

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

*Twenty-Ninth to Thirty-Fourth Week
in Ordinary Time*

*October 17 to November 27, 2021
Cycle B - Year 1*

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What is the Anawim Spirituality?

Our spirituality has three essential characteristics:

Liturgical

The Liturgy is the source of our formation. Daily, we draw inspiration from the readings and prayers of the Liturgy, which we understand to be the ponderings of Mary's heart. For this reason, we honor Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Liturgical Life.

Eucharistic

Jesus in the Eucharist is the center of our spirituality. By faithful participation in Holy Mass and frequent Eucharistic Adoration, we are empowered by the Presence of Jesus to go forth to serve the people of God in all the circumstances of life.

Marian

We entrust ourselves to Mary, the mother and model of every Christian. She continually forms us in her spirit of humility, compassion and reconciling love, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus. She shares with us her spiritual motherhood as we are called to bring forth the life of Jesus in others.

If you would like to explore the Anawim Community further, we invite you to contact us.

Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

***“For the Son of Man did not come to be served
but to serve and to give his life
as a ransom for many.”***

Mark 10:45

Theme for the Week

Jesus, the eternal High Priest, offers his life for the redemption of all mankind. The center of his mission is his freely laying down his life for the sake of us sinners. His way of life reveals how we, his disciples, must live. Let us find our joy in the greatness of service, by giving ourselves in loving service to God and to our neighbor.

THE WAY OF SERVICE
IS THE ROYAL ROAD THAT LEADS TO HEAVEN
A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mk 10:35-45) describes Jesus who, once again and with great patience, tries to correct his disciples, converting them from the world's mentality to that of God. The opportunity is given to him by the brothers James and John, two of the very first whom Jesus met and called to follow him. By now they have gone quite a long way with him and in fact belong to the group of the Twelve Apostles. Therefore, while they are on their way to Jerusalem — where the disciples anxiously hope that on the occasion of the celebration of Passover, Jesus will at last establish the Kingdom of God — the two brothers take courage, approach the Teacher and make their request: "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (v. 37).

Jesus knows that James and John are inspired by great enthusiasm for him and for the cause of the Kingdom, but he also knows that their expectations and their zeal are tarnished by the spirit of the world. Thus he responds: "You do not know what you are asking" (v. 38). And as they are speaking of 'thrones of glory' on which to sit beside Christ the King, he speaks of a "cup" to be drunk, of a "baptism" to be received, that is, his passion and death. James and John, always aiming at the hoped-for privilege, say in an outburst: "yes, we are able"! (v. 39). But here too, they do not truly understand what they are saying. Jesus forewarns that they will drink his cup and receive his baptism, that is, that they too, like the other Apostles, will take part in his cross, when their time comes. However, Jesus concludes: "to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared" (v. 40). As if to say: now follow me and learn how to love 'at a loss,' and the heavenly Father will see to your reward. The way of love is always 'at a loss,' because to love means to set aside egoism, self-referentiality, in order to serve others.

Jesus then realizes that the other ten Apostles are angry with James and John, and thus show they have the same worldly mentality. And this offers him inspiration for a lesson that applies to Christians of all times, for us too. He says: "You know that those who are supposed to rule over

the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (vv. 42-44). It is the rule of Christians. The Teacher’s message is clear: while the great people of the Earth build themselves ‘thrones’ for their own power, God chooses an uncomfortable throne, the cross, from which to reign by giving his life: “the Son of man,” Jesus says, “also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (v. 45).

The way of service is the most effective antidote against the disease of seeking first place; it is the medicine for status seekers, this seeking first place, which infects many human contexts, and does not even spare Christians, the People of God, nor even the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Therefore, as disciples of Christ, let us receive this Gospel passage as a call to conversion, in order to witness with courage and generosity a Church that bows at the feet of the least, in order to serve them with love and simplicity. May the Virgin Mary, who fully and humbly adhered to the will of God, help us to joyfully follow Jesus on the way of service, the royal road that leads to Heaven.

Pope Francis, Angelus, October 21, 2018
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October 17, 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time



First Reading: Isaiah 53:10-11

The LORD was pleased
to crush him in infirmity.

If he gives his life as an offering for sin,
he shall see his descendants in a long life,
and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him.

Because of his affliction
he shall see the light in fullness of days;
through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,
and their guilt he shall bear.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness;
to deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.

May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.



Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Gospel Acclamation: Mark 10:45

Alleluia, alleluia. The Son of Man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Mark 10:35-45 (Short Form: Mark 10:42-45)

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” He replied, “What do you wish me to do for you?” They answered him, “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” They said to him, “We can.” Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared.” When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”



Meditation:

Our Gospel today comes from Mark chapter 10, right after Jesus’ third prediction of his Passion. The evangelist includes the Passion prophecies in three consecutive chapters – 8, 9 and 10. On all three occasions, Jesus’ disciples fail to understand what he is telling them. Instead, they display typical human reactions to suffering, entirely missing Jesus’ revelation that we are to be saved through his Death and Resurrection. In Mark 8, Peter rebukes the Lord for saying horrible things about being rejected and killed (v. 32). In Mark 9, the disciples argue about which of them is the greatest, totally oblivious of the true path to greatness that their Master has just revealed (v. 34). In Mark 10, James and John are preoccupied with lobbying for key positions of authority (v. 37).

When faced with the prospect of suffering, we typically react in three such ways, seeking to replace what we reject with *comfort*, *honor*, and *power*. We want the easy way out, not suffering; we want to boast of our accomplishments, not accept humiliation; we want to be served, not to serve.

Our readings today remind us that the Lord's way is quite unlike our ways. They tell us that instead of pursuing comfort, honor, and power, in all of which we are focused on ourselves, the Lord calls us to tread the path of service, where our focus is on others. As Pope Francis tells us in this week's Spiritual Reflection: "the way of service is the most effective antidote against the disease of seeking first place."

When we are committed to selfless service, we are willing to give up our *comfort* and take on even challenging tasks for the good of those we are serving. There is no greater example of this spirit than Jesus Christ himself, whom today's second reading holds up before us as a "great high priest." The essential work of a priest is to offer sacrifice. Christ, who reigned in glory before the dawn of creation, sitting comfortably with the Father in Heaven, chose to offer the sacrifice of his very self for our sake. He emptied himself of glory and took on our human nature, with all our weaknesses and limitations. He allowed himself to be like us, "tested in every way, yet without sin." In offering the supreme sacrifice of his life, Christ opened a new way for us, so that, instead of fleeing suffering, we may "confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."

We certainly need mercy and grace! When we put ourselves at the service of others, we soon realize how severely limited our capabilities are. Despite our best efforts, our service is simply not enough for what is needed. The right response to this deficiency is not that we must do more, win more *honor*, and make ourselves greater, but that we must humbly make more space for God's providence. Today's Psalm helps us realize that our service is that of stewardship. In our mission as servants, our hearts are to be focused on our Lord and Master, not on our own vainglorious self-reliance. All the resources and abilities that are part of our service come from God. Instead of putting ourselves on a pedestal, let us humbly acknowledge our need for him: "Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you."

Putting ourselves in the service of others also places us in situations where we give up control. Instead of accumulating *power*, we soon feel that we are being crushed by the needs and demands of the people we serve. This can be a frightening experience – but it is part of the path of the Suffering Servant, about whom Isaiah writes in today’s first reading. In symbolic, prophetic language, the Servant is described as being abused by the Lord himself: “The LORD was pleased to crush him in infirmity.” This expression jolts us. It shatters our illusion of being the one in control. God is in control; and he is best served when we are most dependent on him. The masters of the spiritual life teach us that the purer form of sacrifice is passive mortification. This is the path of freely embracing situations that come upon us uninvited and uniting them to the redemptive sacrifice of the Cross, just as the Lord himself willingly accepted the afflictions that were thrust upon him. In the role of the Servant, Jesus gave his life “as an offering for sin.”

Jesus Christ guides us to fight against our tendencies to reject all suffering. Against our attachment to *comfort*, Jesus challenges us to “drink the cup” of suffering and undergo the “baptism” of the Cross together with him. Against our pursuit of *honor*, Jesus admonishes us not to be like the rulers who “make their authority felt.” Instead, he points to us to service as the measure of greatness in his Kingdom. Against our desire for *power*, Jesus leads us in the humble path of slavery: “the first among you will be the slave of all.” A slave belongs to someone else; his service is not for himself but for his master.

In his Passion, Jesus Christ will fulfill all these lessons himself – which is the very reason why he prepared the disciples by repeating three times the paradoxical nature of his saving mission. Today’s Gospel concludes with a concise summary of this mission: “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This is the path he has opened for us his disciples. He calls us to resist our natural tendencies to find the easy way out, to toot our own horn, and to amass power. The alternative is the path of service, the “medicine for status seekers,” which is now the path for every Christian, for every son and daughter of God.

How does comfort, honor and power in my life enable me to escape the prospect of suffering? In what ways do I give in to my natural tendencies to find an easy way out or to toot my own horn? Why do I find it so difficult to give up my comfort for the sake of serving others?

Mary, help me to serve your Son and others the way you did.

Notes

October 18, Monday, Feast of Saint Luke, Evangelist



First Reading: 2 Timothy 4:10-17b

Beloved: Demas, enamored of the present world, deserted me and went to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Luke is the only one with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is helpful to me in the ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, the papyrus rolls, and especially the parchments.

Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. You too be on guard against him, for he has strongly resisted our preaching.

At my first defense no one appeared on my behalf, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:10-11, 12-13, 17-18

***Your friends make known, O Lord,
the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.***

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.

Let them discourse of the glory of your Kingdom
and speak of your might.

***R. Your friends make known, O Lord,
the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.***

Making known to men your might
and the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.

Your Kingdom is a Kingdom for all ages,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

***R. Your friends make known, O Lord,
the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.***

The LORD is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.

The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.

***R. Your friends make known, O Lord,
the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.***

Gospel Acclamation: see John 15:16

Alleluia, alleluia. I chose you from the world, to go and bear fruit that will last, says the Lord. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Luke 10:1-9

The Lord Jesus appointed seventy-two disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.’”



Meditation:

Yesterday’s readings reminded us that there is a crucial difference between worldly ambition and zeal for the Kingdom of God. Although James and John were disciples of Jesus, they also wanted temporal glory. Jesus instructed them that the way to true glory is by way of service.

St. Luke, the evangelist whose Feast we celebrate today, was not present when Jesus taught the Apostles to dedicate themselves to service rather than seek to be served. He was not an Apostle; he was a Gentile. He is the only New Testament author who was not Jewish. However, Luke was well schooled in the humble way of the Lord. Perhaps his being an outsider gave him a particular appreciation for the joy of being a servant of the Lord. His former occupation as a physician made him sensitive to the special needs of the sick and the poor.

Luke’s two volumes, the Gospel that bears his name and the Book of Acts of the Apostles (which together make up almost one fourth of the whole New Testament) are full of a sense of joy. It is the joy that Luke himself experienced, the joy that comes with being given the privilege of spreading the Good News to everyone. It is the joy that Pope Francis describes as “The Joy of the Gospel” – which is the title of his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

The readings chosen for today’s Feast do not emphasize the joy of the Gospel. They alert us that being an evangelist is difficult work indeed. When Jesus sends out the seventy-two, he sends them as lambs

in the midst of wolves, as poor laborers, harvesters. In the first reading St. Paul tells Timothy that he has been resisted by his enemies and abandoned by his friends – except for Luke, the only companion who remained with him. But all the early Church’s evangelists persevered in the difficult mission that had been given to them, with hearts full of confidence and hope. No matter what hardships they faced, including martyrdom, they never lost the joy of the Gospel. This is worth pondering as we celebrate our own call to be evangelists, joyful evangelists for a sad world.

Going into the world as a lamb may not sound attractive to us, especially as we see the world growing more hostile. But Jesus sends us in exactly the same spirit in which he himself was sent. It is the way which allows the power of God to work through us. Being a lamb means that though we are humanly weak, in Christ we are strong. Humility and poverty of spirit allow God to fill us, that he may use us to spread his Good News to others. Like the seventy-two disciples, we are not to be distracted by material concerns or social amenities. Rather we are to continue to work, trusting that God will provide for us through the generosity of others.

Our modern-day world looks very different from the dusty roads and poor villages into which the disciples were sent. But the work of evangelization remains the same, and is even more urgent. We can apply Jesus’ instructions to our own daily mission to bring the Gospel to the world, beginning with the world of our own family and the people closest to us. He tells us to go to others with humility and gentleness, with single-minded devotion to their salvation, without being caught up in the distractions of life. He tells us to be thankful, to bring a peaceful and healing spirit wherever we go, and to proclaim the love of God in whatever ways we can. He tells us to trust that God will provide all we need to do his work, his will, his way.

Jesus does not promise us that the work of evangelization will be easy, nor that we will be considered successful. He does not promise ease or comfort, fewer troubles or more friends. Following Christ on earth means taking a narrow, rough and often lonely road. Yet it holds more joy and more fulfillment than any other road we could ever take.

St. Luke was schooled in the way of missionary discipleship by St. Paul, whom he accompanied all the way to Rome. Paul was no stranger to suffering. As we read his Letter to Timothy, we get a sense of how

pained this great apostle was when he saw others losing their way. He feels hurt and abandoned, but he also knows that God has given him the strength to withstand such trials. Even in the midst of his pain, he allows no space for bitterness; he can still say, “May it not be held against them!” He remains single-mindedly focused on the work of spreading the Gospel, no matter what the cost.

Paul and Luke and all the Saints show us that through the power of God we have supernatural strength to endure the hardest of times when our purpose is for the Lord. When no one stood with Paul, he trusted that Jesus stood with him. “The Lord stood by my side and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it” – that is, hear the Gospel! This is the confident faith and the missionary zeal which God plants in the heart of every evangelist. This is the gift God is enkindling in us on the feast of St. Luke.

In my vocation in life, how does my call to follow Jesus make me sensitive to the needs of others? What are the material concerns in my life which can distract me from spreading the Good News? How do I bring the Gospel to the world and especially to my own family and those closest to me?

Mary, plant into my heart the missionary zeal and confident faith of St. Luke.

St. Luke, pray for us.

Notes

October 19, Tuesday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time
Saints John of Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, Priests,
and Companions, Martyrs
Saint Paul of the Cross, Priest



First Reading: Romans 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21

Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned.

If by that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous. Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through justification for eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 17

Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

Sacrifice or oblation you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Burnt offerings or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
To do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

May all who seek you
exult and be glad in you,
And may those who love your salvation
say ever, "The LORD be glorified."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 21:36

Alleluia, alleluia. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you may have the strength to stand before the Son of Man. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Luke 12:35-38

Jesus said to his disciples: “Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants.”



Meditation:

On Sunday, Jesus taught us that our call is not to be served but to serve, in imitation of him. Today, he tells us a parable about a wise steward, a man who is ready to serve. The first thing we might notice in this parable is that when the master comes home from a wedding, he *knocks on the door* instead of simply walking into his own house. Although he is the master of the house, he waits for his servants to open the door for him. This is symbolic of God’s treatment of us. He does not force himself into our lives; he respects our freedom. With his word he stirs us interiorly while waiting patiently for us to open our hearts to him. We find a similar image in the Book of Revelation: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20).

All too often we do not pay much attention to the Lord’s knocking; we are preoccupied with many other things, or we are spiritually asleep. Sometimes we are aware of his inspirations, but we are busy doing our own will and so we delay our response. When we take on the attitude of a wise servant, however, we remain ready, so that we can respond in faith to the Lord without delay.

The biggest surprise in today’s parable is that the master not only rewards his faithful servants, he goes on to do something much more radical: he puts on an apron, seats them at table, and proceeds to wait on them – he becomes the servant of his own servants! This is the divine humility Jesus spoke about in Sunday’s Gospel when he said that “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The Lord teaches us the supreme value of service both by teaching us this parable and by giving us the example of his own selfless service.

The Lord teaches us that it is foolishness to assume we have plenty of time to prepare for his coming or for the moment of our own death. In reality, we do not know the hour when the Lord will knock on the door to call us into eternity. He may come “in the second or third watch” – that is, in the middle of the night – which is a good reason for us always to pray before we go to sleep. It may be our last waking opportunity to express our love for the Lord and our sorrow for our sins.

The Lord is urging us to “be vigilant at all times.” If we strive to live our faith only on Sundays, we will not be ready for his arrival on the other six days of the week. Frequently our struggle with readiness is not in the middle of the night, but in the middle of our busy day, as our activities wear us down. How often we find that our good intentions of the morning gradually diminish and are practically forgotten by the late afternoon. Sometimes we are taken by surprise when some trial or unkind remark hits us. We feel that some advantage is being taken away – some part of the “good life” – and we respond with anger and fight to get it back. When we come to our senses, we realize that the true “good life” is not the one our flesh craves but the life the Lord has planned for us.

St. Paul reminds us in the first reading that our tendency to lose our way is rooted in the weakened condition we have inherited from our first parents. He speaks of the tragic consequences of the sin of “one man,” Adam. This is our common wound, “original sin.” But Paul goes on to show that this condition has been more than remedied by the righteous act of the New Adam, the “one man Jesus Christ.” This passage reveals a beautiful theology of grace: “Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more.”

Therefore, despite our weaknesses and sins, despite our recurring tendency to be unprepared, we are not discouraged, for the Lord is far greater than our sin. Yes, by nature we share in the death condition of Adam, but by faith we also share in the gift of life won by Jesus Christ. “Through the obedience of the one” – that is, through the perfect obedience of Jesus – “the many will be made righteous.” The *Catechism* puts it this way: “The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the ‘reverse side’ of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation, and that salvation is offered to all through Christ” (CCC 389).

How different this makes our lives! We cannot sit in despair, blaming Adam for all our failures. There is no such thing as a hopeless case. Even when the situation of the world seems hopeless, or when our own lives seem hopeless, grace far surpasses all obstacles to our salvation. Our daily vigilance, with our loins girt and our lamps lit, is not a self-help project. We open our eyes in faith to see God at work in each new situation, drawing us into the reign of grace “for eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

What are the many things that preoccupy me, causing me to be spiritually asleep? How do I overcome the sins of my flesh and pursue the “good life” that the Lord has planned for me? What are some of the situations in my life when I realized in faith that God was with me?

Mary, grant me the grace to “be vigilant at all times” for the Lord’s coming.

Sts. John of Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues and Companions, pray for us.

St. Paul of the Cross, pray for us.

Today we honor eight French Jesuit missionaries who were martyred in North America between 1642 and 1649. Their holiness is reflected in their extraordinary courage in enduring torture from the native tribes they were trying to evangelize. **John de Brébeuf** was mocked by being “baptized” with boiling water, severely mutilated, and scalped. **Isaac Jogues** faced similar tortures, including having his fingers chewed off. When he escaped and returned to France, he received papal permission to say Mass with mutilated hands. In his zeal for souls, he returned to the missions. He was captured again and cruelly tortured. Before his death he said, “These tortures are great, but God is greater.” All eight martyrs are honored at two shrines; one in Ontario, Canada and one in New York.

Paul of the Cross was born in 1694 in northern Italy. Son of a wealthy merchant, he experienced a conversion to a life of prayer at age 19. His reading of the *Treatise on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales and direction from priests of the Capuchin Order taught him the primacy of love and the need to go beyond our own images of God. It became St. Paul’s lifelong conviction that God is most easily found in the Passion of Jesus Christ, being the most overwhelming sign of God’s love for us. His life was devoted to bringing this message to all and founding a community – the Passionists – whose members would do the same. He died in 1775.

Notes

October 20, Wednesday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Paul of the Cross, Priest (USA)



First Reading: Romans 6:12-18

Brothers and sisters: Sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin is not to have any power over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Of course not! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, although you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted. Freed from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 124:1b-3, 4-6, 7-8

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Had not the LORD been with us,
let Israel say, had not the LORD been with us—
When men rose up against us,
then would they have swallowed us alive;
When their fury was inflamed against us.
R. Our help is in the name of the Lord.
Then would the waters have overwhelmed us;
The torrent would have swept over us;
over us then would have swept the raging waters.
Blessed be the LORD, who did not leave us
a prey to their teeth.

R. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

We were rescued like a bird
from the fowlers' snare;
Broken was the snare,
and we were freed.
Our help is in the name of the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

R. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 24:42a, 44

Alleluia, alleluia. Stay awake! For you do not know when the Son of Man will come. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Luke 12:39-48

Jesus said to his disciples: “Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

Then Peter said, “Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?” And the Lord replied, “Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant’s master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish the servant severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful. That servant who knew his master’s will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master’s will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”



Meditation:

Today Jesus again speaks about remaining awake and vigilant: “Be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” He makes it clear that, to be counted as one of his faithful followers, we must be ready at all times for his coming – whether at the end of time, on the day of our own death, or at any moment when he breaks in on us through the situations and circumstances of our daily lives.

What does it mean to “be prepared”? We can best understand it if we understand our role as stewards of the Lord’s gifts. God himself is the owner, the master. He has entrusted each of us with a part of the unfolding of his plan. He does not actually need us, but he wants to share his life with us, so he gives us particular responsibilities. As his

stewards, we are to take proper care of what he has given us and do what he wants us to do. We are all accountable to God. To “be prepared,” then, is simply to be faithful. The Lord calls us to be “faithful and prudent stewards.”

It is easy for us to distort the principle of readiness into busyness, as if simply being busy is enough for us to deserve a reward. God does not reward activity for its own sake. Drug dealers are very busy. So are demons. The question is not whether we are busy, but whether we are doing the Lord’s will. If the Lord wants us to rest, or even to be bedridden due to illness or old age, then that is what we should be doing when he comes. For example, on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, God expects us to take time off from our usual work in order to spend time with him. He wants us to put our efforts into worship, to be “busy” with the task of prayer. Prayer is not laziness; it is not a waste of time; it is part of being a faithful and prudent steward.

The irresponsible steward in the parable is punished not simply because he is lazy but because he “knew his master’s will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will.” His rebelliousness is symbolized by his abusive behavior toward his fellow servants and his gross self-indulgence. This sort of behavior is obviously out of order. We do not need faith to know that we should respect one another; any decent human being knows that. We should not too quickly conclude, however, that we are not like this self-centered steward. We may not be lazy abusers or habitual drunkards, but we may be worse servants than others whom we are tempted to judge harshly. After all, they do not know what we know, so they bear less responsibility.

Many people have not been schooled in the Gospel; they do not know the wishes of the Master. Much worse is the person who knows the Gospel but lives by his own watered-down version of it rather than do what the Lord requires of him. “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” We must admit that very much has been entrusted to us in the gift of faith and in our call to follow Jesus. Therefore much is required of us! Not much activity but much gratitude, much love, much whole-hearted service. Whether our master is “delayed in

coming” or not makes no difference. Every moment gives us another opportunity to love and to serve him in the people around us.

The two options before us – to be faithful stewards or irresponsible ones – are described by St. Paul as two different kinds of “slavery.” To live in selfishness is to allow sin to rule us; that is, to be slaves of sin, “which leads to death.” God has freed us from that slavery to make us slaves of obedience, “which leads to righteousness.” This is not slavery at all in the usual sense. It is the privilege of being called as a steward in the household of God. Paul urges us, “Present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness.” We are to do this, he tells us, precisely because “sin is not to have any power over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.” If we know the gift we have received by the mercy of God, we find joy in making a generous gift of ourselves to him, and in remaining vigilant in his service.

In what areas of my life have I been an unfaithful steward and not taken proper care of God’s gifts? How do I use the different opportunities of the day to love and to serve God and my neighbor? Why am I a faithful steward of God one day and an irresponsible one the next?

***Mary, Cause of our joy, fill my heart with joy as I love others.
St. Paul of the Cross, pray for us.***

Paul of the Cross (see October 19)

Notes



First Reading: Romans 6:19-23

Brothers and sisters: I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your nature. For just as you presented the parts of your bodies as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawlessness, so now present them as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the LORD
and meditates on his law day and night.

R. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers.

R. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Not so the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
For the LORD watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.

R. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Philippians 3:8-9

Alleluia, alleluia. I consider all things so much rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Luke 12:49-53

Jesus said to his disciples: “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”



Meditation:

On Sunday, Jesus used symbolic language when he asked the two sons of Zebedee if they were ready to share in his sufferings: “Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” (Mk 10:38). In today’s Gospel, he again uses the symbol of his “baptism.” He first speaks of his desire to “set the earth on fire,” and then implies that the means by which this fire is to be lit is his “baptism.” To baptize means to immerse. Jesus is revealing that by his being “immersed” in suffering and death, the world will be ignited with the fire of his divine love. It is another way of saying what he said on Sunday, that he has come to “give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus is most eager to make this sacrificial gift – and any delay causes him “anguish” – because he looks beyond the personal cost (baptism) to the great benefit we will receive (fire).

This gives us a rich insight into how love works. A lover is not concerned about what he must sacrifice; he is focused on what his beloved will gain. Jesus longs to see the blaze of love ignited in our hearts. When we follow him, we are caught up in this fire, which moves us to offer ourselves too, together with him. According to Origen, a theologian of the early Church, Jesus once said, “Whoever is near me is near fire; whoever is far from me is far from the Kingdom” (*Homilies on Jeremiah Lat.* 20.3). This saying is not found in the Bible, but it seems connected to today’s Gospel. Jesus wants his disciples to be near him, that we – and the whole world – may be ignited with his divine love. And if we are far from him, we cannot participate in the spreading of his fire or the building up of his Kingdom.

Jesus' next words come as quite a surprise. "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division." He seems to be flatly contradicting himself. After all, he *has* come to establish peace on earth. He is the Prince of Peace. He has come to reconcile us to the Father and to one another. But his peace, a peace the world cannot give, is not simply a matter of compromise. The world's peace is usually mere toleration, a smooth, diplomatic coexistence. The peace Jesus brings is the fruit of truth and love and sacrifice. He speaks the truth in love even to those who do not want to hear it. For example, he loves the Pharisees enough to reveal the truth to them. He risks offending them, and risks their violent opposition, in order to bring them the truth that would set them free.

The word of God, with all its power to transform and free us, is also a sword that divides. It divides bone from the marrow, like a two-edged sword (cf. Heb 4:12). Because we – like the Pharisees – are not always ready to welcome the truth, the gift Jesus shares sometimes brings about deep divisions even in our families. If division results from our dedication to truth and love, not from selfishness and self-righteousness, then it is part of our vocation as disciples. Division is often painful, but because love is more powerful than division, we remain hopeful in the victory of love over every division we suffer.

This is a difficult word to put into practice. Our nature would prefer a life free of conflict rather than a truthful life. We often value human respect more highly than real love. We are lukewarm, not on fire. This is because of the condition St. Paul refers to as "the weakness of your nature." When we live according to the tendencies of our fallen nature, we make ourselves "slaves of sin" rather than joyful "slaves of God." We might be successful in avoiding conflict, but at the cost of putting out the fire. Our call is not merely to preserve domestic harmony but to follow Jesus and to help others to know and follow him as well. Sin can never help anyone. All sin is enslavement and tends toward death – "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"!

In my dedication to truth and love, how do I respond when a division from my loved ones occurs? How does the love of Jesus sustain me in this painful division? What sacrifices do I make to heal this division and allow God's grace to transform their hearts?

Mary, heal all sin in me that enslaves me so I can obtain eternal life, the gift of God.

Notes

October 22, Friday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint John Paul II, Pope



First Reading: Romans 7:18-25a

Brothers and sisters: I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:66, 68, 76, 77, 93, 94

Lord, teach me your statutes.

Teach me wisdom and knowledge,
for in your commands I trust.

R. Lord, teach me your statutes.

You are good and bountiful;
teach me your statutes.

R. Lord, teach me your statutes.

Let your kindness comfort me
according to your promise to your servants.

R. Lord, teach me your statutes.

Let your compassion come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight.

R. Lord, teach me your statutes.

Never will I forget your precepts,
for through them you give me life.

R. Lord, teach me your statutes.

I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.

R. Lord, teach me your statutes.

Gospel Acclamation: see Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the Kingdom. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Luke 12:54-59

Jesus said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain—and so it does; and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot—and so it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

“Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? If you are to go with your opponent before a magistrate, make an effort to settle the matter on the way; otherwise your opponent will turn you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”



Meditation:

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us to “interpret the present time.” The more familiar way of saying this is “to read the signs of the times” (Mt 16:3). In Vatican Council II, and in many ways over the past fifty years, the Church has often spoken out about the “signs of the times,” the “lights and shadows” of our days. “The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics” (*GS* 4).

The Church has spoken, for example, about a greater awareness of the dignity of each human person, greater improvements in health care and medicine, greater awareness of our responsibility as a human family for the environment and for international relations. These are all positive signs. But there are many shadows as well, such as materialism and secularism. Today’s Saint, St. John Paul II, spoke of a “culture of death” and of a contraceptive mentality that prevails in the world. The acceptance of abortion and euthanasia in many parts of the world, the spread of terrorism, the rise of human trafficking, and now the aggressive attempts to change the very definition of marriage and to alter the meaning of human sexuality – all these have cast dark shadows over the human family. Never before in history have we had such signs. They point to a rapid decline in our moral standards.

Jesus goes on to apply “interpreting the present time” to a more personal matter, that of reconciling with our opponents. Going with an opponent “before a magistrate” is symbolic of our whole life in this world. We are all journeying together, on the way to One who will judge us, the Lord. We do best to settle our differences with our opponents now and to forgive now, while we are still on the way. Our opponents may be very hard to settle with, but the more challenging part, and the part we can actually do something about, is within ourselves. We must purify our inner responses to those who hurt us. Jesus calls us to forgive as he has forgiven us.

This is easy to say, but it is not easy to do! We often find it hard to do what we know is right. This is the inner struggle that St. Paul describes very well in today’s first reading. He speaks of the division that we all experience within our own tortuous human hearts. We have a desire to do what is right, but we do not have the power within ourselves to do it. Thus, “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want.” As Jesus said to the weary Apostles in the garden, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Mk 14:38). What inner contradictions we must endure! We are dedicated to God, yet we are still prisoners of the law of sin? If Paul, one of our greatest Saints, struggled with this divided inner self, what hope is there for the rest of us? We wonder: *Who will deliver me from this mortal body?* With grateful praise Paul declares the only answer – Jesus Christ our Lord! Indeed, Jesus has offered himself as a ransom for us all.

St. Paul’s personal discovery of the answer to the human dilemma applies to every one of us. We cannot free ourselves from the slavery of sin or make progress in holiness on our own strength. It is futile even to try. The more we “read the signs” of the tension between the flesh and the spirit, and experience the lingering effects of sin and death within ourselves, the more we realize our absolute dependence on our Savior Jesus Christ. The more we see our need for Jesus Christ, the more we can discover the power of his boundless mercy. The more miserable we are, the more reason we have to be grateful for his love. Let us proclaim with Paul: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The great St. John Paul II, whom we honor on the anniversary of his installation as pope, read the signs of the times with profound insight and was a most dedicated apostle of truth and love. He knew the importance of proclaiming the full truth of the Gospel to a world under the increasing shadows of sin. The beautiful title of one of his most important encyclicals is *The Splendor of Truth*. St. John Paul is a wise

guide and a holy intercessor for all of us who are called to join in the Church's urgent mission to spread the good news.

What inner attitudes challenge me to purify my inner responses to those who hurt me? How does my inner being relate to St. Paul's saying, "The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"? As I accept my sin condition, how can I discover the power of Jesus' boundless mercy and love for me?

Mary, with St. John Paul II, guide me to be an apostle of truth and love.

St. John Paul II, pray for us.

Born Karol Józef Wojtyła on May 18, 1920, in Wadowice, Poland, **Pope John Paul II's** early life was marked by the loss of his mother when he was 9 years old and his older brother and father by age 21. He studied philology in Kraków's Jagiellonian University and was active in theater groups. The Nazi occupation of Poland closed the university in 1939 and Karol had to work in a quarry to earn a living. In 1942, he entered the clandestine seminary of Kraków where he was ordained in 1946. Karol was appointed bishop and then archbishop of Kraków and was considered one of the Church's leading thinkers and contributors to Vatican II. He was made cardinal in 1967 by Pope Paul VI. On October 16, 1978, Karol was elected the 263rd successor of Peter, becoming the first non-Italian pope in more than 400 years. His inauguration was on October 22, which is now the date of his feast day. As Pope, John Paul II demonstrated his deep love for the young, the poor, the sick, the marginalized and those persecuted for their faith, through many and tireless journeys throughout the world. His deep love and dedication to prayer and to Our Blessed Mother was clearly evident in his journeys. Pope John Paul II died on April 2, 2005, and was canonized on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 27, 2014, by Pope Francis.

Notes

October 23, Saturday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint John of Capistrano, Priest



First Reading: Romans 8:1-11

Brothers and sisters: Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death. For what the law, weakened by the flesh, was powerless to do, this God has done: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the sake of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us, who live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit with the things of the spirit. The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace. For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24:1b-2, 3-4ab, 5-6

Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.

For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?

He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain.

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.

Such is the race that seeks for him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

Gospel Acclamation: Ezekiel 33:11

Alleluia, alleluia. I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, says the Lord, but rather in his conversion that he may live. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them— do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!”

And he told them this parable: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.’”



Meditation:

Today’s first reading contrasts *life according to the flesh* with *life according to the Spirit*. St. Paul tells us we are no longer living in the flesh; we are living in the Spirit, for we are in Christ Jesus. However, even though we know we are no longer living in the flesh, even though we know we have been given new life in Baptism, we also know that we have a persistent tendency to slip back into the ways of the flesh. This is the struggle Paul described so vividly in yesterday’s reading.

We find assurance in the victory of Christ: “Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we strive every day to live the new life we have received and not to slip back into the old “dead” life that we left behind. Our whole lifetime in this world is a period of purification and preparation for our perfect union with God – that is, for the time when the Father, “the one who raised Christ from the dead,” will give life to our mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in us. Our time here is limited; therefore we must use it well.

This is the focus of the two parts of today's Gospel reading. Both parts speak to us about using the time allotted to us for repentance and for bearing fruit. The first part of the Gospel is about two calamities and what they mean. One calamity is man-made, due to the wickedness of Pilate. The other is simply an accident. When we hear of such tragedies, we ask ourselves: *Why did God allow this to happen?* Jesus does not answer this question directly, but he does teach us two important lessons. First, we cannot say that the reason why bad things happen is because of the sins of the victims. The victims are no better or worse than any of us. We cannot simplistically conclude that the worst sufferings in this life fall to the worst sinners. One glance at Jesus' own life shatters that false equation, for he suffered more than anyone, and he did not sin at all. The second lesson is that such tragedies should serve as warnings to all of us. Every disaster is an invitation to repentance, a call to reform. When Jesus says, "if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did," he is warning us not about natural disasters but about the much worse disaster of being cut off from God.

The second part of the Gospel is related to the first. It is the parable about the fig tree which did not bear fruit. The owner wants to cut it down, but the gardener asks that he be allowed to tend to it for another year. Then if it does not bear fruit, it can be cut down. We are that fig tree, called to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. In his mercy God often gives us "more time." Jesus, like a skilled and patient gardener, prunes us and nourishes us. But eventually time will run out, and we will have to give an account of our lives. The Lord's compassion is not an invitation for us to procrastinate!

When we are living according to the flesh, we find the call to reform and to bear fruit for the Kingdom burdensome. We do not like being reminded again and again that we must change. Not only that, it also makes no sense to us that we should change simply because of a tragedy that happened someplace else. How can our sin be connected to something that happened across town or in a distant country? What does not make sense to our flesh can be explained if we open ourselves to the Spirit. The Spirit of God helps us understand that we are one Body in Christ, and that what one person does affects the whole Body. When we acknowledge this, we will be moved to forsake the desires of our flesh which has a tendency toward death. We will be guided by the Spirit who brings "life and peace."

What are my inner struggles as I strive daily to live in the Spirit yet tend to slip back to live in the flesh? Since my time here is limited, how am I using it for the glory of God and my salvation? Being aware of the worst disaster of being cut off from God, what changes am I making in my life style?

***Mary, help me not to procrastinate on my journey to eternal life.
St. John of Capistrano, pray for us.***

John of Capistrano was born in Italy in 1386. In 1412, he became magistrate of Perugia and later was imprisoned for trying to bring peace to two warring factions. During his imprisonment, he discerned that his life's journey would be devoted to God. He entered the Franciscans in 1416 and became a very great preacher of missions, fostering devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus throughout Europe. John worked to end the great schism between East and West. He also promoted resistance against the Turks at the battle of Belgrade and is now the patron of military chaplains. He died in 1456.

Notes