

OCTOBER

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WEDDING HOMILY

Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16

1 John 4:7-12

Matthew 22:35-40

FOCUS: In the sacrament of marriage you become an image, to the world, of God's gift of love.

We're gathered today to celebrate several incredible gifts. N. and N., you are a gift to each other! But there is a gift here for the rest of us, too: Your love is a gift we all receive. Today you offer your love to each other in a particular, sacred way. And in this love, you reveal something of God to each other. And to us. You become an image of him, who is love. So, as you become one in love today, you are invited to allow that love to overflow – to be poured out as a gift to all those you meet – and let us meet God in you.

You have been given the special responsibility, the *vocation*, to share God's love with each other in a unique way. Because that is what love is: sharing God with another. *If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.*

And so the order of the commandments in the Gospel takes on a particular significance. Notice that Jesus says first you must love God with all your heart. If you are to love one another the way you hope to, you must *first* receive this love from God. You must seek to be filled with the love you need so that you can then pour this out on each other.

Indeed, your marriage itself is a gift, a *sacrament* – work that God is doing in and through you. To love one another well, you cannot simply look to each other to be your strength: you must together accept the love God desires to give you. There is temptation to believe that you will be enough for one another. Though you are marvelous in so many ways, neither of you can complete the other! You are both, and we are *all*, made for a love that only God can give.

The gift of this love, a love which makes God visible, is not meant to remain only with you. In the sacrament of matrimony, you not only *receive* God's love, but you *become* an image of it to the world. Your marriage, then, is a gift that spreads, making God's loving presence tangible.

Clearly, this is a profound challenge – to make God's love visible for one another and all the world. The good news is that the capacity to love in such a way is a *gift from God*. You are a gift from the Lord, and all that you bring to one another in the vows you are about to make flows from God's abundant goodness. God will continue to pour out that abundant goodness on you, giving you everything you need to love each other as you were created to.

And so we pray for you as you give yourselves to one another in this sacrament and celebrate your love. Thank you for your witness to love and for sharing the joy of God's goodness with us today. N. and N., you are truly a gift!

FUNERAL HOMILY

Wisdom 4:7-15
Romans 14:7-9, 10c-12
John 6:37-40

FOCUS: Nothing that is of God will be lost.

Every Sunday, we pray the creed together, proclaiming that Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead. At times, that can be an intimidating image. Perhaps we imagine Jesus surveying us dubiously, considering only our faults, waiting for us to make excuses: quick to anger, slow to mercy.

Brothers and sisters, we must utterly reject that image of Jesus. For the Jesus who is our hope in times of grief does not ever look on us this way. The Jesus we come to today, as we celebrate the life of N., is the God of love and of life. Have you ever watched a parent with his or her newborn child? Or examined the face of a groom as his bride approaches him down the aisle? This is a shadow, a small glimmer of the love with which Christ receives N. As Psalm 103, verse 8 states: *Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger, abounding in mercy.* Yes, our God will meet us, but he will meet us with love.

So what *will* we encounter in that moment? Judgment that sees the truth. When we think of someone judging us, so often that experience on this side of eternity is filled with misunderstanding. No human person can fully see the complexities of who we are and why we do all that we do. We don't even fully understand ourselves, much of the time. And yet, Christ our judge will see us as we truly are – full of good, and full of brokenness.

The question we will have to offer an accounting for is not, are we worthy? No, Christ has crossed that divide for us, offered his perfect worthiness to heal our brokenness. The question Jesus will judge is, do you want me? Do you want my love? As Jesus assures us in our Gospel, *I will not reject anyone who comes to me.*

How do we come to Christ? Surely in the moment of our passing, but throughout our life as well. Every time we turn to goodness, choose truth, sacrifice in love, we are coming to Christ who will receive us on our last day. [Insert story of the goodness or love of N. here.]

And so, we entrust N. to this Christ who died and came to life. To this Jesus who loves N. so much that he entered into death so that N. would not have to walk this final journey alone, but rather could be carried into the arms of God by our Savior. To our Lord who can transform even the sting of death into a doorway to eternal life.

Friends, this same Jesus who would not let N. enter into death unaccompanied by his/her Savior also will not leave us to carry our grief alone. Jesus, who holds N. so close today, also longs to hold us in this mystical embrace. Our sorrow will not be lost, but rather can be gathered into the transforming love of God who conquered death. Let us bring all that we carry today, our gratitude and our grief, and entrust it to Jesus with N. today. For nothing that is of God will be lost, but will be raised.

**YEAR C
WEEKDAYS I**

Tuesday, October 1, 2019
(Lec. 456)

- 1) Zechariah 8:20-23
- 2) Luke 9:51-56

TUESDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus,
Virgin and Doctor of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 557

FOCUS: Our baptismal vocation is a purposeful journey to God.

In both readings we hear of people determined to make a journey; people on the move with a purpose and energy, on the march so to speak. Zechariah prophesies of the day when *many peoples* and *strong nations* will say *Come! let us go and I too will go.*

It is popular to speak of our life in Christ as a journey. It is tempting to allow that image to justify a slow and perhaps not so purposeful motion toward what, we are not so sure. But to move with no destination or end in mind is not a journey. It is simply to wander. To journey means to move toward something – to know where we want to go.

In the Gospel, we see Jesus begin a journey. It is his final journey, and he *resolutely determined* to undertake it. In other translations, we read that Jesus *set his face* for the journey. Jesus had a vision of what was to come, of where he was to go. Jesus does not wander aimlessly.

The spiritual life, a life in Christ, is indeed a journey. It is not a wandering, but a purposeful march toward something, *someone*, in particular. To say spiritual life, then, is to mean our baptismal vocation, and it is pilgrimage, a journey to meet God.

The people in the first reading move because they have heard that there is a place where God indeed dwells – Jerusalem. The determination and passion of these pilgrims is a consequence of the realization that they might be able to meet God, to implore his favor. Jesus also journeys to Jerusalem. Although he knows what awaits him there – rejection and ultimately death – he does not waver. He knows that God the Father is with him, and that God dwells in Jerusalem.

Today is the memorial of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Although Thérèse was a cloistered Carmelite who lived her life in obscurity, her life is also an example of a spiritual journey undertaken with great zeal and direction. She said that she entered the convent with a clear purpose – *to save souls and pray for priests.* Famous for her “little way” of offering daily tasks and mundane sufferings as sacrifices for love of Christ and others, she made a great journey out of herself in service of God and his Church, even becoming a patroness of missions – without ever leaving the convent.

As Christians we are called to be the people Zechariah speaks of – people on the move with purpose and energy. This journey must be undertaken – we must move – but it does not require us to leave the physical location where God has placed us. Instead, we are called to move resolutely toward Christ and with Christ – marked as his own by our baptism.

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Wednesday, October 2, 2019
(Lec. 457)
1) Nehemiah 2:1-8
(Lec. 650)
2) Matthew 18:1-5, 10
Gospel related: CCC 329, 336, 526, 2785

WEDNESDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
The Holy Guardian Angels)

FOCUS: Let us trust in and serve God with humility.

Our Scriptures today give us some examples for our own life of discipleship and relationship to God: Humility demonstrated through trust and service.

We can think of a young child's relationship with a parent. Provided the parent shows the child proper care and affection, the child implicitly trusts and relies on the parent. When an infant hungers, he looks for his mother. When a toddler falls and hurts herself, she runs to the comforting arms of her father. Even when they insist, "I can do it myself," we know they will always return to their parents.

This is a model for how we, too, should behave as Christians. When we hunger for something more than this world, when we are hurting and sorrowful, and even when we insist we can "do it ourselves," we must always approach our loving Father to provide for our needs, heal our hearts and welcome us. Children who trust are a lesson in humility: at the end of the day, they know they can and should rely on their parents. They, like Nehemiah, know they can ask their Father for anything. If we go to our Father first with our needs, we can trust him to guide us.

One of the ways he guides us is through our guardian angels. Today is the memorial for the Holy Guardian Angels, and it is worth mentioning their role in assisting us when we need help. The catechism tells us that angels *surpass in perfection all visible creatures* (CCC 330), and they serve God in many capacities: worshipping him, delivering messages to humanity, and as our guardian angels.

Today, on the Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels, let us pray for an increase in the virtue of humility, that we, too, may trust in the Father as a child trusts a parent, and that we may be humble enough to serve God in whatever tasks he gives us.

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Thursday, October 3, 2019
(Lec. 458)

1) Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6,
7b-12

2) Luke 10:1-12

Gospel related: CCC 765, 2122, 2611 CSDC 259, 492

THURSDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God invites us to welcome his Word, and to receive the peace and healing it may bring.

Although we all know that bad news abounds, and we can find it just about anywhere on our phones or televisions, we must remember that we are the fortunate ones, because, as people of the Word, we have an inexhaustible source of Good News: the Bible. To hear this Good News and receive it with joy is God's intention for us. God invites us to welcome his Word, to understand it and to accept the peace and healing it may bring.

In the first reading, Ezra the scribe reads to the Israelites from the book of the Law of Moses. This was a pivotal time for Israel, having returned to a rebuilt Jerusalem, and called to live once again by their faith in God. Gathered as a renewed people on this holy occasion, emotions were running high. At first, the people weep as they hear God's word. But once Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levite priests offer interpretation and enable people to understand the proclamation, there is great joy. Together they eat, drink and celebrate the holy day.

Jesus and his disciples hope for a similar acceptance of their proclamation, for the harvest is ripe in the towns ahead of them. Yet, at the same time, they must prepare for rejection. As they share the Good News of the kingdom of God, some may not accept it. Some may refuse their offer of peace; we hear that those who do face a fate worse than Sodom. Others will accept the Good News; this will bring peace upon them and their households, and a chance for their sick to be cured.

Sometimes we are among those who reject God's word. For whatever reason, at a given time or place, we may not be ready or willing to listen. How can we make sure this doesn't happen? Perhaps it will help to still our hearts and prepare ourselves, before hearing the Word, by remembering that God is the source of all goodness, and gives us only good things. He desires to give us the peace and healing that only he can give. Knowing this, understanding this, believing this, can bring us great joy.

After feeding us with his Word in Scripture, God invites us to another feast, at the table of the Eucharist. Here we are fed again with God's word, now through the body and blood of his Son, the Living Word. Partaking of God's nourishment through Word and sacrament, we become not only receivers, but bearers of the Good News to others.

So let us with joy and thanksgiving embrace the Good News and sacrament, and pray that we may be a source of peace and healing in the world.

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Friday, October 4, 2019
(Lec. 459)
1) Baruch 1:15-22
2) Luke 10:13-16

FRIDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Francis of Assisi)

Gospel related: CCC 87, 858

FOCUS: As human beings, we can easily fall away from God – but he is always ready to bring us back.

Today's readings might well call to mind the days of Lent, when we repent for all the wrongs that we have done and offer penance to turn our hearts back to God. The Israelites admit to God's justice in exiling them in Babylon after their sinful disobedience. Jesus reproaches the people of the nearby villages for their failure to repent. Are there not times when we, too, have failed to listen to God and have turned away from him? Times when we've taken for granted God's goodness to us, the small miracles of our daily lives?

Yet we can find hope and inspiration in these readings as well. Immediately after pointing out the failures of the people of Chorazin and Capernaum, Jesus speaks about the rewards of discipleship. Following him means that we are never alone. Our unity with him is so great that acceptance or rejection of us as his disciples is acceptance or rejection of him and the Father.

In this life, it is easy to fluctuate between disobedience to God's word and blindness to his goodness, and the faithfulness, obedience and love for Jesus that we are called to as his disciples. We know that when we stray, God is willing to take us back, but how can we strengthen our discipleship so that we are more often present to God and listening to the voice of Jesus?

Today we celebrate the life of a man who is a great example to us of one who strayed from God but ultimately gave himself completely to God for the remainder of his life. As a young man, Saint Francis of Assisi enjoyed the luxuries and distractions of a wealthy lifestyle until illness and imprisonment as a soldier brought him back to God. Saint Francis renounced his family's wealth and returned to God wholeheartedly, turning to a life of poverty, prayer, service to the Church and to the poor, and praise to God for the goodness of creation.

As we approach the table of the Lord and continue with the rest of our day, let us follow the example of Saint Francis. Let us repent of any distractions or habits that might blind us to God, give ourselves wholeheartedly to his service, and be attentive to the voice of God and the beauties that he has bestowed on us. As we stay attentive to God each day, we will remain the faithful disciples of his son, our Lord Jesus.

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Saturday, October 5, 2019
(Lec. 460)
1) Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29
2) Luke 10:17-24

SATURDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.)

USA: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, Priest;
Saturday in honor of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 787, 1083, 2603

FOCUS: Jesus teaches us how to pray.

Today's Gospel includes a prayer that Jesus prayed as the 72 disciples returned from their first missionary trip. It had been a successful trip, and the disciples were rejoicing not only at what had transpired, but in who Jesus was, saying that *even the demons are subject to us because of your name*. After the 72 had expressed their joy, Jesus himself *rejoiced in the Holy Spirit* and gave praise to the Father.

Throughout the Gospels, we hear of many times when Jesus prayed. Sometimes he was quiet about his prayers, going off by himself to communicate with his Father. Other times he was very public. At times when he prayed publicly, he was not only communicating with his Father, but with his followers as well, as they heard him including them in his prayers.

There is a certain pattern to most of Jesus' prayers. He usually begins with praise to the Father, then gratitude for his blessings, and finally a request. When he prays *for* something, he includes a concession that the request only be granted if it is consistent with the Father's will. This is a great pattern for us to use in our prayers, as well.

When we praise God we not only bring him glory, but we recall what he has done for us and for all humankind throughout history. When we express gratitude, even before we request something, we show our confidence in God's goodness and love for us, regardless of the outcome of our particular petition. When we let God's will determine whether our petition should be granted, we recognize that we cannot see the whole picture. We also acknowledge that God has a plan for our lives, and that plan is rooted in his love for us.

The prayer Jesus said at the return of the 72 disciples is jubilant. The power of God has been evident in the work these early missionaries have done. Jesus gives credit to the Father for providing the ability for these people to bring healing and spiritual renewal to so many. He notes that these wonders have been shown to and felt by ordinary people, without regard for their status or learning.

Jesus also publicly acknowledges that what he has orchestrated is, indeed, the Father's will. He claims his position as Son of God, with authority to reveal the Father's will to whomever he wishes.

As we continue our liturgical prayer, let our hearts call out to God – as today's first reading encourages us. Let us praise and thank him, ask our hearts' desire of him, confident in his mercy and love. Let us also claim our position as children of God, empowered to carry out his will and to bring his love to all those we encounter.

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos (1819-1867) - In 1843, Blessed Francis sailed to America from Germany to dedicate himself to missionary work. Having been accepted by the Redemptorist Congregation in Germany, Francis was ordained a priest in Baltimore and began ministering to German-speaking immigrants. He was admired as a kind and understanding confessor and spiritual director, and was known as a gifted preacher. As a parish priest, he made himself always available to those in need. Pope St. John Paul II proclaimed him Blessed in the year 2000.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2019

(Lec. 141)

1) Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

2) 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

3) Luke 17:5-10

Gospel related: CCC 162

**27TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Faith is a gift, and God is the source and giver of that gift.

As we read this Gospel passage, it is hard not to conclude that this request for an increase in faith comes somehow out of the blue. So what prompted the disciples to make this unusual request? To understand that we need to go back to previous passages in Luke's Gospel – the parables about the prodigal son, the dishonest steward, Lazarus and the rich man. Together, they point to a reality that God's ways are different from our ways. They remind us that if we are to be faithful disciples, then we must take our cue not from the world, but from Christ who reveals to us the very mind of God.

We use the word "faith" in different ways – from our denominational identity to our creedal statements. But when Luke speaks here of faith, and indeed when Paul speaks about the gift given through the laying on of hands, they are not simply speaking about creedal statements or identity. Instead, they refer to that gift from God that binds us and empowers us to follow and live in Christ. This is what the disciples sought: an increase in that most precious of all gifts – a strong and enduring relationship with Christ.

It has never been easy to be a Christian. The early Christians had to deal with all sorts of threats and persecutions. So we can understand why this call to faith is at the heart of the Gospels. By asking Jesus for an increase, the disciples are recognizing that he is the source of this supernatural faith, and that such a faith is not the outcome of human strength or willpower but is sheer gift from God. Because it is a gift, it can never be seen as something we can boast of as our own achievement. We are servants of the Word, and when we respond to it we are simply doing our duty.

We also live in a world where it can be difficult to be faithful disciples. In such a world, our living, acting faith is of more and more importance. To be a faith-filled Christian is not simply about having an inner conviction, but the courage and strength to live that faith on a daily basis.

Christ's word to us today is a word of encouragement that we need only a little trust – the size of the mustard seed – in his strength to carry us through in this life. It is the power of God living in and through us that will ultimately empower us to be faith-filled and faithful.

Monday, October 7, 2019
(Lec. 461)

- 1) Jonah 1:1–2:2, 11
- 2) Luke 10:25-37

Gospel related: CCC 1293, 1825, 2083, 2822

MONDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Our Lady of the Rosary)

FOCUS: Our Lady of the Rosary.

Jonah and the scholar of the law share something in common: lack of knowledge about their future and how God wants to work through them. Jonah flees to escape the Lord, who has given him a mission he does not want to accept. Whether he fears success or failure we do not know. Either way, he does not appear to trust in God's plan. The scholar in the Gospel, meanwhile, knows what is written in the law, but he is unsure what he must do *to inherit eternal life*. So, he tests Jesus about it, specifically asking, *And who is my neighbor?* Jesus uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to explain it to him, and here we see what the scholar could not, namely, that our neighbor is whomever is before us in need of mercy.

Today we celebrate the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary. In the year 1571, Pope Pius V, fearing the invasion of continental Europe by the Turks, called on all of Europe to pray the rosary to ensure victory over their antagonists. A combined European naval fleet repelled the attack at the Battle of Lepanto. To honor Mary's intervention, Pope Pius instituted the Feast of Our Lady of Victory. Over time, numerous popes have honored this Marian feast in their own way, so that today, we commemorate Our Lady of the Rosary.

The rosary assists us in meditating on our salvation, and the mysteries that comprise it. In praying it, we contemplate all that God has allowed to transpire to reconcile us to him – from Christ's birth to his death and resurrection, Mary's unique role in our salvation, and our final end of being united to the Triune God for all eternity. In other words, it is a prayer that both provides answers to our questions, and through Mary's intercession helps us arrive at answers to them.

Thus, at any time in our lives, but especially at times when we are in distress (as was continental Europe), unable to trust (like Jonah), or unable to see God is working in the world (like the scholar), we may place our needs before our Blessed Mother who cares for us. May we be comforted in the knowledge that we can place our trust in her. On this day, let us celebrate Our Lady of the Rosary, whom we ask to *pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*.

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Tuesday, October 8, 2019
(Lec. 462)
1) Jonah 3:1-10
2) Luke 10:38-42
Gospel related: **CSDC** 260

TUESDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Let us listen to the Lord's message and allow it to change us.

One common thread in our Scriptures today is that the word of the Lord is spoken and proclaimed, and this Word leads to transformation. It changes those who hear it.

Through Jonah's efforts, this Word calls the Ninevites to repentance, and they heed this call. They are moved enough to do something about it and actually change their ways. Let's let that sink in for a moment. They heard the Lord's call to repentance, and they didn't ignore it or let the busyness of their daily tasks drown out the warning. No. Rather, they heard this message, recognized the truth of it and allowed it to change them.

In the Gospel, Martha welcomes Jesus into her home. We can imagine that Martha probably had invited other guests at other times, and on those occasions her sister Mary would have been present. Mary likely would have helped her with all the tasks needed to properly welcome a guest, such as preparing and serving food.

But this time was different. Instead of helping her sister, Mary sits by Jesus and listens to his words. Whatever he was saying led her from the perceived norm of helping her sister, Martha. It interrupted the usual order of things and led Mary to spend time doing something that arguably wasn't very productive. And yet, the Lord affirms the importance of spending time just listening.

Like the Ninevites, like Martha and Mary, we have had the Lord's message proclaimed to us. Not only do we receive his Word – words of mercy and forgiveness – we receive his very presence in the Eucharist. And the challenge for us is the same: Do we heed the call of the Lord and allow it to penetrate and change us? Do we allow the Lord's presence to interrupt our usual routine and heed his invitation to just listen?

As we go forth this day, let us commit to hitting the pause button – maybe before we start the car, brush our teeth or turn on the TV or device – and stop what we're doing, listen to the Lord's message to us today and allow his grace to change us.

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Wednesday, October 9, 2019
(Lec. 463)
1) Jonah 4:1-11
2) Luke 11:1-4

WEDNESDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saints Denis, Bishop,
and Companions,
Martyrs;
Saint John Leonardi, Priest)

Gospel related: CCC 520, 1425, 2601, 2632, 2759, 2773, 2845

FOCUS: God answers our prayers with grace and mercy.

In today's first reading, we find an angry Jonah. He is angry because God saved the lives of 120,000 people – thanks to Jonah's preaching to them, by the way. This is the same Jonah who was *not* angry, of course, when God saved him from the belly of a great fish.

So it is with us sometimes. We may get angry with God when we have no idea of what his plan is in our lives. We can't see the big picture because we get too focused on ourselves, as Jonah did. Yet we often forget the times when he saves us from something akin to the belly of a great fish.

The Book of Jonah is one of many scriptural examples of God's patience with us, and his mercy. For example, the saving of the Ninevites, who were Gentiles, foreshadows Jesus saving all humankind – Jews and Gentiles alike – from the ravages of sin.

Jonah's attitude contrasts sharply with that of the Apostles in today's Gospel from Luke. Though they often did not understand Jesus' ways, they recognized how important prayer was to our Lord.

They asked him how to pray, and Jesus taught them the Our Father. The fullness of God's love and mercy for us is contained in that prayer. In fact, according to the catechism, "The Lord's Prayer 'is truly the summary of the whole gospel'" (2761). So, when we pray the Lord's Prayer in a few minutes, let's ask him to replace any selfish, Jonah-like attitudes we may have with an Apostle-like attitude of humble prayer.

And may that which God grants us in prayer and sacrament be a sign of grace and mercy not just to us, but to the whole world.

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Thursday, October 10, 2019
(Lec. 464)

1) Malachi 3:13-20b

2) Luke 11:5-13

Gospel related: CCC 443, 728, 2613, 2623, 2671, 2761 CSDC 453

THURSDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The Lord promises to answer our prayers, for those who seek will find.

In the twenty-first century, we live in a culture of instant gratification. We have been programmed to expect immediate results, and we move on to something else or just give up hope completely when that doesn't happen.

In today's Gospel, we hear, *ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.* It would be easy, living in this age, to interpret this to mean that God will quickly respond to us when we ask. If there are things we want, or cures we need, or opportunities we want to pursue, all we need do is pray and God will provide. If that doesn't happen the way we want it to, we lose faith and question why God does not fulfill his promise as stated in Luke's Gospel.

We can illustrate this concept with a fable. A 10-year-old boy begged his parents for a TV for his bedroom. He was persistent and impatient as he asked his parents over and over to give him what he thought he desperately needed. In response to his request, the parents did not rush out to buy him a TV. Instead, they provided him with opportunities to earn money so he could buy one himself. He diligently saved his money from extra chores, birthday gifts and cans returned to the store for refunds. After many months, he had saved enough to make his big purchase, and walked into the store with his money in his pocket and a big smile on his face. His parents had listened, and answered – just not in the way he had expected, and in ways that were about more than just giving him a specific material item.

Like the parents in this story, God will provide all we need. And he will do it in ways we may not expect, and with a greater love for our well-being than we can see. But we have a role in this as well. We must be persistent in our prayer. We need to be patient as we await God's response. We have to trust God and accept that his response may not look like the answer we have envisioned. And we must have faith, remembering that God always keeps his promises.

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Friday, October 11, 2019
(Lec. 465)
1) Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2
2) Luke 11:15-26

FRIDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John XXIII,
Pope)

Gospel related: CCC 385, 700

FOCUS: With the spirit of Christ within us, we do not need to live with fear.

It seems pretty clear that as the people of God, we have a simple choice before us: We are either with God, or against him. With him, we escape the divine punishment of which Joel speaks, and are part of the kingdom of God come upon us that Jesus describes. Against him, we are overcome and scattered, and subject to the day of ruin.

This is why it is sometimes embarrassingly painful to see the crowds behave as they do in the Gospels. They have seen many signs, yet they ask for more. They hear Jesus speak of the kingdom of God, yet accuse him of acting on behalf of *Beelzebul, the prince of demons*.

We have the benefit of hindsight, to be sure. After all, with the testimony of Scripture and the gift of faith, we know how Jesus' life, death and resurrection have overcome and conquered sin. But the crowds had Jesus the Christ right in front of them!! And yet they did not believe.

So it is that with the spirit of Christ within us, we do not need to live with fear and trepidation. By choosing to be with him, we have freedom in him. By staying close to Jesus by trusting him, turning to him and relying on him, we can walk in confidence. He gives us the sacrament of reconciliation which enables us to seek forgiveness when we sin. We also are invited to receive him in holy Communion. What a gift that is!

Jesus has indeed set us free. This week, let us focus on keeping our minds and hearts fixed upon him. Through him our lives can be victorious, full of peace and joy. When challenges come our way, we can rest in the knowledge that God loves us even more than we love ourselves.

Saint John XXIII (1881-1963) - Elected at age 76, Pope John XXIII initiated actions that would change the Church and the world. In addition to convening a synod and establishing a commission to revise the Code of Canon Law, he called for the Second Vatican Council just three months after his election. The council published 16 documents calling for changes to help the Church engage the modern world. Affectionately called "Good Pope John" because of his visits to children's hospitals and prisons, he died before the council adjourned in 1965.

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Saturday, October 12, 2019
(Lec. 466)
1) Joel 4:12-21
2) Luke 11:27-28

SATURDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: Salvation is not just for a chosen few, but for all who hear and observe God's word.

In today's first reading, the prophet Joel proclaims that God will avenge and restore Israel. Joel's descriptions of God's judgment on enemies and his blessing on his elect are lengthy, vivid and dramatic. The message is one of hope and goodness: *from Jerusalem [the Lord] raises his voice ... [and] is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the children of Israel.*

Jesus, like Joel, also speaks of blessing. Though he is much more brief than Joel was, the message is the same: All who *hear the word of God and observe it* will be blessed. With his quick and concise response, Jesus summarizes the new covenant of salvation – it is for all, not just the children of Israel.

By this point in Luke's Gospel, Jesus has commissioned his Twelve Apostles and 72 others to proclaim the kingdom of God. After his resurrection, he will send his disciples even farther, to witness to the ends of the earth. The Gospel will continue to spread, and the Church to grow, carrying out God's divine plan to reach all peoples and nations. For God desires that all of us will be reconciled to him, and united to him for eternity.

God is far more merciful and loving than we could ever be. The Eucharist is a reminder of God's mercy, and how great a love it was that compelled him to send us his son, Jesus, to save us. May partaking of the body and blood of the Savior of the world make us more like him in mercy and love.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2019

(Lec. 144)

1) 2 Kings 5:14-17

2) 2 Timothy 2:8-13

3) Luke 17:11-19

Gospel related: CCC 586, 2463

**28TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: The proper response to God is worship – in gratitude and faith.

In two readings today, people are cured of their leprosy – Naaman by the prophet Elisha and 10 people, including a Samaritan, by Jesus. In these healings, the people are restored to physical and communal life – renewed in health and re-established in a society that had kept them separate for fear of contagion.

In each reading, there is a response to this healing. Naaman expresses gratitude to Elisha and asks for *two mule-loads of earth* so that he can offer his sacrifices to the God of Elisha rather than his own god. The Samaritan, the only one of the 10 who appears to realize that he has been cured, returns to Jesus and glorifies God. In both cases, faith had saved them and had prompted the proper response.

Jesus, the eternal Word of God, is still healing us today. If we turn to Jesus in trust, he can cleanse us of the most basic of all human ailments – sin. Jesus, the Word of God, is unchained, as Saint Paul writes to Timothy. He remains faithful to those who are faithful. And we, who have died to sin with him in baptism, shall also live with him. This gift of life, of restoring us to communion with God, is one available to use in faith. When accepted in faith, the only proper response is worship.

The more we respond in faith and in worship, the greater the graces, and the easier and more joyful is our relationship with the Triune God – who desires nothing more than for us to spend eternity with him. May those graces continue to transform us and bring us ever closer to him.

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Monday, October 14, 2019
(Lec. 467)
1) Romans 1:1-7
2) Luke 11:29-32

MONDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Callistus I,
Pope and Martyr)

FOCUS: Let us allow the word of God to direct the way we live.

There is something greater than Solomon here ... and there is something greater than Jonah here.

These words would have commanded the attention of Jesus' listeners, which was exactly his point. Why? Because crowd after crowd, people after people, were approaching him – demanding signs that would convince them he was who he said he was. They were demanding signs because they had either heard he performed them, or they had in fact already seen some. Yet they wanted more.

As faithful Jewish people, they knew their Scripture. So those who heard Jesus say these things would have known who Solomon and Jonah were, what they had done and why they were “a big deal.” Thus, in these two phrases, Jesus identifies himself as one who knows and understands the history of the Israelites. He also signifies, in his words and by his presence, the future of the Israelites – and all of God's people.

So Jesus lays it out for them, saying their generation is evil, because unlike the Ninevites (to whom Jonah preached repentance), they have not repented. And unlike those who listened to the wisdom of Solomon, they do not listen to Jesus. They look to the old stories, and Jesus is the new Word. Perhaps instead of a sign to see, they might have asked for ears to hear!

There is something greater than Solomon here. Greater than Jonah here. Greater than *everything*, here. Jesus, the living Word and Son of the Father, come to save us. We do not need signs – we have the real presence.

Saint Callistus I (d. 223) - Although he began life as a slave in the latter half of the second century, Callistus was given a second chance due to the kindness of the emperor's mistress. He eventually became a deacon and was elected pope in the year 218 by a majority vote of clergy and laity in Rome. A compassionate and controversial pope, Callistus absolved any sinner who was truly penitent, and also legitimized marriage between Christian women and Christian slaves. Saint Hippolytus bitterly opposed Callistus, and was soon elected as the first antipope. The schism lasted 18 years.

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Tuesday, October 15, 2019
(Lec. 468)
1) Romans 1:16-25
2) Luke 11:37-41

TUESDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Teresa of Jesus,
Virgin and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 579, 588, 2447

FOCUS: Cling to God who gives us everything.

Those who become *vain in their reasoning* become fools while claiming to be wise; they exchange the truth of God for a lie. When we lose sight of the truth of who God is, *worship[ing] the creature rather than the creator*, the lusts of our hearts rule, our minds are darkened and wickedness is the result. We've all felt the impact of this kind of darkness in our lives.

This seems to be the failure of the Pharisee in today's Gospel. He lost sight of the maker, lost sight of the truth and so allowed himself to be filled with plunder and evil. His purity is threatened, not by a lack of attention to externals, but rather by a problem with interior darkness.

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Teresa of Jesus, better known as Teresa of Ávila. Throughout her life, there were many who questioned her, saying that she was guided by evil, not by God. She nevertheless kept her focus on her Lord, always clinging to God who gave her everything. She has timeless words of wisdom:

Let nothing disturb you.
Let nothing make you afraid.
All things are passing.
God alone never changes.
Patience gains all things.
If you have God you will want for nothing.
God alone suffices.

Saint Teresa was never vain in her reasoning. She had an interior light, rather than darkness. May she intercede for us, that we may never lose sight of the truth of who God is.

* * *

Wednesday, October 16, 2019
(Lec. 469)
1) Romans 2:1-11
2) Luke 11:42-46

WEDNESDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Hedwig,
Religious;
Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque,
Virgin)

Gospel related: CCC 579

FOCUS: Undertake all things for the love of God.

In today's readings, we hear two different messages about the judgment and mercy of God. In the first reading, Paul warns that by judging others, we stand accused. Everyone will undergo God's judgment, and God will judge both justly and mercifully. We must, Paul says, repent now to take advantage of God's ready and willing forgiveness before final judgment. Essentially, Paul warns us about critiquing how others match up with the law.

Jesus sees how the religious leaders have manipulated the law and righteousness. In today's Gospel he condemns the Pharisees for basking in the social glory of public holiness, taking their place in seats of honor as they busy themselves with the lesser priorities of exceptional tithes, while ignoring the central message of God's judgment and love.

The words of both Jesus and Paul direct us to an essential truth about our faith: God is a just judge, who shows no partiality to worldly status. Who we are in the world means nothing if we are not disciples of Christ who love God. Therefore, actions undertaken for the love of God and one another are rewarded with *glory, honor, and peace*. Actions undertaken that are not mindful of God and his judgment face the necessary consequence of that separation and are subject to *affliction and distress*.

This is what our salvation means, carried out in God's redemptive work through Jesus. Christ's sacrifice, undertaken for his love for God and for us, empowers us to do the same. By his example, and through the advocacy of the Holy Spirit he sent to us, we are capable of right and just action. In God's kindness and grace, we are called to and are able to repent, and we are promised his ready mercy and willing forgiveness when we do.

We have often heard it said, "Apart from Christ we can do nothing." And while those words are not in our Scriptures today, they certainly underlie the message: Christ is love, and without that love, whatever we do is "no-thing." But as disciples, we are called to "some-thing." May the graces we receive in this Mass give us the strength to do so.

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Thursday, October 17, 2019
(Lec. 470)

- 1) Romans 3:21-30
- 2) Luke 11:47-54

THURSDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Ignatius of Antioch,
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 579

FOCUS: We are not saved by following the law, but by following Christ.

Both of today's readings address the relationship between the law and faith. In the Gospel, Jesus denounces the scholars of the law, holding them responsible for every murder recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures. He charges them with *tak[ing] away the key of knowledge*. Their strict interpretations of the law have barred those under their care from understanding God's message. They have killed the prophets by refusing to teach their words to the people.

It is easy for us to condemn the scholars of the law, because we know how the story ends. We wonder how they could have missed the Savior sitting in their midst. Yet, how often do we fall prey to the same temptation to take the work of salvation into our own hands? We can be so focused on doing enough of the "right" things, and avoiding enough of the "wrong" ones, that we miss the ways God is working to save us. Rather than allowing God's word to penetrate our hearts, we choose which laws we think are important and ignore the rest. Then, we apply our criteria to judge others.

This is one of Paul's concerns in his Letter to the Romans. God has shown his righteousness in that we are not justified by works of the law, but by the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus' saving action. Because God gives us this gift freely, we have no reason to boast. We have not earned this gift of salvation through our own merits or by following our version of the law to a T. We all have the same starting point: We are sinners. And we are all saved the same way – by Jesus. We are no more or less worthy of salvation than our neighbor.

Laws are not weapons to divide us, but tools to guide us toward holiness. Our own *Code of Canon Law* concludes with this: "The salvation of souls ... must be the supreme law in the Church" (§1752). The scholars of the law prioritized works of the law over works of love. The early Christian community of Rome was concerned with outward signs of faithfulness rather than the faith that saves. We must remember that we are not saved by following the law, but by following Christ. He extends God's forgiveness to us and invites us into communion.

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Friday, October 18, 2019

(Lec. 661)

1) 2 Timothy 4:10-17b

2) Luke 10:1-9

Gospel related: CCC 765, 2122, 2611 CSDC 259, 492

**SAINT LUKE,
EVANGELIST
- FEAST**

FOCUS: Being a Christian is a way of life that witnesses to Christ.

Many parents have the experience of instructing their kids on how to behave when they go out in public. They say things like, "Always say thank you," or "Be extra polite," or "Make sure you are respectful to your teachers." Parents know that the behavior of the child will reflect, not simply on the child, but on themselves.

It is the same for being a Christian. The following quote, (often attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, but likely from an unknown author), applies here: "Go out and preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words." How we behave as Christians does not just reflect on ourselves, but on Christ. How many believers have left the Church or organized religion, not because they oppose what Christ taught, but because of the behavior of Christians, whose examples were so opposed to what Christ taught?

In the Gospel, Jesus sends out disciples to go into towns and places he intends to visit. What is so interesting is that Jesus does not spend time telling them *what* to preach, but *how* to behave: Offer peace to the household. Eat and drink what is offered. Do not move from one place to another. It is as if Jesus is telling them, "You will be representing me. Behave properly." Imagine if the disciples had done otherwise. By the time Jesus arrived in those towns, his message would already have been undermined by the behavior of his followers.

Saint Luke, whose feast we celebrate today, provides a beautiful example of a person who lived up to the instruction, "Go out and preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words." As one of the most prolific writers of the New Testament, Saint Luke *did* go out and preach the Gospel, yet he did more. His very life was one of witness to the Gospel, of faithful companionship. In fact, during the trials recounted in the first reading, Paul writes that only Luke has remained with him. Luke has not left him to face his struggles alone.

Being a Christian is not something that is contained simply in words. It is a whole way of life that witnesses to Christ. For Luke, it was a way of life that involved using his skills as a physician; it was a way of life that involved using his education and language as a writer; it was a way of life that involved his faithfulness to other Christians and disciples.

Jesus' words and Luke's example model for us what it is to be a faithful follower. We are called to preach the Gospel with our lives. We are called to use the skills God has given us, whether as a physician like Luke, or as a parent, a teacher, an accountant, a farmer or a friend. We are called to be faithful, to persevere. In so doing, we will, like Luke, reflect Christ to the world.

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Saturday, October 19, 2019
(Lec. 472)
1) Romans 4:13, 16-18
2) Luke 12:8-12

SATURDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
USA: Saints John de Brébeuf
and Isaac Jogues,
Priests,
and Companions,
Martyrs)

Gospel related: CCC 333, 1287, 1864

FOCUS: *God calls into being what does not exist.*

On this memorial of Saint John de Brébeuf, Saint Isaac Jogues and their companions, we celebrate some of the most important origins of the Church in the U.S. This group of eight Jesuit missionaries were the first martyrs in North America. They underwent extraordinary hardship and suffering to proclaim the Gospel, and while they saw some fruits of their labors, they overwhelmingly experienced hostility, persecution and eventually death. Aware of the challenges and dangers they faced, these saints proceeded in faith. They believed that the seeds of faith they sowed would take root and that God would call forth something from their efforts.

In our first reading, Saint Paul lifts up the Old Testament hero of faith: Abraham, the father of many nations. Abraham is praised for believing in God who, among other things, *calls into being what does not exist*. Abraham acted out of faith: He did not yet have any children, nor was his wife (he thought) capable of having children. Yet, he believed that something new could be called into being because God promised it would.

The witnesses of Abraham and the North American martyrs attest to the fact that where God's spirit is present, so is God's power to call into being what did not exist. God can take a present "nothing" and call forth a future "something." In the Gospel, Jesus tells his followers that the Holy Spirit will tell them what they are to say when the disciples are called before the authorities. On a practical level, they are asked to take nothing with them as far as answers or arguments, assured that the Holy Spirit will give them what they need at the appropriate time. God will call forth into being their words, and their deeper witness.

The Lord wants to continue calling into being his kingdom of life, truth and peace through his people. This happens when we acknowledge him and claim what he has done; it can continue when we cling to his promises and act in faith. Yet, as Jesus tells us, if we deny him or denounce the creative work of his spirit, we cut ourselves off from this new life of our own accord.

What will the Lord call forth in us? In Abraham, he called forth a patriarch and made a people. The Lord called forth Isaac Jogues and John de Brébeuf, and they became saints and martyrs, whose sacrifice, in turn, helped bring into being the North American Church. As we approach the eucharistic table, where we offer ourselves as people willing to be transformed by what we receive, may we embrace what the Lord wants to create in each of us.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2019

(Lec. 147)

1) Exodus 17:8-13

2) 2 Timothy 3:14–4:2

3) Luke 18:1-8

Gospel related: CCC 675, 2098, 2573, 2613

**29TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Our doggedness and staying power will keep us faithful to God's ways.

The three readings today bring to mind the meaning of persistence. As long as Moses kept his hands raised, eventually, with the help of Aaron and Hur, Joshua and the Israelites prevailed over Amalek and his men. Saint Paul reminds Timothy to remain faithful *to what [he has] learned and believed*. In the Gospel, Jesus uses the parable of the persistent widow to remind his disciples *about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary*.

What does it mean to be persistent? According to the dictionary, it is the “firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.” Some synonyms for this “obstinate continuance” include: perseverance, tenacity, endurance, and two rather fun expressions: doggedness and staying power. Let us think about those last two synonyms with regard to our relationship with God.

There is no doubt that when thinking about how God relates to us, doggedness, and staying power are apt descriptions. God created us and pursued us in love endlessly: He never diverts from this path. He loved us into being, and his love is what sustains us. From our existence, to the daily efforts we expend, God is our source of being. The entirety of Scripture attests to this.

When it comes to our relationship with God, however, we might ask ourselves if we can use these same descriptions. We certainly have the opportunity to do so. The sacramental graces we receive give us the power to persist in prayer, and our participation with that grace enables us to do so. The gift of faith allows us to trust that God will provide for us not just in answer to our prayer, but even in the act of praying for something, as he provided Aaron and Hur to assist Moses. Hope assures that our doggedness and staying power will be rewarded in eternity with Christ. How could we choose anything other than doggedness and staying power as the foundation for our relationship with God!

United by our baptism we are stronger together, and our unceasing prayer for our needs and the needs of the world really do have an effect. Here in this assembly we are united in Eucharist – in the body and blood of our Lord, in the person of Jesus Christ, the son of God. Here together we have the doggedness and the staying power to face whatever obstacles might tempt us or drag us away from our purpose in this life. For each of us is a beloved child of the Father, journeying to be one with the Father in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot resort to quick fixes. Quick fixes may work for a leaky tire, but eventually the tire will need to be replaced if we want to drive on it for a long journey. And it is a long and sometimes arduous journey we are on. Together, the journey is safer than if we venture out on our own. For together we lift each other up whenever necessary. Let us not ignore the voice of God reminding us *to pray always without becoming weary*. And may this Eucharist we receive help us follow that command.

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Monday, October 21, 2019
(Lec. 473)

1) Romans 4:20-25

2) Luke 12:13-21

Gospel related: CCC 549 CSDC 325, 326

MONDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Those faithful to God will be good stewards of the blessings they have received.

In many parts of the world, it is harvest time. The produce of the land is gathered up and stored, so that there is enough to survive the winter. Imagine if those who work and toil in the fields kept the bounty of their labor to themselves. What conditions would we find ourselves in a month or two from now?

Today's readings call us to reflect on how our actions affect others, through an examination of one of the seven deadly sins – greed.

In the Gospel, a man pleads with Jesus to advocate on his behalf, so he might receive his fair share of an inheritance. Rather than getting caught up in a web of triangulation, Jesus asks the question: *Who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?* Then he cautions the entire crowd to avoid greed and not dwell on material goods.

To help underline this point, Jesus tells the parable of a rich man who stores up his harvest. His plan is to hoard his goods in storage, and then to rest, eat, drink and be merry. But God calls the man a fool, and declares that *this night your life will be demanded of you*, emphasizing that everything the man has stored will go for naught. He will not be alive to enjoy them, and the things he stored up will do him no good after death. He has made himself rich in all the wrong things.

In contrast to the rich man, Saint Paul gives us the example of Abraham, held up as a true believer in God. By entering into a covenant with the Lord, Abraham received the blessings of children and land. The covenant is not limited to Abraham, but is shared with his descendants.

As his children, we inherit the blessings of Abraham's covenant with God. These are the riches that are worth pursuing and storing. But even greater are the blessings that come from the eucharistic table – blessings that are real treasure, and matter to God. How good it is that Christ shares that table with us. He has not kept his worth to himself, but poured it out for all of us. He emptied the metaphorical barns that held all the goodness he contains and gave all he had – including his very life – that we, too, might share in the bountiful harvest of the kingdom.

In thanksgiving for these gifts, may we who have a plentiful bounty be good stewards, sharing what we have with those who need it. May we take what Jesus offers in the Eucharist, as a sign of the life to come in heaven, and share it with all for the salvation of the world.

Tuesday, October 22, 2019
(Lec. 474)

- 1) Romans 5: 12, 15b,
17-19, 20b-21
- 2) Luke 12:35-38

Gospel related: CCC 2849

TUESDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John Paul II,
Pope)

FOCUS: Vigilance is part of Christian living as we await the return of Christ.

One of the key themes in Paul's writings is that Christ is the new Adam. Through his self-giving sacrifice and resurrection, Jesus has mitigated the curse of the first Adam and original sin. Christ has, as Paul tells us today, removed the threat of eternal death from humanity and bestowed upon it the gifts of justification and righteousness.

In today's reading, Paul writes that all humanity shares in the sinfulness of one man: It was through one man that sin and death entered our world. We know that this tarnished our dignity and relationship with God. Although we deserved to be condemned and found guilty, the Lord in his great mercy has acquitted and redeemed us through Christ, who has paid the price for our transgressions. In writing to the Romans, Paul tells them and us that we must never see this redemption as something we have merited – it is God's great initiative and his generous gift.

Because we are justified, we have grace – the love of God poured into our hearts making us capable of more than just blind obedience or minimum commitment. Grace allows us to live a Christ-like life and to hope *for eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

This hope and Christ-like life is not a passive one. By grace we are justified and made righteous, but that must *mean* something. It's not just a description of some "thing" that God has given us, it is a reference to how we have actually been transformed. We are no longer dead in sin, but are alive in grace. And this implies a way of being in the world.

Jesus tells us what this way of being is. In our Gospel today, he tells his disciples to be like good and dedicated servants who are awaiting their master's return. They, and we, must be vigilant and faithful – preparing ourselves and others for the unknown moment when Christ will return. We are to stand ready to fulfill our tasks here, using the grace that we have in Christ, and remaining steadfast in faith in our service to God and others.

Christ gave all for us. In the grace and righteousness of our being, let us do the same for one another.

Saint John Paul II (1920-2005) - One of the most influential leaders of the twentieth century, Pope John Paul II was the first Polish pope and the first non-Italian pope since 1522. He was instrumental in bringing an end to Communist rule both in Poland and the whole of Europe. His pontificate was also marked by tremendous strides in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. He was the first pope to visit both a mosque and a synagogue. By the time of his death in 2005, he was one of the longest-serving popes in history.

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Wednesday, October 23, 2019
(Lec. 475)
1) Romans 6:12-18
2) Luke 12:39-48

WEDNESDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John of Capistrano,
Priest)

Gospel related: CCC 2849

FOCUS: Christ helps us turn away from sin.

There is an old legend generally attributed to the Cherokee people in which a tribal elder describes his interior life as a battle between two wolves. One wolf fights for sin and wickedness while the other wolf fights for grace, goodness and faithfulness. He explains that this is a battle happening inside each of us. A little boy asks the elder: "Which wolf will win the fight?" To which the elder replies: "The wolf that you feed."

In the first reading, Saint Paul addresses the same general topic, though in a more theological way. He encourages those who have been conformed to Christ in baptism to not allow evil and sin to reign over them. For whatever we choose, whether sin or obedience, becomes our master. And God has freed us from sin, so we are to participate with his grace in order to embrace obedience. Returning to the Cherokee legend by analogy, obedience is the wolf we should feed.

Christ's words in the Gospel also speak to the choices we make. There will be temptation for any disciple, he notes, to ignore God's urgent call for faithfulness and endurance. In the absence of the master, the servants in his parable seem to think they can be wicked and unfair to each other. With Christ as our master, however, we have the grace for growing in virtue and avoiding sin. The wolf of sin fights the wolf of obedience, steadfastness and grace.

Which wolf will win that fight inside us? The one we feed. God's grace and God's word are the nourishment we crave. And so we prepare to receive both, now, in the Eucharist. May we become what we believe and receive, turning away from sin and cooperating with God's grace.

Saint John of Capistrano (1386-1456) - Born in 1386, John of Capistrano was instrumental in reforming the Franciscan Order and Poor Clares. An articulate and inspiring preacher, large crowds greeted him during a time of corruption and demise in the Church. He began to preach in the town square because the churches could not hold the crowds. Known as the "soldier saint," John led a crusade against the Ottoman Empire at the age of 70. He promoted devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, and is the patron saint of military chaplains and judges.

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Thursday, October 24, 2019
(Lec. 476)
1) Romans 6:19-23
2) Luke 12:49-53

THURSDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Anthony Mary Claret,
Bishop)

Gospel related: CCC 536, 607, 696, 1225, 2804

FOCUS: Peace and eternal life are gifts we can accept or reject.

“Peace be with you.” How many times have we heard these words from Christ’s own lips in the reading of Scripture or during Mass? And yet, in our Gospel reading today, Christ proffers a very different view of his mission – one not of peace, but division.

Peace is a sign of God’s kingdom, a sign of salvation. To accept Christ is to accept peace. What Jesus points out to the disciples in today’s Gospel reading is that the opposite is also true. Rejection of Christ causes division and conflict.

In his Letter to the Romans, Paul writes of two masters – sin and God. We cannot be fully obedient to both. We have to choose. Each time we sin, we reject Christ. We take a step back from God. We choose death. Each time we obey God, we choose life. With every choice we make, we either step closer to God, closer to salvation and peace, or further away from God, toward death.

When we sin, we often think that we are acting in freedom, as we choose our will over God’s will. However, as Paul points out, rather ironically, to be free from righteousness, free from God’s law, is to be a slave to sin. And what “profit” do we gain from these actions? Not the peace and happiness we so desire, but death. Obedience to God, on the other hand, leads to holiness, the end of which is eternal life.

Paul sums up this passage with the memorable verse, *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. In an unexpected twist, it is when we submit ourselves to God’s will that we are truly free. Death is what we earn by our sinful actions, but salvation is a gift. To accept it, we need only believe in Christ.

If our belief in Christ is central to our lives, then to love someone who rejects Christ can be very painful. Jesus prepares his followers for this reality. The battle between death and life is ongoing, both in the world and in our own hearts. Until the final battle is won, we can expect our acceptance of Christ to cause rifts in even the most intimate human relationships. However, to work for peace is to work for the kingdom. As members of the body of Christ, it is our mission to build up the kingdom of God on earth, to be instruments of peace in a world that is so often divided. Christ came to purify the world with the fire of his death and resurrection. May we keep it blazing.

Friday, October 25, 2019
(Lec. 477)

- 1) Romans 7:18-25a
- 2) Luke 12:54-59

FRIDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We are called to confront sin in our own lives in order to follow Jesus.

Today's readings speak to us about the human inclination to sin. The first reading gives us insight into Paul's inner turmoil. He sounds like someone waiting in line to go to confession – someone who is going to confess the same sin that he confessed last time. He wants to act rightly, but he just keeps falling short of his goal. That sounds familiar.

In the Gospel, Jesus criticizes the crowd for not interpreting the signs of the times. The crowd cannot recognize that Jesus is the Messiah who will set them free from sin. Perhaps they did not want to believe salvation was near. Perhaps they wanted to hold on to their sinful ways. The crowds may have recognized their sinfulness, but were too comfortable with their way of life to make a change.

Both readings address how to respond to evil and sin. The crowds in the Gospel do not or cannot recognize the signs around them. And so, they do not repent of their sin. Paul, on the other hand, is acutely aware of his temptation to sin. Both passages teach us that it is normal to mess up; however, Paul's example is one we can learn from.

Paul shows us that even the most devoted believer can struggle with the conflict between good and evil. He recognized his capacity to sin and was willing to confront that truth. That is the key difference between Paul and the crowds in the Gospels. The crowds in the Gospel were either blind to the signs of the times or too comfortable to change their ways, whereas Paul chose to confront his sin.

The inclination to sin is in all of us; we're human! Yet we also get to choose how to respond. We can choose like the crowds did, or we can choose to be like Paul.

Jesus asks us to pay attention and interpret the signs of the times. By doing so, we can become aware of what is good and what is evil. Then, like Paul, we can confront our own tendencies, temptations and desires. It is not easy work. We will certainly struggle, but we have God's grace in the sacraments. We can follow the example of Jesus in the Gospel. We can reach out to one another for help on our spiritual journey. We cannot be afraid to confront the evil in our own lives, for God will give us the strength we need.

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Saturday, October 26, 2019
(Lec. 478)
1) Romans 8:1-11
2) Luke 13:1-9

SATURDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: God calls us to repent, and gives us the grace and courage to heed that call.

Repentance is hard. While we may know there are things we can do to more closely follow God, it is difficult to take an honest look at our failings and take concrete steps to change our lives. It is often easier for us to think about other people's faults, whether that is judging a family member's cranky mood, or a neighbor's parenting techniques. We often would rather focus on how other people can change their lives, but that is not the hard, yet truer path that Jesus calls us to today: the path of personal repentance.

Today we hear Jesus speaking to the crowds who have been following him and listening to his teaching. Jesus has just preached about the final judgment and the critical importance of each person choosing to do what is right. Yet we see how little the crowds have understood Jesus' message. Rather than focusing on their own repentance, the crowds bring up examples of the Galileans Pilate killed. Jesus redirects their attention to themselves, calling them to repent lest they perish.

Looking at our own failings, and doing the hard work of repentance, indeed does not come naturally. As Saint Paul notes in our first reading today, there are two opposite laws at work within us: those of the flesh and the spirit. We may believe and profess, as Saint Paul says, that *The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace*. Yet while we work out our salvation in our earthly lives, these two laws battle within us. It is our responsibility to choose time and again to live in the law of the spirit, and in so doing, welcome the Spirit of God to dwell within us.

The life of the spirit is one that heeds Christ's call to repent. God's spirit gives us courage to face our weaknesses and take the steps to follow him more closely. We are never asked to do this alone, for Christ is with us, desiring and working for our salvation even more than we can. He is the gardener who, in today's parable, insists on sparing the barren fig tree in the hope that it can still bear fruit. The gardener cultivates the ground around the plant and fertilizes it: Our Lord goes with us and gives us all we need to grow, including the food of life at the eucharistic table. May we turn to him to find the strength to change, to carry our cross, and to follow him wherever he leads us.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2019

(Lec. 150)

1) Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

2) 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

3) Luke 18:9-14

Gospel related: CCC 588, 2559, 2613, 2631, 2667, 2839

**30TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner.*

The Book of Sirach tells us that God *listens* to the prayers of every sinner, showing no preference. Yet he shows special *care* to those most in need: the last, the lowest, the vulnerable and the oppressed. God heard the prayers of the Apostle Paul with special favor, for when Paul wrote to Timothy, he was in a prison cell in Imperial Rome, soon to be martyred for the faith.

Paul identifies his own suffering with that of Christ, and he rejoices in it. His blood will be poured out like that of Christ. He had no one to speak in his defense at trial, and neither did Jesus. He forgave his betrayers just as Jesus did. God gave Paul the strength to preach the Gospel even in the midst of darkness and difficulty, much like Jesus the Son of God did.

Paul's prayers were answered because of his humility. Jesus, in Luke's Gospel, compares and contrasts the prayers of the humble tax collector with the arrogant prayer of the Pharisee. The Pharisee was among the elite of Jewish religious and political society. He believed that he deserved God's love and the admiration of others, but no one loved the Pharisee more than the Pharisee himself. In fact, what the Pharisee says can hardly be called a prayer. It was more of a self-congratulatory speech.

The tax collector, on the other hand, had some difficulty experiencing the love of God, and expected no love from the Pharisee or the people of his town, most of whom despised him and were in debt to him. He prays to God as a son pleads with a father, and he does so with no pretense or pomp.

The Pharisee asks for praise. The tax collector gives it. The tax collector asks for mercy because he needs it. The Pharisee shows no mercy because to him it is just a word for the weak.

Jesus favors the heartfelt prayer of the tax collector over the many supposedly righteous deeds and words of the Pharisee because Jesus felt that only the tax collector was being sincere in what he prayed.

We can all learn from the tax collector. In prayer, we stand bare before God, seeing in ourselves what God sees in us, and worrying less about what others may think of us. The tax collector's prayer, *O God, be merciful to me a sinner*, fits well with the prayers of some of our greatest saints, such as Augustine who said: "Man is a beggar before God."

Saints were once sinners. We are sinners, called to be saints. The Pharisee admitted of no sin and that deprived him of sainthood. The tax collector admitted his unworthiness, and in so doing, became more worthy of the freely given love and mercy of God. The same can happen for all of us who approach the Lord in humility rather than pride.

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Monday, October 28, 2019
(Lec. 666)
1) Ephesians 2:19-22
2) Luke 6:12-16
Gospel related: CCC 1577, 2600

**SAINTS SIMON AND JUDE,
APOSTLES
- FEAST**

FOCUS: God calls us all by name. In our naming, we are commissioned for service and ministry.

What's in a name? We all have names given to us by our parents when we are born. For some, our name may be a family name that was chosen to honor a grandparent, an inspirational individual or a close friend. We may be given a name on which rests promise and a hope for what we will become.

A name is often the first thing we learn about someone. From it, we draw connections and make judgments. Often until we know a person's name, we consider them strangers. Naming someone can change how we relate to them.

In the Rite of Baptism, for example, the first question asked of the parents after the priest greets the parents at the door of the Church is, "What name do you give your child?" We are introduced to the child via his or her name. This is how we first get to know them.

In today's Gospel, we hear the names of Jesus' disciples. Jesus takes a break from his ministry and sets out to find time away to pray. He goes up on the mountain and spends the night in prayer. In the morning, he goes down from the mountain and calls his disciples to him. From these many disciples, Jesus chooses Twelve.

Luke's Gospel provides the names of each individual of the Twelve. At this point we know little else about them other than their names, although there are a few nuggets of information: two are brothers; another is the son of Alphaeus; and one is a Zealot. But we have their names. It was important to Jesus, and to Luke's relating of this story in his Gospel, for their names to be known, and remembered. The Church has even set aside this date to memorialize the lives of Saints Simon and Jude [not Judas, but the one also called Thaddeus], two of those chosen Twelve.

In selecting these 12 men, Jesus commissions others to help in his ministry. This is the beginning of the Church. The story doesn't end there. When our names are given at baptism, we, too, are given a purpose and mission, sharing in the prophetic witness to the kingdom, and proclaiming the Gospel to all nations.

So as we prepare to share in the Eucharist, by which we are united to Jesus, strengthened against sin and helped in living a Christian life (cf., CCC 1391-1394), let us pray for the intercession of Saints Simon and Jude, that we may be made worthy, called by name, of the promises of Christ.

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Tuesday, October 29, 2019
(Lec. 480)
1) Romans 8:18-25
2) Luke 13:18-21
Gospel related: CCC 2660

TUESDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: As Christians, we long for the kingdom of God with justified hope in that which God already has begun within us.

The Christian life involves *labor pains*, as Saint Paul writes. In short, no one can avoid suffering. Yet no one should have to endure suffering without hope – the virtue that truly defines and sustains us as Christians. Paul encourages us to wait with endurance and eager expectation for the flowering of God's promises. Such hope is not a blind optimism, a blithe wish for a good thing that may come. Christian hope is based on the faith and confidence that God is true to his promises. Just as all creation produces the first signs of life in springtime, followed by blossoming, growth and production of fruit, so, too, can we persevere through our daily challenges with hopeful expectation of what is to come.

Like Paul, Jesus uses images of growth to describe the kingdom of God that we await. It is like a mustard seed and a little yeast, both of which start infinitesimally small yet blossom into a garden and a whole batch of dough, respectively. Whether we recognize it or not, all of us have experienced a foretaste of God's kingdom – a moment of knowing God's love in prayer or through the sacraments; the experience of forgiveness or reconciliation with a family member; the sense of peace upon witnessing a beautiful sunrise or sunset. And, of course, in every Eucharist in which we partake.

This foretaste of the kingdom, mingled with the daily pains we face throughout life, creates in us an ardent longing for more – more love, more reconciliation, more peace. And this longing is full of hope, trusting that the Lord who planted the seed and the yeast of the kingdom within us will bring it to fruition. No matter what labor pains we have to endure, may there always be hope, stemming from and bringing us back to the eucharistic table we now turn to.

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Wednesday, October 30, 2019
(Lec. 481)

- 1) Romans 8:26-30
- 2) Luke 13:22-30

WEDNESDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The faithful pilgrimage toward the kingdom of God.

Jesus' words in this Gospel have a notable tension. He mentions first the *narrow gate* through which we must strive to enter the kingdom. He then warns that many *will not be strong enough* to do so. Yet at the end of the Gospel his warning turns to a joyful proclamation: People from all directions will enter the kingdom, and *some are last who will be first*. The Good News is not meant for the Jewish people alone; salvation is extended to the Gentiles. Heaven-bound holiness is to be found in every direction – especially among the least of us.

Pope Francis is fond of saying that our lives are pilgrimages. Life itself is a journey in time. Certainly our life journeys begin in many different places – north, south, east and west of here. We all find ourselves mid-pilgrimage on our way to the kingdom. The compass that points us in the right direction is humility.

If humility is our compass on our life's pilgrimage to the kingdom, then the Holy Spirit is our guide, advocate and intercessor. When we humble ourselves before God to pray, the Spirit *intercedes for the holy ones*, making our words into prayers acceptable to the ears of the Father. In a pilgrimage, even wrong turns can be made right for *we know that all things work for good for those who love God* as Saint Paul writes. And so we walk without fear, knowing our origin is not as important as our humility and trust in the guidance of the Spirit.

The journey to the kingdom of God can be exhausting. Christ warns about not being strong enough. But through the help of the Holy Spirit and a disposition of humility, the people of God will find their way from all corners of the earth. From north, south, east and west, the last will be first to enter the narrow gate to sit with Christ at his table.

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Thursday, October 31, 2019
(Lec. 482)

1) Romans 8:31b-39

2) Luke 13:31-35

Gospel related: CCC 557, 575, 585

THURSDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Even in the face of adversity, we cannot be separated from God's love.

If God is for us, who can be against us? This is Paul's rhetorical question of hope to the Romans. But it is also a victory cry of sorts, rallying the community to stand victoriously with Christ – who was nailed to a cross. Paul had received and understood the good news of Christ's redemption on the cross and victory in death.

In times of our own trials, it's easy to focus on the limits of what we can accomplish and give up. Sometimes a relationship is too damaged, a diagnosis too dire, a way forward too daunting. We sometimes receive more than a challenge or a difficulty – we receive a cross. We receive a metaphorical or literal death sentence, and there is no reprieve. It can be the death of a dream, the death of a family member or a medical diagnosis. And, of course, our own death looms before us.

But fear does not have to overwhelm us. Fear and anxiety do not have to take away our life prematurely.

So many of our martyrs are pictured with items that killed them, for example, Sebastian with arrows and Stephen with stones. It seems brutal that these holy people must continue to be tormented by the manner of their untimely deaths. However, this is not to torment our martyrs, but, rather, to acknowledge that they have won. Like Christ, who is symbolized by the cross – the very implement of our salvation – we proclaim that these holy people defeated fear and death and have been glorified with Christ, whose life and suffering they imitated, and whose resurrection they share.

Jesus' message for Jerusalem is that God loves them. He predicts that he has come to Jerusalem as the latest Jewish prophet to be assassinated by Jewish leaders, but their ill intent will not thwart his mission of love. Jesus speaks boldly to those who challenge him and says, *I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the following day.*

Jesus even challenges his antagonists in return, saying that they will not see him again until they acknowledge who he is by saying, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

So let us welcome Jesus as our friend and advocate, and let us bask in Christ's glory as he stands at the right hand of God. Though we face burdens and trials, though we carry our cross and enter into death, let us do so with confidence and full view of the resurrection. Let us say with hopeful conviction, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

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