

# OCTOBER

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## Wedding Homily

- 1) Tobit 8:4b-8
- 2) Colossians 3: 12-17
- 3) Matthew 19:3-6

FOCUS: The grace of God can unite and transform your daily lives for the sake of the Kingdom.

What event is as wonderful as a wedding? In their beauty, weddings are a perfect place to talk about God's relationship with us, the love relationship between Christ and his Church. Today we celebrate this image of a divine reality: Your marriage will be a sacrament, a visible sign of the invisible reality of God's love. Today we also celebrate the beginning of a very everyday human reality: Two people committing to live together in a total way, or as the Gospel we just heard put it, *the two become one flesh*. The grace of God, which has brought you two together, can unite and transform your daily lives together such that they are not just your shared lives, but also a place where God is at work in a powerful way. In this sacrament, God intends to make his Kingdom manifested on earth through your everyday life together.

The grace of God can change everything, and we hear that in the readings you chose for today. The second reading describes what a grace-infused community looks like: compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient. It is one thing to list these virtues; it is entirely another to practice them every day, in sickness and in health, when you're feeling up to the challenge of considering your partner's needs and when you're not. The key to pursuing these virtues is, as Paul says, to *let the word of Christ dwell in you richly* – to undertake this grace-filled path with all your effort, strengthened and directed by prayer.

In the first reading, Tobias and Sarah get up to pray together on their wedding night. In this prayer, they recall the things God has said and done before asking for his mercy and blessing toward them to continue. You will learn your own way of praying best suited to your relationship, yet consider this prayer from Tobias and Sarah, who remember what God has done for them. At shining moments such as this, recall how God brought you to this day of great joy: how God grew each of you through your friends and family to make you who you are; how you were brought together to love and give yourselves to each other. God always pours his grace upon us, and we thank God especially for the grace of this couple, this love, and his plans for you. May you seek him in your prayer and life together so that his grace will transform the everyday ways you live in to the place where God dwells, for you and everyone you meet.

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## Funeral Homily

- 1) Wisdom 4:7-15
- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10
- 3) Matthew 25:31-46

FOCUS: In the midst of our sorrow, there is hope.

We come here today to worship together, and to offer prayers for N., who has died. This is a difficult time, and so the Church offers us this opportunity to mourn in prayerful ritual, filled with both sorrow and hope. Sorrow for the need to say goodbye to N. in this life, and hope that as faithful members of Christ's body, we will one day reunite with N. in the presence of God, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Today's Scriptures give us insight into that hope, and that promise. From the Book of Wisdom, we hear that *the righteous one ... shall be at rest*. And while this reading speaks specifically of those who die young, or "early," it also speaks more broadly to the topic of remaining unsullied by sin, and having a soul that is *pleasing to the Lord*.

By all indications, N. does have a soul that is *pleasing to the Lord*. He/she was faithful in his/her life in Christ. Baptized into Christ, he/she lived freely and willingly as an obedient servant to the Lord – availing him/herself of the sacraments and asking for, and granting, forgiveness when human failures and sin befell her/him. And so we commend his/her soul to God today in the knowledge that he/she believed in the Lord, and had great faith in him. And we pray that he/she will soon be purified and welcomed into God's presence amid the company of all the angels and saints.

Saint Paul tells us, *For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven*. This home has been prepared for us since our creation. Even before our birth, God knew us and prepared a place for us in the next life. *Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matthew says in today's Gospel. In both Saint Paul's Letter and in the Gospel, we hear of the promised dwelling place with God in heaven. In the midst of our sorrow, there is hope.

*So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord*. Death is not the end; it is the new beginning. Death brings us "home."

That was N.'s hope, and it is our hope. And it is a great and wonderful hope. Death is not the end. Of course, that doesn't necessarily take the pain away from those of us who remain – who love N. and will miss his/her earthly and bodily presence among us. Believing in the promise of our future does not mean we do not experience pain in our present. But Jesus Christ, who bore our suffering and opened the gates of heaven for us, is also present with us today and every day to strengthen us in love and faith that we might be consoled even in our despair and grief. We give thanks for the life of N. among us, and look forward to the time when we may, through the great mercy of God, rejoice with him/her at that heavenly banquet.

**YEAR A**  
**WEEKDAYS II**

Thursday, October 1, 2020  
(Lec. 458)

- 1) Job 19:21-27
- 2) Luke 10:1-12

THURSDAY OF  
26<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus,  
Virgin and Doctor  
of the Church)

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

FOCUS: We are called to help build God's kingdom through our complete trust and surrender to him.

When musicians or comedians provide entertainment for fans, it is customary to have an "opening act," perhaps a lesser-known band or artist who performs before the main event. This opening performer gets the crowd warmed up, ready for the main act, but they are "second," even if they perform first.

In today's Gospel, Jesus sends out disciples to go ahead of him to *every town and place he intended to visit*. These disciples will be his "opening acts." They are to trust Jesus and his mission completely, so much so that they are to carry *no money bag, no sack, no sandals*. They are to be like *lambs among wolves*. They have nothing for security, except knowing that they are obeying the one who sends them.

These disciples are not the main act. They are the opening act. Although they may come first, they are *second*. They are not the ones providing salvation; rather, they are ones serving the Savior. They are not responsible for results or even the understanding of how results might occur; rather, all results are up to God.

Job, in the first reading, seems to have an understanding of this limited ability of humankind. He has lost so much and is undergoing much suffering. His friends try to comfort him, yet their words imply that they know the mind of God. Job responds, *Why do you hound me as though you were divine?* Job knows that they are human, and that they cannot know or pierce the mind of God. Job himself cannot know the ways of God; he can only obey, only surrender.

Today we celebrate a great saint who models for us what it is to give one's life to God. Thérèse of Lisieux, known as the Little Flower, died at the age of 24, but in that short time she surrendered the entirety of her life to Christ. In her autobiography, she writes of fearing only one thing – that she will not wholly surrender to God. "My God," she writes, "I don't want to be a saint by halves, I'm not afraid to suffer for You, I fear only one thing: to keep my own will; so take it, for 'I choose all' that You will!" Thérèse knows that she is more like an opening act than the main event. As such, she allows God to do great things through her complete act of abandonment. She does not want to do this by "halves," but wholly, completely, entirely.

May we, too, allow God to do great things through our trust and our complete dependence on him.

Friday, October 2, 2020

(Lec. 459)

1) Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5

(Lec. 650)

2) Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Gospel related: **CCC** 329, 336, 526, 2785

FRIDAY OF  
26<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
The Holy Guardian Angels)

FOCUS: Our holy angels guard us, hear our supplications, and defend us.

We've all had moments when we think we know better than God. Maybe we didn't get the job we wanted, or got a breakup instead of a ring, or were outbid on what we thought was the perfect house. "Why, God?" we might ask. "This would have been perfect for me! This was exactly what I need!" We might hear, in our wounded hearts, the Father's quiet, tender voice saying, "No, my child, I have something even better planned. Just trust me."

Job, it seems, would have every right to question God. He had lost nearly everything: his family, his livelihood, his health. But God reprimands him, for the Lord God who made everything in the universe sees everything from an eternal perspective. And Job hears him, trusts him, and promises not to question God again.

God knows us better than we know ourselves, and he knows what we need in order to grow in holiness so that we can be with him forever in heaven. To help us on this journey, he has given us each a guardian angel. Today's collect prayer speaks to this beauty: "O God, who in your unfathomable providence are pleased to send your holy angels to guard us, hear our supplication as we cry to you, that we may always be defended by their protection and rejoice eternally in their company."

In other words, we thank God for sending us helpers to guard our bodies and, more importantly, our souls, and we ask him that we may join our angels in heaven one day. The *Catechism* teaches that "angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they 'always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven' they are the 'mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word'" (CCC 329).

So what can we make of all this? One, angels are always listening and heeding the word of God. Doing this enables them to be his servants and messengers. God has designated some angels to be our guardian angels, whom we celebrate today. These angels are charged with getting our souls to heaven so that we may live forever and praise God with them and all the children of God.

Two, if God has sent us spiritual guardian angels, can't we also trust him to give us the graces and circumstances necessary for our sanctification? He certainly gives us specific directions! Jesus says today, *Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.* Children implicitly trust their parents to give them what they most need (even if they fuss while waiting, as do we). Job trusted God, even after quite an ordeal.

Today, let us thank God for the gift of guardian angels, and let us also pray for a greater trust in him. Our eternal and all-powerful God created us to live with him forever; may we reach the gates of heaven one day with the help of our guardian angels.

Saturday, October 3, 2020

(Lec. 460)

1) Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17

2) Luke 10:17-24

SATURDAY OF  
26<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

Gospel related: **CCC** 787, 1083, 2603

FOCUS: God wishes to meet us today.

In today's readings, we hear about seeing God, about knowing God. One of the most difficult challenges many confront in faith is the perceived intangibility of God. We try to talk to God in prayer, but seem to hear nothing. We may long to see God as we can see the person standing beside us. Our readings today offer us some help with this challenge. How does God reveal himself? In what ways do we see and know him?

Let us begin with Job. We have been hearing the culmination of the story of his suffering. Job, wrestling with tremendous trials, has disowned his previous words of accusation against God, and repented. He clings tenaciously, if not perfectly, to God. This place of struggle, this place of pain – this is where Job meets God. This is where God reminds Job that he is master of light and mountain, creator of all things. This place of suffering is where God reveals his power.

What about the disciples in today's Gospel? How do they see and recognize God's power and goodness? In mission. In being sent by Jesus to heal and share God's peace. In doing what Jesus commands, they recognize the Son a bit more fully.

*Blessed are the eyes that see what you see*, Jesus tells the disciples. They see Jesus, God incarnate, and hear his voice. Here at Mass, we, too, are invited to see what they saw, to hear Jesus speaking. Christ is truly present in the Mass, speaking to us through Scripture. This is why we stand for the proclamation of the Gospel – it is a physical response that acknowledges the significance of hearing God's own words. In a few moments, we will be invited to taste and see the goodness of the Lord: Jesus Christ made tangible, body, blood, soul, and divinity, in the Eucharist for us.

We may think, "But I want to see Jesus as the disciples did!" Remember that it took faith to recognize the divine in the man, Jesus, just as it does for us to recognize him in the Blessed Sacrament. In both instances, his glory is veiled by appearance, but fully present.

In whatever pain or struggle we bring to this Mass, in the mission Christ has entrusted to us in this moment, the God who made the stars and set them in their place, the God who revealed himself to Job and healed through the disciples, wishes to meet us today. May we be given the faith to taste and see the goodness, power, and love of the God who can do all things.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020**

(Lec. 139)

1) Isaiah 5:1-7

2) Philippians 4:6-9

3) Matthew 21:33-43

Gospel related: **CCC** 443, 755, 756

**27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: God calls us to bear good fruit and to be good stewards of his vineyard.

Today's first reading and Gospel present to us similar parables about a landowner who takes great care in setting up his vineyard, only to be deeply disappointed by the results. In both cases, the landowner is clearly meant to represent God, but there are distinct differences.

Isaiah says that the vineyard is the house of Israel. In spite of God's great care for the people of Israel, they disappoint him and do not produce the fruit of obedience to the covenant that God desires. Therefore, he, takes away all of his carefully laid protections on the vineyard and lets it be susceptible to the effects of the world: trampled underfoot and left to be overgrown, and to suffer drought.

In Jesus' parable, the tenants to whom the vineyard is leased are expected to take care of the vineyard and give their share of the produce to the landowner. When the time to do so comes, however, the tenants ignore any attempts on the part of the landowner's agents to collect his share of the produce. They go so far as to kill the vineyard owner's son.

We know that the first parable speaks of the disobedience of the Israelites in the Old Testament. But that same disobedience is present in the second parable. For who else is the Son, in this parable, but Jesus? Who else are the murderous tenants, but those who reject the Son? For as Jesus says, *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes. Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.*

We who are here, baptized into the Kingdom, would do well to pay as much heed to these words as those to whom they were spoken should have. For as tenants of this vineyard – this Kingdom – we are responsible for it. God has blessed us with the land and the means for reaping its bounty, and by his grace we bring about the fruit of goodness, justice, and peace – and the produce of others who seek to follow Jesus because of our witness. As his tenants in this world, God gives us all the equipment we need – talents, work, education, special opportunities – to further the kingdom of God, to make God's kingdom visible in our world to the people we meet day in and day out.

Today, let us commit ourselves to bearing good fruit as God's vineyard, and to using our skills and opportunities to spread the message of God's kingdom – God's vineyard – to the people we encounter every day.

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Monday, October 5, 2020  
(Lec. 461)  
1) Galatians 1:6-12  
2) Luke 10:25-37

MONDAY OF  
27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
USA: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos,  
Priest)

Gospel related: **CCC** 1293, 1825, 2083, 2822 **CSDC** 112

FOCUS: *Go and do likewise.*

In the Gospel today, we encounter one of the most popular of Jesus' parables, the Good Samaritan. In an encounter between Jesus and a *scholar of the law* (often referred to as a scribe), Jesus is asked, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* Jesus directs him to look at the law – in other words, the commandments. This is what is necessary.

In the scribe's answer, he includes the commandment to love *your neighbor as yourself*. This is not one of the first Ten Commandments, but it was certainly included in the commandments given by God to Israel; there are actually 613 commandments in the Torah.

In Jesus' day, the Samaritans and Jews did not like each other. The man who *fell victim to robbers* is presumably a Jew. The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was a dangerous route, especially for someone traveling alone. While the priest and the Levite pass by the injured man, only the Samaritan stops to offer him assistance. This is what surprises Jesus' audience, for the Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies.

When Jesus asks the scribe which of the three *was neighbor to the robbers' victim*, the scribe doesn't say "Samaritan." Instead, he describes him as, *The one who treated him with mercy*. Jesus' command to him is also addressed to us: *Go and do likewise*.

May God give us the grace to follow his command.

**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.

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Tuesday, October 6, 2020  
(Lec. 462)  
1) Galatians 1:13-24  
2) Luke 10:38-42

TUESDAY OF  
27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Bruno,  
Priest;  
USA: Blessed Marie Rose Durocher,  
Virgin)

Gospel related: **CSDC 260**

FOCUS: Jesus points out the value of discernment in the moment.

In today's Gospel, Martha is upset because she is doing all the work, while Mary is giving all her attention to the Lord. Jesus points out that Mary has chosen the better part – and we can understand this to mean that what is important in that scene is paying attention to Jesus – paying attention to the message of Jesus, without other distractions.

There are two ways we can look at this passage: what Luke is doing in writing it, and what Jesus is doing in it. For Luke, the importance of women in Jesus' ministry and the early Church is characteristic of his Gospel (and the Acts of the Apostles). It would be very unusual to see these kinds of interactions between single men and women in first-century Judaism, and so Luke highlights these moments with Jesus to show both the essential contributions of women to Jesus' ministry and the community of disciples; and to show one of the many ways that Jesus flipped cultural conventions upside down.

For Jesus, the dignity of women and their important role in the life of the family and discipleship are beyond question. And in this case, he is not decrying Martha's actions per se – for they are important within a culture of hospitality with specific social customs. Nor does he decry Mary's failure to assist with the serving, for in her sitting at his feet she has claimed a rightful place heretofore not provided to women. Rather, Jesus points out the value of discernment in the moment, even when choosing among goods. There are times when discipleship is about action, and there are times when it is about sitting and listening at the feet of the Lord.

While this scene focuses on women, and demonstrates ways in which Jesus raised the dignity and status of women, its message applies to all disciples. We have many Scriptures and commandments which instruct us on how to choose good over evil. This story is one that speaks to the value of balancing the goods in our life with what Jesus is asking of us in the moment. Mary chose the better part, and it would not be taken from her. May she be an example for us in our own decision-making.

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Wednesday, October 7, 2020  
(Lec. 463)

- 1) Galatians 2:1-2, 7-14
- 2) Luke 11:1-4

WEDNESDAY OF  
27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Our Lady of the Rosary)

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

FOCUS: Jesus teaches us how to pray.

The Lord's Prayer, or the "Our Father," is a foundational prayer for Christians, and it has been preserved both in Scripture and (Matthew's version) in our liturgy.

After addressing God as Father and blessing the name of God, the words we heard in today's Gospel from Luke continue with a petition: for the coming of the Kingdom. This line signifies both our sure hope that Christ will come again, and a request that the Father will bless our efforts to build up his Kingdom on earth. The *Catechism* notes that "there is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming" (CCC 2632).

What is necessary for our cooperation forms the basis for the rest of our petitions to God. First, for daily bread, teaching us to recognize our dependence on God for both physical and spiritual sustenance. We express our longing for Jesus, who is himself the Bread of Life. His body and blood are necessary nourishment for welcoming the Kingdom.

Next, we pray for forgiveness. In order to forgive others, we must first receive God's mercy and forgiveness. Christ is the Prince of Peace. If we want to live in his Kingdom, we must seek to be at peace in our own hearts and with our neighbors.

Finally, we pray for deliverance from the final trial. All of us will face judgment at the end of our lives and at the end of time. We pray that we will be ready when our time comes.

As the Lord's Prayer helps us speak to the Father, the rosary helps us ask our Holy Mother for her assistance and intercession. Today, the Church celebrates the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary. It is out of gratitude for her constant intercession on our behalf, specifically in light of a 16th-century naval victory in Europe which held off a Turkish invasion, but also in our everyday lives. Our perfect mother, praying her most perfect prayers to God – Our Father – for our sake.

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Thursday, October 8, 2020  
(Lec. 464)

- 1) Galatians 3:1-5
- 2) Luke 11:5-13

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

THURSDAY OF  
27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God is always there, ready to hear our petitions.

The Gospel reading today is all about petitionary prayer. Jesus says: *For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.* To the greedy and selfish part of our nature, it sounds like a good deal. It's especially alluring when our petitions involve charitable requests, such as health or financial success for someone else.

But we cannot usually foresee what the consequences would be if God granted every prayer we make. In fact, most of us can admit that we're glad that he said "no" to some of our past prayers. So what are we to make of our Lord's promise?

Petitionary prayer doesn't inform the Father of our needs. Jesus elsewhere assures us that God knows what we need before we ask. Rather, petitioning God for what we need, both materially and spiritually, is an exercise of trust in – and submissive dependence on – the One who gives all good things. Saint Paul upbraided the Galatians for wanting to put their faith in works of the Mosaic Law. Our faith, instead, must be in Jesus Christ.

Jesus says at the end of today's Gospel. *If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?* God is always there, ready to hear our petitions and grant them according to our need and his holy will. Come, Holy Spirit.

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Friday, October 9, 2020  
(Lec. 465)  
1) Galatians 3:7-14  
2) Luke 11:15-26

FRIDAY OF  
27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Denis, Bishop,  
and Companions, Martyrs;  
Saint John Leonardi,  
Priest)

Gospel related: CCC 385, 700

FOCUS: The Kingdom of God is open to all who respond in faith.

Saint Paul takes to task the Galatians who are divided over whether Gentiles are also to be recipients of God's promises. This was a great source of tension in that community, for as the Gospel tells us, *Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house.*

All the divine benefits of the Kingdom are extended to every person who responds in faith, Saint Paul says. He recalls the promise God made to Abraham: *through you shall all the nations be blessed.* From this covenant of Abraham unfolded the lineage that led to Jesus Christ, and it was through Jesus that this promise is fulfilled to all nations, not just the Jewish people. It builds upon all that came before Christ, redeeming it all in God's sight and gathering it into a new covenant that inaugurates the kingdom of God.

With the coming of the Kingdom, the power of sin is broken. In today's Gospel, Jesus drives out demons – doing so *by the finger of God.* He is the stronger man of his own parable, attacking and overcoming the one who has a hold on a palace, filled with possessions. By his death on the cross, Jesus takes on Satan, binds the evil one, *attacks and overcomes him, [taking] away the armor on which [Satan] relied.*

Applying his own parable to him, we see that for Jesus, the spoils are not gold and jewels. The spoils in this case are us: the souls that were previously in the grip of sin and death. Sin is not only made up for, but washed away in the sacrament of baptism, and healed in the sacrament of confession. The power of evil wilts before our Lord. *The Kingdom of God has come upon us,* and is open to all who have faith.

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Saturday, October 10, 2020  
(Lec. 466)  
1) Galatians 3:22-29  
2) Luke 11:27-28

SATURDAY OF  
27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

FOCUS: To live a life of faith, we must recognize our deepest identity as a child of God.

The words of the unknown woman in the crowd from today's Gospel echo the words of Elizabeth to Mary we heard just 10 chapters before this. And what Jesus says in reply brings to mind Mary's own courageous fiat: *blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.*

The observance of the word of God, as Gabriel spoke it to Mary, and as Christ speaks it here, is a deep relationship with God – the Christ, the eternal Word. To observe the word of God, then, is to live one's life in relationship with Jesus Christ.

One of the repeated themes in the papacy of Pope Francis is the relational aspect of faith. Human life is filled with relationships, and our relationship with God is at the center. The word that is used to refer to that relationship with God is *faith*. In our relationship with God, there is a dialogue, a sharing in joy, a promise of love. This deep friendship with God is possible only through the work of Jesus Christ, who has made it possible for us to live as children of God rather than as slaves to sin.

This relationship with God is the center of our being. The relationship of faith, in fact, is so central to the Christian that it becomes our deepest identity. When one is *baptized into Christ*, as Saint Paul writes, that person takes on a new identity. In Christ, our identity *becomes* that with whom we are in a relationship – Christ himself. God has “clothed us” with Christ through our faith and our baptism.

Our deepest identities are freed to be who we are. Any way in which others might attempt to define our personhood falls away, and any of our points of pride or shame also disappear. In Christ, our identity is simply that – we are Christ's. There is no Jew or Greek; we are all *Abraham's descendants*. In Christ, “male” and “female” are terms that cease to carry meaning. All people who live their lives of faith, who hear the word of God and observe it, live their lives in the knowledge of their deepest identity as a child of God.

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## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2020

(Lec. 142)

- 1) Isaiah 25:6-10a
  - 2) Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
  - 3) Matthew 22:1-14 or 22:1-10
- Gospel related: CCC 546, 796

28<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Around the table of the Lord, we find our deepest and truest identity.

In every culture, food is an essential part of celebrations – from the wedding banquet to the Christmas meal. As families and friends we gather around the table, not just out of necessity, but because the time spent together there has emotional, spiritual, and human meaning. At the table, a deeper sense of unity among all is present; food unites as much as it nourishes. So we can understand why food, and the sharing of it, is so present throughout Scripture.

We see that image in today's readings from the great banquet foretold by Isaiah with its *rich food and choice wines*, to the wedding feast in the Gospel. Even Paul hints at it by referring to being *well fed and living in abundance*. Added to this, the wonderful Psalm 23, with its table spread and its overflowing cup, gives us a glimpse of what the fullness of the Kingdom will be like – a great feast, hosted by the Lord, where everyone has a place and is gathered not just to be fed but to celebrate and find peace.

It makes sense that Jesus chooses this image to flesh out his teachings on the Kingdom. It would clearly have resonated with his audience, even if some, like the chief priest and elders, failed to understand it fully.

Like many, they failed to understand that while God invites all to his banquet, that invitation must be accepted. We respond by the way we live our lives. As the parable unfolds, some responses are clearly indifferent, but others seem to resent the intrusion of the invitation, and even respond with violence and hostility. Little do they know that by rejecting the invitation, they are also rejecting the King.

But the King does not give up. Why? Because, as Isaiah tells us, God generously wants all to share in his eternal banquet.

But is that the same as saying that all will be there at the great event? No! Like some in the parable, there will be some in this life who will refuse the Lord's invitation. Consumed by this world and its busyness, and concerned with earthly treasures, they lose sight of what is eternal.

How have we responded to that invitation? By gathering on this day, we recommit to our acceptance of it. Around the table of the Lord we find our deepest and truest identity, and the grace we receive encourages and strengthens us in our lifelong preparation for our attendance at the heavenly wedding feast. Here, today, we get a foretaste of that great and glorious banquet. May it strengthen our faith in the promise that awaits us.

\* \* \*

Monday, October 12, 2020  
(Lec. 467)

- 1) Galatians 4:22-24,  
26-27, 31–5:1
- 2) Luke 11:29-32

MONDAY OF  
28<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: In faith and freedom we are transformed as witnesses to the truth.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says to the crowd: *This generation is an evil generation.* This is because, unlike the Ninevites who repented immediately upon hearing Jonah's preaching, the crowd around Jesus fails to heed any of his words of repentance.

We could ask ourselves, "Are we more like the Ninevites, or like the crowd around Jesus?" It's always interesting to try and place ourselves within the Scripture stories. Maybe we are a little of both. We're here, which means we believe the Good News that Jesus preached, and we have, each to our own degree and in our own way, repented of sinful ways and chosen to follow Christ. And yet, we're human. We are still under the influence and power of sin, even if we have been saved through Christ from its dominion over us. We still sometimes fail to heed Christ's words.

We *could* ask ourselves the question above, but it's the wrong question. The real question is not "Who are we in these stories?" but "Who are we by the grace of God?" Paul's encouraging exhortation to the Galatians give us the answer: *Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our mother.* We are her children, Paul says, and *for freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.* Truly, we are neither the Ninevites nor the crowd around Jesus. We are members of Christ's body, and we recognize Christ as the head. We acknowledge his presence in the Word and Eucharist, and in faith we are transformed as witnesses to the truth.

That witness ought to translate into seeing God's presence out in the world, too. As we drive in traffic, work, go to the grocery store, get dinner ready, do the laundry – in all these daily activities and more, God is present. What we do here, in this sacred place, should shape the way we see the world, and help us see the way God's grace continues to reveal his kingdom. For there is definitely *something greater than Jonah here.*

\* \* \*

Tuesday, October 13, 2020  
(Lec. 468)

- 1) Galatians 5:1-6
- 2) Luke 11:37-41

Gospel related: **CCC** 579, 588, 2447

TUESDAY OF  
28<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: In God's mercy we are made clean.

There is a common secular proverb that says, "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." The lesson behind it is to be cautious about judging others for what they say or do, because we might just be hypocritical in our observations. This proverb reminds us to try to bring awareness to areas in our life that we might not be proud of, but tend to overlook. Certainly, it can be easier to point to the weaknesses in others before recognizing our own.

The same message could be derived from both of our readings today. Paul is writing to the Galatians in the midst of an early Church debate regarding whether male Gentile converts needed to be circumcised according to Jewish law. This matter caused deep division in some of the faith communities, including in Galatia. Paul counsels them to put this question aside and focus on what is most important: the freedom that Christ has won for us. This freedom empowers us to be united in Christ with a faith that works through love.

A faith that works through love is clearly not what the Pharisee in today's Gospel practices, as we just heard. In the midst of providing hospitality to Jesus, the Pharisee is *amazed to see* that Jesus does not observe the ritual washing before a meal. Jesus calls him out for the hypocrisy of the situation, being more preoccupied with appearances than what is really within them. They have not yet realized the freedom that Christ will win for them, should they choose to believe in it. Their faith is focused on law, not love.

God's incredible mercy is found in the person of Jesus Christ, who – in fulfilling the law – has freed us from it. In love, he has given us a way to be purified, both inside and out, through faith and forgiveness. So while the secular proverb exhorts us not to throw stones, our merciful Father reminds us that should we fail and fall into that judgmental trap, we can repent, and be made clean.

Shortly, we will celebrate the Eucharist, a powerful reminder of God's abundant mercy in our lives. Let us bring our vulnerable areas, our areas that we need cleaned, before Christ at this table. Let us remember his presence in our midst.

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Wednesday, October 14, 2020  
(Lec. 469)

- 1) Galatians 5:18-25
- 2) Luke 11:42-46

WEDNESDAY OF  
28<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Callistus I,  
Pope and Martyr)

FOCUS: The heart of the Christian life is transformation in the Holy Spirit, not our own good deeds.

The Pharisees and law scholars in today's Gospel are trying to make themselves righteous by outward observance of the Jewish law. In doing so, they forget the heart of the law: love of God. Their interior lives grow cold, they become obsessed with human respect and power, and their influence leads others astray. That false righteousness is, in part, what Jesus has come to clear away.

Jesus came to give us a whole new kind of life – the life in the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul explains that we now have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and giving us his direct guidance. Whenever we act on that silent push to do an act of kindness or resist temptation, whenever we get a sense of God's presence and allow ourselves to be still and listen to him, we're following the Spirit. And we're then free from both *the law* and the desires of *the flesh* – two terms that need some explanation.

The law was the canon of instructions the Israelites followed in their covenant with God. Jesus fulfilled the law, and he, then, becomes the One we follow: his commandments and his example. Moral precepts that form our conscience help us *follow the Spirit*, but the precepts themselves are never the point. The point is transformation.

Hence the contrast between flesh and spirit. It isn't that "our bodies are evil" and "only our souls are good." Rather, "the flesh" refers to the weakened state of our nature without grace (CCC 990). Jesus has fulfilled that law and we're no longer bound by it, but we still need commandments – why else would Paul give us a whole list of sins that can keep us out of the kingdom of God?

The Holy Spirit wants to transform everything about us: our mindset, our desires, our attitude, and emotions. The fruits of the Spirit aren't rules, they're the dispositions of a heart like Christ's, one that surrenders everything to the Father and receives everything in return. The more we let him work in us, the less we *want* to sin; it becomes easier to be generous and charitable because our hearts are overflowing with the love we've been craving our whole lives. So let's invite him in right here and now, and receive him with full trust and humility.

**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.

Thursday, October 15, 2020  
(Lec. 470)

28<sup>TH</sup> WEEK

- 1) Ephesians 1:1-10
- 2) Luke 11:47-54

THURSDAY OF

IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Teresa of Jesus,  
Virgin and Doctor  
of the Church)

FOCUS: Come, let us bless the Lord.

The first reading today consists of the opening section of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Paul's style of letter-writing is fairly consistent. In most letters, he begins with a reference to the sender (himself, and perhaps another, such as Timothy); he specifies to whom the letter is being written, and gives a greeting; and then he gives [sometimes lengthy] thanksgiving for and blessing to the community. Today's passage stops shy of the thanksgiving, but it *does* include something not found in every letter: a blessing of God for all he has done for Christians – those at Ephesus, and those elsewhere.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, Paul writes. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ.* Paul, persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, and beaten/imprisoned some more, never ceased giving thanks for, and praising the gracious mercy and faithfulness of God. And here he is showing us, during times today that can seem scary, uncertain, and unjust, that our first words ought to be "bless God."

It is also a great reminder of our adoption in Christ – to take comfort during this earthly turmoil in knowing that while we were given this world, we are made for another. Saint Augustine says, "The true Christians are those who understand that on earth they will always be aliens. Our native land is above in God's heaven" (Sermon 111, 4). That God has made us his adopted sons and daughters through Christ is a consolation beyond any other. Many did not believe it at the time of Christ – Jesus in today's Gospel accuses those who surround him of being guilty of killing all the prophets who had come before him. And he knows they will kill him. Many still do not believe it today.

But we *do* believe. And Paul's simple greeting and blessing is a great consolation to us: *to the holy ones ... faithful in Christ Jesus.* At the *fullness of times*, we shall be gathered up with all of creation in Christ. So come, let us bless the Lord.

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Friday, October 16, 2020  
(Lec. 471)  
1) Ephesians 1:11-14  
2) Luke 12:1-7

FRIDAY OF  
28<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Hedwig,  
Religious;  
Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque,  
Virgin)

Gospel related: CCC 342, 678

FOCUS: Let us pray that we be given confidence in Jesus' unending love for us.

Today's Gospel might seem scary or even threatening: *There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known ... even the hairs of your head have all been counted.* This makes us think: How many are the sins that I keep hidden? How vast the number of thoughts I should not have thought, the number of hours I have wasted, the things I did not say and should have? All this is to be heard in the light, and proclaimed on the housetops?

But Jesus today also tells the gathered crowd, and he tells you and me: *Do not be afraid.* But how can this not be a fearful truth?

Jesus indeed knows everything there is to know about us. He knows our faults and failures, yes, but he knows them as one who loves us. The hairs of our heads have been counted not so that every fault might be wrung out of them, but because Jesus wants to know and to love the real us – not any whitewashed image, but the reality of our whole selves.

Saint Paul writes in the Letter to the Ephesians that, *in Christ we were also chosen ... so that we might exist for the praise of his glory.* Christ does not come to condemn, but to save. This does not, then, promise us an easy life, but it does promise a good life. Today let us pray that we be given confidence in Jesus' unending love for us, and so not be afraid to let him see us – faults, failures and all. Instead, we entrust our whole selves to him.

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Saturday, October 17, 2020  
(Lec. 472)

- 1) Ephesians 1:15-23
- 2) Luke 12:8-12

SATURDAY OF  
28<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
Saint Ignatius of Antioch,  
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 333, 1287, 1864

FOCUS: The Holy Spirit is with us and helps us in all we do.

There is great comfort in knowing that the Holy Spirit will teach us what we should say, in important moments. For what Jesus is promising here is the help of the Holy Spirit in the face of persecution and difficulty – in guiding us in our mission for Christ. It is a sign of his promise that he will never leave us alone.

Christ's physical human presence ascended from the earth, but the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and is given to us in baptism. Through our participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and in prayer, we encounter the manifestation of God's promise that he will never forsake us. Not only are we always within God's loving embrace, we are strengthened and empowered by the Holy Spirit to progress in faith, hope, and love.

As Paul writes to the Ephesians, he prays for them, asking *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him.* This spirit of wisdom and revelation is the same one we possess, and is the one upon whom we should call in times of need, distress, and defense of the faith.

Hence, Jesus' focus in this passage on the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. For to reject the Spirit is to reject Christ. Thus it is "unforgivable" precisely because those who commit this sin have made it so, through their own rejection of the *possibility* of forgiveness found in Christ. This somewhat frightening declaration has its upside, however. If we are truly concerned about ourselves not being forgiven, then we are almost assuredly free from this sin. Because in that case, we wouldn't care. And if we ever do find ourselves in that position, there is always the abundant mercy of God available to free us from it.

And this brings us back around to the comfort of knowing the Holy Spirit is with us and helps us in all we do – including having the words to profess our faith in him, and giving us both the desire, and fortitude, to turn away from any sin and seek the grace and mercy of God. Truly, God will never forsake us.

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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2020**

(Lec. 145)

- 1) Isaiah 45:1, 4-6
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b
- 3) Matthew 22:15-21

Gospel related: **CCC 2242 CSDC 379**

**29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Our primary allegiance is to God.

Our allegiance to country – be it the United States or other nation – is important, but never more important than our allegiance to God. Our primary identity is not as citizens of a particular country, but as children of God. It is God to whom we belong, first and foremost. This is the message of today's readings.

Our first reading from Isaiah is about Cyrus, king of Persia, to whom the Lord gave power to subdue the Babylonians. Cyrus then allowed the captive Israelites to return to Jerusalem. This rebellion was accomplished, not for the sake of Cyrus or his kingdom, but for God's glory. Of primary importance is not belonging to the Babylonians or Persians, but belonging to God and knowing that there is none other besides him.

In the Gospel, Jesus' opponents try to entrap him on the question of taxation. Jesus' response is, *repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God*. Caesar's image and inscription are on the Roman coin. Thus, they belong to Caesar.

Jesus does not ask, but the next question is implied: Where do we find God's image and inscription? The answer is, in us, his children. God created us in his image and inscribed his law on our hearts. No matter what their allegiance to Rome, Jesus' message to his opponents is that they belong to God. Caesar may claim the coins to be his own, but he cannot claim people; they are claimed by God.

We are God's, we belong to him. We must repay to God what belongs to God. How do we do this? We do this by giving God our very selves: loving him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind. We do this by giving God the best we have to offer: our first fruits of time, talent, and treasure. We do this by giving God our primary allegiance: putting God first, before nations or kingdoms, political or economic systems, institutions or ideologies.

Participating in the Eucharist, we are united with Christ and one another in offering our very selves to God. The grace of the sacrament strengthens our unity and allegiance to the One to whom we belong, now and forever.

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Monday, October 19, 2020  
(Lec. 473)

- 1) Ephesians 2:1-10
- 2) Luke 12:13-21

MONDAY OF  
29<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(OBL MEM  
USA: Saints John de Brébeuf  
and Isaac Jogues,  
Priests,  
and Companions,  
Martyrs)

Gospel related: **CCC 549 CSDC 325, 326**

FOCUS: Grace is not earned, but given by God as a gift to us.

If we live our lives apart from Jesus, we can be controlled by all the negative influences of the world. In his Letter to the Ephesians today, Saint Paul points out that we are powerless to fight the evils of our world without God's help – without his grace. Fortunately, we have a *God, who is rich in mercy*. Through him and *by grace [we] have been saved through faith*. In our baptism, we have been given new life in the risen Christ.

Paul emphasizes that the grace God has given us is not something we have earned, but is a gift from him. *It is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are ... created in Christ Jesus for good works* [emphasis added]. We do not receive grace because we have done something we can boast about; instead we receive the grace of faith so that we may do good works. We do good works that point back to the One who is pure goodness. The *Catechism* says, "the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God" (CCC 2008). Otherwise, if we think we can work our way into heaven, we fall into the sin of pride.

Speaking of pride, Luke's Gospel account today is that of the parable of the rich fool, whose pride drives his greed. This man is consumed by his self-serving works – gathering food to the point that he thinks he is set for life after filling his barns with the fruits of the harvest. Everything was about him – "my harvest, my barns, my grain" – not about God or the needy.

The rich fool was storing treasure for himself – treasure that the parable tells us is very short-lived. The life he thought was his own, was (like ours) really just a loan from God, who called in that loan shortly after the barns were filled.

Together, today's readings send us a clear message: God is in charge. Our lives are gifts from him. Likewise, his graces are a gift to us. If we desire eternal life in heaven, we can't do it alone.

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Tuesday, October 20, 2020  
(Lec. 474)  
1) Ephesians 2:12-22  
2) Luke 12:35-38

TUESDAY OF  
29<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
USA: Saint Paul of the Cross,  
Priest)

Gospel related: **CCC** 2849

FOCUS: Blessed are those who are ready for the Master's return.

The psychology behind advertising tactics and marketing often takes advantage of a basic human emotion: fear. Fear of not having enough; fear of not being prepared; fear of missing out; fear that *this* will happen if we do not do *that*. We are constantly given messages in commercials and printed material that contain instructions to do *something* so that we may achieve something *better*, and avoid some kind of failure or shortfall. The modern economy is built, in part, on fear.

God also has an economy. Is that surprising to hear? *Oikonomia*, the root word in Greek, means "household management." We already know how this applies to the market economy. With respect to God, we refer to his "economy of salvation," or his "divine economy." These terms "refer to God's activity in creating and governing the world, particularly with regard to his plan for the salvation of the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a plan which is being accomplished through his Body the Church, in its life and sacraments" (CCC Glossary: Economy of Salvation). *This* economy is based not on psychology and fear, however, but on perfect, divine love.

In today's Gospel, then, when Jesus instructs his disciples, *Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding*, he is speaking from this love. He is not telling them to be preppers, buying and stocking up on supplies while awaiting some distant apocalypse. He is calling on them – and us – to be vigilant in our lives of faith *now*, striving to make perfect within ourselves that which God has already given us. We do not need to go out and "get" anything; Jesus is reminding us that we already have all we need through him and the Church.

Our charge every day is to clothe ourselves in his love and mercy, and to dispel any darkness in the world with our witness to the Good News. In this way, and with God's help, we will indeed be well-prepared for the coming of Christ and the fullness of life in the Kingdom to which we are invited.

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Wednesday, October 21, 2020  
(Lec. 475)

- 1) Ephesians 3:2-12
- 2) Luke 12:39-48

Gospel related: **CCC** 2849

WEDNESDAY OF  
29<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We all have been entrusted with gifts that are meant to be shared with others.

Most of us today are able to control certain aspects of our calendars and schedules on a daily basis. What none of us knows, however, is the time of the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore, we must always be prepared.

Peter is not sure who the Lord is talking about in the parable in today's Gospel, so he asks Jesus to clarify it for him. Jesus responds with a second parable about the responsibilities of a steward, with specific ramifications for the Apostles and their successors. But really, it applies to all of us: *Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.*

The saints certainly took those words, and responsibilities, seriously. As a bishop, Saint Augustine said, "I am terrified by what I am for you," while Saint Ambrose warned priests "that they will suffer severe punishment" if they neglected to govern the Lord's household properly (Gadenz, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 246). We should take them just as seriously, because we also have been given much. We have been given the gift of faith, and of the sacraments. We know Jesus opened the gates of heaven for us through his death and resurrection. But we also know that we must follow his path in order to reach heaven.

We all have been entrusted with charisms from the Holy Spirit – gifts that are meant to be shared with others. Paul wrote in his Letter to the Ephesians that his gift of grace from God was to *preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ*. God took the leadership skills Paul was using against the Christians and converted him to one who would spread the Gospel like no other.

Let's pray today for the Lord to help us discover the gifts he has entrusted to us, so we may use them in service to him.

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Thursday, October 22, 2020  
(Lec. 476)

- 1) Ephesians 3:14-21
- 2) Luke 12:49-53

THURSDAY OF  
29<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint John Paul II,  
Pope)

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

FOCUS: Jesus gives us the strength we need to follow him.

Much of our world is divided – country against country and factions within countries against other factions. The Christian world and even the Catholic Church often face turmoil. So Jesus' proclamation in today's Gospel that he has come to establish division rather than peace can sound discouraging. We long for the Prince of Peace to bring us this peace, but instead he promises discord.

But Jesus' statement of fact is not meant for discouragement, but instead is an opportunity for us to rely on God. We who love God and follow his Son already understand the source of this division – not Christ himself, but the choice of some not to follow him. We bear the Gospel values of love; the truth of God's word; the dignity of every human life; humility; obedience to God's law; trust in God rather than ourselves; and rejection of the idols of wealth, power, and absolute personal freedom. Our call is to bring about the kingdom of God to our world, as much as we can, in spite of opposition from people who don't understand God's values. Responding to this call can feel like the burden and challenges faced by salmon who swim upstream.

While Jesus' words remind us of our need for dependency on God, Paul's words can encourage us as to how to exercise that dependence. Paul speaks of the ways God equips us to handle our call to bring God's kingdom to the world. He prays that we might be *strengthened with power through [God's] Spirit in the inner self*, with Christ dwelling in our hearts and the comprehension of God's incredible love for us. Through this power that God establishes in us, Jesus can accomplish *far more than all we ask or imagine*. If we are rooted in the Gospel and in the love of God, we will have the trust to let Jesus himself work through us.

Then we, too, can help the Lord set the earth on fire – witnessing to *the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*, in the hope that all may come to know *the fullness of God* and be saved.

**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.

Friday, October 23, 2020  
(Lec. 477)

- 1) Ephesians 4:1-6
- 2) Luke 12:54-59

FRIDAY OF  
29<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint John of Capistrano,  
Priest)

FOCUS: The Christian life requires transformation through grace.

Paul encourages the Ephesians *to live in a manner worthy of the call [they] have received*. That is, in faithfulness to *one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all*. It is the same with all of us who have been baptized into Christ. The Christian life requires transformation through grace, that we might obtain our end of living eternally in God. Transformation happens when we allow Jesus to change us from people of sin into people of God.

Jesus speaks of this process of transformation in today's Gospel. It is a call to conversion before the time of judgement is at hand. Calling the crowds hypocrites, Jesus is scolding the people for letting others decide for them what is right and wrong. For allowing others (namely the scholars of the law, the scribes, and Pharisees [cf. 11:53]) to decide for them whether he is the Messiah. *Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?* he asks. Or, put differently, why do they not open their hearts to the ways God wishes to transform them?

Jesus gave his life to us for both our salvation and our sanctification. Jesus not only wants to forgive our sins, he wants to free us from all the roots and effects of sin until we are completely radiant with God's glory. Therefore, we can learn to rejoice in the transformative journey toward heaven, knowing that that pains of purification are not in vain.

**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.

Saturday, October 24, 2020  
(Lec. 478)

- 1) Ephesians 4:7-16
- 2) Luke 13:1-9

SATURDAY OF  
29<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Opt. Mem.  
Saint Anthony Mary Claret,  
Bishop;  
Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

FOCUS: We bear fruit for God when we answer the call to use our gifts.

In today's Gospel parable, the gardener saves the fig tree from destruction. He does so by asking for a reprieve from the owner, and promising to cultivate it and fertilize it so that *it may bear fruit in the future*. What a beautiful representation of what Jesus did for us: He saved us from certain death, cultivating and feeding us with his grace and the strength of the Holy Spirit. And now we bear fruit for the Kingdom. Jesus calls us to be fruitful. Jesus is the good gardener, who has a plan to fill the Church with life and grace in the Holy Spirit.

In our baptism we received a calling, the call to holiness, to become saints. This is the first "vocation" (or calling) that every member of the Church receives. In our baptism, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us answer this call and serve God and the Church. In the sacrament of confirmation, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are increased in us, giving us the strength "to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross" (CCC 1303). These words and actions take different forms.

In our first reading today, Saint Paul speaks about some of the ways that followers of Jesus are called to minister. He lists a few of the gifts that believers use as they become saints. Paul states, *And he gave some as Apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ.*

If we are called to be a prophet, then we will bear fruit as we use our gifts in the ministry of a prophet. If we are called to be a teacher, then we will bear fruit as we use our gifts in the role of teacher. Each baptized member of the Church is called in some way to minister and to bear fruit. We may not always know everything about the nature of ministry to which God is calling us, but we have faith that the Holy Spirit gives gifts and ministry to all the baptized to bear fruit.

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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2020**

(Lec. 148)

1) Exodus 22:20-26

2) 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

3) Matthew 22:34-40

Gospel related: **CCC** 581, 1824, 2055, 2083 **CSDC** 112, 580

**30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: *Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord.*

Today we learn that *the whole law and the prophets depend* on two great commands from the Lord. Everything concerning our fidelity to God hinges on our ability to love God above all else and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Matthew's Gospel is not written until after the destruction of the temple, around 70 A.D. With the temple gone, the elders were left with how to attend to the Jewish community in Israel, which was roughly in two segments: those who held to the full Jewish tradition and interpretation of the Torah, and those who had begun to follow Jesus.

Matthew's main audience was these Jewish Christians – those who had come to believe in Jesus, but who also held on to the Torah. The difference between them and the Pharisees we see portrayed in the Gospel is that they followed the interpretation of the Torah as reframed and fulfilled by Jesus.

So when Jesus is tested by the Pharisees today, he simply takes the 613 commandments in the Torah and telescopes them down to a summary of two. Two laws he wanted his followers to have tattooed on their hearts. Five words as it were: "Love God, Love your neighbor."

In our first reading from the Book of Exodus – the second book of the Torah –the Lord's words give clear examples, among the multitude available, of how to love our neighbor. We get a clear picture that our neighbor is not simply someone on our block or someone we see at church. It is the alien among us, for we were all aliens once. It is the widow, the orphan, the impoverished.

God's two great commandments are why we work at shelters. It is why we stock food pantries. It is why some of us become foster parents. It is why we invite those living alone on our block to join us for dinner from time to time. Again, examples of love that do not exhaust the myriad ways in which we can live out the commandments.

These, and the many ways we love God and neighbor, are concrete proof that we are "imitators of the Lord," as Saint Paul articulates today. A way of being *a model for all the believers*.

For Matthew's community, and for us, "loving God and loving our neighbor" is not just a summary of commandments as rules to follow, but a whole new way of living that incorporates our relationship with God into everything we do. No longer driven by law, we instead follow Jesus Christ in his drawing all of the laws unto himself into a manifestation of love. *Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him.*

Monday, October 26, 2020  
(Lec. 479)

- 1) Ephesians 4:32–5:8
- 2) Luke 13:10-17

Gospel related: **CCC 582 CSDC 261**

MONDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Jesus calls us to live lives of compassion.

Writing to the Ephesians, Saint Paul encourages them (and us) to live lives worthy of the Christian calling. As God's *beloved children*, we are to *be imitators of God*, inspired by the example of Jesus, who gave his life for us.

Paul reminds us that as God's children, we are *children of light* and so we should live as such. Our kindness and compassion toward one another should be based on the kindness and compassion bestowed upon us, first, by God. Paul refers to the Ephesians as *holy ones*, a term that indicates dedication to God. Each of us is called to be holy.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath. There he meets a woman who *had been crippled by a spirit* for eighteen years, and he heals her. This makes the leader of the synagogue indignant, for Jewish law proclaimed the Sabbath a day of rest, and therefore healing was explicitly forbidden. At least, it was forbidden according to this and other religious leaders' interpretation of the law.

But this prohibition was not of heavenly origin, but of human origin. So Jesus argues in response that the owner of an ox or ass unties his animal on the Sabbath and leads it to water; he takes care of the live-giving, physical needs of the animal. Should not this woman, *whom Satan has bound for eighteen years*, also be cared for, given new life, even on the Sabbath? The contrast is between a strict interpretation of the law and showing compassion.

Luke once again narrates a mixed reaction to Jesus' words and deeds: *his adversaries were humiliated*, and we can presume that they were also angry with him. But yet, *the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him*. This healing is not unique for Luke, but is one of many by which Jesus reveals the reign of God.

Let us give thanks to God this day for the good he has done for us, and strive to be imitators of him.

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Tuesday, October 27, 2020  
(Lec. 480)  
1) Ephesians 5:21-33  
2) Luke 13:18-21  
Gospel related: **CCC** 2660

TUESDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Love is the leavening agent that grows our relationships and, ultimately, the kingdom of God.

Watching homemade dough rise is a beautiful thing. Though imperceptible to the eye when watched constantly, the rising of the dough is startling when one steps away from it and returns at a later time. A small amount of yeast, mixed with water and flour, produces an explosion of dough in the bowl. Step away for an hour or two and “voila!” – the dough has quadrupled in size.

What an apropos image for the kingdom of God. Though we are prone to reducing the Kingdom to eternal life in heaven, Jesus ushered in something much larger – a new way of living, beginning right here and now, that makes real God’s presence to all. From the person of Jesus, with his individual ministry and preaching, will grow a full and robust kingdom on earth, the fullness of which will be reached at an appointed time. Jesus yearned for the abundance of life for all in both this life and the next. He desires for each of us to help build God’s kingdom on earth.

Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians specifically addresses married couples, but his point is applicable to all who are invested in the kingdom: love one another *even as Christ loved the Church*. This is a sacrificial love, one that loves another as one loves himself; one that sanctifies the other through the gift of oneself.

Authentic acts of self-gift are a love that leavens, and allows for flourishing in, relationships. And as the bonds of love are built between us, the kingdom of God grows. God’s presence is made real on this very earth, through the hands that serve, the words that encourage, the feet that carry the Good News, and the hearts that are touched by the giving and receiving of one another’s love.

The next time we see a loaf of bread baking, let us take a moment to admire the smallness of the yeast and the grandeur of its result. So, too, are our acts of self-gift – even the smallest ones – even when we cannot see the results in the immediate moment. We are an agent of yeast, building the kingdom of God through love.

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Wednesday, October 28, 2020

(Lec. 666)

1) Ephesians 2:19-22

2) Luke 6:12-16

Gospel related: **CCC** 1577, 2600

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

FOCUS: Each of us is called to holiness.

Today the Church celebrates the feast of two of the Apostles, Saints Simon and Jude, about whom we actually know very little. What we do know is that they were chosen by God to fulfill an important role.

In Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, he says that the Apostles [along with the prophets] are the foundation for the *household of God ... with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone*. The early Church communities were founded by these Apostles, who were eyewitnesses to the risen Christ. In the Nicene Creed, we profess our belief in the one, holy, catholic, and *apostolic* church. We believe that the twelve men Christ chose completed the mission they were given to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. They did this by choosing men to succeed them, who in turn chose others to succeed them, and so on through the ages to the present day.

The gift of apostolic succession is that the original witness of the Apostles to Christ's words and actions is still alive in the Church today through the college of bishops. Much like the Apostles, they are ordinary men, who have been called to an extraordinary mission. The Church is a human reality, and as such it grows and undergoes changes over time. The bishops, "with priests as co-workers, have as their first task 'to preach the Gospel of God to all men,' in keeping with the Lord's command" (CCC 888).

The Apostles already began this work in their time, preaching Christ's message in new places, encountering new human dilemmas, and resolving them in Christ's name. They received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to empower them for this mission. The faithful receive the same Spirit at their baptism and confirmation. Each of us is called to share Christ's offices of priest, prophet, and king. However, by the graces of their ordination, bishops represent Christ to his Church in a special way through their teaching, sanctifying, and governing.

In today's Gospel from Luke, we see that Jesus prayed to his Father all night long before choosing his twelve Apostles. Each of us is called to holiness. Christ chooses us and calls us to come after him. To follow in the steps of the Apostles, we need only to say yes. Yes to giving up control of our lives. Yes to letting go of our plans and letting God lead us.

As we receive the Eucharist today, let us thank God for the guidance of the Apostles and their successors. May we learn from their example and ask the Holy Spirit for the necessary graces to follow our own calling.

Thursday, October 29, 2020  
(Lec. 482)

- 1) Ephesians 6:10-20
- 2) Luke 13:31-35

Gospel related: **CCC** 557, 575, 585

THURSDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Let us persevere in prayer for ourselves and for all the faithful in the struggle against darkness and sin.

As we near the end of the liturgical year, the readings tell us how to fulfill our lives in accordance with God's will. Saint Paul has been giving instructions to this community on how to conduct themselves in their own households. Now he instructs them on how to deal with the powers of darkness in their lives. They can't do it by their own efforts. Nor can we.

As it says in a commentary on the Book of Ephesians: "We do not put the devil to flight or crush demonic forces underfoot. Defeating Satan is God's work" (Peter Williamson, 2009). We *stand firm against the tactics of the Devil* only by employing the armor of God. The weapons are spiritual: truth, righteousness, readiness to spread the Gospel, faith, salvation, and the word of God.

Saint Paul emphasizes perseverance and petitionary prayer, particularly for himself. Even as a prisoner facing the end of his life, he intends to persevere in preaching the Gospel until the last moment. But this will not be possible without the grace and strength that God provides, and will provide, in answer to the supplications of Paul's fellow Christians.

Jesus, of course, casts out demons and performs healings by his own power. He also makes it clear that he is in control of his destiny. His defiant reply to King Herod's death threat indicates that he will continue until the end to carry out the work his Father gave him. No earthly power can alter either the time or place of his saving death.

Although we are not likely to face explicit death threats from a major political power, we still encounter temptations to give up on our God-given life mission. Cowardice, fear, doubts, pride, selfishness, and laziness are all *tactics of the Devil*. They all put up obstacles to our perseverance in fidelity to the Lord, and to carrying out the specific works that he requires of us. But sacraments and prayer – part of the armor of God! – help us overcome.

As the psalmist says of the Lord in today's responsorial psalm: *Blessed be the Lord, my Rock! My mercy and my fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer, My shield, in whom I trust.* Let us trust in God's grace and equip ourselves with his weapons and armor, persevering in prayer for ourselves and for all of the faithful in the struggle against darkness and sin.

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Friday, October 30, 2020  
(Lec. 483)

- 1) Philippians 1:1-11
- 2) Luke 14:1-6

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 582, 588 **CSDC** 261

FRIDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: With God's help, we can help whomever he sets before us.

This Gospel shows us that Jesus had no compunction against healing a sick person on the Sabbath, even though he knew it would bring criticism from the religious leaders.

It is unclear from the text whether the man with dropsy had asked for Jesus to cure him, or if he was simply at the same meal as Jesus. It *is* clear, however, that Jesus did not have to wait for a plea. He knew the man was sick and intervened to make him well.

Jesus cured the man without making a spectacle. He simply made a decision as to the most appropriate thing to be done. This is much like what we might do when faced with a person in need of immediate care: We just do what needs to be done – we help. It does not matter what day it is, what other activities we may be doing, or who is watching. We do what needs to be done. Many people, first responders for example, do this every day at risk to themselves, without hesitation.

Another lesson in this Gospel may be a little more subtle. Jesus is dining with a leading member of the Pharisees. They, of course, would have thought this to be right and just – after all, they were the elite, and he proclaimed to be a teacher and therefore ought to associate with their kind. But we know the larger picture: This is an example of Jesus eating with sinners as much as his eating with tax collectors and prostitutes was. He came to save all God's children, not just the lowly and rejected, but the leaders and teachers, as well.

We can learn from this that no one is beyond redemption; no one should be written off. The Good News is available to all. But it must be received. For the Pharisees, it was literally right in front of them and they rejected it. But we who are here have accepted this gift of faith. With this faith, with God's help, we can do what needs to be done. We can help whomever God sets before us.

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Saturday, October 31, 2020  
(Lec. 484)

- 1) Philippians 1:18b-26
- 2) Luke 14:1, 7-11

SATURDAY OF  
30<sup>TH</sup> WEEK  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
(Saturday in honor  
of BVM)

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 588 **CSDC** 261

FOCUS: Am I serving Christ first, or myself?

Today is All Hallows Eve – better known as Halloween to most of our society.

But, All Hallows Eve really is a more accurate moniker when we look ahead to the next two days on the Church calendar. As we enter the month of November, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of all Saints on the 1st, (a holy day of obligation). Hence, this is the eve of “all saints” day.

One saint we all know well, of course, is Saint Paul. Writing from prison, and in real danger of death, he tells the Philippians in today’s first reading that he is not sure if it would be better if he died soon, or somewhere further down the line. There are countless martyrs who have accepted death in the name of Christ without fear, but none of them left the insight Paul did in today’s reading – openly considering with his community the ramifications of his imprisonment.

He did not fear death; he feared only being put to shame. Dying soon and meeting Jesus would be best for him, he thought, but continuing his discipleship might be better for the Churches he served. His greatest concern was: “Which of these would give greater glory to God?”

This fearlessness in the face of death comes from the hope and joy Paul expresses. *For to me life is Christ and death is gain*, he tells us. As Catholics, this is also our hope and joy, for we are striving for eternal life with Christ. Truth be told, though, although that’s our goal, most of us deep inside likely are saying, “just not today.”

While preparing for the day when we are to meet Jesus face to face, it will be to our advantage to heed the message Jesus gives us in today’s Gospel from Luke: to live our lives with humility. *The one who humbles himself will be exalted*, Christ says. Seek not the place of honor (exalting of self) but of dependence and need (humbling of self). Approaching life this way acknowledges that everything we have comes from God [the host], and not from ourselves. We align ourselves with all who depend on him, who recognize our need for his grace. We have the opportunity to serve, rather than be served. Just as Paul did.

And just as Paul did, may we, too, face death without fear, when it comes; may we, too, have a sense of healthy detachment as to what the world might offer, versus what God is asking of us and offering to us. And as we move into the month of November, dedicated to praying for all the faithful souls who have departed before us, let us look at our own lives and dedicate ourselves to being humble servants of the One who may, upon our death, say, *“My friend, move up to a higher position”... and enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table.*

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