

SEPTEMBER

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**YEAR B
WEEKDAYS 1**

Wednesday, September 1, 2021
(Lec. 433)

- 1) Colossians 1:1-8
- 2) Luke 4:38-44

WEDNESDAY OF
22ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God draws near to us, drawing us into his love as we intercede for one another.

And they interceded with him about her.

In this Gospel, Jesus' power is vividly on display. Christ cures so many, and yet, there is a detail that should not be missed in this first part of the story. Jesus goes to the house where Simon's mother-in-law lies ill. He draws near to her suffering – but there is more. The disciples bring her to him through their words.

Jesus knows she is sick, just as he knows our wounds and our needs. Jesus draws near to us. And yet, in the mystery of his love, he also invites those around us to participate in this work. Jesus calls us into deeper relationship with God, but also with one another. He draws forth the disciples' love for Simon and his mother-in-law through their intercession.

This is why we pray for one another. It is not that God does not know our needs. It is that, in our reaching out to God on one another's behalf, we are bound to one another more fully in God's love. To put it another way, we lift one another toward God in our prayer, and that lifting draws us up in its wake.

And so, as we hear of Saint Paul and Saint Timothy praying for the Christians in Colossae, we, too, are invited to pray for one another here today. Who is in need of our prayer? Who needs us to bring them with us to the intimacy of Christ's love in the Blessed Sacrament at this Mass? Let us intercede for one another as we encounter Christ in this Eucharist.

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Thursday, September 2, 2021
(Lec. 434)
1) Colossians 1:9-14
2) Luke 5:1-11
Gospel related: CCC 208

THURSDAY OF
22ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God grants us every grace we need to put out into deep water.

One must wonder about the look on Simon Peter's face when Jesus – a complete stranger – steps into his boat and begins teaching the crowds. Is it a look of bewilderment? Astonishment? Fear? Certainly, all of these emotions are warranted within Simon Peter. And then Jesus goes one step further, instructing Peter to *Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch*. Peter proceeds to tell Jesus the ridiculousness of this proposal, for Peter has fished all night and caught nothing! Who is this stranger, who can demand something preposterous with such authority and conviction?

Jesus similarly calls all of us to *Put out into deep water*. How does this make us feel? Does it provoke fear? Bewilderment? At the very least, we may feel unprepared or incompetent for the task at hand. Yet regardless of the emotion stirred, Jesus does not relent on his request. Moreover, he does not abandon us to accomplish the task alone. As today's first reading attests, we are *strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience*. God the Father has made us *fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light*. How often do we underestimate the power we have at work in us – the grace of God, the Holy Spirit?

Peter ventures into the deep and catches so many fish that his nets begin to tear. We, too, are called to put out into the deep, trusting in the command of Jesus, no matter how bewildering, astonishing, or fear-inducing it may be. Through grace, made available to us especially through this Eucharist we are about to receive, God will provide the catch for us.

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Friday, September 3, 2021
(Lec. 435)
1) Colossians 1:15-20
2) Luke 5:33-39

FRIDAY OF
22ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Gregory the Great,
Pope and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: The Messiah has come.

When we think of celebrations, there are so many practices that are the norms of our culture. Indeed, even from family to family we might see differences in how we celebrate occasions. But what unites them is that these occasions are special. They call for different actions, thoughts, and practices.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is confronted by critics who are judging him and his followers for not following the established norms of fasting. What they fail to understand is the purpose of these standards. They were made with an understanding that the Messiah was still to come. However, as we know, the Messiah, Jesus, was in their midst in this story. Jesus uses a number of examples of celebration to explain why things are different with him there.

While we still long for the Second Coming, we still live in the truth that the Messiah has come. This shapes so many of our traditions in our faith. We can even consider how it shapes our everyday life. The truth is, we live as people who have been reconciled by Christ. This reality colors our whole life, including how we see ourselves, how we act, and how we are called to serve others.

As we continue our celebration today, let us pray for an increased awareness of the power of Christ in our lives. He has brought us fulfillment and given us a way to live until we see him again. May our feast at the table today bring us to a greater understanding of this powerful revelation.

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Saturday, September 4, 2021
(Lec. 436)
1) Colossians 1:21-23
2) Luke 6:1-5

SATURDAY OF
22ND WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: *The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.*

We can point to many things in our lives that we observe as sacred. Indeed, our celebration of the sacred can become so ritualized that it falls into a routine in our lives. Even so, what we hold sacred shapes what we prioritize in our lives.

In today's Gospel, we see an example of what happens when we lose sight of what is sacred. The Pharisees criticize Jesus and his disciples for doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath. Because they were eating unlawfully on this sacred day, the Pharisees saw them as unrighteous. But Jesus questions them about their priorities. Furthermore, he reminds them of the tradition set forth by David in Scripture. His disciples are hungry, and he, the Son of Man, is with them. They have not disrespected the sacred. They have left their previous way of life to follow the Son of Man and learn from him. Their way of life embodies the sacred.

The purpose of the sacred is to help us recognize God in our lives and grow closer to him. It can help us to consider what we hold sacred, and reflect on how it helps us to grow deeper in our relationship with God. What we believe shapes our understanding not only of God, but of ourselves and of others. We are called to constantly grow in our relationship with God, and in doing so, we increase our understanding of what he calls us to in this life.

As we celebrate this sacred meal, let us pray for a greater understanding of its meaning. May this meaning wash over us to increase our faith, and better serve the Lord.

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

(Lec. 128)

1) Isaiah 35:4-7a

2) James 2:1-5

3) Mark 7:31-37

Gospel related: CCC 1151, 1504

23RD SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Jesus comes to heal the deaf and all who need restoring to right relationship.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus assuming a familiar role as a healer when he makes the deaf man hear. Indeed, Jesus' reputation as a healer is the reason the people bring the deaf man to him; had their friend needed shoes, or a loaf of bread, we can imagine they would have taken him to a cobbler or a baker. Yet he needs to be healed from his deafness and speech impediment, so they bring him to the healer. When Jesus heals the deaf man, he is doing what God had long said he would do since the time of the prophet Isaiah: open the ears of the deaf and make the eyes of the blind see. For anyone who is aware of this prophecy and of Jesus' other healings, this is an example of Jesus "being Jesus" – he is doing what is typical of him.

Jesus' healing of the deaf man may be something typical to us, but we know it was a great surprise to the crowd who were, as the Gospel says, *exceedingly astonished*. And what about the deaf man himself? We do not know if it was his idea to call for Jesus – if he had faith in this healer or not. All we know is that Jesus took the man away from the crowd, touched his ears, and with a sigh to heaven made him able to hear. Whether the deaf man anticipated his healing or not, this moment changed everything as he received what he needed from the Lord.

This Gospel may not be surprising to us, for we who have heard the other Gospel stories know that Jesus is simply being himself: He is doing the will of the Father, which is to bring healing. Yet if our familiarity with Jesus' healing power compromises our awe at his goodness, then we are in exactly the same position as the deaf man at the story's beginning. If we are not only unsurprised but also unmoved by this story, then we, too, are in need of being restored to right relationship with God, and we need healing to hear his voice again. The healed heart not only hears that Jesus is the healer, but runs to him and begs for the help we need, that our families and friends need, that our world needs.

Thankfully, part of Jesus' mission – his being who he is – is to come to heal the deaf in body as well as restoring us to right relationship with God. He comes for us, whether we know how much we need him or not, and he longs to give us what we need. The Lord's groans to heaven are for us – for you and for me – to be open to receive all we need from him. As we approach the Eucharistic table, let us seek what we need. Our God is the God of healing, forever worthy of our thanks and praise.

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Monday, September 6, 2021

(Lec. 437)

1) Colossians 1:24–2:3

2) Luke 6:6-11

Gospel related: CCC 581 CSDC 261

MONDAY OF
23RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Our faith is in Christ crucified and risen, not in the law.

In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a man's withered hand – he has mercy on the man's plight – on the Sabbath day, a day of rest.

His actions angered the Pharisees, strict followers of the law.

But the law is not how we find our righteousness before God. Our faith in Christ crucified and risen is what we believe and proclaim as that which gives us *the hope for glory*. Jesus did not abolish the law, but fulfilled it in love. It is by "divine authority" that "he disavowed certain human traditions of the Pharisees that were 'making void the word of God'" (CCC 581).

Jesus performs a great work of mercy on the Sabbath, which is a small glimpse of the unlimited and eternal work of mercy that God performed in raising Christ from the dead on the third day – Easter Sunday. It's our Sabbath, Sunday – each one a little Easter. Bearing this in mind, do we use Sunday, our Sabbath, in a way that orients our minds and hearts toward that eternal Sabbath? Are we merciful on that day, and every day? Do we dedicate ourselves to the law of love, in ways that enliven rather than make void the word of God?

Saint Paul certainly dedicated himself to God and others. He tells the Church in Colossae that, even though he has not met them in person, he rejoices in suffering for them and deeply desires to teach them about Christ. In this, he helped bring the kingdom of God into this world.

Today, let us ask the Holy Spirit how we can start dedicating each Sabbath to God and others in a deeper way.

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Tuesday, September 7, 2021
(Lec. 438)

1) Colossians 2:6-15

2) Luke 6:12-19

Gospel related: CCC 695, 1116, 1504, 1577, 2600

TUESDAY OF
23RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God calls us by name.

There is not much we know about the Twelve Apostles who were selected by Jesus from among his disciples. We know they were close followers of Jesus. We know what they had witnessed from what we have read in the Gospels. But individually, we do not know the details of their lives. Still, it is powerful to hear their individual names listed today in the passage from Luke. A name carries the weight of someone's story. We might not know all of their biographical facts, but we know that each name we hear represents the full life of someone who made sacrifices to follow Jesus.

At our baptism, we, too, were called by name by Jesus. Our vocation is connected to the discipleship of the Twelve. Like them, God knows us deeply. He knows the gifts he has bestowed upon us. He knows how we can use these gifts to respond to the needs in the world. He knows the ministry that we are capable of doing in his name.

While God knows our vocation deeply, it can be challenging for us to recognize what God calls us to do in the world. But, we have ways of seeing what he asks. Through prayer and discernment, we can grow in understanding of who we are, that is, who God made us to be. As Paul wrote to the Colossians, *As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted in him and built upon him and established in the faith as you were taught.*

As we celebrate the Eucharist today, let us remember that God has called each of us by name to be here. He has called us to remember him, and he sends us out into the world.

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Wednesday, September 8, 2021
(Lec. 636)

1) Micah 5:1-4a

or Romans 8:28-30

2) Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 or 1:18-23

Gospel related: CCC 333, 430, 437, 452, 486, 497, 744, 1507, 1846, 2666, 2812 CSDC 378

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

FOCUS: Through Mary's conception and birth, the story of human history changes.

Today, we celebrate the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Church has celebrated today as the date of Mary's birth since at least the sixth century. The Sept. 8 date helped determine the date for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the feast day in which we celebrate Mary's conception, on Dec. 8.

The New Testament does not give us much information about Mary. For example, Scripture does not give an account of Mary's birth. There is an ancient text, the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*, which helps fill in some of the details of Mary's life. According to this account, Anna and Joachim are infertile but pray for a child. They receive the promise of a child who will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. Such a story, like many biblical stories, helps stress the special presence of God in Mary's life from the beginning.

The Gospels of both Matthew and Luke give us a more complete picture of Mary's role in the Incarnation – the Son of God taking on human flesh – the birth of Jesus. In the verses of today's Gospel, we hear of ancestors and genealogy. We hear of the family lines that produced the family of Jesus. The Gospel tells us that Mary's husband-to-be is Joseph, a direct descendent of David, Israel's greatest king (Mt 1:6-16; Lk 2:4). Matthew highlights the direct line from King David to Jesus through Joseph – who was the spouse of Mary.

Mary's birth brings about Jesus. She is connected to Jesus' saving work. For Mary is the Mother of God. Through her birth, the story of human history changes. She will bring forth the Son of God, as the angel explains to Joseph (Mt 1:20). The Son of Mary comes to bring salvation to all the world. The opening prayer at Mass speaks of the birth of Mary's Son as the dawn of our salvation, and asks for an increase of peace. We read how she is God's, and marvel at her response to God's invitation.

It is good to celebrate birthdays. Mary's birth offers a look at the amazing power of God and how salvation comes to us. Let us celebrate Mary and all that follows as a result of her birth.

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Thursday, September 9, 2021
(Lec. 440)
1) Colossians 3:12-17
2) Luke 6:27-38

THURSDAY OF
23RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
USA: Saint Peter Claver,
Priest)

Gospel related: CCC 1458, 1669, 1789, 1970, 2842

FOCUS: We are called to be merciful as God is merciful.

Today's Gospel contains what is probably one of the most-quoted passages from Scripture – *Do to others as you would have them do to you* – the Golden Rule. It is so simple that we teach it to children. It requires basic empathy, imagining ourselves in another person's situation, and then treating them the way we would want to be treated. Simple. And yet, any parent or teacher of young children knows that empathy is something that must be taught – a skill that must be practiced. Furthermore, Jesus calls us to go beyond basic empathy. In imitation of God, we are to give more than what is expected.

In the same passage from Luke, Jesus asks his followers to love their enemies, turn the other cheek, and lend without expecting repayment. For, he says, even sinners love those who love them and are good to those who are good to them. Don't we all hope that others would give us the benefit of the doubt, show us mercy, and forgive us? We hope that people will treat us better than we deserve. Therefore, we must be willing to do the same for them. After all, hasn't God already done as much for us? Jesus says that God himself *is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked*. None of us is deserving of the mercy God offers.

The measure by which we give is the measure we will receive, with the added reminder that God cannot be outdone in generosity. What measure do we use? Do we give without counting the cost? Or do we calculate what we give others based on what we hope to get in return? As we reflect on the endless mercy we have received from God, may we strive to treat everyone we encounter with the same generous mercy.

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Friday, September 10, 2021

(Lec. 441)

1) 1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14

2) Luke 6:39-42

FRIDAY OF
23RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Look to see where we need God's mercy, for he will give it when asked.

Though today's Gospel is short and quick, the lessons are many. First, Jesus poses the question about what will happen if the blind leads the blind. *Will not both fall into a pit?* he asks. For us, being blind might take on a different meaning. Maybe our physical vision is fine, but what about our spiritual vision? In order to keep it growing and healthy, we need to seek out those whose vision is stronger than ours. We want to learn from those who can challenge us, teach us, and help us develop. We must look to those who are not so "blind."

The second lesson extends from that. Jesus tells us that the learner is not superior to the teacher, but by following the master we can grow closer to him. We should not just find comfort in what we already know. Rather, we need to keep looking for more. Our spirituality can be enhanced by seeking out the lessons Jesus continues to teach us through Scripture. We need to work toward improving our prayer life, and always hunger and thirst for more.

And finally, Jesus tells us that we should not be judgmental of other's failings without looking at our own faults first. Truly, if we are blind to our own faults, how can we dare to be critical of others? Too often, we may be quick to judge and see ourselves as superior. Instead, Jesus tells us to look at our own failings first and see where we need God's mercy. In recognizing our own faults, we can be more understanding and compassionate in ministering to others. All are important lessons in living a life with Christ at our center.

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Saturday, September 11, 2021
(Lec. 442)

- 1) 1 Timothy 1:15-17
- 2) Luke 6:43-49

SATURDAY OF
23RD WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: **CSDC** 70

FOCUS: Life in Christ is a journey of transformation, through which we produce good fruit for eternal life.

If we want to grow a healthy tree, we first need to plant good seed. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good seed that must be planted in order for our lives to produce eternal fruit. Without Christ, we can produce only thornbushes and brambles. By contrast, the true mark of a disciple of Christ is the bountiful harvest that life yields. The Good News is that every fruit tree – no matter how rotten its past – can be transformed by Christ into a good tree. The Good News of Jesus Christ, when received into the heart of a person, produces a transformed life.

Saint Paul testified to this miraculous transformation in our first reading. As the foremost of sinners, Paul was mercifully treated so that *Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life*. In other words, God wants us to know that transformation is possible for anyone who receives Jesus Christ into their lives. Paul wrote that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. Salvation is ultimately a work of transformation. Through the power of Christ's death and resurrection, we who are in Christ are dying to sin and rising to new life in God. This transformation begins at our baptism and ends when we are fully united to God in heaven.

No matter where we are in this journey toward heaven, let us receive Jesus Christ again today with great confidence. His work of transformation is continuing in us and in all those who are sincerely seeking God. Let us rejoice in the work of Christ in us, knowing that it will bear fruit for eternal life.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

(Lec. 131)

1) Isaiah 50:4c-9a

2) James 2:14-18

3) Mark 8:27-35

Gospel related: CCC 459, 472, 474, 557, 572, 649, 1615, 2544

24TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: To be a disciple is to have faith and follow Jesus.

As Catholics, we usually think of Peter as the saint, the first pope, the one with the keys to the Kingdom, the rock on whom the Church was built. The basilica that bears his name sits in the center of Rome. Yet Scripture passages such as today's Gospel show us a more headstrong and human side of Peter, one who was far from a perfect disciple. In today's Gospel passage, Peter could not accept the fate Jesus foretold for himself. In fact, Peter *rebuked* Jesus when he predicted he would suffer and die.

That is what some might call "cheeky." Others might call it impertinence. Jesus calls him Satan. That sounds pretty harsh, considering that Peter had just declared his faith in Jesus. When asked by Jesus, *Who do you say that I am?* Peter had answered without hesitation: *You are the Christ*, the Messiah. But Peter's words – as faith-filled as they might be – still demonstrated a lack of understanding of what was happening around him. He (innocently) wanted to stop the plan of salvation that was in motion, thinking that he knew a better way.

Luckily for Peter – and for all of us – perfection is not a qualification for discipleship. What are the necessary qualifications? To have faith and to follow Jesus' commands. This entails denying one's self, taking up one's cross, and losing one's life for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel. These are the works without which faith is dead.

Like Peter, we are not perfect disciples, and God knows this. Though we have faith, sometimes we think first of what we want – what feels good and safe – rather than thinking of what God wants. But if we go our own way rather than God's, we risk becoming a mouthpiece for the things of the world and its earthly values; and the self-serving life we tried to save we will lose. Even if we are unsure of exactly what God is asking of us, or if it seems risky and uncertain, God invites us to trust. If we just get behind Jesus, he will guide us. Jesus will teach us what to do and how to follow him.

God is near, upholding us. He is our help, present to us in his Word and in the Eucharist. Nourished by these, we can set our faces like flint and not turn back, even as we confront opposition. The Lord will save us as we follow him in faith.

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Monday, September 13, 2021
(Lec. 443)

- 1) 1 Timothy 2:1-8
- 2) Luke 7:1-10

MONDAY OF
24TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint John Chrysostom,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: *The Lord is my strength and my shield; he hears my prayers.*

Blessed be the Lord, for he has heard my prayer. This psalm speaks for all of us – both as individuals, and as the entirety of the Body of Christ, the Church. It is indeed the prayer of the Church – one which finds its supplication and answer in the person of Christ. Christ who himself advocates and mediates for us, whose voice joins ours in prayer both in petition and thanksgiving. It is his intercession upon which we rely for help, and should model our own intercession for others.

The Gospel reading gives a vivid example of the value of intercessory prayer, and how pleasing it is to God. The centurion exhibited two of the virtues that most delight our Lord – faith and humility. The centurion did not belong to the chosen people; he was a Gentile who had great love for the Jewish nation and *built the synagogue for [them]*. He feels unworthy, for he does not yet know that the salvation of God is meant for all peoples. So he makes his request through friends, with deep humility.

The centurion's prayer obtained the health of his servant, and alerts us to the impartiality of God, who will make the Good News known to Jews and Gentiles alike. The divine encounter the centurion had prefigures the one we all have, most particularly in the Eucharist, where we today offer the same words of humility in preparation for receiving Christ fully into our bodies. In our communion with one another, we pray for one another, interceding for the needs of the Church and the world.

The Lord is my strength and my shield, the psalmist says. And Christ, united to us, prays the same. *In him my heart trusts, and I find help; then my heart exults, and with my song I give him thanks.* *Eucharisto* is a Greek word meaning, "I give thanks." The holy Eucharist is thanksgiving and praise in action. With faith and humility, let us prepare for our divine encounter.

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Tuesday, September 14, 2021
(Lec. 638)

1) Numbers 21:4b-9

2) Philippians 2:6-11

3) John 3:13-17

Gospel related: CCC 219, 423, 440, 444, 454, 458 661, 679, 706, 2130 CSDC 3, 64

**THE EXALTATION
OF THE
HOLY CROSS
- FEAST**

FOCUS: *We adore you O Christ and we bless you, because by your Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Invented by the Persians and perfected by the Romans, crucifixion was considered to be the cruelest of all forms of execution in the ancient world. Designed to act as deterrent, the victim was subjected to great physical pain and distress and often left to die over a period of days. To the Jewish people, it was the most accursed of all forms of death and a sign that the victim had lost all hope and connection with God.

Today's feast marks the finding of the true cross by the Empress Helena in 325 A.D. and the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem some 10 years later. But this feast is more than just the marking of historical events. As we celebrate the Exaltation of the Cross, we are invited to take a moment to reflect on the great mystery of our redemption in Christ, and by doing so to understand that what was once a symbol of death and rejection has become for all Christians a powerful symbol of God's abundant love and his offer of life. After all, there can be no life without death – no resurrection without the cross.

When we read the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion, we see that each evangelist takes a different approach in his description and detail. While never denying the horrors of this form of execution, John presents the crucified Jesus not in lonely helplessness, but in majestic control. Today's Gospel recalls an earlier conversation with Nicodemus where Jesus uses the image of the bronze serpent to foretell and explain his forthcoming death and its meaning – a tangible expression of the abundant love that God has for all humanity.

For John, the cross is not a defeat but a triumph. Here the forces of sin and death throw all they have at the Lord of Life, and yet to no avail! For Jesus' obedience and self-emptying do not end in the silence of death, but in glorious exaltation and salvation for all who believe in him.

That is the core of this feast day: Jesus does indeed hang on the cross in agony and pain, but as the Gospel and, indeed, the first reading from Numbers hinted at, he is equally raised up as a king on a mighty throne. He is lifted up so that all who gaze upon him, all who take refuge in his victory, all who believe in him might also experience healing and a share in his eternal life.

Today as we look upon the cross, let us not see it as a means of death, but a holy expression of God's love. Let us cherish that love, live in that love, and share that love. Let us never be embarrassed to witness to Christ and to his self-sacrificing love, for by his wounds we were truly healed, by his cross we are offered salvation.

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Wednesday, September 15, 2021
(Lec. 445)

1) 1 Timothy 3:14-16
(Lec. 639)

2) John 19:25-27
or Luke 2:33-35

Gospel related: CCC 149, 495, 501, 575, 587, 618, 726, 964, 2605, 2618, 2677, 2679

WEDNESDAY OF
24TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Our Lady of Sorrows)

FOCUS: *How great are the works of the Lord!*

Our first reading today reminds us of the joy that awaits us. Saint Paul writes to Timothy that Jesus is vindicated by the Spirit, believed in throughout the world, and taken up in glory. We hear such hope in this letter; this is *the pillar and foundation of truth*.

As Christians, we have the grace of the theological virtue of hope. Our mission is to share the good news that Jesus, who is truth and love, came down, loving us so much that he entered into our humanity to save us. And in his dying moments, he entrusted each one of us to his Mother, whom we see standing at the foot of the cross in today's Gospel. In the midst of his own suffering, in his darkest moments, Jesus loved us enough to think of *our* needs, not his; he gave us his holy Mother and asks us to give ourselves over to her.

Therefore, as the Body of Christ, under the protection of Christ's Mother – our Mother – we can know that in whatever moments we might have when we are faced with evil, with brokenness, with hatred, or with death, we can see that Christ is King, and we can trust the end of this story to be good.

The human person can carry unbearable burdens if we know we are not alone. In the grief of his holy Mother and his beloved disciple, Jesus gives them to one another. And he gives us to one another, too. Mary, who stood in the face of so much sorrow, stands with us, wraps us in her embrace so as to draw us into her hope.

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Thursday, September 16, 2021
(Lec. 446)
1) 1 Timothy 4:12-16
2) Luke 7:36-50

THURSDAY OF
24TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saints Cornelius, Pope,
and Cyprian, Bishop,
Martyrs)

Gospel related: CCC 575, 588, 1441, 2616, 2712

FOCUS: Let us be witnesses to Christ's love in the world.

Writing about evangelization, Pope Paul VI said that "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 41).

The witness of the *sinful woman* in this Gospel makes her a powerful evangelist. Her actions speak – even though she says no words at all! In lovingly wiping and anointing the feet of Christ, she bears witness to a love which has changed her and which changes the world.

Likewise, Saint Paul dedicated his life, after his conversion, to the single-hearted spreading of the Gospel. Having encountered the transformative power of Christ's love himself, Paul knew that this gift must be shared. In the Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy, Paul is encouraging Timothy to join him in this task.

The instructions that Paul provides to Timothy today do not primarily concern his teaching. They concern his witness. Paul tells Timothy to *set an example* and *attend to yourself*. Like the woman in the Gospel, Paul wants Timothy to remember the great love he has received in Christ, and live out that love in a way that will reflect the truth. Only in this way can Timothy be an effective teacher.

The sinful woman, Paul, and Timothy all knew the love of Christ themselves, and so they each became powerful witnesses to that same love for the world. Let us pray that we, too, may know the love Christ has for us and bear witness to it, setting our own example in *speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity*.

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Friday, September 17, 2021
(Lec. 447)

- 1) 1 Timothy 6:2c-12
- 2) Luke 8:1-3

FRIDAY OF
24TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Robert Bellarmine,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: Our security rests in God alone, not in anything we accumulate in this world.

The readings today warn us against the temptation to pursue things that will never give us *lasting* security. Saint Paul tells Timothy, and us, that *we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it*. It is enough to have food and clothing. And whereas the pursuit of riches and the love of money may tempt us into thinking they will lead us to true happiness, they instead lead us to ruin.

The Gospel, however, indicates the kind of security that *is* lasting: staying close to our Lord. As Jesus travels from town to town and village to village, preaching and proclaiming the kingdom of God, we do not know many of the details of his ministry. Where does he sleep? What does he eat? Where does he rest? Luke does not say. There is no mention of any of the practical securities that we usually seek.

Instead, Luke focuses on those who remain with him, secure in his mission and presence: the Twelve Apostles, and several women who were his followers. These earliest disciples have chosen to pursue what is good, what is lasting. Rather than accumulating for themselves, they *give* what they have for the sake of the Kingdom.

Blessed the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!

Saint Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) A key leader of the Counter-Reformation, Robert Bellarmine was a man of giant intellect and influence. The Jesuit professor of theology was a gifted preacher and teacher whose sermons attracted crowds and converted many. His publication, *Disputations*, is a comprehensive defense of Catholicism and papal authority. Robert wrote several works on spirituality for the laity as well. He is the patron saint of catechists, catechumens and canon lawyers.

* * *

Saturday, September 18, 2021
(Lec. 448)

- 1) 1 Timothy 6:13-16
- 2) Luke 8:4-15

SATURDAY OF
24TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 368, 1151, 2668, 2731, 2847

FOCUS: What can we do to ensure God's word can take root and flourish in us?

In the Gospels, Jesus often uses parables to explain something to the crowds who gather. "A parable is a *metaphor or simile* drawn from *nature or common life*, arresting the hearer by its *vividness or strangeness*, and leaving the mind in sufficient *doubt* about its precise application to tease it into *active thought*" (modern biblical scholar, C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*).

Thus, when Jesus speaks to the crowd comprising *people from one town after another* – about seed falling on rocky ground, among thorns, and on good rich soil – the disciples need to ask him *what the meaning of this parable might be*. Despite living in an agrarian society, Jesus' use of this particular metaphor is baffling to the disciples. The parable causes them to say, "Wait, what? That's not how this works; that's not how any of this works!" Then again, and paradoxically, this type of sowing of seed is exactly how it works.

For, as Jesus explains, the seed is the word of God. The word is shared with everyone, regardless of their internal "soil" and how ready they are to initially receive it. Things affect how the Word is transmitted, how it settles, and where it lands. The Devil steals the Word, and the anxieties and pleasures of life choke further growth out of promising seedlings. But seeds that are nurtured in rich soil *bear fruit through perseverance*.

Literary and rhetorical devices such as parables often make it easier for people to remember a message or instruction. And remembering it ensures that it is returned to, treated, nourished, and given the opportunity to take root. What in Jesus' parable sticks with us today? What can we do to ensure God's word can take root and flourish in us?

* * *

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

(Lec. 134)

1) Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

2) James 3:16–4:3

3) Mark 9:30-37

Gospel related: CCC 474, 557, 1825 CSDC 379

25TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Both God and the world offer their wisdom; our lives can be governed by only one.

The readings today feature a clash of two definitions of wisdom: worldly wisdom and divine wisdom.

Worldly wisdom looks at the just man with loathing. He pricks their consciences and points to the law of God. The wicked scoff: *let us see whether his words be true ... if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him and deliver him.* If the just man is truly righteous, then God should step in, revealing truth through might. If God fails to do so, the wicked then claim victory through their abuse of the just ones. Worldly wisdom also spurred the debate among the Apostles in the Gospel passage. Who was the greatest? Who would get the seat of highest honor in the Kingdom? Honors and rewards are paramount in worldly wisdom.

Divine wisdom is explained by Saint James in the second reading: *Wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity.* That sounds exactly like what the world needs. Saint James not only describes the fruits of divine wisdom, but also indicators of its absence: jealousy, selfish ambition, war, conflicts. Might makes right in the short term, but leads to disaster. He also shows the self-defeating nature of worldly wisdom; coveting doesn't lead to possessing but to downfall.

In the Gospel, Jesus foretells his passion and death and stuns the Apostles into silence. Picture Jesus' passion and death – the events, the figures, and especially the crucifixion. The supposed victory of the wicked over the just one is actually part of the divine wisdom. We don't have a good way to process this until it happens to us: how could revilement, torture, and a shameful death be anything good? That's why the cross is a stumbling block.

So where do we go? Who wins? Divine wisdom does.

First, worldly wisdom falls short because it has no eternal perspective. Those who taunted Jesus as he died on the cross (see Mt 27:39-44) inadvertently fulfilled what the Old Testament speaks of in our first reading. God used Jesus' rigged trial and horrendous death toward an eternal end.

Second, worldly wisdom is short-sighted even in the temporal realm. Might making right works until someone mightier comes along. And history testifies: eventually, someone stronger always comes along.

Third, worldly wisdom relies solely on human intellectual powers. On the other hand, divine wisdom comes from our all-knowing God. It includes the cross but also heaven. If we persevere according to worldly wisdom, we may get temporal rewards and death. If we persevere according to divine wisdom, we get eternal love and happiness.

The difficulty lies both in the choice for God and in the commitment to his ways. In full trust, let us choose God's wisdom.

* * *

Monday, September 20, 2021
(Lec. 449)
1) Ezra 1:1-6
2) Luke 8:16-18

MONDAY OF
25TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saints Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn, Priest,
and Paul Chŏng Ha-sang,
and Companions,
Martyrs)

FOCUS: Lights are meant to shine, not to be covered up.

In today's first reading from Ezra, we have an Old Testament story of the Israelites, in essence, returning to the light. The Persian ruler Cyrus frees the Israelites held captive in Babylon for most of the sixth century B.C. The Lord inspired Cyrus to allow them the freedom to return home to Jerusalem. God's light is once again shining amid his people.

Today's Gospel from Luke is a short one, but it gets straight to the point: lamps are designed to illuminate – to shine brightly. Lamps should lead us out of darkness and should not be hidden.

Our Gospel selection from Luke highlights the sense of sight. An earlier parable, the account of the sower and the seed, featured the sense of hearing. In each case, he uses a human sense to help facilitate understanding. In each of these well-known parables, we see symbols for the word of God – in one the seed, and in the other the lamp serves the same literary purpose.

What this whole chapter in Luke is reminding us is that once we receive God's word, we are then expected to internalize the Truth and take it out to the world. If we do not share our faith, then we become the lamp that has light to share, but instead covers it with a *vessel* or hides it *under a bed*. As noted earlier, light is designed to illuminate and so we, as lamps, are to take the Good News of Jesus Christ and illuminate others. We are charged with sharing God's saving word.

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Tuesday, September 21, 2021
(Lec. 643)
1) Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13
2) Matthew 9:9-13
Gospel related: CCC 581, 589, 2100

**SAINT MATTHEW,
APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST
- FEAST**

FOCUS: The Lord invites us to be merciful toward others as he has been merciful toward us.

We can picture Matthew *sitting at the customs post* when Jesus passed by. He was a tax collector, and so was likely sitting in a booth – a toll booth – and extracting, some might argue extorting, the first cut of all produce, fish, or other goods the merchants and people trying to make a living were carrying. Tax collectors were among the most hated of people, plying an irreligious trade and helping the Romans in a way that was considered traitorous. Many who held this position were thieves and violators of other Jewish law. They personified ritual impurity, and pious and law-abiding Jews would steer clear of them.

So, of course, Jesus doesn't do that. No, he approaches Matthew, calls to him, tells Matthew to follow him, and then goes to his house to eat. And Matthew's response to Jesus is just as immediate as that of Peter, Andrew, and John in the story of their call (Mt 4:18-22). Perhaps we are meant to see that this supposedly evil person was just as capable of being moved by the Lord's command as those earlier disciples, whose occupations and lives did not raise the Pharisees' eyebrows in the same way. For Jesus says, *Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do ... I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.*

As annoying as this event seemed to be for the religious leaders of his time, it is equally consoling and encouraging to us. The Lord is inviting us to be merciful as he has been, not only to Matthew, but to each one of us as well. We are sinners – and yet we are still loved, called, and redeemed by the One who created us for himself. There are many ways we can give as a gift to others the very gift of mercy we have received. Let us not forget how undeserving we ourselves are of the Lord's mercy, yet have received it in abundance all the same.

* * *

Wednesday, September 22, 2021
(Lec. 451)
1) Ezra 9:5-9
2)) Luke 9:1-6
Gospel related: CCC 551

WEDNESDAY OF
25TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God's mercy is always with us.

Mercy can be a difficult concept to understand, because it is an unbelievable, and unmerited, gift. God's mercy is rooted in his love for us. It is his presence in our lives, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. In our lives, we can recognize times when we have seen God's mercy. It might be formally through the sacrament of reconciliation, or more informally from the helping presence of a friend or family member.

Whatever our experiences of mercy may be, they are all connected in God's love. In today's Gospel, Jesus commissions the Twelve to go out and do his work of mercy. To do this, they are given the ability to cast out demons and to cure diseases. Both of these miraculous tasks are about freedom. God's mercy brings freedom and new life to those who are previously imprisoned by suffering.

Like the Twelve, we are also commissioned by God to do his work of mercy in the world. We each have been given gifts and talents by God that can be used to help others find new life and freedom. There are many ways in which God has prepared us to show his mercy to others.

As we continue our gathering today, we will receive nourishment for our journey. The Eucharist, the Real Presence, reminds us powerfully of God's presence in our lives. We are called to be that presence of mercy to others.

* * *

Thursday, September 23, 2021
(Lec. 452)

- 1) Haggai 1:1-8
- 2) Luke 9:7-9

THURSDAY OF
25TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Pius of Pietrelcina,
Priest)

FOCUS: The Lord takes delight in his people.

Herod the tetrarch was a man of many vices, questionable judgment, and an overabundance of pride. And yet even he can serve a purpose: The Gospel says today that Herod asks, regarding Jesus, *Who then is this about whom I hear such things? And that Herod kept trying to see him.*

Despite his innumerable faults, and even in the face of dubious motivation, he was drawn to the Messiah. The light of Christ penetrated his darkness, and he wanted to know more; he wanted to see Jesus.

This is good news for us! Because, as we heard only two days ago in the Gospel, Jesus came to call not the righteous but sinners. In this, we are not dissimilar to Herod; nor are we all that different from the people of Judah.

The prophet Haggai tells the governor and the high priest of Judah to rebuild the temple. He invites them to *consider their ways* since returning from exile in Babylon, for the people of Judah have fallen on hard times. Despite their hard work, they never seem to have enough.

And why? Because while they were busy rebuilding their own homes and working for their own livelihoods, they have neglected to rebuild the temple, the house of the Lord. The hard work they have done is not the problem; it is the orientation of the work. They have toiled for their own sake, forgetting that the source of every blessing is the Lord. The time has come to glorify God

Herod certainly had no interest in glorying God – history has been quite clear about that. For those of us here, however, we are at least committed to trying to do so. Christ's light has penetrated whatever darkness may be within us, and we want to know him more; we want to see him. And so we gather to do just that. Through God's bountiful mercy and goodness, Christ comes to meet us at the altar. *For the Lord loves his people, says the psalmist, and he adorns the lowly with victory.*

* * *

Friday, September 24, 2021
(Lec. 453)

- 1) Haggai 2:1-9
 - 2) Luke 9:18-22
- Gospel related: CCC 2600

FRIDAY OF
25TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The Lord is with us and delivers us through all of our trials.

Today's readings speak of a common human experience: loss and restoration, death and resurrection – all in the presence and under the watchful eyes of our God and Father.

In the first reading, the prophet Haggai offers encouraging words to the people of Israel, newly returned to their home from exile and facing the difficult task of restoring their lives and the glorious temple of the Lord. Haggai reminds the people of God's presence with them, and of help to come from neighboring nations through the hand of God.

For Christians, the foundation of our faith is Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, which he foretells in today's Gospel after Peter proclaims him to be the Messiah.

These are not just Scripture passages. These are the stories of our own lives. We have all faced suffering, loss, destruction, and ultimately, new life and recovery. But we have never faced them alone.

God's words to the people of Israel through Haggai are his words to all of us: Be strong and work, for *my spirit continues in your midst*. God is with us in all of the losses and failures of our lives, encouraging us to work hard to rebuild our lives, but promising his own presence and help from people around us. The hope we have in Christ Jesus, whose own death and resurrection opened the gates of the Kingdom to us, and the consolation we have in the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent to us as our advocate, give us strength for the trials of this world.

As we approach the altar, let us pray for those who are now suffering loss or death, and express our gratitude for the times that God has seen us through the difficulties in our own lives.

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Saturday, September 25, 2021

(Lec. 454)

1) Zechariah 2:5-9, 14-15a

2) Luke 9:43b-45

SATURDAY OF
25TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 554

FOCUS: The Lord has come to dwell among us.

See, I am coming to dwell among you, says the Lord. This was the prophecy given by Zechariah, six centuries before the birth of Christ. It would have been well-known to the Jewish people, and was part of the traditional understanding of the coming of the Messiah. And yet, juxtaposed with the scene in today's Gospel, we see how there are times when that which ought to be most clear to us in our sight is obscured by fear, doubt, or misunderstanding. The very one for whom God's people have been waiting is in their midst – he has come to dwell among them – and yet they do not recognize him. Nor do the disciples understand his words, as we hear Jesus predict his suffering and death.

Both readings today are a powerful illustration of how God's ways surpass our own understanding. While saying this is not news to us, and may even come off as cliché, the truth is that it is good to be reminded of this. It is good to be reminded, because we usually think of it only when things don't go our way. "Well, God's ways are just not our ways," we might say, when disappointment or tragedy befalls us. Rather, we ought to be mindful of – and thankful for! – this in all things and at all times. For everything that is good in our lives, the very fact that we exist, is *because* God's ways are not ours – because they surpass our understanding, and in fact go beyond our imaginative capabilities.

Only in God's Divine Mercy can the fact of the Son of Man being handed over to men – to suffer and die for the salvation of all – be a good and miraculous gift. Only when we free ourselves of the need to rely on our own understanding rather than God's (cf., Prov 3: 5-6) can we truly see the One who has come to dwell among us – in the Eucharist, in the Church, and within each one of us.

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

(Lec. 137)

1) Numbers 11:25-29

2) James 5:1-6

3) Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Gospel related: CCC 1034

**26TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Doing good in Jesus' name can help us store up treasure for ourselves in heaven.

Jesus speaks today of the fires of Gehenna, a place feared and reviled by the residents of Jerusalem for centuries. It was viewed as a cursed place, the closest thing to hell we might imagine. It was in Gehenna where Jewish kings practiced the human sacrifice of children to appease pagan deities. To show their utter disdain for Gehenna and the evils that happened there, it eventually became a landfill where the populace of Jerusalem dumped their garbage. Gehenna was a place of fetid odors and *unquenchable fire*.

To end up in Gehenna was akin to one's worst nightmare. It was hell on earth. For Jesus, Gehenna is an artfully used metaphor to convince people to live in right relationship with God and one another, or else suffer the eternal consequences of a life lived for oneself rather than for God and for others. By this point in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is already traveling the lonesome road to Calvary. He has told the Apostles that he is going to Jerusalem to die for sin and to destroy the powers of hell forever and for everyone.

It was Jesus' desire that we all act in his name for God's glory, in the same way that Moses wished that all God's people would prophesy in the Spirit. Doing good in Jesus' name can help us store up treasure for ourselves in heaven. In the second reading, James tells us *you have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure*, and that our sins against our fellow humans cry out to God for justice.

Gehenna is all around us. It exists in the forms of temptation that distract us from God and take our focus off the many gifts and blessings that God gives to those who trust in him. Gehenna was outside Jerusalem. It was outside the walls of Jerusalem, outside the protection offered by the walled city. It was a feared place where both people and things were thrown away and left to rot. For us, the promise of life and eternal security can be found only within the walls of the Holy City. The more we cling to Christ and remain close at his side, and the more we demonstrate our love of God and neighbor, the less likely it is that we will be thrown into Gehenna, where *their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched*.

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Monday, September 27, 2021
(Lec. 455)

- 1) Zechariah 8:1-8
- 2) Luke 9:46-50

MONDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Vincent de Paul,
Priest)

FOCUS: God brings forth gifts from all who serve him.

Today's Gospel contains a familiar story: Jesus places a little child by his side and tells his disciples that receiving a child in his name is the same as receiving him, and receiving the one who sent him. It is a lesson about communion, and humility – where the least among us *is the one who is the greatest*.

Then this familiar story takes an interesting, if not outright humorous turn. The disciples have literally just been told how to treat other disciples and followers of Jesus, and John immediately replies to this instruction with another complaint: *Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company.*

We must give the divine patience of Jesus here its due. As far as we know, he did not do an epic eye roll, though no one would have blamed him if he did. Instead, he merely says something that is so simple it is paradoxically profound: *Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you.*

In other words, to use a popular turn of phrase: “just chill.” “Stop creating divisions; stop trying to micromanage or get in the way of the working of the Spirit. Be humble and be grateful for those who join you in serving me.”

It's good advice. It's good for us to remember that God brings forth gifts from those whom we might least expect. Including ourselves.

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Tuesday, September 28, 2021
(Lec. 456)
1) Zechariah 8:20-23
2) Luke 9:51-56

TUESDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Wenceslaus,
Martyr;
Saint Lawrence Ruiz and Companions,
Martyrs)

Gospel related: CCC 544, 557

FOCUS: Jesus, who brings us salvation, brings us to our eternal home, Jerusalem.

If one ever steps foot on a Christian tour bus in the Holy Land, the greeting often is the same: "Welcome home." Two thousand years after Jesus, Christians still find their most authentic spiritual home in Jerusalem.

For the Jewish people in Jesus' time, Jerusalem was a common and essential destination, for there was the temple in which the Holy of Holies – God – resided. In today's Gospel, Jesus begins his final journey to Jerusalem, where his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension soon will take place.

The first reading from the prophet Zechariah speaks of this salvific destiny of humanity: *Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to implore the favor of the Lord. This passage speaks to the reunification of humanity, men of every nationality, speaking different tongues, shall take hold, yes, take hold of every Jew by the edge of his garment and say, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."* Salvation, it was foretold, was to come from the Jews. Indeed, Jesus is the culmination of this prophetic vision, and salvation is accomplished in Jerusalem.

As descendants of the Jews and disciples of Jesus, Jerusalem is our spiritual home, too. Scripture speaks of the eternal kingdom as the "new Jerusalem," where heaven and earth meet. For Catholics, we experience a taste of this at every Mass, where heaven and earth are joined together in an inexplicable way that foreshadows our destiny. This is the great mystery of the Eucharist: Jesus, who brings us salvation, brings us to our eternal home, Jerusalem.

Saint Lawrence Ruiz and companions (17th century) Lawrence, or Lorenzo, was the first saint of the Philippines. As a married man and devout Catholic, he was one day accused of murder, and ended up fleeing his homeland with a group of Dominican priests, who were sailing to Japan in spite of terrible persecution of Christians. Upon refusing to recant his faith, Lawrence was martyred with his Dominican companions.

Wednesday, September 29, 2021
(Lec. 647)

- 1) Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
or Revelation 12:7-12a
- 2) John 1:47-51

**SAINTS MICHAEL,
GABRIEL AND RAPHAEL,
ARCHANGELS
- FEAST**

FOCUS: God's glory endures forever.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Archangels: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Although angels have many different representations in popular culture, the theological reality is that "Angels are spiritual creatures who glorify God without ceasing and who serve his saving plans for other creatures: 'The angels work together for the benefit of us all'" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 114, 3, *ad* 3; CCC 350). They serve God's people: giving help, offering comfort, and providing protection. They deliver messages, fight spiritual battles, and worship God.

We certainly see them fulfill this in today's readings. In the Book of Revelation, Michael and his angels defeat Satan and his minions. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nathanael that he will see incredible glory as he answers his call to discipleship. He describes this glory with an image of the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Like Nathanael, Jesus calls us to follow him. And like Nathanael, when we follow Christ, we will see greater things. We give thanks for all that God has shown us, but we also know that there are greater things to come. As we encounter God's graciousness and his glory, we give thanks and proclaim it to all in word and deed.

In the sight of the angels, I will sing your praises, Lord. Because of your kindness and your truth; for you have made great above all things your name and your promise. When I called, you answered me; you built up strength within me.

* * *

Thursday, September 30, 2021

(Lec. 458)

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

2) Luke 10:1-12

THURSDAY OF

26TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(OBL MEM

Saint Jerome,

Priest and Doctor of the Church)

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

FOCUS: God invites us to rejoice in the simple and small things in our lives.

Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength. These words from the first reading still ring true today. We gather together today carrying our triumphs and joys, as well as our hardships and struggles. Jesus knew that life as a human contained great pain and difficulty, and yet he became human and accepted those hardships.

God is not ignorant of the human condition, so what must it mean to rejoice?

To rejoice means to take delight and be gladdened. We can learn about rejoicing from small children who slowly meander down sidewalks mesmerized by ants, grass, rocks, and whatever else they stumble upon. The sense of wonder and delight in young children can remind us that joy can be found in the most simple and mundane parts of our lives.

It can be easy to think that we need the perfect job, perfect health, the right house, the right spouse, or perfect social network to be happy. But finding joy can be deeper and simpler than just seeking out the best in life. When we encounter life's difficulties – an illness, the death of a loved one, losing a job – our lives are often put into perspective. And it can be challenging at these times to feel joyful.

Yet Jesus' sending of his disciples in today's Gospel gives us some insight into facing those challenges. They go not alone, but in pairs – God has provided community. They are unencumbered by possessions, relying instead on God's providence and the hospitality of welcoming households. And they have the Good News to top all other news: the kingdom of God is at hand.

God's invitation to rejoice is not a call to superficial happiness, but rather an invitation to a child-like sense of awe and gladness at the gift of creation and our lives. An invitation to find joy in our struggles. An invitation to take delight in the small and simple things, while walking with one another. An invitation to faith that trusts in the promise of a Kingdom which will one day come to its fullness.

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