflict. In other words: we have the Eucharist. Now, as those who receive Christ in the Eucharist, we are called to be Eucharist to and for one another. May the Holy Spirit give us the grace to do so.

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Tuesday, June 18, 2019

(Lec. 366)

1) 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

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: We are called to radical generosity.

Sometimes holiness requires us to do something unexpected. In today's first reading, Saint Paul tells the Corinthians about the Christians in Macedonia, who lived in *profound poverty* and yet *overflowed in a wealth of generosity*. In the Gospel, Jesus challenges his followers to do something radical: love not only your neighbor, but also your enemy. Both situations ask the true Christian to pour out oneself for another, whether it be through stewardship or charitable love.

At her address to the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. in 1994, Mother Teresa said "This is the meaning of true love: to give until it hurts."

The Macedonians must have realized that. They loved the fledgling Church and the message of Jesus Christ so much that they *begged* to help the missionaries. Note that it doesn't say that they were asked, so they complied. No, they *begged insistently*, despite their poverty. It calls to mind the widow in the Gospel who gave her last two copper coins (Luke 21:1-4).

We cannot think that this generosity applies only to money, however. Saint Paul reminds us that we should be generous as an act of genuine love because Jesus – God the Son – became poor so that we might become rich. He humbled himself to become human and die so that we could be reconciled to God and one day be with him in heaven. Certainly, Jesus knew "the meaning of love: to give until it hurts."

Jesus tells us also about the importance of a charitable heart. It is easy enough to love and pray for our family and friends, but our enemies? Holiness calls us to do something unexpected: to love everyone, even those who treat us poorly. Jesus did just this as he died for all of us, not just the souls of those who would be Christians, but also for those who he knew would mock him and hate him, both at the foot of the cross and in the future. Nevertheless, he gave until it hurt and kept giving.

Today's Scriptures challenge us to be radically generous, to do something unexpected, to give of ourselves until it hurts. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will give us the fortitude and faith to be so generous, and that the Eucharist will strengthen us to do every kind of good.

Most of all, let us thank Jesus for his overwhelming generosity as we prepare to receive him in the Eucharist, the same Jesus who gave everything in atonement for our sins.

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Wednesday, June 19, 2019
(Lec. 367)
1) 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
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

FOCUS: We are called to be generous and called to do it quietly.

There is a tiny symbol on the steering column of our cars that resembles a horn. People use the horn to warn people they are too close to their car. People use the horn to get the attention of someone they know. Given that the symbol is rather small, it might be a gentle hint that the use of the horn should be infrequent. So when to toot our horn and when not to, is today's question.

Saint Paul tells us that those who give a little get a little. He also tells us that *God loves a cheerful giver*. There are endless stories about very wealthy people engaged in philanthropic efforts, and of others who tend to squander a great deal of wealth. Other stories that impress us are the ones about individuals who are not wealthy, yet are able to induce others to rally around a certain cause such as helping someone pay for an expensive medical procedure or dig wells in Third World countries.

In faith, we are all called to share what we have for the common good, for building up the kingdom of God here on earth. We do this by offering up our time, our talents and yes, our treasures.

Now here is the wrinkle to all of this. In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us to go about doing good in secret. There should not be excessive blowing of our horns, thus drawing unneeded attention to ourselves. Having said that, there may be appropriate times when we need to use our horns – right?

If someone's effort to help another needs the assistance of even more people to accomplish the task, then of course we need to spread the word. Even if it draws attention to ourselves. A sort of "honk if you love Jesus" moment. But for the most part, we should strive to be cheerful givers in secret, for then is the glory of God revealed and the kingdom of heaven built up.

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Thursday, June 20, 2019

(Lec. 368)

1) 2 Corinthians 11:1-11

2) Matthew 6:7-15

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

THURSDAY OF
11TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God, who knows what we need, desires to give us these gifts.

Today's Gospel from the Sermon on the Mount contains Jesus' teaching on prayer. From this we have the words of the Our Father, the definitive prayer that Christians have prayed for thousands of years. Jesus contrasts this prayer with that of the pagans who *babble*, believing they will be heard because of their many words. Such prayer does not account for an important fact: namely, that God knows what we need before we ask him.

When Jesus gives his listeners the words of the Our Father, he teaches them how to pray to a God who knows what they need. If we think of the things we need, a long list may come to mind whose items range from trivial to significant, and it is good to bring those things to God. In the Our Father, however, Jesus reveals some of our needs that may not be at the top of our list. These are needs that God knows we have, and seeks to address through prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Jesus shows us our need to praise God. God has no need for our praise, but we need to praise him! In praise, we name God for who he is – the Holy One whom we are called to know, love and serve. Praise fulfills our need to be oriented to our end, the purpose for which we were created.

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus shows us our need to align our will with God's. Though we can often see prayer as a way to ask God for something we want, this truer prayer forms us to want what God wants.

Give us this day our daily bread. Jesus shows us our dependence on God to provide for us. When we ask for the very bread we eat, and everything we need to survive, this prayer teaches us that we are sustained only by God.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Jesus shows us our need for forgiveness. While God calls and sustains us, we often fail in our response. Only with God's forgiveness can we continue on our journey of faith day after day.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Jesus reminds us that we always have God on our side. Whenever things get to be "too much," we need only call on God and he will provide.

Our need to praise God, do his will, depend on him and be forgiven by him may not always be what we think of most. Yet God, who knows what we need, desires to give us these gifts. As we pray the Our Father together in a few minutes and each day of our Christian journey, may this prayer take us further into God's heart and make us into who God created us to be.

Friday, June 21, 2019
(Lec. 369)
1) 2 Corinthians 11:18, 21-30
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: God turns poverty into eternal riches.

What's a Christian to make of Jesus' words in today's Gospel? *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but store up treasures in heaven.* There are saints inspired by this passage who gave away all they owned. It seems like such a radical venture to embrace poverty in such a way. After all, shouldn't parents supply security for their children? But poverty is not just physical or financial, but also spiritual: utter dependence before God. Not taking things on as if we were invincible, but allowing our weaknesses and vulnerabilities to be where Christ can fill us. There is a tension there, and as Christians we enter into it; we enter into the discomfort of discernment between comfort and poverty.

In the second reading, Saint Paul demonstrates this tension, as he boasts to the people of Corinth. He highlights his struggles, imprisonment and the dangers he has faced. He says he lived *through hunger and thirst* and through *cold and exposure*, sleeping outside as a homeless person. He talks about his poverty and says he is *talking like an insane person*. Paul is boasting, but he does so in Christ: meaning, he boasts *of the things that show [his] weakness*. And we know that in our weakness, Christ is strong.

Christ urges humility and simplicity, but not as ends in themselves. They are for the sake of Christ. The less we fill up with material and other spiritual things (such as pride), the more room there is for Christ within us. There is a promise he makes to those who lead lives detached from earthly treasures. He encourages us to *store up treasures in heaven*. When our hearts are set on heaven, God turns our poverty into eternal treasure.

The sacrifice of Christ is the quintessential poverty of spirit: Jesus emptied himself for us so that we could be filled with life and the love of God (Cf., Philippians 2:1-11). As we prepare to commemorate this sacrifice, and be filled with the real presence of Christ, let us pray for the grace to allow Christ's presence to grow within us, changing our poverty into eternal riches.

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Saturday, June 22, 2019

(Lec. 370)

- 1) 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- 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: Rely on God's providence, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Today we hear a great list of things about which we are not to worry. Included in his list, Jesus instructs us not to worry about *what we will eat or drink, or what we will wear*. While this advice is perhaps a nightmare for shopping malls, today's Gospel offers great comfort to Jesus' followers, especially to graduates, newlyweds and those making plans for the future.

Mammon, a Greek word in the New Testament borrowed from Aramaic, can be defined both as wealth or profit, and as the greedy pursuit of such. In other words, greed and gluttony, and the belief that the wealth and its attainment is the most important thing in life.

No one can *serve God and mammon*, Jesus says, and while it may be scary to prioritize the work of God's kingdom above building up our physical and financial security here on earth, distressing oneself (giving in to greed) over superficial things such as fashion, and even practical things like bodily sustenance will lead us to serve the wrong master.

Jesus seems to be saying that if we seek *first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness*, all will be provided for by our heavenly Father, who knows our needs before we ask. If we take a note from birds in the sky who do not *sow or reap and gather nothing into barns*, perhaps we might learn to have a balance between providing for ourselves and our families so as to live good lives of discipleship, and the temptations of extraneous desires.

We can have faith in God's providence. This faithful dependence frees us from excessive worry in order to courageously take up the mission of Christ. We ritualize this at every Mass when we are fed by Jesus' presence in the word proclaimed, the fellowship of the assembly gathered, led by our priest presider, and in a very special way, through Jesus' body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. Fed by the Lord, God gives us what we need to go forth to love and serve ... him, and not mammon.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2019

(Lec. 169)

- 1) Genesis 14:18-20
- 2) 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
- 3) Luke 9:11b-17

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

FOCUS: In the Eucharist, we taste the very presence and mercy of Christ.

Popularly known as the *Feeding of the Five Thousand*, this miraculous event is found in all four Gospels. For Luke it took place in a *deserted* place, or in some translations, a *lonely* place. But do they mean the same thing? To be *deserted* means to be uninhabited, empty; to be *lonely* means to be alone, without company. We can see how both of these could be good descriptions. And maybe these words also refer to the human condition and the deepest desires of the human heart.

The Gospels agree that Jesus was followed by a great crowd into the hill country. What were they after? Maybe some came to hear a little more about the kingdom, inspired by his hope-filled promise of God's mercy and healing. Perhaps others simply came to see another miracle from one whose words could change lives, and whose deeds could do marvelous things. Maybe some were at the last stop in their journey of life with nothing to lose and yet everything to gain.

So they are willing, if not eager, to follow him into this lonely/deserted place – willing to risk the growing darkness, hunger and even the potential of a long walk home just to be with Jesus. And it is here in this lonely/deserted place that Jesus meets them and their deepest needs in a life- abundant and self-giving way.

We are gathered today to celebrate the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. In many ways, we are very like the Gospel crowd. We, too, have come with our hopes and needs to encounter Jesus. Here Jesus creates a Eucharistic world where all experience his real presence and the hope of something better – here no one goes hungry!

Today and at every Mass, Jesus meets these needs by giving us his total and unconditional love, while at the same time nourishing us both physically and spiritually. Here we see why the Church calls the Eucharist *the source and summit of our faith*. It is *source* because Jesus is the source of our faith, and it is *summit* as our faith is ultimately about a sharing in his Resurrection and life.

Here we truly receive the same Jesus – his body, blood, soul and divinity, nourishing us for those lonely moments that are so often part of our human experience, reassuring us that God is always present in our lives.

As we prepare to receive holy Communion, we will repeat the words of the centurion from the Gospel who encountered that same Jesus: *Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed* (Matthew 8:8). Every time we receive this great gift from heaven, we should do so with fear and trembling, knowing as Paul reminds us that we are proclaiming Christ's death and resurrection until he comes again in glory. Here we are joining the saints and angels in the worship of the One who has loved us without condition. Here in the signs of bread and wine, Christ meets our most basic needs: to be loved and to be nourished.

Monday, June 24, 2019
(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: We celebrate the birth of John the Baptist and the role his parents play in the fulfillment of his unique mission.

Almost every parent has experienced the generous but unsolicited advice of others, whether it is about how a baby is to be properly bathed, or fed or put to bed at night. Often strangers will offer commentary about how to best discipline a child, or cut his hair, or get a baby to sleep. Many have strong opinions about names as well, which is probably why many expectant parents will not disclose the names they are considering for their child, lest it expose them to all sorts of unwanted advice.

This type of intervention is attempted with Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. After giving birth, others ignore her authority as a mother, for they think they know better what his name should be; *they were going to call him Zechariah after his father*. Some translations even read that *they were already calling him Zechariah*. Yet when Elizabeth tells them that his name will be John, they dismiss her. “No one is named John in your family,” they say, and without waiting for an answer, they ignore her and address Zechariah instead.

But Elizabeth and Zechariah know something that others do not know. God has a unique mission for this child. He has called him, like the prophet Isaiah, from his mother’s womb. He has a role to fill that no other person will fill. God has named this child, and now they will do not what the crowd expects – but what God has instructed them to do.

No. He will be called John. These words by Elizabeth, and then Zechariah, capture in some ways what it means to be faithful to God: *No. He will be called John*, they say.

This is what we are called to do. We are called to listen to God, to not be swayed by the conventions of the time or the pull of the crowd, and rather to be obedient to God’s instruction. God has a vocation for us that only we can fill. There is no other person on the entire earth who can do what we do, be where we are, or be *who* we are.

We may consult others. We may find wisdom there, but we must first take time to listen to God, to heed his instructions, his calling. When others attempt to pull us away from that mission, we must reply with our own version of “No, his name will be John.” It may be “No, I am not called to do that,” or “No, I have other commitments I must maintain,” or “No, I will raise my child in a manner consistent with my faith,” or “No, this is not who I am or what I am about.”

In doing so, we will fulfill a calling that no other person can fill; we will participate in what God grants to Isaiah, the gift of being a *light to the nations, that (his) salvation may reach to the ends of the earth*.

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Tuesday, June 25, 2019

(Lec. 372)

1) Genesis 13:2, 5-18

2) Matthew 7:6, 12-14

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

TUESDAY OF
12TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: When making choices, let our priorities reflect those of the Gospel.

In the first reading, we hear Abram offering Lot the choice of land on which to settle. Given that he had large flocks and herds, Lot chose the land that seemed to him best suited for this purpose, even though this land was close to Sodom, whose inhabitants were wicked in the eyes of the Lord. On the surface, Lot's approach seems reasonable. In fact, many of us might make decisions in a similar way: we evaluate our options, we weigh pros and cons that seem most relevant, we trust our own reason and insight to lead us to the best option.

In contrast, Abram deferred the first choice to Lot, even though, as the elder, he was within his rights to choose first and let his nephew take what was left. Abram has an entirely different approach, starting with a different priority. To Abram, what is important is to preserve the relationship between them rather than see it deteriorate due to disagreements brought on by their wealth, even if this meant settling in land that seemed second-rate.

Of these two approaches, it seems that the Lord was most pleased with Abram's, to whom he reaffirms his promise of land and innumerable descendants.

And when we look at Jesus' words in the Gospel, they certainly shed more light on where Lot went wrong. Jesus talks about treasuring and treating with respect that which is holy. Certainly, our relationship with God is and should be our most valued treasure, and our relationship with our family should be a close second.

Jesus also talks about doing to others what we would have them do to us – “the golden rule” with which we are familiar. And once again, this is something that seems very doable, until we're talking about things that affect our livelihood. In which case, we might be tempted to think of ourselves and our options first, as did Lot.

The choices we are facing at this moment in our lives might not involve wealth – they might involve time or require other sacrifices or commitments. But the challenge is still the same: to make sure the priorities that guide them are the ones Jesus proclaimed and set before us, for they will lead us to life.

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Wednesday, June 26, 2019

(Lec. 373)

1) Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

2) Matthew 7:15-20

Gospel related: CCC 2005, 2285, 2763

WEDNESDAY OF
12TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Beware of the wolf in sheep's clothing.

When we were children, we had an inborn sense of trust. We believed our parents and others in authority would guide and protect us. (This, of course, did not preclude us from asking "Why?" a thousand times as a child, but that's a subject for another day). At some point in our maturation, we realized that some people weren't as truthful as others. We started looking for clues to help us discern when someone was purposely misleading us. In today's Gospel from Matthew, Jesus warns of such people. He calls them *ravenous wolves* appearing *in sheep's clothing*.

Jesus is referring to the false prophets who preached the "good news," but didn't live it. Today's Gospel reading comes just a few verses after Jesus' proclamation of the golden rule – to do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matthew 7:12). We can identify a false prophet, for example, if we observe someone not treating others the way they themselves would like to be treated (Mays, *Bible Commentary*). It verifies Jesus' assertion that a rotten tree cannot bear good fruit.

So it is up to us to be wary of the wolves, but we certainly must also have the trust of a child when it comes to God's teachings. In our first reading from Genesis, the Lord promises Abram a child, and descendants as numerous as the stars, then promises a land large enough for all his descendants to live. Abram is at first skeptical, but eventually shows faith and trust in God, who we know fulfills his part of the covenant.

What does all this mean for us? Although it may seem difficult these days to discern who and what to trust, we always know we can trust in our loving God and the Scriptures. And we should have the child-like faith of Abram. But in the end, it is up to each of us to determine who the false prophets are in our lives. We can do that by forming our consciences well, according to God's word. As it says in the catechism, "A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful" (1783-85). Only when we have done this will we be able to detect the wolves *in sheep's clothing* who want to lead us down the wrong path.

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Thursday, June 27, 2019

(Lec. 374)

- 1) Genesis 16:1-12, 15-16
or Genesis 16:6b-12, 15-16
- 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: In order to gain a place in the kingdom of God, we must not just speak, but act on, the words of the Lord.

We all know of the person who speaks a good line, but doesn't follow through. Their words sound great, give us hope and may even inspire us. But when the promises are not followed with action, the words are empty and hollow. We are let down. We lose trust. We may even turn away from that person with disgust.

Jesus addresses this in today's Gospel in relation to our desire for a life with Christ. He makes it clear that actions must accompany our words. He says, *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.* Merely speaking the words of salvation, without living them in our day-to-day actions, is insufficient.

Jesus equates this to the man who builds his house on sand. We have all seen video of a grand and wonderful house standing tall and majestic until it is suddenly consumed by a sink hole, or falls off a cliff that collapses in a storm. It nearly takes our breath away to watch it happen.

This is a good metaphor for speaking the words of Christ, while living a life that contradicts them. The circumstances may involve overt lawlessness and immorality. But often, the ways we deny God's teachings are far more subtle. Our sinfulness may involve gossip, unkindness, selfishness, bullying, insensitivity, dishonesty and even hatred toward others. We see the hypocrisy in this, but who among us can say we have not been guilty of some of these actions at some time or other?

Jesus says we must be like the wise one who builds his house on rock. God's message creates a strong foundation for our life. However, we must listen to his words *and* act on them. This will have an impact on the kind of life we lead. We can treat others with kindness and compassion worthy of their human dignity, or be mean-spirited and selfish. We can be generous with our time and worldly goods, or cling to ourselves in selfishness. It is all about the choices we make. We are called to put God's plan for us in the forefront of our lives and to not just speak the message, but to live it out in our actions each day.

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Friday, June 28, 2019

(Lec. 172)

1) Ezekiel 34:11-16

2) Romans 5:5b-11

3) Luke 15:3-7

Gospel related: **CCC** 545, 1443, 1846

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

FOCUS: The Sacred Heart of Jesus burns with the love of God for all people.

Today, the Church celebrates the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We place a high value on images, and the Sacred Heart is no exception. It is often depicted as a flaming heart shining with divine light. The crown of thorns surrounds it, and on top of the heart is a cross.

The Sacred Heart reminds us that Jesus Christ is both God and Human. He is the Word Incarnate. He takes on our humanity, experiencing our joys and our sufferings. As our readings today tell us, he is the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, willing to lay down his life for us.

Throughout the Church's history, some have questioned if Jesus was merely a man blessed by God. Others argued that he is only God, in a human disguise. But his Sacred Heart points to the revelation that he is fully human and fully divine.

On the Sacred Heart, the crown of thorns and the cross remind us that Jesus is expiation for our sins. In the Nicene Creed, we attest that, "for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, [and that] he suffered death." The fire surrounding the Sacred Heart represents the transformative power of Jesus' divine love for humanity. He descended into the fires of hell, and overcame them. The light that emanates from his Sacred Heart is a sign of his divine power over death. He was not constrained by the finality of death, nor does he allow humanity to be imprisoned by death. The Sacred Heart parallels the person of the good shepherd in today's Scriptures, who cares for his sheep, bringing them to a place where they may graze freely under his watchful eye.

Although we gather here, united by his love, there are many people in this world who do not know his love and care. When he appeared to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque in the seventeenth century, Jesus lamented:

"Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love. In return, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrileges, and by the coldness and contempt they have for me in this sacrament of love.... I come into the heart I have given you in order that through your fervor you may atone for the offenses which I have received from lukewarm and slothful hearts that dishonor me in the Blessed Sacrament."

As with all the images of the Church, they are not meant to merely be admired and venerated. They impel us to act, in faith and in love, for God and for God's people. The Sacred Heart directs us to pray for those who have turned away from God and those who do not know God. When we conclude this Eucharistic celebration, we are challenged to, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." Emboldened by the Sacred Heart, let us pray for all who do not have the love of God burning within their hearts, and let us preach the Gospel, by word and example, so that they may know God's love.

Saturday, June 29, 2019
(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: God is with us through all the challenges of this life, as he was with our Fathers in Faith.

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, we get a glimpse of the various ways that God was with them. In the Gospel, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to recognize Jesus' true identity and to proclaim it boldly. It was this revelation from God that brought Jesus to name Peter as the head of the Church. In Acts, God is present to Peter in his imprisonment through the intercession of the Church and the angel. In the second reading, Paul is also in prison, but at the end of his years of ministry, and he recognizes that his days of service are at an end. He relies on God to be with him through his imprisonment and death – and to lead him to eternal life with him in heaven.

As members of the Catholic Church, we rightly hold Saints Peter and Paul in high regard as our Founding Fathers. It might seem that these two great saints are way above us – that they are the heroes of the faith and that we can't match the great things they did. Yet through our baptism, we were made into members of the body of Christ – the same body that Peter and Paul led two centuries ago. If we take up our call as baptized Christians, we can expect to be faced with similar challenges – and yet be consoled and strengthened by the presence of God in all of those challenges.

And those challenges to a baptized Catholic can be many. Parents are called to raise their children in the faith to the best of their ability. We might be called to witness to Christ in the marketplace – in our daily job or in our profession, whether as a waitress, a business executive, a farmer or a physician. God might be calling us to generous service in our parish, or to a vocation in religious life or the priesthood.

As we claim our role in Jesus' Church, in our witness to the world, let us be open to the ways God is present to us. No matter what, we are all part of the Church of Peter and Paul – and we are called in our own way and our own time to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God through our lives.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2019

(Lec. 99)

- 1) 1 Kings 19:16b. 19-21
- 2) Galatians 5:1, 13-18
- 3) Luke 9:51-62

Gospel related: CCC 544, 557

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Obey God's call without delay or excuse.

Now that the Easter Season is concluded and we have celebrated the Feasts of the Ascension, Pentecost, Most Holy Trinity and the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, we have returned to Ordinary Time. The Scriptures today refer to God's call, and the necessity for us to provide an answer to that call with an act of faith. If we truly believe the Lord to be the sovereign in the center of our hearts, then we must obey God's call without delay or excuse.

Just prior to today's reading on top of Mount Horeb, the Mountain of God, Elijah was granted an answer to his prayers. After praying for death and enduring an earthquake, windstorm and wildfire on top of that mountain, he had heard the tiniest whisper. It was the voice of the Lord telling him that Elisha was chosen to be his successor. Elisha was not as excited as Elijah to learn of this. He wanted to go and bid farewell to his family, and perhaps get his affairs in order. Once he realizes he must leave everything and go right then, not only does he lay down the reins to his father's plow, he burns everything up – there is no turning back. Elisha set the stage for what Jesus' Apostles would do centuries later, when they would lay down their nets and leave the customs post to follow him.

In the Gospel, we listen to the final verses of the ninth chapter of Luke. This is a very busy chapter in Luke's Gospel, and a tumultuous time in the life of Christ. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had sent out the Twelve Apostles on their first missionary journey. Then, Jesus informed his Apostles that he was going to be arrested and put to death. Then, he took Peter, James and John up on Mount Tabor and they saw Jesus transfigured before them.

Now, today, as we work toward the end of the chapter, we see that Jesus increasingly meets resistance in his efforts to seek and save the lost. Fewer and fewer people wish to accompany him, even Samaritans who previously offered him the warmest of welcomes. They know why Jesus is going to Jerusalem, and they are not sure they wish to follow him any further if it means suffering and death.

Jesus calls others to follow him but, like Elisha, they have excuses, they need more time, they are not ready to go. The Lord *has nowhere to rest his head* and his days are numbered, but still he presses on, inviting others to join him along the way of the cross. They will not go. Perhaps it is a sign of the abandonment and isolation Jesus is set to endure in his last hours, as almost everyone he cared about refuses to stay at his side.

The Lord is calling all of us. He calls us to be prophets, apostles, disciples, friends, *to serve one another through love*, as Paul encouraged the Galatians in today's second reading. The time for excuses is long past. Whether we feel unworthy, unwilling or afraid, let us trust in the Lord and leave it all behind and follow him, that he might lead us to himself, to the Father and to heaven.