

JULY

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24 25 26 27

28 29 30 31

**YEAR B
WEEKDAYS I**

WEDDING HOMILY

- 1) Hebrews 13:1-4a, 5-6b
- 2) John 15:12-16

FOCUS: God has chosen each of you, called you together to this life, and has done so for a purpose.

N. and N., the day toward which you have been working and planning for so many months is finally here. And, regardless of whether every little detail unfolds exactly as you envisioned, the most important moment of the day will soon take place. In a few moments, N. and N., you will face each other, and in the presence of God and this community, you will freely commit yourself to each other completely and unreservedly, for life, as you enter into the sacrament of matrimony. When you leave the church this day, you will do so joined in a union that is forged and held together by God. A pretty momentous day, I would say.

Momentous as today is, it has not come about by magic. You have been working toward it for months. Certainly in planning the details but more importantly, in establishing the foundation for a relationship that is called to last a lifetime – a relationship that will experience joy but that will also be tested by challenges as yet unforeseen. All those discussions, going back and forth about how many guests, how much to spend, etc. have taught you to listen to each other, to compromise, and most importantly, to keep your eye and focus on the larger picture. That is to say, remembering that you love and care about each other so deeply that you are both willing to cast your future together. Never forget how amazing it is to find someone who is willing to say “yes” with you to anything that life might throw your way.

Yet, just as there were days when your love for each other triumphed over the differences and disagreements, there might be future days when you might wonder why you took this step. On those days, it will be important to keep your eye and focus on the even greater picture. And that is that it is not you N. who chose N. It is God who has chosen both of you and who has called you together to this life, and who has done so for a purpose.

And what is that purpose? That you both grow in holiness, and grow in your capacity to love the way Christ has loved us – unconditionally, fully, sacrificially. This kind of love that the Lord calls us to is challenging. It will require that you put the needs of your spouse and family ahead of your own. In marriage, every day, you will die a little more to yourself. But that’s OK, because only in doing so will both of you *bear fruit that will remain*. What fruit? Joy, peace, unity, generosity, compassion, kindness, and more.

The Lord has blessed you in bringing you together. Always have confidence and rejoice that there is no one who wants to see your marriage bring you fulfillment in this life and prepare you for eternal joy more than the Lord himself. So trust in him, give him thanks for every blessing, and don’t be afraid to turn to him for help when you need it.

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FUNERAL HOMILY

- 1) Romans 6:3-9 (short form, 6:3-4, 8-9)
- 2) John 6:51-58

FOCUS: *If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*

For disciples of Christ, there is nothing more comforting than knowing the Lord has prepared a heavenly home for us.

The concept of heaven as a home is one to which we can all relate. The Lord has a home readied for all of us, and today we gather to send our loved one, N., off to his [her] eternal home with God.

In today's first reading, Saint Paul tells us, *We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.*

When we hear the word "baptism," most of us probably envision water being poured over an infant or a catechumen's head. Those listening to Paul were more familiar with immersion baptism – the total immersion of a person in a baptismal pool. Immersion in water symbolizes the death of a life in sin and the newness of life in Christ. Immersion baptisms are still celebrated, though not as widely as in the early Church.

The words Paul uses are specific. When he says Christians *were baptized into Christ Jesus*, he is saying we are incorporated in him, into the body of Christ, and by extension into Christ's death and resurrection. We anticipate our loved one's future resurrection today.

Christ's words in today's Gospel from John reiterate this promise: *Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. ... whoever eats this bread will live forever.*

We celebrate the life of our beloved N. today, knowing that N. was baptized into Christ – and thus into his death and resurrection. We know N. was a faithful disciple. And so, as we look back at N.'s life with us here on earth, let's remember all the good N. brought to our lives. And let us all pray that N. hears the words we all long to hear from Jesus at the gates of heaven: "Well done, my good and faithful servant." Welcome home.

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Thursday, July 1, 2021

(Lec. 380)

1) Genesis 22:1b-19

2) Matthew 9:1-8

THURSDAY OF
13TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(USA: Opt. Mem.
Saint Junipero Serra,
Priest)

FOCUS: Trust in the one who has known and loved us for all time.

Today we read the familiar account of God testing Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. This parallels God the Father sending Jesus to die on the cross. Just as Isaac is referred to as Abraham's *beloved son*, Jesus is described as God the Father's *beloved Son* (Mt 3:17). Both carried the wood for the sacrifice; both were placed on top of the wood. Abraham and Isaac arrive at the place for the sacrifice *on the third day* after God's command – which we know ends with God sending a messenger to save Isaac. Jesus is raised on the third day. In a sense, then, both have new life on the third day.

As the call to sacrifice Isaac prefigured Christ's perfect sacrifice – the fullness of God's abundant love for us – so, too, Christ's healing of the paralytic is a sign of God's love and mercy through the person of his Son. In cleansing the man of his sin and telling him to rise and walk, Jesus manifests what will be accomplished through his death and resurrection. Through Isaac, God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled and his descendants became a great nation. Through Jesus, the gates of heaven were opened to all who believe in him.

We are always in need of mercy and forgiveness, and will almost certainly find ourselves in need of healing at some point. Let us pray for the strength to trust in the One who has known and loved us for all time.

Saint Junipero Serra (1713-1784) Junipero Serra was a Franciscan missionary responsible for spreading Christianity throughout California when the West Coast was still mission territory. He founded or helped establish 21 missions, including San Diego and San Francisco. Junipero chose to walk from mission to mission, even though he had a walking disability and suffered from asthma. By the time his life's work was finished, he had traveled approximately 5,500 miles on foot.

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Friday, July 2, 2021

(Lec. 381)

1) Genesis 23:1-4, 19;
24:1-8, 62-67

2) Matthew 9:9-13

Gospel related: CCC 581, 589, 2100

FRIDAY OF
13TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Christ says, *Follow me*.

When we reflect on our faith life, many of us can point to a mentor. Whether a family member, teacher, or friend, the example of others can teach us much about what it means to be a disciple.

In today's Gospel, we hear the story of the call of Matthew, though without much detail. Jesus sees Matthew, tells him *Follow me*, and Matthew does so without hesitation. We can wonder why Matthew did it. We can wonder what he left behind. We can wonder what hope he saw in a life with Jesus. While we do not have clear answers to these questions, we do know that Jesus' call, and Matthew's response, had an effect on others. Many tax collectors and sinners joined Jesus and the disciples at the table. They were at least curious about, and perhaps longing for more from Jesus.

Seeing sinners and outcasts following Jesus upset the Pharisees, who saw Jesus as a threat to their power and influence. To the Pharisees, "following" meant that one follows the law. But Jesus corrects their misdirection. He tells them that God does not desire following empty sacrifices, but rather he desires mercy. Jesus shows this quite clearly by dining with tax collectors and sinners.

When we follow Jesus, we trust in him with our own longings. Like the sinners who gathered with Jesus, we, too, gather as sinners, joining Jesus at the table. We seek hope, healing, and the grace to be transformed to be as Christ for the world.

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Saturday, July 3, 2021

(Lec. 593)

1) Ephesians 2:19-22

2) John 20:24-29

Gospel related: CCC 448, 644, 645, 659 CSDC 491

**SAINT THOMAS,
APOSTLE
- FEAST**

FOCUS: Where there is doubt and fear, Christ offers us faith and hope.

Today we encounter the Apostle Thomas at a time when he was unwilling, or unable, without some form of tangible proof, to embrace the truth of the Resurrection.

It is into this difficult moment that the risen Christ comes to Thomas. Notice how gently and lovingly Jesus takes him from obstinate skepticism to a moment of faith. Using Thomas' own words by inviting him to place his *finger into the nailmarks*, Jesus coaxes from him a profound declaration of faith: *My Lord and my God!* In that moment of encounter, Thomas is both healed and changed: healed of his grief and pain, changed from doubt to belief. He has not only come to believe in the resurrected Jesus, he has proclaimed the Divinity present before him.

This life-changing encounter reminds us that the Gospel message is essentially one of hope and healing. As Saint Paul tells us, we not only have a holy destiny to share in the life of the risen Christ, but also have a sacred dignity as citizens and *members of the household of God*. We are called to grow into a sacred temple where the Spirit of the Lord dwells.

So changed was Thomas by his encounter that he set out to share his faith with others. Tradition tells us that having first proclaimed the Gospel in Palestine, he then traveled as far as India where he suffered persecution and martyrdom for Christ. We, too, are transformed by our encounter with the presence of the risen Christ who comes to us in Word and sacrament. In the mystery of the Eucharist, Christ comes to bring peace and healing to our hearts and to our lives. Like Thomas, we are invited to believe, to trust, and then share our faith with others.

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SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2021

(Lec. 101)

- 1) Ezekiel 2:2-5
- 2) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- 3) Mark 6:1-6a

Gospel related: CCC 500, 699, 2610 CSDC 259

14TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Live in faith, directing every thought and deed toward the love of God and one another.

Jesus' entrance into and activities in his hometown are the subject of today's Gospel passage from Mark. He had been all over the Galilean region, performing signs and doing miraculous deeds, and many had come to believe that he was a man of some power, or at least marvelously useful gifts. These same people did not necessarily know whence this power came, however, or what authority it may have carried. They just knew Jesus as an interesting figure; a novelty; a man who could clearly heal others and cure disease; and someone worthy of following. In today's world, advertisers would compete with each other for his attention and endorsement, so that his millions of followers would be exposed to their products.

And then Jesus enters his hometown and is "canceled." Why? Because he is *the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon*. He is of lowly birth and humble parentage, and the crowd of people is scandalized by him. *They took offense at him*. Despite their awareness of the *wisdom [that had] been given him*, and the obviously *mighty deeds [that had been] wrought by his hands*, the people of his native place swelled with the sin of pride and were spiritually blinded to the Truth, lacking faith in who Jesus was. *And they took **offense at him***.

We ought to be offended! We ought to be offended by their taking offense – because how pathetic is that? Of all the proverbial hills to die on, this one regarding his place of birth and parentage is the one they chose? Come on! It's a little self-indicting for them, isn't it? Since this is their hometown, too? And if we canceled the literal, Son of God 2000 years ago, how surprised can we be that many in the world still ignore him today, and that we have grown a culture of canceling others for failing to meet our expectations or because we judge some aspect of the messenger more important than the truth of the message? The sin of pride reigns mightily in the world.

But there is good news! The first is that, thankfully, advertisers did not exist in Jesus' time. The second, more seriously and more importantly, is that there is an antidote to this toxicity, and that is faith. Not just the faith that speaks piously of belief, and dresses in the finery of proclamations. It is a faith that is lived: with fervent dependence upon the power and authority of God; with a heart that recognizes the futility of sin and seeks the liberation of grace – through repentance, confession, and the Eucharist. A faith that directs our every thought and deed toward the love of God and one another. A faith that sees the image of Christ in every human being, regardless of their place of birth or their parentage. A faith that does not take offense at the Truth that Christ brings to the world. Let us give thanks for the gift of faith that we have been given. May we use it wisely, and grow ever more conformed to Christ through it.

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Monday, July 5, 2021

(Lec. 383)

1) Genesis 28:10-22a

2) Matthew 9:18-26

MONDAY OF

14TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(Opt. Mem.

Saint Anthony Zaccaria,

Priest;

USA: Saint Elizabeth of Portugal)

FOCUS: God always seeks us out and draws us to him.

Jacob has a marvelous encounter with God in today's first reading. God appears beside him in a dream (beside him!) and renews the covenant made with Jacob's grandfather, Abraham. The Lord expands his promise to be the God of Abraham and his kin. To Jacob, he vows protection, presence, and fulfillment of his earlier promise.

This benevolence of God is not surprising. What makes this encounter a bit unusual, however, was Jacob's situation. He was on the run, fearing for his life after using a ruse to take his father's blessing from his older brother Esau. He did not yet fully believe in the God of his father. But this did not prevent God from seeking Jacob. Here is the great mystery for us. Thinking only in human terms, the covenants are terrible deals for God. For all that God gives to humanity, in return we give him cycles of fidelity, infidelity, open rebellion, and penance. Humanity has been doing this to God for thousands of years.

Yet our inability to uphold our end of the covenant does not affect God's willingness to keep his end. Through the new covenant that Jesus forged with his blood, we are reconciled to the Father despite all we have done. God draws us to him with the gift of faith through his infinite love, that we might have eternal life. The official and the hemorrhaging woman in today's Gospel are both drawn to Jesus. They recognize what he can do for them, and so do not hesitate to ask him for help. Their faith is rewarded, just as the faith that Jacob eventually came to was rewarded.

Whether we have moments where we are like Jacob or like the actors in today's Gospel, God does not wait for our faith to be perfectly formed or our lives to be in order. He comes to us here and now, offering himself. Let us open our hearts and encounter our Lord!

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Tuesday, July 6, 2021

(Lec. 384)

1) Genesis 32:23-33

2) Matthew 9:32-38

TUESDAY OF
14TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Maria Goretti,
Virgin and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 2611 CSDC 259

FOCUS: God gives us an identity and a mission at our baptism.

Every great hero has an origin story. Often it is the tale of a tragic moment from their youth that inspires their future work. For the character of Bruce Wayne, witnessing the murder of his parents as a child is what motivated him to devote his life to fighting crime as Batman. Life consists of many such defining moments, big and small, that prompt us to choose one way of life over another.

Today's first reading tells the story of one such defining moment in the life of Jacob. The story is mysterious, involving a violent encounter in the dark of night. Though God has played an active role in Jacob's life from the beginning, it is in this encounter that Jacob claims to have seen God face-to-face. He has wrestled with God and lived to tell the tale. And he is given a new name.

We, too, have an origin story as members of God's people. Our new identity is given to us at baptism when we receive the name "Christian." We die to our old self and become a new creation, beginning a lifelong journey of faith. We become members of the body of Christ and are called to live in this identity.

What does it mean to follow Christ's example? In our baptism, we are anointed to continue Christ's work as prophet, priest, and king. In today's Gospel, Jesus casts out a demon and then travels around teaching, proclaiming the Gospel, and curing diseases. We, too, are called to be priests, sanctifying the world by our work; and prophets, seeking the lost and proclaiming the Good News. Jesus shows compassion for the crowds, who are lost and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. And we are called to be kings, who lead with compassionate service. Jesus tells his disciples to ask God to send laborers out into the harvest; we are those laborers.

Like Jacob and the other patriarchs of Israel, we may stumble along the way, but we are called to persevere in faith. We can rely on our encounters with Christ in the sacraments to give us strength for the journey.

Saint Maria Goretti (1890-1902) - Maria Goretti of Italy is the patron saint of youth and young girls, and of all rape victims and abused children because she chose martyrdom over submitting to sexual harassment and rape. Her forgiveness of the attacker who stabbed her to death led to his repentance and eventual life as a monk after his release from prison. She was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

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Wednesday, July 7, 2021
(Lec. 385)

1) Genesis 41:55-57;
42:5-7a, 17-24a

2) Matthew 10:1-7
Gospel related: CCC 543

WEDNESDAY OF
14TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We are the hands of Christ in the world.

In 1980, a statue at Christ the King Catholic Church in San Diego was damaged by vandals, and the hands were broken off from the arms of Christ. When repairing the statue, the community decided not to reattach the hands and instead placed a plaque at the base of it. On it is inscribed a quote attributed to Saint Teresa of Ávila: "I have no hands but yours."

I have no hands but yours.

In today's Gospel, Jesus commissions the Twelve Apostles to go out and continue the ministry that he has begun. He directs them to drive out unclean spirits, cure every disease, and announce the kingdom of heaven. They are to expand his work in the world. They will be his hands, his feet, and his voice.

The disciples will do this regardless of their skill set or their past. Some of the disciples are fishermen, hardly trained to go out and preach a Gospel message. One is a tax collector, despised by his community. Yet they will be instruments of God's work, just as Joseph, in today's first reading, becomes an instrument of God's saving power. Joseph, sold into slavery by his own brothers, went on to become the most trusted advisor to the Pharaoh in Egypt. Joseph had planned for the famine and provided a means for people in Egypt and the surrounding areas to have grain at a desperate time.

"I have no hands now but yours." This is what Christ says to us as well. Like the Apostles, we are called to be his hands, his feet, and his voice in the world. Like the Apostles and Joseph, we may have little or no training, we may have a troubled past, and we may have suffered at the hands of others. Nevertheless, God can use us to be his hands in the world.

As we celebrate the Eucharist, may Christ's body and blood transform us and provide us the strength and wisdom to share Christ with the world.

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Thursday, July 8, 2021

(Lec. 386)

1) Genesis 44:18-21,
23b-29; 45:1-5

2) Matthew 10:7-15

Gospel related: CCC 543, 1509, 2121, 2122, 2443 CSDC 184

THURSDAY OF
14TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God is the great giver, who expects nothing in return.

Imagine what it would be like if the Gospel came with a price tag: 50 dollars to hear the message of Jesus; 100 dollars to experience sacred Scripture; 200 dollars to participate in the sacraments and life of the Church. Yikes!

Even in a world where close to nothing is free, this notion of paying for the Gospel – that is, the Good News of salvation – offends our most basic Catholic sensibilities. The Gospel is infinitely valuable yet given completely free of charge. Jesus states this point-blank to his Apostles, telling them, *Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give*. They will demand no payment for their work on mission and travel with no material provisions, relying solely on the generosity of those they encounter. Ultimately, they have nothing concrete to depend upon – no money or clothing or even a walking stick. Nothing, that is, except their trust in the Gospel and in Jesus.

The disciples succeed in their mission, trusting that God is the great, generous giver. God holds nothing back from us, sacrificing his beloved Son and blessing us with the continual presence of the Holy Spirit. God's gifts require no payment and are never rescinded or withheld based on our response. God loves us fully and unconditionally, expecting nothing in return for his blessings.

Turning to the Eucharistic table, we see God first-hand – he who laid down his life so that we may fully live. May we, like the Apostles, trust in the generosity of God, who guides us on our own mission of sharing the Gospel, motivated by love alone.

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Friday, July 9, 2021

(Lec. 387)

1) Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30

2) Matthew 10:16-23

FRIDAY OF

14TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(Opt. Mem.

Saint Augustine Zhao Rong,

Priest,

and Companions,

Martyrs)

Gospel related: CCC 161, 728, 764, 1821

FOCUS: Trust in God – he is with us always.

All of us know what it is like to go on a trip. Whether it is a business trip, a vacation, or a family reunion, we all know what it is like to go somewhere with a special purpose. We also know what it is like to prepare for a trip. What we need to bring will vary, but every trip requires some preparation.

We can also consider a bigger journey in our lives – our journey as disciples. Granted, this is a different type of journey, one that does not have a definitive start and end date. It is ongoing, and so are our preparations. We can draw on what our parents taught us about faith, formal religious education or catechesis classes, and the example we see from others who live their faith. There are many rich ways that we prepare ourselves for our ongoing journey as disciples.

Our readings today teach us two important lessons to take with us on our journey. First, God tells us to be not afraid. While we do not know what is on the road ahead, God asks us to trust in him. Second, God assures us that he is with us on the journey. Whatever bump or fork in the road we might face, we do not face it alone. God does not send us unprepared. God is with us as we grow in faith.

As we continue our faith journey around the Eucharistic table today, let us ask God for what we need. Wherever we are on our map, God wants us to know of his holy presence.

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Saturday, July 10, 2021

(Lec. 388)

1) Genesis 49:29-32;
50:15-26a

2) Matthew 10:24-33

Gospel related: CCC 14, 305, 363, 765, 1034, 1816, 2145

SATURDAY OF
14TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: God's love for us is deep and abiding.

Experiencing fear is a part of being human. Although each of us differs as to the reason for our fears and anxieties, we all experience them to some degree. We might consider how these everyday fears affect our faith and our understanding of God.

In our readings today, we hear a message to put aside our fears. As we can all attest, this is easier said than done. But both readings also offer insights into how we can overcome these hurdles.

In the first reading, Joseph tells his brothers to not be afraid of their past sins because God ultimately used them for good. The joyful outcome outweighs the dark past. We, too, are called to consider the bigger picture. We can point to examples in our own lives when our fears or anxieties were quelled and led to greater joy.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us we need not fear potential persecution because God has an incredible love for us. His love is so powerful that he knows every hair on our head. Perhaps our fears in the past come from underestimating God's love for us. Although it is impossible to fully grasp the power of God's love for us, we are called to reflect on and increase our understanding of this revelation.

As we continue our liturgy, let us pray for an increased awareness of the power of God's love in our lives. May the sacrifice we celebrate here today bring us a renewed sense of God's abiding presence, which can help us overcome our fears and anxieties.

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SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2021

(Lec. 104)

1) Amos 7:12-15

2) Ephesians 1:3-14 or 1:3-10

3) Mark 6:7-13

Gospel related: CCC 165, 1506, 1511, 1673

**15TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Those called to lead others to the Lord must first learn to follow him.

Today, Jesus sends his Apostles on their first missionary journey. He is specific about what they may take with them. They will have to trust in the Lord and depend completely on the hospitality of those with whom they share the Gospel. Where the word of God is welcomed, the one who preaches it will be fed and sheltered. Where the Gospel meets with hostility, the Apostles are to shake the dust from their feet and move on.

Like the Apostles, we, too, are called and sent by our baptism, called to be disciples of Jesus and called to make disciples for Jesus. One in three people in our country do not profess Christianity, nor do one in three people in the world. Once we accept the call of our baptism, our work is cut out for us: to spread the faith by word and example as the Apostles did, trusting in the Lord and in the kindness of strangers.

Being an intentional missionary disciple requires devotion, perseverance, and persistence. The prophet Amos exemplified all these traits when he opposed Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel and chief advisor to King Jeroboam II some 750 years before the birth of Jesus. Amos was content as a shepherd when the Lord called him to lead a new flock. When shepherding lambs, he walked behind them to keep them always in his sight, making sure they did not wander off. As a prophet, he is called to lead, not to follow, but the goal remains the same: to keep the flock together.

Amaziah despised Amos and wanted him expelled, never to prophesy again. Though banished and censored, Amos did not stop prophesying and calling God's people to repentance. God, who is always faithful, does not give up either, telling Amos, *Go, prophesy to my people*. At the end of Mass, we are given the same instruction: "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." Not everyone will listen, but for those who do, the word of God changes everything.

The Apostles would have learned the stories of Amos when they were young, and if Amos was their inspiration, Christ was their motivation. The Apostles, like Amos, had a single aim, one shared by Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians – the call to holiness. May that be our goal as well: to live *to the praise of his glory*.

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Monday, July 12, 2021

(Lec. 389)

1) Exodus 1:8-14, 22

2) Matthew 10:34-11:1

Gospel related: CCC 858, 1506, 2232 CSDC 193

MONDAY OF
15TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Jesus calls his disciples to put him first above all others and live God-centered lives.

Today's Gospel may sound a bit harsh as we hear Jesus speak to his Apostles about setting family members against one other. It may even cause us to squirm a bit until we understand what Jesus is really telling us. In the early Church, some families were literally divided. There were those who chose to follow Jesus, leaving their families behind and embracing a life dedicated to God. In today's world, the Gospel continues to speak to us. We may be faced with situations when following Jesus puts us in conflict with our friends and family.

Jesus does not seek to divide us, but challenges us to place God at the center of our lives. To be worthy of him and the Father, Jesus commands that we take up the cross and follow him. This is not always easy, but sometimes it can be as simple as noticing and responding to the needs of others. In this Gospel, Jesus says giving a cup of water to one in need is an act of discipleship. It honors the dignity of human life and demonstrates the love of the One who sent us. Even the small things, done in his name, help to build the kingdom of God.

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Tuesday, July 13, 2021

(Lec. 390)

1) Exodus 2:1-15a

2) Matthew 11:20-24

TUESDAY OF
15TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Henry)

Gospel related: CCC 678

FOCUS: Acknowledging our sin is the first step toward receiving God's mercy.

After Moses killed the Egyptian, he wanted to erase the evidence by hiding the body in the sand and keeping it a secret in his own heart. Moses thought he could continue living as though nothing had happened. This is what we, too, are tempted to do with the reality of our own sin. Humans often bury sin in the depths of our hearts, thinking that we can continue living as though we have no need of repentance.

In our Gospel, Jesus has done mighty deeds in many towns so that people would turn their hearts toward God and away from evil. But the power and love of Jesus' mighty deeds were not enough for these cities. And so Jesus does a loving thing – he warns those unrepentant towns of the coming judgment. Through this Gospel reading, Jesus is speaking to our world today. The eternal consequences of unrepentant sin are real. But so are the eternal rewards of a life lived for Christ.

We do not have to do it alone. The sacraments are the Church's gift to us to help us live for Christ. Through prayer and grace, we can identify and acknowledge our sin, which is the first step of repentance. In doing so, we can bring our sins to Jesus and receive the gift of his forgiveness. At that moment of mercy, we are called to rejoice with the Lord because we are truly forgiven and restored to the hope of heaven.

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Wednesday, July 14, 2021
(Lec. 391)
1) Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12
2) Matthew 11:25-27

WEDNESDAY OF
15TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Kateri Tekakwitha,
Virgin)

Gospel related: CCC 151, 153, 240, 443, 473, 544, 2603, 2701, 2779, 2785

FOCUS: Let us lead one another out of darkness and oppression and into the light of the worship of God.

God's self-revelation is an important aspect of both passages from Scripture today. Moses, having a seemingly ordinary day tending to his father-in-law's flock, is intrigued by and drawn to a *fire flaming out of a bush*. What catches his eye is not so much the fire itself, but that the fire does not consume the bush. Moses decides he must check it out, and in doing so, comes metaphorically face-to-face (God's face is hidden from him) with God. And God has a mission for him.

This curiosity of Moses, almost childlike in its simplicity and desire, results in him hearing the voice of God calling to him. He does not yet know whose voice this is, but he is drawn to its call and instruction, and he does not immediately refuse that which is bestowed upon him. Instead, he questions his own worthiness, but still accepts the direction of the Lord God who has beckoned him.

In the Gospel, the Lord is once again revealed to others, to the childlike, this time through the presence and work of the Son. *No one knows the Son except the Father, Jesus says, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.* This is a literary equivalent of a burning bush: the Lord has cried out to us in response to our cries to him, and he has literally made his Word known to us. We stand before him on holy ground, made sacred through the sacrifice of his Son. Like Moses, we are called to lead others out of darkness and oppression, and into the light of the worship of God.

Jesus gives praise to God for all he has chosen to reveal, and to whom he has revealed it. The mysteries of the Kingdom are a stark contrast to what we perceive as the laws of nature: God is an all-consuming fire who does not consume us; he loves us completely and fully without annihilating us. He asks us to approach him without forcing us to do so. And in none of this are we ever left alone without the help of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Thursday, July 15, 2021
(Lec. 392)

- 1) Exodus 3:13-20
- 2) Matthew 11:28-30

THURSDAY OF
15TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Bonaventure,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 459, 1615, 1658

FOCUS: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.*

If we are tired, if we are struggling under burdens that feel heavy, if there are crosses weighing on us, God is speaking to us today! The Lord, the God of our ancestors, cares about us and desires to lead us out of misery. The God of Abraham and Moses is here and wants to give us rest.

While we process this good news, we should also notice that Jesus promises rest, but also a yoke. He does not tell us that everything difficult will vanish, rather, he speaks of the cross.

Jesus reminds us that his burden is light while also telling us to take his yoke. How can this be? What makes even the heaviest burden light?

When we are not carrying the full weight of a burden, it is transformed. The God who freed the Israelites from the might of Egypt wants to carry our burdens *with us* – so close that the weight becomes light. *Come to me*, Jesus says. He wants to walk alongside us.

The God who freed his people invites *us* today: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.* My friends, let us rest here in the arms of God for a moment. This time we have together, feasting on the word of God and being nourished by the Eucharist, is a time to rest. And then let us go forth to carry our yoke, united to Christ in this Eucharist, resting in his strength and letting him lighten our load as we walk toward heaven.

* * *

Friday, July 16, 2021

(Lec. 393)

1) Exodus 11:10–12:14

2) Matthew 12:1-8

Gospel related: CCC 581, 582, 586, 590, 2100, 2173

FRIDAY OF

15TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(Opt. Mem.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel)

FOCUS: God is with us always.

The reading from Exodus today begins with a striking line: *Although Moses and Aaron performed various wonders ... the Lord made Pharaoh obstinate*. Pharaoh is unmoved. He will not change course, he will not acknowledge the work God is doing, and he will not let God's people go.

The Pharisees in the Gospel today also seem obstinate. As they interpret it, the law forbids the picking of grain on the Sabbath. Even in the face of the wondrous presence of God himself, the Pharisees are unmoved. They do not recognize the one whom they chastise.

In contrast, the enslaved children of Israel and the disciples of Jesus react differently. The wonders that Moses and Aaron have performed capture the attention of the Israelites: They move right away to respond to the command to prepare the Passover feast. Jesus' disciples have seen in him something beautiful and captivating – enough so that they follow him even when they are hungry – and carefully listen to his words.

In our lives, too, God constantly offers us reasons to be moved by wonder: the beauty of creation, the simple gift of each day, the gift of God's own body and blood at the Eucharistic table. Do we let these gifts of God's presence strike us? Do they move us to worship, to wonder, to give thanks like the Israelites, or have we also been made obstinate?

The good news is that even when we are not moved, God is with us. Pharaoh was obstinate, so God moved to set his people free. The Pharisees were fixated on the law, so God sent his Son to teach and to save them. Our God is a God of mercy, who loves us even when we reject him. Let us be moved to love him in return.

* * *

Saturday, July 17, 2021

(Lec. 394)

1) Exodus 12:37-42

2) Matthew 12:14-21

SATURDAY OF
15TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 713 CSDC 261

FOCUS: We find freedom in surrendering to God.

Today's readings point to the importance of doing things in God's time, starting with the story of the Israelites' departure from Egypt. For the Israelites, this event is a turning point in their relationship with God as the one who delivers them from slavery to freedom. In today's passage, the biblical author includes many specific details about time, drawing attention to exactly when God saved them.

Today's Gospel also shows us something about God's time, for we see Jesus do an unusual thing. In response to his critics, Jesus quietly withdraws and warns his followers not to talk about him. This stands in contrast with other instances where Jesus welcomes and even further rebukes his challengers. (c.f. Mt: 23). It seems here that Jesus is showing us that "it is not the time." We see throughout the Gospels that Jesus seeks only to do the will of his Father. The Father's time, which Jesus seeks in prayer, determines when Jesus prays and preaches, when he dies, and when he will rise.

Jesus does things on his Father's time because he knows that God always brings his people to freedom. He trusts his Father entirely and so chooses to do things in his Father's time and his Father's way. We are also called to this total surrender, which of course is hard for us but is made possible, step by step, through God's grace. Today, as we approach the table of the Eucharist, let us beg for the grace to offer God everything, including our time, so he may bring freedom to the world through our open hands.

* * *

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2021

(Lec. 107)

- 1) Jeremiah 23:1-6
- 2) Ephesians 2:13-18
- 3) Mark 6:30-34

**16TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Those rooted in the Holy Trinity truly are shepherds after the heart of the Lord.

Humanity has a great hunger for the truth hardwired into our souls. God made our hearts for eternity, and the whole of salvation history is directed to that end. From revealing himself and making covenants, to sending Jesus and establishing the Church in the present day, God never ceases to give himself to his people. He never ceases to provide for, care for, and lead his people. The Lord is indeed our shepherd, and there is nothing we shall want. The Lord *is* a good shepherd.

In both the first reading and the Gospel, we see the effects of poor shepherding. Jeremiah pronounces woe on the false shepherds. God's people are scattered as a result of their misleading and negligent care. Jeremiah scolds them, and prophesies of the Lord himself gathering the remnant of his flock and bringing them back to their meadow, where they shall be safe and shall increase and multiply. In the Gospel, Jesus sees the vast crowd and is full of compassion for them – *his heart was moved with pity* – because *they were like sheep without a shepherd*.

We're not the nomadic or agrarian societies of the ancient Middle East, so sometimes the image of a good shepherd gets lost in its lack of novelty, and that we don't have the same visceral understanding of the role, value, and importance of such a person. But all of us can understand the need for something so valuable for one's livelihood and flourishing (in this case, sheep) that they must be cared for and protected – as well as fed, led, and given a bed.

So much more important, then, to protect and care for one another. That is, to be nourished in body and spirit; to be directed along the safe path; and to be given rest in order to remain healthy and well. Framed that way, we realize that we all have a responsibility, in some form or another, to shepherd each other. If nothing else, we are obliged by our baptismal vocation to holiness to not lead others astray.

In today's readings, we have insight into how the Lord helps us carry out our responsibilities. The Apostles in the Gospel reading are so overwhelmed by the crowd's longing for Jesus that they did not have time to eat. Human strength is not enough! All ministry needs grace. We have a duty to the truth, but may face confrontation and conflict as a result. So Jesus steps in and calls for some refreshment: come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. Saint Paul points us to the peace of Christ. It is *through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father*.

The Lord is our shepherd and we find refreshment in the communion of the Holy Trinity. The love of the Father, the reconciling peace of the Son, and the igniting fire of the Holy Spirit should be the strength of us all. Those rooted in the Holy Trinity truly are shepherds after the heart of the Lord.

* * *

Monday, July 19, 2021

(Lec. 395)

1) Exodus 14:5-18

2) Matthew 12:38-42

Gospel related: CCC 590, 627, 635, 678, 994

MONDAY OF
16TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God gives us signs to motivate us to repentance and trust in him.

The readings today address signs from God. Pharaoh and the Egyptians have just released Israel in response to a long series of adverse, divine signs – 10 plagues – that have brought devastation to the country. But in short order, they forget these occurrences and regret the economic loss of free slave labor. It seems almost incredible that greed could so blind them and harden their hearts that they would engage again with a people who are obviously under divine protection!

But they are not the only ones to forget God's visible works so quickly. The Israelites panic when they see the advancing Egyptian army. They, too, regret their departure from Egypt. They, too, forget the many things God has already done on their behalf. Only Moses has confidence that the Lord will follow through on his promises. He encourages the Israelites to trust and obey, assuring them they will again witness great signs of God's providence.

Even in the Gospel reading, the scribes and Pharisees, who have already witnessed a multitude of good deeds accomplished by Christ, demand a sign from him. Far from repenting of their unbelief, they have stiffened their resistance to him. Jesus sees their unbelief and the hardness of their hearts, and foretells the one sign that he *will* give them – his resurrection. Sadly, even this will not be enough to convince them. He compares them unfavorably to the Ninevites of Jonah's time, and the queen of the south, who repented and believed without demanding proof.

We, too, may be tempted to demand signs from God, forgetting the ones he has already granted. Chief among these are the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which convey far greater power than plagues and cures did. God pours out unlimited sanctifying grace to us through them, calling us to repentance and trust. What Moses told the Israelites is good advice for us today: *You have only to keep still*. Let us approach the Eucharistic table with faith in God's grace and promises.

* * *

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

(Lec. 396)

1) Exodus 14:21–15:1

2) Matthew 12:46-50

TUESDAY OF
16TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Apollinaris,
Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: CCC 764, 2233

FOCUS: We are all brothers and sisters when we do the will of the Father.

The English language sometimes allows for a word to be used in different contexts. In the phrase “all hands on deck,” *hands* actually refers to entire persons. In the phrase “Can you lend me a hand?” *hand* means assistance. And sometimes hand just means hand – the part of the body at the end of a person’s arm. In today’s Gospel from Matthew, Jesus uses his hand to draw attention to those who are listening to his words while he praises them for their desire to do *the will of my heavenly Father*.

The Lord not only *wants* us to work for him, he *needs* us to work. To him it is not “my mother and my Apostles on one hand and my other disciples on another.” His message to us today is a combination of the two phrases with which we opened this homily. God wants all his people “on deck” and “lending a hand” to take the Gospel to others. The work to be done is not for someone else; it is for all of us who hear his Word.

While in today’s Gospel, Mary and the Apostles appear to be slighted in favor of the disciples to whom Jesus was speaking, in reality he was including them, and us, as part of the family. With Mary as our mother, we are all brothers and sisters when we do the will of the Father. As the catechism says, “Becoming a disciple of Jesus means accepting the invitation to belong to God’s family” (CCC 2233).

Saint Apollinaris (1st century) Originally from Syria, Apollinaris was ordained Bishop of Ravenna, Italy, by Saint Peter. Famous for his effective preaching and healing power in the name of Christ, he was repeatedly exiled, imprisoned and tortured by the pagan leaders, but persisted in proclaiming the Gospel until he was ultimately martyred.

* * *

Wednesday, July 21, 2021
(Lec. 397)

- 1) Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15
- 2) Matthew 13:1-9

WEDNESDAY OF
16TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Lawrence of Brindisi,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 546, 1724

FOCUS: God provides for us, but we must be open to his gifts and cooperate with his will.

A common theme in the Book of Exodus is the grumbling of the Israelites. Throughout their journey, they grow restless and dissatisfied. They remember their time in Egypt where they *ate our fill of bread!* So they grumble *against Moses and Aaron*. But they are actually grumbling against God. In response, the Lord does not get angry but continues to provide, sending quail and manna – *bread from heaven*.

Each day, the Israelites are to gather only enough manna for one day so that they will learn to trust the Lord and depend upon him for their food. Only on the day before Sabbath are they allowed to gather enough for *two* days since on the Sabbath they are to rest. These gifts are God's way of showing how he cares for and provides for his people.

Matthew tells us that Jesus *went out of the house* and was surrounded by a large crowd. His teaching is intended not just for the disciples, but for everyone. They are anxious to hear his word: God's word given as provision for his people.

Jesus' teaching is this: God spreads his word generously. The fruitfulness of the seed depends on the ground where it is planted. God's word is offered to us, but sometimes we are grumbling Israelites or we make ourselves inhospitable to the seeds of God's love. Yet God never stops sowing. God always provides. Whether the seeds produce a harvest depends on the reception we provide.

As a farmer works the soil, clearing it of rocks and weeds and breaking up the hardened earth, so, too, we are called to make our hearts a place where God's word can produce an abundant harvest. May our sharing at his table strengthen us to do the work of the Kingdom.

* * *

Thursday, July 22, 2021

(Lec. 603)

1) Song of Songs 3:1-4b
or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

2) John 20:1-2, 11-18

Gospel related: CCC 443, 640, 641, 645, 654, 659, 660, 2174, 2795

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

- FEAST

FOCUS: *Behold, new things have come.*

Although Mary Magdalene experiences the joy of Jesus' presence during his ministry, she also witnesses the horror of his crucifixion and death. Adding further to her heartbreak, she goes to the tomb to find the body of her beloved gone. She informs the disciples who then come to see the empty tomb, but do not linger. Mary stays, alone in her agony and grief.

It is not clear how much time passes, but for Mary it may have seemed like an eternity. Suddenly Jesus appears. At first, Mary is too distraught to realize it is him – her beloved Christ! Then he calls her name. With this, the recognition is immediate. *Teacher!* she calls out and embraces him.

As much as she might like, she cannot remain in this joy-filled moment forever. Jesus has plans and needs her support to carry them out. Jesus sends her to announce the news of the resurrection to the other disciples, hence her title as Apostle to the Apostles. Though broken-hearted by the death of their beloved teacher, Mary and the others find renewed hope in his resurrection. Commissioned by Christ to continue his mission, they move forward with meaning and purpose. Their love for him carries on in their love for others. This community of Christ's love – this Body of Christ, the Church – remains. Through her, God's will and intention for the salvation of all people is accomplished.

Mary Magdalene was chosen for her role and her witness, just as each one of us is chosen by Christ for ours. It is *the love of Christ [that] impels us*, Saint Paul says. It affords us the conviction to go and tell the Good News to others as Mary and the Apostles did: Christ died for all, and *whoever is in Christ is a new creation*. Through him we share the same Father, the same God. No longer is God the Father only to the Son, but to each one of us as well. *Behold, new things have come*, indeed. Let us rejoice and be glad.

* * *

Friday, July 23, 2021

(Lec. 399)

1) Exodus 20:1-17

2) Matthew 13:18-23

FRIDAY OF
16TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Bridget,
Religious)

Gospel related: CCC 29, 1724 CSDC 325

FOCUS: God sows the seeds of authentic freedom in his commandments, and invites us to hear and understand.

There are many who hear the commandments in our first reading as a long list of no's. Don't do this, don't do that. For some, this creates a false image of a God who wants to limit us, restrict us, and keep us from the best things in life. Make no mistake – this is a lie.

In giving us these commandments, God invites us to true freedom – to authentic fullness of life. Just as a parent tells a child not to put her hand on a hot stove, so God warns us not to do things that will hurt us. That parent is not seeking to limit the child's freedom, but rather to increase her freedom. She will be much freer to play and swing and do all the things a child is made to do if her hand is not burned!

We, too, are made for freedom: freedom from theft, lies, or the other prohibitions of the commandments. Freedom from sin enables us to say yes to an even greater good. We reject false idols so that we can say yes to the only God who can truly satisfy our needs. We turn away from envy and adultery to say yes to the life of right relationship for which we were made.

The yes to God at the heart of these commandments is a yes to the deepest desires of our heart. This yes is the seed Jesus invites us to hear and understand today.

Saint Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) Bridget was a mystic who experienced visions of the crucified Christ beginning when she was seven. Inspired by her visions, she became committed to works of charity for unwed mothers and their children. After her husband of 20 years died, she gave up her possessions and entered the Third Order of Saint Francis. Bridget dedicated the rest of her life to reforming religious life and establishing the Bridgettines. She is the patron saint of Sweden and co-patroness of Europe.

* * *

Saturday, July 24, 2021
(Lec. 400)
1) Exodus 24:3-8
2) Matthew 13:24-30

SATURDAY OF
16TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Sharbel Makhlūf,
Priest;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 827

FOCUS: Jesus commands us not to judge, but to trust his justice in the end.

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives us a little lesson in gardening. Early in the life of a plant, weeds and good wheat crops can look very much alike. Jesus uses this comparison to remind us not to judge people by what we see. People can also appear to be what they are not.

It should be clear to us all that we do not know the secret thoughts and actions of other people. How often have we seen scandals of well-known people who, by all accounts and appearances, lived good and upright lives, only for us to discover that they had a secret (not-so-good) life? Even the Church herself has been betrayed by individuals who were loved and trusted. Sometimes a weed can look an awful lot like a good plant.

The opposite can also be true. Moral weakness is sometimes incorrectly ascribed to others based on appearances: the job they hold, their state in life, the clothes they wear, or even their choice to have body art or piercings. We do not know the beauty and goodness that may lie beneath these outward expressions. Sometimes a good plant is mistaken for a weed.

We can certainly proclaim that certain actions are wrong. Telling another not to steal, commit adultery, or harm their neighbor is not judging. Speaking the truth in love to another is a charitable act of discipleship. It helps them understand and follow the commandments of God. The problem arises when we think that we alone have the wisdom to know who is deserving of God's mercy and who is not. After all, isn't each one of us, at our worst, like a weed? It is only with God's forgiveness and mercy, and our repentance, that we become worthy of harvesting for the Kingdom.

Thank God for that mercy, available to each one of us until the moment of harvest.

* * *

SUNDAY, JULY 25, 2021

(Lec. 110)

1) 2 Kings 4:42-44

2) Ephesians 4:1-6

3) John 6:1-15

Gospel related: CCC 439, 549, 559, 1338

17TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: What do we do with the leftovers?

Time and again, Jesus made clear that his mission on earth was to do his Father's will. In his public ministry, he expressed the Father's love in various ways – he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and even raised people from the dead. He showed great affinity for the lowly and the outcast; he fought injustice with compassion and strength. He was not sent to be a political leader; he was the promised Messiah who came to save us from our sins.

The miracle in today's Gospel is well known. [Mark and Matthew have two accounts of a multiplication of loaves and fishes; John and Luke have one.] Large crowds were following Jesus because he had been curing the sick. Jesus saw that they were hungry. After asking his disciples where they could *buy enough food for them to eat*, Andrew told him about a boy who had *five barley loaves and two fish*. Jesus took the food, gave thanks, and distributed it. Amazingly, Jesus fed about five thousand men (and uncounted women and children).

After satisfying the human needs of his hungry followers, Jesus instructs his disciples to *gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted*, and they collect *twelve wicker baskets* full. As with Elisha in today's Old Testament reading, *there was some left over*. Jesus' miracle prefigured the superabundance of the Eucharist (CCC 1335). For from the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus would travel to Jerusalem, and there, he would institute the Eucharist the night before he died – a perpetual memorial of his sacrifice.

Two thousand years later, we, too, gather to listen to Jesus and to implore him with our needs. We, too, watch as the priest takes the bread, gives thanks, and distributes it to us – another unworthy and hungry crowd. We feast at the Lord's table. We encounter Jesus – the bread of life – under simple forms of bread and wine.

We are thus nourished by Word and sacrament. He freely gives us all we need. And yet, there is some left over – more grace, more gifts, more wisdom. What do we do with the leftovers? Perhaps the answer lies in today's second reading. Saint Paul tells the Ephesians to *live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace*. This is a job description for Christians! We have the obligation to use the gift of the Eucharist in the service of others. We must join with other Christians, with people of all faiths or no faith, to make the world better, to strive for unity and peace. Jesus knew his mission – to share the Father's love. That's our mission, too.

* * *

Monday, July 26, 2021

(Lec. 401)

1) Exodus 32:15-24, 30-34

2) Matthew 13:31-35

MONDAY OF

17TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(OBL MEM

Saints Joachim and Anne,

Parents of the

Blessed Virgin Mary)

FOCUS: Jesus preaches hopeful patience as he heralds the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

Patience is a funny thing. We are asked to have it, be it, practice it, offer it to others, and ultimately, to cultivate it in its own form of the moral virtue of fortitude so as to endure all things in conformity with the will of God. Patience is one of the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit, and to embody it is to perform a work of spiritual mercy. It is often just as visible in its absence as it is in its presence. Where patience is lacking, one often finds fear, lack of trust, a need for control, or anger. Where patience is lacking, so is the opportunity to experience something great.

Today, we are in the middle of a series of Gospel passages in which Jesus shares his vision of the kingdom of heaven – one which necessitates hopeful patience. In equating the kingdom of heaven to both a mustard seed and yeast, Jesus chooses two disparate images that are bound by one commonality – they both need time, and its commensurate patience. As any farmer would know, a seed requires a fair amount of time in order to grow into a full-sized tree. Bakers would concur that yeast must multiply over time in order to encourage flour to rise. Patience is needed to see the kingdom of God develop into its fullness.

The Israelite people in our first reading were not patient. While Moses and Joshua were away, the people panicked, and they created for themselves a god to follow, formed in their own image and forged from their own earthly treasures. We face the same temptation – to fashion a god we can follow based upon what we value. Jesus' preaching of a hopeful patience is a reminder that God desires that we have more than that, and that his love, mercy, and grace are what bind us to the promises he has made to us. We do not know if we will see the kingdom of heaven fully realized in our lifetimes, but we can do our part to encourage its growth, to pray for its fulfillment, and to have patience that the Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

* * *

Tuesday, July 27, 2021

(Lec. 402)

1) Exodus 33:7-11;
34:5b-9, 28

2) Matthew 13:36-43

Gospel related: CCC 333, 1034

TUESDAY OF
17TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God is gracious and full of mercy, yet he has expectations of the people he claims as his own.

In the first reading, God reveals himself clearly to Moses as *a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity*. He does so not only in words but in actions, when he responds to Moses' plea to forgive the people of Israel and to accompany them during their exodus in the desert. The Lord relents, and Moses *wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments*.

God's mercy becomes even more apparent when we realize that today's passage takes place in Exodus, 14 chapters *after* the people had already received the commandments once, at the same time they had created and worshipped a golden calf. God shows his willingness to give his people a second chance, and he is clear about the expectations for the people he claims as his own.

In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us of God's expectations. God is gracious and forgiving, but he still expects us to follow his commandments. While God will allow all people to live out their lives, at the end of the age, they will be judged by their actions. Did they live up to God's call to love him and their neighbors, or did they sin and encourage others to do so?

Jesus clearly intends the image of the weeds being thrown into the fiery furnace to be troubling to his listeners, and he encourages them to hear and ponder his words before it's too late. Are we the wheat, growing and flourishing according to God's will and obeying his commandments, or are we the weeds, sinning and inciting others to sin?

As we approach Jesus in the Eucharist, let us pray for the grace to hold fast to our call as people who belong to God – to obey God's commandments and to witness to God's love, mercy, and fidelity. And, like Moses, let us intercede for all people, so that together, we might be gathered into God's eternal kingdom.

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Wednesday, July 28, 2021
(Lec. 403)
1) Exodus 34:29-35
2) Matthew 13:44-46
Gospel related: CCC 546

WEDNESDAY OF
17TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Allow the love of the Lord to transform us, so all may know that he is the source of our joy.

A person who is deeply happy, such as a pregnant woman or someone in love, is sometimes said to be “glowing.” That, of course, is hyperbole, but the description of Moses’ face as *radiant* was no exaggeration. In fact, Moses’ face was so radiant that others became afraid. His time on Mount Sinai spent conversing with the Lord changed Moses so deeply that it was evident to everyone who saw him.

God had just given Moses the law, and this law showed Moses and the Israelites how to stay close to God, the source of all goodness. Moses’ life was forever changed by this and subsequent encounters with God, outwardly signified by veiling his radiant face: He had an intimate friendship with the creator of the universe! Yes, Moses had given up a princely life in Egypt to wander in the desert with the Israelites, but he found a new role building the kingdom of God: freeing the Israelites from bondage, mediating between God and his people.

Moses certainly knew what it was to allow the love of the Lord to transform him – he gave up things of value in order to gain God’s treasure.

Today, let us ask God to transform us in love; to show us what we might need to “sell” or give up in order to “buy” the field with hidden treasure or the pearl of great price. When we find that treasure – the kingdom of heaven, the love of God, Christ himself in the holy Eucharist – it’s worth anything we might have to give up in order to gain that treasure.

Then we must ask ourselves: How will we allow that encounter with the Lord to change us? We must open our hearts to allow the love of the Lord to transform us from the inside out so radically that all who see us may know that the source of our joy is the Lord.

* * *

Thursday, July 29, 2021

(Lec. 404)

1) Exodus 40:16-21, 34-38

2) John 11:19-27

or Luke 10:38-42 (Lec. 607)

THURSDAY OF
17TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saints Martha,
Mary, and Lazarus)

Gospel related: CCC 439, 993, 994, 1001 CSDC 260

FOCUS: Faith in the Resurrection reminds us that death is not the end.

The death of a loved one, no matter how expected, is always a sad day. The loss of their physical presence, their laughter, their voice, their distinctive habits, the smell of their perfume or soap – reminds us of their absence and can move us to tears. Even for people of faith, this loss can also lead us to echo Martha's reproach to the Lord for not intervening and preventing this tragedy and demanding restoration of what we have lost.

But the Lord invites us to take a longer, deeper view at what has happened, a view that makes sense only through the eyes of faith. Jesus' question to Martha elicits from her an affirmation of her faith in the Resurrection, and in Jesus as God's chosen and promised one. A faith that looks beyond the limited view of this life and toward eternity can give us a better perspective not only on death, but on all those losses and troubles that, if we're not careful, can lead us to despair.

Why did the Lord allow our loved one to die? Why did events have to unfold the way they did? We don't know. But let us take heart in our faith, the faith we share with Saint Martha, that these things do not mark the end. Our faith reminds us that our lives unfold in the context of eternity, an eternity ruled by a loving and merciful God who sent his only Son for our salvation.

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Friday, July 30, 2021

(Lec. 405)

- 1) Leviticus 23:1, 4-11,
15-16, 27, 34b-37
- 2) Matthew 13:54-58

FRIDAY OF
17TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Peter Chrysologus,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 495, 500 CSDC 259

FOCUS: Jesus will astonish us with wisdom and mighty deeds when we open our hearts to the gift of faith.

We follow Jesus. We listen to his words. We look to him for knowledge and as a model for how to live. We trust his love and believe in his message. We are touched by his story and call him our friend. Most importantly, we know he is our God, a divine person in the Holy Trinity, and hope to live with him in eternity when our time on earth is complete. So it is hard to imagine him being rejected by those who knew him well.

When he returned from his travels, where he had been teaching and performing miracles, he was dismissed by those in his own hometown. Preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth, his authority was questioned. It's as if they were saying, "Who does this guy think he is? Isn't he just the carpenter's son? Isn't Mary his mother?" They were *astonished* and questioned his wisdom since he was just a "hometown boy." The Gospel tells us that Jesus acknowledged that it is hardest for a prophet to be believed in his own house.

We may want to ask ourselves if we also reject Jesus. The truth is that every sin is a rejection of Jesus. We also reject him by taking his presence for granted. Instead of nurturing our relationship with him in daily prayer, we may seek him out only when we are desperate. Today's Gospel can serve as a great reminder for us to listen more, to love more, and to embrace the message of the one who will astonish us in wisdom and mighty deeds when we open our hearts to the gift of faith.

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Saturday, July 31, 2021
(Lec. 406)
1) Leviticus 25:1, 8-17
2) Matthew 14:1-12

SATURDAY OF
17TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Ignatius of Loyola,
Priest)

FOCUS: In our search for happiness, Christ is the answer.

King Herod had the same desire all of us have today – he wanted to be happy. So he searched for happiness in his power and authority as king. He searched for happiness in taking his brother's wife to be his own. He even searched for happiness in throwing a birthday party for himself. Like King Herod, we, too, have a choice of where to fulfill that desire. Ultimately, happiness is found in doing the will of God, and in proclaiming that will to others, as John the Baptist did.

God wants us to be happy. But we need to know where happiness is found. It's not found in living for ourselves as King Herod did. It's found in living for God. When we give our lives to the Lord, we find happiness – even amid trials. When the followers of John the Baptist buried his body, they undoubtedly were grieving. But the Gospel tells us that they went and told Jesus. They brought their sorrow to Jesus and undoubtedly found peace in his presence.

King Herod had heard of Jesus, but he refused to turn to Jesus in his search for happiness. In coming to Mass today, we have come to Jesus in our pursuit of happiness. Christ is the answer! He is truly the fulfillment of our deepest desires. John the Baptist knew this truth. We want the whole world to know this truth, so that all of us can find the happiness we were made for in God.

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