

OCTOBER

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**YEAR B
WEEKDAYS I**

WEDDING HOMILY

- 1) Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31
- 2) 1 John 4:7-12
- 3) Mark 10: 6-9

FOCUS: Marriage is a living example of God's love and communion to the world.

Today's readings paint a beautiful picture of what a Christian marriage should look like. The beauty of wisdom, love, and the Lord come together to form an inseparable bond known as marriage.

Our first reading from Proverbs is an excerpt from "Poem on the Woman of Worth." In it, we see not only a woman who runs an efficient household but who also reaches out to the poor and the needy. Her heart bears the "fear of the Lord." The full poem gives us a picture of what the author sees as the perfect wife – a business person and a mother – one with practical wisdom who cares for her family and for her community. And this wisdom is abounding in and through love, the most important quality in a marriage.

Our second reading from John's Letter gives us an eloquent explanation of what love is and how an essential understanding of it is critical for a successful marriage.

That's because the covenant we are all about to witness here today between this man and this woman has a third party – God. There is no better source for understanding love, because God is love. No better example of love is there than God giving us his Son to die for our sins. *If God so loved us*, John says, *we also must love one another*. By doing so, his love is brought to perfection in us. If that sounds a bit heavy, that's because it is. But it is necessary to understand, because, just as Jesus sacrificed his life in love for us, so must a husband and wife learn to sacrifice for one another.

Our Gospel today is short – but it is as pointed as it is powerful. This man and this woman are to become one and *what God has joined together, no human being must separate*.

(To the bride and groom)

The vows you (N. and N.) make to one another before God today are not for five years, or ten years, but for life. The courtship now is over. The wedding planning, no matter how hectic it may have been, is in the past. Through this sacrament, you are embarking on a living example of God's love and communion to the world. With his grace you will continue to grow in marital love and self-sacrifice, and wisdom will bring you an ever deeper spiritual bond. Know of our prayers for you as you begin this journey together, as one.

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FUNERAL HOMILY

- 1) Wisdom 4:7-15
- 2) 2 Timothy 2:8-13
- 3) John 14:1-6

FOCUS: God has given us the truth that we are created for eternal union with him.

Today we gather to commend N. to God's love and mercy as he/she leaves this earthly life and enters into eternal life. In doing so, we come face to face with the reality of our own mortality. And we are often confronted with life's deepest questions. What is the purpose of our lives? Where are we going? And how do we get there? Asking these questions is good and natural.

The good news is that so many of our questions have answers in the word of God. So, what is the purpose of our lives? Our first reading reveals that a long life is not the ultimate goal. Rather, our first priority is to live a life that pleases God by following Jesus Christ. Where are we going? Jesus promised that he is preparing a place in heaven for those who follow him. How do we get there? Jesus promised that he is the way to eternal life. No one comes to the Father except through him.

These answers don't remove the sadness we feel when a loved one dies. But they do give us a steadfast hope that guides us through our sadness to eternal joy. Without God's word to guide us, we are left wandering in darkness. Scripture is the light for our path toward heaven. It is full of promises that we can trust. Our second reading proclaimed, *This saying is trustworthy: if we have died with him we shall also live with him.*

Choosing Christ in the midst of death's mysteries gives us the hope and healing that we so deeply need. If there are questions we cannot answer today, we can still find peace by remembering Christ's resurrection and trusting that we also will rise with him.

In the face of death, God has not left us in the darkness. God has given us the truth that we are created for eternal union with him. God has given us the trustworthy promises of Scripture to be our light in the darkness. And when there are questions we cannot answer, we choose faith in Jesus Christ and remember his resurrection. When we come to the place Christ is preparing for us, there will be no more death or sorrow. All of our questions will be answered, and all of our darkness will give way to light.

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Friday, October 1, 2021

(Lec. 459)

1) Baruch 1:15-22

2) Luke 10:13-16

FRIDAY OF
26TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus,
Virgin and Doctor
of the Church)

Gospel related: CCC 87, 858

FOCUS: We can follow God's ways by doing everything out of love for him and our neighbor.

Today's readings highlight our constant human struggle to live up to our covenant with God. We fail, we repent, we confess our sins, and then we fail again. We indict ourselves through large and small rejections of Christ in our daily lives, and as Jesus says, that brings woe, not blessing. And don't we know it! How disordered, chaotic, and off-balance are our lives when we are not fully reconciled to God.

Following Jesus doesn't have to be hard, but it does take a certain mindfulness – reminding ourselves of our daily call as Christians. In this, we can find a beautiful model in the life of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. In her very short life, this Carmelite nun learned an easy way to stay close to Jesus and to please him. She accepted any hardship that came her way and did everything – mostly small tasks – out of love for God. She proved that we don't have to be missionaries, martyrs, or great theologians to please God.

Saint Thérèse left a "little way" that we can all follow. We all face hardships to varying degrees. We all have tasks, great and small, that we need to accomplish each day. What we need to do is train ourselves to face these daily challenges and tasks with the intention of showing our love for God and neighbor. And when we falter, we can avail ourselves of God's grace and mercy in contrition and repentance. The mighty deeds of God become clearer, and bear more fruit in our lives, when the obstacles between us and him are removed.

Today, as we approach the altar, let us ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit to begin this simple but holy practice, to remember that each task, and each hardship, is a way for us to demonstrate our love for God and each other. With God's help, this simple teaching can bring us closer to God each day.

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Saturday, October 2, 2021

(Lec. 460)

1) Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29

(Lec. 650)

2) Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Gospel related: CCC 329, 336, 526, 2785

SATURDAY OF

26TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(OBL MEM

The Holy Guardian Angels)

FOCUS: Become like children, so that we might enter the kingdom of heaven.

What might Jesus mean when he says we must be childlike to enter the kingdom of heaven? Consider a very young child. When he is hurt or sad, he might run to his mother for comfort. When she needs food, she might run to her father. When they are excited, they run to their parents to share their joy. A child has complete trust in, and dependence upon, his or her parents. This is what God desires from us.

He desires this not for the purpose of some subservient, falsely humble disposition on our part, but for the sake of having an intimate relationship with each of us – a relationship in which he continuously outpours his love and care for us, and we willingly accept it. In other words, we let God be God, and we both rely on that, and hold him to it. He waits patiently with open arms for us to speak with him in prayer, and offers us answers in ways that are for our good.

Though of course God already knows our hearts, he still wants to hear it from us. Saying “thank you” is a good place to start. When we get bad news, do we run to God immediately? Do we remember to talk to God every day? We depend on him even more than a child depends on his parents, and so it is right for us to come to God in prayer constantly throughout the day.

Though a parent is saddened when their child misbehaves and a child is hurt when scolded, the reconciliation brings them both joy. God reminds his children through the prophet Baruch that when they return to him, they will be even more joyful than before. With that childlike trust and love, let us approach God each day.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2021

(Lec. 140)

- 1) Genesis 2:18-24
- 2) Hebrews 2:9-11
- 3) Mark 10:2-16
or 10:2-12

Gospel related: CCC 699,1244, 1261, 1627, 1639, 1650, 2364, 2380, 2382 CSDC 217

27TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: In Christ, there is no offense that cannot be forgiven and no wrong that cannot be made right.

This Sunday's Scriptures teach us about the sacramental covenant of marriage and how it is a reflection of God's covenant with his creation, and a preparation for the eternal union all of us hope to enjoy with God in heaven. In Genesis, we see that God created man and woman for one another, that the two may become one flesh. Just as Adam and Eve named all God's creatures, parents have the opportunity to name their children, a name by which they will be referred to in this life and in the next.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus quotes this same passage from Genesis when speaking about the unbreakable bond of marriage. When faced with the question of divorce, Jesus says it is the hardness of the human heart that brought about divorce, but the marriage bonds made by God can never be broken or undone. God never withdrew his covenant love for Israel, no matter how unfaithful his chosen people became. Jesus tells us that, in the same way, we should never fail to love and forgive one another so that the two who have become one in marriage may remain united until death.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we heard that Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, helps us to become perfect through suffering. Married couples and parents bear crosses particular to their vocation, as do those who are not married or parents. If we can draw upon the grace of God to carry those crosses far, faithfully, and well for the glory of God and the good of others, then there is no offense that cannot be forgiven and no wrong that cannot be made right.

Jesus reminds us to be childlike in our faith, accepting the kingdom of God like a little child so that one day we might enter into it. Children are quick to become angry, but almost as quick to forgive, forget, and move forward. The Lord reminds us to never lose and always cherish the awe and wonder with which children experience the world and others. That is where our faith can do the greatest good. Instead of seeing all that is wrong with the world, with ourselves, or with our marriage or our families, we can see what God sees through the eyes of mercy – the potential for holiness and greatness.

As Jesus said, *what God has joined together, no human being may separate*. It is the duty of each of us to see and serve Christ, *for whom and through whom all things exist*, by how we see, love, serve, and forgive one another. Then, as we recall how God's love for us in Christ has never failed us, we may draw strength from that to live in right relationship with him and one another.

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Monday, October 4, 2021
(Lec. 461)

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

MONDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(OBL MEM
Saint Francis of Assisi)

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

FOCUS: We are called to be good neighbors by showing compassion for others.

God has loved us into being. In return, we are called to love God with our entire heart, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The entirety of the law is summed up in the positive command to love. We are called to not simply avoid hurting our neighbors, but to actively care for their needs.

The scholar of the law in today's Gospel knows this, yet he continues to test Jesus, not out of curiosity, but because he wishes to justify himself. *Who is my neighbor?* he asks. In other words, "Who am I obligated to love?" Rather than answering the scholar's question directly, Jesus tells a parable.

In the story, a man is attacked on the road to Jericho and left for dead. The priest and the Levite pass him by, but the Samaritan tends to his wounds and carries him on his own animal to an inn, where he cares for him and leaves money for the innkeeper to continue his treatment. Jesus asks the scholar which one acted as a neighbor. He changes the nature of the question. A neighbor is not a person who deserves our mercy, but one who shows mercy. The only possible answer is the Samaritan, the outsider.

The Samaritan risked his own life and possessions to care for a stranger. Commenting on this passage, the *catechism* says, "The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away" (CCC1825). To follow Jesus, then, means to be less concerned with whom we are obligated to care for and more concerned with how we can be a neighbor to others. Who in our lives is far away and in need of mercy? How can we love them like Jesus today?

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Tuesday, October 5, 2021

(Lec. 462)

- 1) Jonah 3:1-10
- 2) Luke 10:38-42

TUESDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Faustina Kowalska,
Virgin;
USA: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos,
Priest)

Gospel related: **CSDC** 260

FOCUS: Hearing and observing the word of God give us the favor of his mercy and grace.

It will likely surprise no one to hear that one of the reasons it is easy for us to fall into sin and therefore away from God is that we can easily deceive ourselves into thinking we are not the ones with the problem. This self-deception is almost a superpower! (Though it's a power we certainly do not want to cultivate.) But each of us probably recognizes that human inclination to pride: when we are so convinced we are right, it is difficult to realize and accept that we are wrong. It is far easier to judge, accuse, and blame others.

Given this aspect of human nature, the events in the first reading are even more astounding. The singular prophetic voice of Jonah, competing with the chaotic noise of the city in his unrelenting pace to cover it in three days, reaches the ears of the king. And the king's superpower of deception disappears: he at once recognizes the sin that is present in himself and the evil that is alive in his city. He repents, leading his people to do the same, and God shows favor with mercy and grace.

One wonders what "chaotic noise" may have surrounded Martha at the time of Jesus' visit to her home as told in today's Gospel. After all, the singular prophetic voice of Christ did not reach her ears in such a way as to draw her immediately to his side, as it did Mary. Otherwise, she, too, would have been sitting at his feet! Certainly, hospitality to her guest was important, but the Gospel isn't setting up a contrast between meal preparation and perceived idleness. The Gospel is laying out the truth that the word of God is one that we ought to hear; it is worthy of our notice and attention, for it is life-giving and offers mercy and grace.

Many things can interfere with our ability to hear, and observe, God's word. Pride is at the root of most of these obstacles, and of course we can be masters of self-deception. With the help of the Holy Spirit, however, we can be rid of the noise that surrounds us and be free to sit at the feet of the Lord and listen to him. That is truly the better part.

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos (1819-67) - In 1843, Blessed Francis sailed to America from Germany to dedicate himself to missionary work. Having been accepted by the Redemptorist Congregation in Germany, Francis was ordained a priest in Baltimore and began ministering to German-speaking immigrants. He was admired as a kind and understanding confessor and spiritual director, and was known as a gifted preacher. As a parish priest, he made himself always available to those in need. Saint John Paul II proclaimed him Blessed in the year 2000.

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Wednesday, October 6, 2021

(Lec. 463)

1) Jonah 4:1-11

2) Luke 11:1-4

WEDNESDAY OF
27TH WEEK

IN ORDINARY TIME

(Opt. Mem.

Saint Bruno,

Priest;

USA: Blessed Marie Rose Durocher,

Virgin)

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

FOCUS: We are invited to meditate on the mystery of who God is for us.

How do we pray? What do our prayer lives look like? It's not unusual to struggle with prayer – to find it difficult to stay focused, to make the time to spend in prayer, to feel like we're connecting with God.

Our struggle with prayer doesn't seem to be new given that one of the requests from Jesus' disciples was for him to teach them how to pray. Maybe Jesus had the key that would unlock the mysteries of prayer and make all these challenges go away. Jesus' lesson was quite short and simple, actually – just two sentences. And yet, there are some profound truths we would do well to always remember when it comes to prayer. Let's look at one.

Who are we praying to? The answer seems obvious – God, of course. But who is God for us? Jesus invites us to approach God as Father. This means that we should approach him as children, children who need his guidance, his protection, his encouragement, his discipline; children who trust in their Father's unconditional love. Yet Jesus also invites us to make sure that when we invoke God's name we do so with reverence and respect.

Maybe a lesson for us today is to spend less time worrying about how we pray, what we should say, whether we're praying *the right way*, and spend more time in prayer meditating on and coming to know the God to whom we pray. For prayer invites us into relationship with the One who created us and signals our humble reliance on him.

As we come to the table to pray the great prayer of thanksgiving, let us be mindful of what this prayer reveals to us about God, marveling in all he has done for us out of love and in love.

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Thursday, October 7, 2021
(Lec. 464)

- 1) Malachi 3:13-20b
- 2) Luke 11:5-13

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

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

FOCUS: Prayer plays a vital role in building and nurturing our relationship with God.

Today, we are reminded of God's promise. He says, *And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.* Some believe this means if we want something, all we need to do is ask God for it and, like an overindulgent parent, he will give it to us. The truth requires us to dive deeper into what God is really promising with these words.

Perhaps a place to start looking at this is to ask ourselves why we pray. Do we pray so that God can give us all we want? Fame? Fortune? Victory? Healing? Love? Success? In praying for these things, we put God in the role of a genie who grants all our wishes. Is this truly what we seek? Does this answer God's plan for us? Does this build the kingdom of God? No. Our relationship with God, and our connection to him through prayer, is much richer and more fulfilling than asking him to grant us our checklist of desires.

Our faith informs us that God, like a good parent, gives us all we need, but not necessarily exactly what we ask for. If we really believe that God will take care of our needs, then do we need to pray at all? Absolutely! We pray to connect with God – to build and intensify our relationship. Prayer nurtures our love and strengthens our bond with God. The real answer to all our prayers is for God to send the Holy Spirit to be present in our hearts and in our minds. His presence comforts us, inspires us, keeps us on the right path, and teaches us how to live God's plan for us. The Holy Spirit is the real answer to all our prayers.

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Friday, October 8, 2021

(Lec. 465)

1) Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2

2) Luke 11:15-26

Gospel related: CCC 385, 700

FRIDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The kingdom of God is upon us, and we believe in Christ's redeeming power.

There are no warm fuzzies in today's readings. Instead, we hear of warning, impending catastrophe, conflict, division, and demonic activity. In the first reading, Joel is prophesying shortly after a plague of locusts devastated the land of Judah. He compares the coming day of the Lord to such an infestation, calling it *a day of darkness and of gloom, a day of clouds and somberness!* He warns the people (and especially the religious leaders) that they must perform severe penance and public prayer on account of their sins in preparation for that day.

We get the sense, in hearing Luke's Gospel, that Joel's prophecy was not heeded by everyone. For as Jesus stands before the crowd, having driven out a demon, many hypocritically identify him with demonic forces – as if to say only like could drive out like. And as Judah was laid waste by locusts, so those who fail to acknowledge Christ's authority, and therefore fail to dwell in the Kingdom which Christ has inaugurated, will be scattered. For the kingdom of God is upon those who believe in Christ's redeeming power.

In our own day, we must take these warnings to heart. We must make a radical commitment to Jesus and his Church. To do otherwise amounts to inhabiting a divided kingdom, and that's a losing battle. Rallying to Jesus involves penance, liturgical participation, and action. There are no safe alternatives; the day of the Lord will come for each one of us. May the Lord strengthen us through the Bread of Life to face that day.

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Saturday, October 9, 2021
(Lec. 466)

- 1) Joel 4:12-21
- 2) Luke 11:27-28

SATURDAY OF
27TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Denis, Bishop,
and Companions, Martyrs;
Saint John Leonardi, Priest;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: *Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.*

Today's Gospel from Luke is a short one, but its message cuts to the heart of Christianity – knowing the words of Scripture is great, but taking those words and living out God's plan for us is what he calls us to do. On the surface, Jesus' response to a woman's call to bless *the womb that carried [him]* might seem a bit curt. But Jesus is saying that what makes Mary blessed is not her motherhood, but her "fiat," – her "yes" to God's plan. That is, heeding and obeying God's word outweighs any familial, blood relation one might have to Jesus.

These words have myriad application, both for the crowd surrounding Jesus and for us. For those who surrounded him, it de-emphasized – within a culture that highly emphasized – the importance of relationships to other people for the purpose of status, credibility, authority, and likelihood of advancement in both secular and religious circles. It also, while not exactly prefiguring, illuminates that which had been made apparent in the Epiphany and would be expanded in the post-Resurrection mission of the Apostles: Christ's saving power is meant for all – Gentile and Jew alike. The criteria is simply faith, not bloodline.

This is certainly good news for us today. Though we partake of Christ's body and blood, literally housing him within our bodies, that act is one of faith and obedience, not of biology. We are blessed for the ways in which we respond to God's word and observe it. Therefore, today's message is simple: We need to be more like Mary. We need to listen to God's word. We need to give him our "Yes."

Saint Denis (d. 250) and companions – Known as the first bishop of Paris, Denis was sent by Pope Fabian with other bishops to evangelize Gaul in the third century. According to Tradition, Denis was so successful that pagan priests arranged to have him, along with his companions, arrested. They were then martyred by decapitation. A shrine grew at the place of Denis' death, and became the Basilica of Saint-Denis. He eventually came to be regarded as the patron saint of the French people.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2021

(Lec. 143)

- 1) Wisdom 7:7-11
- 2) Hebrews 4:12-13
- 3) Mark 10:17-30
or 10:17-27

Gospel related: CCC 1618, 1858, 2728

**28TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Joy comes to those who seek the love of God above all else.

Jesus, looking at [the man], loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

The man's response? *His face fell. He went away sad, for he had many possessions.*

This man was a self-described good man; he had observed all the commandments from his youth. Jesus shocks him, however, by telling him that following the rules is not enough. To inherit eternal life, Jesus says, the man must give up all he has. In a time when material wealth was considered a sign of God's blessing, this was a radical proclamation.

It is still a radical proclamation. But it is one that is meant for us to understand that in order to experience the fullness of joy that God wants for us, it is first necessary to free ourselves from our attachments. Only when we are free from the things that do not help us grow closer to God is there room within us to be filled with his love: love that is so fulfilling that it overflows into generosity to others; love so overwhelming that we want to respond by taking up our cross and eagerly following Jesus.

It is difficult to give up that which we hold dear – the things that make us comfortable and provide convenience, that represent our accomplishments, and that give us status and make us proud. In fact, Jesus says that it is impossible for humans. But he also tells us that we are not on our own. We can rely on God to help us break free from the material and temporal goods we treasure, because *all things are possible for God*. He assures us that if we give up things for his sake, if we rely on him totally and choose him above all else, we will *receive a hundred times more now in this present age*.

We are here today because we believe in the One who gave up all to give us all. In seeking to be one with him through the gift of his body and blood, we reveal our desire to know and imitate his love more deeply. In receiving him in the Eucharist, we recommit ourselves to allowing the Lord to work in us, making it possible to break free from all that keeps us from knowing his love completely.

Knowing that God is with us, we continue seeking to make God our greatest "treasure," and trust that we will know joy not only in eternal life, but here in this life which he has so graciously given us.

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Monday, October 11, 2021
(Lec. 467)

- 1) Romans 1:1-7
- 2) Luke 11:29-32

MONDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John XXIII,
Pope)

FOCUS: We are called to holiness.

Uncertainty can be one of the most challenging aspects of our human experience. Whether we are waiting to hear life-changing news or wondering what our life will be like in five years, all of us have faced doubt about what the future holds for us. It is not comfortable to sit in waiting. And yet, it is a part of life that we have to accept.

Today's Gospel also contains a situation of uncertainty. Jesus addresses people who are asking for a sign from him. They might have heard what he has been doing and saying, but they are not sure if he is the Messiah. Furthermore, as Jesus points out, their motives are not just about uncertainty. Rather, they are really asking Jesus for a sign because they are hoping to prove him wrong and discredit his authority.

Our craving for certainty is probably not sinister, but simply seeking some answers in life. Still, today's readings remind us of the signs we *do* have in our lives as faithful disciples. We have the Gospel, we know Jesus' miracles and teachings, and we have a faith that has been handed down to us for generations. As Saint Paul writes in the first reading, we are called to belong to Jesus Christ, and we are called to be holy.

Our call to holiness is strengthened here as we celebrate the Eucharist together. We are reminded of the sign we celebrate of Christ's sacrifice for us, conquering death, and bringing us to eternal life.

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Tuesday, October 12, 2021

(Lec. 468)

1) Romans 1:16-25

2) Luke 11:37-41

Gospel related: CCC 579, 588, 2447

TUESDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: The revelation of God is a single story of redemption, with the goal of salvation for all humanity.

Saint Paul has an urgent message for the Christian community in Rome: The Gospel *is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes*: for Jew first, and then Greek. The revelation of God to us – creation, covenants, the Incarnation of Jesus, the passion and resurrection of Jesus, the founding of the Church – is fantastic news. It is a single story of redemption, with the goal of salvation for all humanity.

In the passage from Luke's Gospel, Jesus hints at this universal offer of salvation. He did not do the ordinary ritual washings before eating, seemingly on purpose, to highlight a lesson to the Pharisees. If observance of the Jewish law was an end unto itself, then the Pharisees were missing the entire point. An unwashed interior was far more perilous than not washing before a meal.

Both Jesus and Paul end with a warning. Jesus calls the Pharisees fools, which must have shocked those in attendance. The leaders of the Jewish faith? Paul also calls those fools who see the revelation of God (even in creation) and refuse to acknowledge him. The fools of the world exchanged faith in God for worship of idols; the fools of Jesus' time created idols out of ritual observance.

No one is forced to accept God's invitation, but it would be foolish not to. It is the only way to perfect love and union with him. He desires this for us and offers us the means to attain it.

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Wednesday, October 13, 2021

(Lec. 469)

1) Romans 2:1-11

2) Luke 11:42-46

Gospel related: CCC 579

WEDNESDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *There will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good.*

In today's Gospel, Jesus has sharp, critical words for the Pharisees and scholars of the law. Ordinary Jews looked to the Pharisees and scholars of the law to guide them regarding obedience to God's law, to help inform them about what was right and what was wrong. Yet of the Pharisees Jesus says that they are *like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk*. As close proximity to a dead body made one unclean (defiled), Jesus was, in essence, accusing the Pharisees of leading people astray. And he didn't have much better to say about the scholars of the law, whom he accuses of failing to observe the practices they impose on others – of basically following the principle of “do as I say not as I do.”

Saint Paul has his own harsh words for the fledgling Christian communities in Rome. They, too, are judging others for their behavior, while committing the same actions and participating in the same disobedience and wickedness. *Affliction and distress will come upon everyone who does evil*, Paul writes. Words of warning to be sure, but words that also lead to the Good News. For *there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good ... There is no partiality with God*.

There is no partiality with God: that is, Jew or Greek, man or woman, child or adult, all receive God's blessing and reward through the righteousness of faith. Repentance and conversion and the doing of good; love of God; and loving one another as Christ commands protect us against the hypocrisy and judgment for which Jesus and Paul indict their listeners. Therefore, as we prepare to receive Christ's own presence in our hearts, let us do so with hearts that are open to the truth we need to hear from him that in his mercy he may lead us to repentance and deeper conversion.

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Thursday, October 14, 2021
(Lec. 470)

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

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

Gospel related: CCC 579

FOCUS: Do not hinder others from growing closer to God.

There's a common saying that cautions to never talk about politics or religion at dinner.

Today's Gospel finds Jesus concluding a not-quite-polite dinner conversation with Pharisees and Jewish lawyers. He condemns generations of persecution, starting *from the blood of Abel*, and continuing to the death of Zechariah, a prophet who died toward the end of the Kingdom of Judah. There may not have ever been a more awkward dinner.

Perhaps the most significant part of Jesus' teaching that night is this: *You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter.* Instead of strengthening the relationship between the human and the Divine, the Pharisees and lawyers are admonished for becoming obstacles to God's mercy, preventing many from growing closer to God.

Saint Paul's Letter to the Roman Christians engages a related topic. Some in these early communities believed that salvation was only for those who followed Jewish tradition. However, Paul is telling them God belongs to all people. He corrects them, instructing that salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles. They, as with the Pharisees and lawyers in the Gospel, ought not to be obstacles to God's mercy, but instruments of it – leading others to the faith and building up the communities in love, not division.

Both of these Scripture passages offer a message and an opportunity for an examination of conscience: Are we helping others grow closer to God? Are there ways we may be impeding them from doing so? Our liturgy together offers the opportunity for reconciliation, as well as forgiveness for the times we have failed in those respects. And it is Christ himself, whom we receive in the Eucharist here, who transforms and empowers us to do as he commands. We will go forth, with his grace, to help others grow closer to God.

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

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Friday, October 15, 2021

(Lec. 471)

1) Romans 4:1-8

2) Luke 12:1-7

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

Gospel related: CCC 342, 678

FOCUS: God asks only that we say yes to his gift of love.

Our first reading today might feel surprising. *When one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.* If we serve in numerous ministries, there may be a part of us that feels like those works *must* count for something! Or maybe we know that our Church teaches that faith and works go hand in hand, and so we are puzzling over Saint Paul's words. Or maybe we live surrounded by the lie that we should place our faith only in what we accomplish, on our own – if we only do this or that, then we will find happiness.

Jesus warns us to beware of this hypocrisy. It has a secular form that may take the form of, "if only I get that promotion or earn that award." But it also has the form it took for the Pharisees: "if I do these good things, then I will be righteous." Both are a lie.

The word of God is very clear: God does not love us or save us because of what we do. We do not earn salvation through our works.

God saves us because God loves us. We are worth more than many sparrows. Even the hairs on our head have been counted. God asks only that we say yes to this gift.

That is what faith is. Faith is our "yes" to God. Salvation is found in the relationship, in receiving the freely given, intimate love of Christ and responding by giving ourselves in our "yes." That response of love *will* lead us to act as it fills our heart more fully, but our actions are a response to salvation already given, *not* the payment for salvation.

Let us joyfully give our "yes" today, receiving God's gift of self in this Eucharist and, filled with this saving love, be empowered to respond to our salvation by sharing God's goodness with others.

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Saturday, October 16, 2021
(Lec. 472)

- 1) Romans 4:13, 16-18
- 2) Luke 12:8-12

SATURDAY OF
28TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Hedwig, Religious;
Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

Gospel related: CCC 333, 1287, 1864

FOCUS: The Holy Spirit is with us each day to draw us into deeper relationship with God.

The most important aspects of our lives are our relationships. Whether these relationships are in the context of family, friendship, work, or business, relationships allow us to connect with others. The best relationships involve willing partners who are attuned to each other and ready to respond actively to each other's needs.

Of all our relationships, the most important, of course, is with God. In him we find the perfect, most responsive, attentive relationship. Today's readings lift up God's dynamic power in the Holy Spirit and call us to do our part in our relationship with him.

Jesus speaks to his disciples about the Holy Spirit in the context of testimony. Jesus knows his disciples will be tested and that he will not be there to assist them. Note Jesus' active love here – he anticipates the disciples' needs and helps prepare them. Jesus commends his disciples entirely to the Holy Spirit who will teach them at the moment of their trial. Jesus will send his own spirit to accompany the disciples at each moment of their lives and provide for their needs in love.

This active, loving God is a person with whom we can be in relationship, as were the disciples. Faith shows us that even here, even now, the Holy Spirit attends to us. Do we look for the signs of the Holy Spirit around us and welcome his aid? How active is our own response? Of course God always gives more, and through his patient love he teaches us how to respond generously as well. We learn this here, at this altar, where the Lord gives himself for the sake of deepening his relationship with us. May we listen attentively and respond generously to our loving God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90) – At age 24, Margaret entered the Visitation Order of French sisters, ready to “not be extraordinary except by being ordinary,” as the order prescribed. Within three years of joining the order, however, Margaret experienced visions of Christ asking her to express his love for mankind by using his human heart as the symbol of his love. Despite resistance from her order and theologians of the day, Margaret is recognized for established and promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was canonized by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2021

(Lec. 146)

- 1) Isaiah 53:10-11
- 2) Hebrews 4:14-16
- 3) Mark 10:35-45
or 10:42-45

Gospel related: CCC 536, 608, 618, 1225, 1551, 1570 CSDC 193, 379

**29TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: In the mystery of Christ's sufferings, we find hope and meaning.

Today's Gospel dominates our Scriptures – so much so that we can fail to notice the words of Isaiah in the first reading. Taken from the Song of the Suffering Servant, the prophet sets the scene for what will follow and for what the Church places before us today. It points to one perennial question: Does human suffering have any meaning?

Suffering is one of life's great mysteries. It can be random, unexpected, and found in many forms derived from natural evil (things of nature, such as natural disasters, disease and illness – the list is endless); and from moral evils – those acts committed by humans that are morally wrong and impact relationships, cause grief, destroy life. That list also is endless.

Surrounded by its effects, we seek to explain it or at least understand it, even when no explanation is possible. As people of faith, suffering seems to go against our most basic image of a loving God, and we find ourselves asking how could God let this happen?

So, we take comfort in Scripture. Remember the words of Isaiah: *The Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity,* and the words of the Letter to the Hebrews: *Since Christ has been tested in every way ... let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.*

Initially, we might not find much solace here, but when we look through the eyes of faith we see that these words do not seek to explain suffering, but to help us realize that even in moments of trial, good can emerge. The Suffering Servant does not suffer in vain, but justifies many. His suffering has value.

This theme of finding value in suffering is developed further in our Gospel. The Twelve are learning that leadership and authority are not about glory, but service and self-giving. In a radical way, Jesus reverses the worldwide view of power, making suffering and service, symbolized in the cup of suffering, the hallmark of discipleship.

Therefore, in Christ we can begin to use suffering for a greater purpose – to learn from it and to join our sufferings to Christ's for the justification of others. No moment of human suffering goes unnoticed by God. It is part of life and cannot be avoided, but what gives us hope is not that Christ suffered, but that he triumphs over suffering in the resurrection. Our hope is that we, too, can share in that victory.

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Monday, October 18, 2021

(Lec. 661)

1) 2 Timothy 4:10-17b

2) Luke 10:1-9

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

**SAINT LUKE,
EVANGELIST
- FEAST**

FOCUS: Prepare the way for Christ by promoting peace and reconciliation.

Today the Church celebrates the feast of Saint Luke, the evangelist. In the first reading, we hear that he is a loyal friend to Paul, staying with him when everyone else has deserted him. In the Gospel, we hear about Jesus sending disciples to the places he plans to visit to prepare the way for him. This additional mission of 72 disciples is unique to Luke's Gospel, causing some to propose that Luke himself was among them. The instructions for the disciples to travel light and not to greet anyone until they arrive at their destination reflect both the urgency and risks of their mission.

They may encounter some who are hostile toward their message. Still, when they arrive at a household, the disciples are told to greet them with peace. This greeting is an offer of salvation. To accept peace is to accept the kingdom of God. Where they are welcomed, the disciples are to remain and eat and drink what is put before them. They are to cure the sick and proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom.

Though the disciples can cure illnesses in Jesus' name, this is only a sign of the healing that is to come. Only God can forgive sins, and it is Jesus' death on the cross that will make our reconciliation with the Father possible. As the seventy-two prepared the way for Jesus to enter towns that may not accept his message of peace, so the Church is called to proclaim the kingdom of God to a world that is often hostile to its values. We are tasked with the same mission to proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand. First, we make peace with God and one another, rooting out sin from our hearts and making reparation. Then we, like the disciples, become people of peace and reconciliation, preparing the way for Christ's reign by bringing healing and hope to the world.

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Tuesday, October 19, 2021
(Lec. 474)

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

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

Gospel related: CCC 2849

FOCUS: Through Adam we were condemned; through Christ we are saved.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to be watchful and wait for his return since we do not know when it will occur. We need to live in a state of preparedness as we do not know when he will return or when we will be called to meet him. A life of preparedness is one that preaches the Good News in word and deed. In the first reading, Saint Paul helps us understand what this Good News is.

In writing to the Christians in Rome, Saint Paul compares Adam and Jesus. Adam brought sin into the world; this resulted in death for him and all his descendants. By his death, Jesus, the new Adam, brings redemption, resulting in eternal life for humanity. Adam's sin leads to death for all people. *Through one transgression condemnation came upon all*, for we are all children of Adam. But God, acting in his Son, Jesus, brings us justification and eternal life. This is grace, Paul says. It is not something we earn, rather it is a gift from God. Through Jesus' *one righteous act acquittal and life came to all*. This is the "Good News" of the Gospel we are called to live and preach.

Through Adam we were condemned; through Christ we are saved. This is radical and affirming Good News! Whereas human institutions fall short of truly caring for us, God's grace abounds and redeems. Where we humans fail one another in love, God's perfect love reconciles and saves. The freedom we are given in this is like no other freedom. Nothing but ourselves – and sin – keep us from the One who desires only our good and who created us to spend eternity with him. For this we prepare. May God help us prepare well.

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Wednesday, October 20, 2021
(Lec. 475)

- 1) Romans 6:12-18
- 2) Luke 12:39-48

WEDNESDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
USA: Saint Paul of the Cross,
Priest)

Gospel related: CCC 2849

FOCUS: To whom much is given, much is expected.

What are the standards by which we judge ourselves? What are the standards by which we judge others?

Jesus tells us, *Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.*

Let us consider the gifts that God had entrusted to us. Many of us have experiences or talents that no one else has. These gifts are entrusted to us with the expectation that they will be used well, not squandered, for to whom much is given, much is expected. We are now *stewards* of the gifts we have been given. In a variety of ways, many of us have a “head start” because of experiences or talents that have been granted to us, and we are called to be stewards of these gifts.

Who, then, according to Jesus, is “the faithful steward?” It is not the person who *has* the most, not the person who has *accomplished* the most, and not the one who has *used his privileged position* for his own gain, counting his prosperity as a reward from God. It is not the one who judges others’ failings and faults, neglecting to understand the different starting points that we all have. No, the faithful steward is the one who, at any unexpected time, will be found acting righteously, using the gifts God has granted to *serve* God, not himself.

Today, may we consider the particular gifts that God has entrusted to each one of us. Let us ask God to help us be good stewards of those gifts, so that at any hour, he will find us using those gifts for his service.

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Thursday, October 21, 2021

(Lec. 476)

1) Romans 6:19-23

2) Luke 12:49-53

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

THURSDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! Why fire? The early Church Fathers understood this to be for many reasons. For some, it was a symbol of the saving message of the Gospel and the power of its commandments (Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Catena*); it was the word and love of God united for salvation. Saint Basil the Great said that the fire *[reveals] the malice of sin, and the excellence of good actions performed for the glory of God and his Christ*. Others wrote that it represented the person of the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the disciples *in fiery tongues* (Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catena*). This fire would unite the Church, but it would also cause a greater division with unbelievers.

All of these theological reflections seem to have been borne out in history. For even as Jesus taught, and even prayed for unity, there is still opposition, or even hatred, between and among his followers. This is why division among Christians is such a scandal. As Saint Paul writes today, *the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. We are *freed from sin*, a benefit that leads to our sanctification. And yet we continually fall short due to the weakness of our nature, and so peace and unity do not yet reign.

Jesus also tells us that by following him, we are going to face rejection from unbelievers. The Holy Spirit will unite the baptized and call us away from the selfish values of the world. We will be rejected. We will face persecution. The Good News, however, is we will also be accompanied by that Spirit, and be strengthened and fortified with his gifts so as to bear fruit in the world for its salvation.

The Lord desires that we be one in mission and faith through baptism. With his help, we continue to work and pray for unity, and commit ourselves to bringing the Gospel of Redemption to the whole world.

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Friday, October 22, 2021

(Lec. 477)

1) Romans 7:18-25a

2) Luke 12:54-59

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

FOCUS: Our war against sin is won only with and through Jesus Christ.

There are some things in life that are more difficult to achieve, or overcome, than others. In our first reading today, Saint Paul recognized that he was incapable of conquering sin on his own strength. Paul was ready and willing to do good, but admits to being unable to do it. He saw the war within himself – the battle between good and evil raging in his own heart.

Saint Paul's testimony sheds light on our fallen humanity. We all experience this war within us. Sometimes we hopelessly give up the war and give in to sin without a fight. At other times, we battle valiantly against temptation, but do not find ourselves strong enough to win the war.

The Good News is that we do not have to live as a prisoner of this war. Christ's message in the Gospel is a call to conversion. We are Christians who have found victory in Christ, who has delivered us from evil. And he will continue to set captives free until the end of time. By uniting our lives to Jesus and conforming ourselves to him in obedience to the commandments, we share in his victory. How freeing it is to rely on Christ to deliver us through his eternal sacrifice, and through the help he gives us in the Holy Spirit and through the sacraments. We do not fight this fight alone – our Advocate is here for us.

At the conclusion of his lament over his human condition, Saint Paul asks a powerful rhetorical question – *Who will deliver me from this mortal body?* His answer is one that we, too, can exclaim when the Lord delivers us from sin: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rather than living in hopelessness and despair as captives of sin, we can live in the freedom that Christ has won for us. When we experience this freedom, our hearts naturally overflow in thanksgiving and praise to God.

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

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Saturday, October 23, 2021
(Lec. 478)

- 1) Romans 8:1-11
- 2) Luke 13:1-9

SATURDAY OF
29TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John of Capistrano,
Priest;
Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: God sent his Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us.

Any gardener can sympathize with the orchard owner in today's parable and his frustration over the fig tree that simply will not produce. Why bother wasting time on it? Even just leaving it alone means it uses up the valuable nutrients in the soil – nutrients that other plants could use. It's understandable that he asks the gardener to just cut it down – to give up and move on. But the gardener isn't ready to give up on the fig tree quite yet. Instead, he says he will tend to the tree, diligently cultivating the ground and fertilizing it to try and help it produce fruit.

Friends, our loving God is like this tender gardener. For generations, he sent the judges, kings, and then prophets to teach the Israelites about himself and to help them live as they should – to bear fruit, in a sense. The Old Testament, however, demonstrates that Israel never stayed faithful for long. Rather than abandoning or destroying his people, God sent his own Son to teach all people about himself. God also sent his Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us as we seek to know, love, and serve God and avoid living according to the flesh. Jesus is clear that those who do not repent and follow him will perish.

Like the gardener, the Holy Spirit moves among us, preparing the soil of our hearts to be receptive to God working in our lives. We must cooperate with God's grace to reap the fruits of a faithful life, "fertilizing" our hearts with prayer, the sacraments, Scripture, and good works. Our Father will search for the fruit our lives have produced. May we, the harvest, be abundant.

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

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2021

(Lec. 149)

1) Jeremiah 31:7-9

2) Hebrews 5:1-6

3) Mark 10:46-52

Gospel related: CCC 548, 2616, 2667

**30TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: Jesus invites us to follow him and make God's way our own.

Frank Sinatra famously sang: "I did it my way." This song remains one of his greatest hits, not only because of how well he sang it, but because of its meaning. We would all like to do it our way – to have everything go according to our own plans, like the self-made person in charge of his or her own destiny.

We *think* this is possible because we've bought into two lies. The first is, "what we do, WE do," rather than it being done through God's grace and generosity. The second is that "self-reliance is freedom." And perhaps it is indeed true that we have ventured out on a career path and found success without the explicit assistance of others. Maybe we single-handedly completed business projects or maintained a household without another human being to really help us. But underlying these gains are the truths that God's love is what sustains us and allows us to achieve goodness, and true freedom comes through communal life in Christ. Faith is what allows us to align "our way" with what God desires for us.

Through marriage we join our way to that of a spouse and perhaps children. Through religious vows or a commitment to worthy causes, we join with the way of a community. As we continue to surrender ourselves to others for the sake of those we love and the greater good, we become more free in relying on God to guide us. He guides us in the way of compassion and love, as revealed by Jesus, his Son.

Jesus reveals God's way of love to us and invites us to join him. For some, this is straightforward; Jesus said to Peter: *Come after me* (Mt 4:19), and to Levi: *Follow me* (Mt 9:9). Others like Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, hear Jesus' voice and cry out to him for pity. Our faith is a gift as we acknowledge our own need to see and follow Christ. Like Bartimaeus, we may not see clearly at first, but we can listen closely for Jesus, who never gives up on us. We, too, will find restoration, healing, and redemption.

Bartimaeus joined a sizable group of others following Jesus. It is not easy and takes courage to do so, but we, too, are surrounded and supported by others: the community of disciples known as the Church. Jesus continues to heal and guide us, especially through the Eucharist that unites us to him. We become more Christ-like in our compassionate caring for ourselves, others, and the world. Instead of being self-made, we are Christ-made, and our destiny is our redemption in him as God's way fully becomes our own.

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Monday, October 25, 2021

(Lec. 479)

1) Romans 8:12-17

2) Luke 13:10-17

Gospel related: CCC 582 CSDC 261

MONDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: With our adoption as God's children, we move from slavery to freedom.

The woman in today's Gospel has been in bondage for 18 years, suffering from a severe curvature of the spine, unable even to stand erect. Yet she still comes to the synagogue on the Sabbath; she is a devoted *daughter of Abraham*.

As a *daughter of Abraham*, is she not worth so much more than an ox or an ass? It would be a necessary thing to assist either of those animals who were in need on the Sabbath, thus how could anyone question Jesus' action of curing the woman? Unless they were hypocrites, which is what Jesus calls the synagogue leader and those who admonish Jesus along with him.

Jesus lays his hands on the woman, and she immediately stands up straight and glorifies God. She who was once crippled and had no choice, physically, but to present herself as bowed before others, now stands tall as one healed and saved by God. Jesus has gifted her with physical health *and* the chance to live a life of praise. *Woman, you are set free.*

This Gospel is a tangible expression of Paul's beautiful theology found in today's first reading. He writes, *you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption*. With our adoption as God's children, we move from slavery to freedom, from fear to love. Like the woman in today's story, we are no longer under the bondage of Satan; through the touch of Christ's healing hands, we have encountered the Divine who became human that we might become like him. Joined with him, the begotten Son, we are joint heirs to the promises of God.

Through the Lord's Supper, we are continually fashioned into God's beloved children. Together, in gratitude, we cry, *Abba, Father*.

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Tuesday, October 26, 2021

(Lec. 480)

1) Romans 8:18-25

2) Luke 13:18-21

Gospel related: CCC 2660

TUESDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We live with hope and endurance as we work in expectation of the coming glory.

Throughout our lives, we plant different kinds of seeds. A single class leads to a career. A first meeting leads to a friendship. A prayer leads to a discernment of a vocation. These humble beginnings can lead to something extraordinary.

In today's Gospel, Jesus shares similar images to describe the kingdom of God. A tiny mustard seed blooms into a verdant tree. Small measures of yeast lead to a whole batch of dough. Both are characterized by tremendous growth.

Mindful of this, we are called to participate in the building of the kingdom of God here on earth. We build the kingdom of God with every compassionate act toward others in which we engage. We build the kingdom of God with every prayer that unites us with God. We build the kingdom of God with every grace-filled encounter that might seem like just a mustard seed, but is on its way to becoming an abundant shrub. This work is not easy. It is full of hardship, but as Saint Paul advised the Romans, we are to live with hope and endurance as we work in expectation of the coming glory.

One way we can be supported in faithfully living our call is through our gathering here today. The Eucharist is a representation of Christ's Paschal Mystery, that he has conquered death with new life. Whatever hardship we face or however small our efforts might feel, we must not be afraid to be a seed for another's soil, nor to be the dough for someone else's yeast. For as Paul writes, *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.*

God is working in and through us to build his Kingdom, and in that hope, we are saved.

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Wednesday, October 27, 2021

(Lec. 481)

1) Romans 8:26-30

2) Luke 13:22-30

WEDNESDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: We are called to know God personally through regular practices of prayer.

The Gospel today makes it clear that those who enter into the Kingdom are those who are known by God. And so we are called to have a personal relationship with God, our just and merciful Lord.

The practices of regular prayer and reflection help us to train ourselves to hear God speaking to us, and to recognize how we respond. Sometimes it is easy to know what God is asking of us; other times it is not. There are times when our spiritual state is moving toward God in faith, hope, mercy, and love; and times when we may resist God, and gravitate toward doubt, despair, and negative influences. Saint Ignatius of Loyola wrote about these moments, or states of being, calling them “consolations” and “desolations,” respectively.

We can take a few minutes each day to reflect on where we sense our interior movement. Eventually, this practice can help us to notice God’s work in our lives in the moment. We can start to notice those subtle movements of the Spirit that call us to action or contemplation. And when times are difficult, it helps to remember, as Paul writes, that *the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes* for us.

God calls us to himself, and we respond in faith. But that doesn’t mean we will not struggle in this world. Our hope is in God’s mercy; we trust in it. And *we know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose*. God desires to know and be known by us. In Jesus Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have the ways and means to meet that desire, and to one day recline at the table in God’s kingdom.

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Thursday, October 28, 2021
(Lec. 666)

1) Ephesians 2:19-22

2) Luke 6:12-16

Gospel related: CCC 1577, 2600

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

FOCUS: The power of God's grace and the wonders of the Holy Spirit are at work in us.

Today the Church celebrates the feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles. In the Gospel we just heard, the Lord Jesus chose them and others from among his followers to be part of the Twelve: the ones he called Apostles. Besides this call, we know very little about these two men. But what we do know is probably sufficient to highlight the power of God.

Simon and Jude had presumably been following Jesus for a time, learning, observing, and listening to the Lord. Like other disciples, they were ordinary men who were drawn by Jesus' message and his person to make a commitment, to dedicate time and effort to being his disciples. And Jesus appointed them to be Apostles. They traveled the known world, boldly proclaiming Christ crucified, and eventually, being martyred for their commitment.

Today's feast highlights for us the power of God's grace and the wonders the Holy Spirit can work in us, individually and as a body. Those Apostles who ran away at the hour of Jesus' passion are not the same Apostles who set out to spread the Gospel to every known corner of the world. The Holy Spirit transformed them from fearful deserters to great evangelizers, giving them the courage they lacked.

As disciples of the Lord, we, too, have a calling; we, too, will find our commitment tested. But the story of the Apostles shows us that none of us are too insignificant for God to achieve great things with our cooperation. This same Holy Spirit is working in us, *members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.*

As we come to the table of the Lord, let us pray for hearts that are open to this transformation and for the grace to persevere when we ourselves are tested.

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Friday, October 29, 2021

(Lec. 483)

1) Romans 9:1-5

2) Luke 14:1-6

Gospel related: CCC 575, 582, 588 CSDC 261

FRIDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: Let us be open to the gifts Jesus wishes to share with us.

There is a longing, a deep sorrow, in both of our readings today. Saint Paul affirms that the adoption, the promises, the glory – all of Christ's gifts – belong to the people of Israel. But there is a lament in his words because so many of his kindred are "missing the gift."

Similarly, Jesus' exchange with the scholars of the law and the Pharisees has an inherent sadness to it. They watch Jesus carefully, and yet so many miss who, *and what*, he is. They miss the heart of his mission. They do not understand the healing the Sabbath is supposed to bring, or the healing Jesus brings.

And yet, he still reaches out. On that Sabbath day, he reached out to heal the man who was suffering, but he also reached through the blindness of the scholars and the Pharisees to teach them. This same Christ is reaching out to us today, too.

What might be keeping *us* from receiving the gifts Jesus wants to offer us? Maybe we're afraid to take the steps Christ is inviting us toward, and so we are missing out on the gifts he would give to carry us on that journey. Maybe we have convinced ourselves of some unworthiness and so are missing out on the gifts of his mercy. Maybe we are missing Jesus present in some of our brothers and sisters because we are blinded by pride or judgment.

Whatever may be separating us from Christ's gifts, he is present here today to pour himself out on us. Let us, in the prayer of this liturgy, be opened to what he wishes to share with us. Let us, in this Eucharist, be healed of whatever would separate us from his love.

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Saturday, October 30, 2021
(Lec. 484)

1) Romans 11:1-2a,
11-12, 25-29

2) Luke 14:1, 7-11

Gospel related: CCC 575, 588 CSDC 261

SATURDAY OF
30TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: God has called every one of us to relationship with him.

Saint Augustine once said the three virtues necessary to follow Jesus are humility, humility, and humility (*Letter 118, #22*). Saint Benedict devoted the longest chapter in his monastic rule to humility. Their insights derive in part from Jesus' words in today's Gospel: *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*

In this parable, and in all instances, Jesus taught with his words and deeds that the will of the Father was more important than individual pomp and circumstance. For the will of the Father is infinite, eternal, merciful love. It's a love with which God remained faithful to Israel even in their unbelief, as Paul writes: *God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.*

But he has chastised them, and he has humbled them. And in that vein he has brought to them at their table every manner of person from every corner of the earth. Those who were once outsiders to the nation of Israel are now co-heirs with Christ to the promises of God.

God has called every one of us to relationship with him. And he's never changed his mind – never rescinded that invitation. His call "is irrevocable." And thus our humility before the Lord in the light of this truth is one that truly sees the dignity of and the divine image in each person around us. We need not try to impress the Lord (we cannot); we ought not seek to be honored above another or attended to at their expense. Humility recognizes that our own status is not of our efforts or works, but due to the gracious mercy of God.

In this we have the perfect teacher: Christ who humbled himself to become one of us. He comes to us at the table, not as a king, but as the sacrifice upon which we feed. His humility exalts us. In our humility of faith, we exalt him.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2021

(Lec. 152)

1) Deuteronomy 6:2-6

2) Hebrews 7:23-28

3) Mark 12:28b-34

Gospel related: CCC 129, 202, 228, 575, 2196 CSDC 40, 112

**31ST SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FOCUS: God's command to love challenges us to put him first and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

What does it mean to love God in this way? Surely it means that God should be our "center." Our life should revolve around him. He should be first in our thoughts, in our actions, and in our hearts. It means we must nurture our spiritual relationship with God through daily prayer, by learning all we can about him, by reading Scripture, and through participation in the sacraments.

Loving God in this way also means following another commandment: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* Love of self is not vain or selfish, when directed toward the higher good of caring for and protecting this life, which God has given us, in service of him. We are made in the image of God. That alone makes us worthy of love. Self-love requires us to take care of our basic needs. We make sure we are fed, clothed, and sheltered. Then we reach beyond and indulge our wants as well. We spend time and energy doing things we enjoy, seeking joy, and surrounding ourselves with the people and activities that please us. All of this is good and beautiful when our lives themselves are ordered toward praise of God.

In the same way, we must love others. This is, after all, not merely a suggestion. It is a command. Loving our neighbor is not passive. It requires action. It calls us to reach out and provide for the needs of others; to share our time, our talents, and our resources with our neighbor; to invite them into God's embrace and give comfort and love freely to those who need it.

If we model our love after the Father's love, we must reach beyond our own circle. God's love is unconditional. He does not offer his love to only a few. He loves everyone, even those we might think are unlovable. His command to love our neighbor goes well beyond our circle of family and friends. It includes our enemies and those who are different from us; it includes those of all races, religions, and nationalities. No one is excluded from our responsibility to love them. No one.

Clearly, following this command is not always easy, but it is expected of us, nonetheless. Sometimes it requires forgiveness and putting aside judgment. Fortunately, when we ask, God will provide all the grace and strength we need to put his command in action.

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