

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

*Pentecost Sunday to Sixteenth Week
in Ordinary Time*

*June 5 to July 23, 2022
Cycle C - Year 2*

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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.

***Pentecost Sunday
and
Tenth Week in Ordinary Time***

***Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.***

Alleluia Verse

Theme for the Week

At Pentecost, the Apostles were spiritually energized to fearlessly continue the saving mission of Christ. We who have received the same Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation are sent forth as Spirit-filled apostles for our times. We have been given power to stand as witnesses of Jesus in the world, proclaiming that Jesus is Lord, not with words only, but with our whole way of life.

THE SPIRIT IS THE FIRST AND LAST NEED OF THE CHURCH

A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis

Pentecost arrived, for the disciples, after fifty days of uncertainty. True, Jesus had risen. Overjoyed, they had seen him, listened to his words and even shared a meal with him. Yet they had not overcome their doubts and fears: they met behind closed doors (cf. Jn 20:19, 26), uncertain about the future and not ready to proclaim the risen Lord. Then the Holy Spirit comes and their worries disappear. Now the apostles show themselves fearless, even before those sent to arrest them. Previously, they had been worried about saving their lives; now they are unafraid of dying. Earlier, they had huddled in the Upper Room; now they go forth to preach to every nation. Before the ascension of Jesus, they waited for God's kingdom to come to them (cf. Acts 1:6); now they are filled with zeal to travel to unknown lands. Before, they had almost never spoken in public, and when they did, they had often blundered, as when Peter denied Jesus; now they speak with *parrhesia* [free, open, bold speech] to everyone. The disciples' journey seemed to have reached the end of the line, when suddenly they were *rejuvenated by the Spirit*. Overwhelmed with uncertainty, when they thought everything was over, they were transformed by a joy that gave them a new birth. The Holy Spirit did this. The Spirit is far from being an abstract reality: he is the Person who is most concrete and close, the one who changes our lives. How does he do this? Let us consider the Apostles. The Holy Spirit did not make things easier for them, he didn't work spectacular miracles, he didn't take away their difficulties and their opponents. Rather, the Spirit brought into the lives of the disciples a harmony that had been lacking, his own harmony, for he *is harmony*.

Harmony within human beings. Deep down, in their hearts, the disciples needed to be changed. Their story teaches us that even seeing the Risen Lord is not enough, unless we welcome him into our hearts. It is no use knowing that the Risen One is alive, unless we too live as risen ones. It is the Spirit who makes Jesus live within us; he raises us up from within. That is why when Jesus appears to his disciples, he repeats the words, "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19, 21), and bestows the Spirit. That is what peace really is, the peace bestowed on the Apostles. That peace does not have to do with resolving outward problems – God

does not spare his disciples from tribulation and persecution. Rather, it has to do with receiving the Holy Spirit. The peace bestowed on the Apostles, the peace that does not bring freedom *from* problems but *in* problems, is offered to each of us. Filled with his peace, our hearts are like a deep sea, which remains peaceful, even when its surface is swept by waves. It is a harmony so profound that it can even turn persecutions into blessings. Yet how often we choose to remain on the surface! Rather than seeking the Spirit, we try to keep afloat, thinking that everything will improve once this or that problem is over, once I no longer see that person, once things get better. But to do so is to stay on the surface: when one problem goes away, another arrives, and once more we grow anxious and ill at ease. Avoiding those who do not think as we do will not bring serenity. Resolving momentary problems will not bring peace. What makes a difference is the peace of Jesus, the harmony of the Spirit.

At today's frenzied pace of life, harmony seems swept aside. Pulled in a thousand directions, we run the risk of nervous exhaustion and so we react badly to everything. Then we look for the quick fix, popping one pill after another to keep going, one thrill after another to feel alive. But more than anything else, we need the Spirit: he brings order to our frenzy. The Spirit is peace in the midst of restlessness, confidence in the midst of discouragement, joy in sadness, youth in aging, courage in the hour of trial. Amid the stormy currents of life, he lowers the anchor of hope. As Saint Paul tells us today, the Spirit keeps us from falling back into fear, for he makes us realize that we are beloved children (cf. Rom 8:15). He is the Consoler, who brings us the tender love of God. Without the Spirit, our Christian life unravels, lacking the love that brings everything together. Without the Spirit, Jesus remains a personage from the past; with the Spirit, he is a person alive in our own time. Without the Spirit, Scripture is a dead letter; with the Spirit, it is a word of life. A Christianity without the Spirit is joyless moralism; with the Spirit, it is life.

The Holy Spirit does not bring only harmony *within us* but also *among us*. He makes us Church, building different parts into one harmonious edifice. Saint Paul explains this well when, speaking of the Church, he often repeats a single word, "variety": *varieties* of gifts, *varieties* of services, *varieties* of activities" (1 Cor 12:4-6). We differ in

the variety of our qualities and gifts. The Holy Spirit distributes them creatively, so that they are not all identical. On the basis of this variety, he builds unity. From the beginning of creation, he has done this, because he is a specialist in changing chaos into cosmos, in creating harmony. He is a specialist in creating diversity, enrichment, individuality. He is the creator of this diversity and, at the same time, the one who brings harmony and gives unity to diversity. He alone can do these two things.

In today's world, lack of harmony has led to stark divisions. There are those who have too much and those who have nothing, those who want to live to a hundred and those who cannot even be born. In the age of the computer, distances are increasing; the more we use the social media, the less social we are becoming. We need the Spirit of unity to regenerate us as Church, as God's People and as a human family. May he regenerate us! There is always a temptation to build "nests," to cling to our little group, to the things and people we like, to resist all contamination. It is only a small step from a nest to a sect, even within the Church. How many times do we define our identity in opposition to someone or something! The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, brings together those who were distant, unites those far off, brings home those who were scattered. He blends different tonalities in a single harmony, because before all else he sees goodness. He looks at individuals before looking at their mistakes, at persons before their actions. The Spirit shapes the Church and the world as a place of sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. These nouns come before any adjectives. Nowadays it is fashionable to hurl adjectives and, sadly, even insults. It could be said that we are living in a culture of adjectives that forgets about the nouns that name the reality of things. But also a culture of the insult as the first reaction to any opinion that I do not share. Later we come to realize that this is harmful, to those insulted but also to those who insult. Repaying evil for evil, passing from victims to aggressors, is no way to go through life. Those who live by the Spirit, however, bring peace where there is discord, concord where there is conflict. Those who are spiritual repay evil with good. They respond to arrogance with meekness, to malice with goodness, to shouting with silence, to gossip with prayer, to defeatism with encouragement.

To be spiritual, to savor the harmony of the Spirit, we need to adopt his way of seeing things. Then everything changes: with the Spirit, the Church is the holy People of God, mission is not proselytism but the spread of joy, as others become our brothers and sisters, all loved by the same Father. Without the Spirit, though, the Church becomes an organization, her mission becomes propaganda, her communion an exertion. Many Churches spend time making pastoral plans, discussing any number of things. That seems to be the road to unity, but it is not the way of the Spirit; it is the road to division. The Spirit is *the first and last need of the Church* (cf. Saint Paul VI, *General Audience*, 29 November 1972). He “comes where he is loved, where he is invited, where he is expected” (Saint Bonaventure, *Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Easter*).

Brothers and sisters, let us daily implore the gift of the Spirit. Holy Spirit, harmony of God, you who turn fear into trust and self-centeredness into self-gift, come to us. Grant us the joy of the resurrection and perennially young hearts. Holy Spirit, our harmony, you who make of us one body, pour forth your peace upon the Church and our world. Holy Spirit, make us builders of concord, sowers of goodness, apostles of hope.

Pope Francis, Homily
Solemnity of Pentecost, June 9, 2019
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June 5, Pentecost Sunday

Vigil Mass: *Gen 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-2, 24, 35, 27-28, 29, 30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39*

Extended Vigil: *Gen 11:1-9; Ps 33:10-15 / Ex 19:3-8, 16-20; Dn 3:52-56 or Ps 19:8-11 / Ez 37:1-14; Ps 107:2-9 / Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-2, 24, and 35, 27-30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39*



First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or *Alleluia.*

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!

How manifold are your works, O LORD!

the earth is full of your creatures.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or *Alleluia.*

If you take away their breath, they perish
and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or *Alleluia.*

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD be glad in his works!
Pleasing to him be my theme;
I will be glad in the LORD.

***R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
or Alleluia.***



Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

or Romans 8:8-17

Brothers and sisters: 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. Consequently, brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through whom we cry, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.



Sequence: Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!

Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
 Come, within our bosoms shine.
You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul's most welcome guest;
 Sweet refreshment here below;
In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
 Solace in the midst of woe.
O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
 And our inmost being fill!
Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
 Nothing free from taint of ill.
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
 Wash the stains of guilt away:
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
 Guide the steps that go astray.
On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
 In your sevenfold gift descend;
Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
 Give them joys that never end. Amen.
Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: John 20:19-23

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had

said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

or *John 14:15-16, 23b-26*

Jesus said to his disciples: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.

“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Those who do not love me do not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

“I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.”



Meditation:

The glorious Season of Easter concludes with the great Solemnity of Pentecost, the day of the *descent of the Holy Spirit* upon the Apostles. We can even think of today as the feast day of the Holy Spirit. We have been preparing for this day for the entire fifty days of Easter, especially during the last ten days since the Ascension of the Lord to the Father. We have been reflecting on all that Jesus taught us about the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, the One who will lead us into the fullness of the truth. On the day he ascended, Jesus promised: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Today we rejoice in the glorious fulfillment of this promise.

Our liturgical preparation for Pentecost has lasted for only a few weeks, but God was preparing his people for the coming of the Spirit for much, much longer. Long before the descent of the Holy Spirit, “Pentecost” was already a major feast day for the Jews. It was known as the “Feast of Weeks” (in Hebrew, *Shavuot*), celebrated fifty days – a “week of weeks” – after Passover (“Pentecost” comes from the Greek word for “fiftieth”). It was originally a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, but over time it became the annual commemoration of the gift of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Jewish feasts are marvelous preparations for our Christian feasts. Just as the Jewish Passover has come to its completion in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the true Passover Lamb, so the giving of the Law to Moses celebrated fifty days later is fulfilled in the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church on Pentecost. Now the law of God is written, not on stone tablets, but on the hearts of all believers. The “first fruits” of a great harvest of souls began on Pentecost with people from “every nation under heaven.” On this very day, after Peter’s first sermon, some three thousand people believed and were baptized.

The signs that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit attracted a large crowd. They were amazed to hear the simple Galilean fishermen speaking boldly in the languages of people from all over the world. It is not clear whether the Apostles themselves were speaking in the various languages or the people in the crowd were given the gift of understanding what the Apostles said in their own language. Perhaps both. It is clear that a dramatic miracle took place. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit “opened to all peoples the knowledge of God and brought together the many languages of the earth in profession of the one faith” (*Preface of Pentecost*). The fragmentation of the human race described in the story of the Tower of Babel has been reversed. At Babel, God confused the speech of the proud men who wanted to build the city of man (cf. Gen 11:1-9). At Pentecost, as the Church came to birth, God united people from every nation in the city of God by giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The coming of the Holy Spirit is not merely an interesting historical event of the distant past. The miracle of Pentecost began in Jerusalem, but it did not end there. It continues to this day – and we pray that it will always continue! The Church’s unending prayer is: *Come, Holy Spirit!*

Some people wonder why Christians no longer speak in many languages as the Apostles did on Pentecost. Others go to the opposite extreme and claim that the charismatic “gift of tongues” is the one sign of a true Christian. Either way, they are missing the point because they are looking at individual Christians, not at the great work the Spirit does in uniting us in the Body of Christ. “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body.” No individual person speaks all languages. No individual has every gift the Spirit can give. Even on the day of

Pentecost, the language miracle was a communal one. It was a sign that the Body of Christ can indeed speak all languages. The Church, under the inspiration of the Spirit, speaks in such a way that everyone can understand, no matter what language is used.

We are all members of the one Body, “all given to drink of one Spirit.” Through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation we have been filled with the very same Spirit who filled the Apostles. Because we are now temples of the Holy Spirit, we can proclaim boldly, “Jesus is Lord!” This is a proclamation that must be made, not with words only, but with our whole way of life. Our witness to Christ is undermined if we say “Jesus is Lord” with our lips but we oppose his Lordship by our attachment to sin. The coming of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the destruction of the reign of sin. This is why Jesus, when he breathed forth the Spirit, immediately connected the Gift with the forgiveness of sins: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them. . . .” The continued power of the Spirit in our lives is assured through the Sacrament of Confession.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.” On Pentecost we recall that there are many different “gifts” and “forms of service” and “workings” – all flowing from the abundant creativity of Divine Love. We all participate in the work of the Spirit in unique ways. It is a waste of time and a disorder to be envious of the gifts of others. All gifts belong to all of us in the one Body of Christ. The obvious manifestations of the Spirit – healing, prophecy, miracles – are not necessarily the most advantageous for those who receive them. What is essential is that we submit ourselves entirely to the Spirit, letting him use us for the glory of God and for the benefit of his people. The “gift” of being a good listener helps those who need to be consoled. The “gift” of being a helpful neighbor can provide transportation for those who have no means to get to church. The “gift” of friendship can enrich the lives of those who have been abandoned by family. Each one of us has been given a “manifestation of the Spirit” that enables us to contribute to the good of all.

Wherever Christians are speaking the one language of faith and love, the Spirit is at work, for the Spirit himself is Love, the Love of the Father and the Son. When we stand up for Jesus Christ, when we defend the dignity of our neighbor, when we protect the unborn children, or provide for the needy, or love our enemies, the Spirit is at work in us. We are the Lord's Spirit-filled apostles for our times. *Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth!*

When has sin undermined my proclamation that "Jesus is Lord!"? How am I allowing the Spirit to use me for the glory of God? When am I envious of the gifts given to others?

Mary, open my heart to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Notes

SEASONAL INTRODUCTION TO ORDINARY TIME AFTER PENTECOST

Note: *The Easter Season concludes with Pentecost Sunday. From the Upper Room, the Church goes forth empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the life she has within her. Now we enter the period of Ordinary Time, which concludes on Saturday following the feast of Christ the King.*

Before we move into a new season, with its broad thrust through the remaining weeks of the year, it is good to review the events that have brought us to this point. We recall that the new liturgical year began with the First Sunday of Advent, November 28, 2021. Advent led into the Christmas Season, which continued through the Baptism of the Lord, January 9, 2022. January 10 was the start of Ordinary Time, which lasted until the day before Ash Wednesday, March 2 this year. The Season of Lent followed, preparing us for the great Easter Triduum: from Holy Thursday evening, through Good Friday and Holy Saturday, up to Easter Sunday. With the solemn Easter Vigil on the night of April 16, we saw the first dawning of the “Fifty Days” of Easter. This gives us an overview of what we have celebrated in the life of the Church thus far.

This Sunday, June 5, we celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost. Monday, June 6, begins the period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost. Now that we have been brought to a certain corporate maturity in the growth of the Body of Christ, we are called to proclaim this fullness of life to the whole world. It is through the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord that we have been given the fullness of the Spirit, which fills us with an ardor to go forth as Jesus charged the Apostles to do when he ascended to his Father. The period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost ends on November 26, the Saturday following the Solemnity of Christ the King, and a new liturgical year begins with the First Sunday of Advent, November 27.

The period of the liturgical year that is now before us represents in a symbolic way the period of time before the end of the world, whenever that will be. All of creation is waiting in expectation for all that is to be fulfilled. The thrust of this Season is reconciliation: the restoration of all

things in Christ – a total restoration of creation itself. Finally, all creation must be filled with the one life of God to realize the glory that is to be revealed. This becomes our commission, our labor, our life.

Meanwhile, we must see ourselves here on earth as one Body of Christ: we must maintain our unity. That gives us the thrust of the Church and our commission, as we stand at the edge of this new liturgical season. We operate out of this awareness to maintain the integrity of our faith and proclaim this unique restoration.

Several feasts central to the Church are celebrated during the first weeks of Ordinary Time in order to prepare us once more for what lies ahead. Pentecost is followed by the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (June 12) and the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (June 19). Friday, June 24, is the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Saturday, June 25, is the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This exceptional combination of feasts immediately gives to the liturgy a sense of very deep mystery.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary also gives us the invaluable awareness of being nurtured in the “womb” of Mother Church. As we ponder the word of the liturgy, Mary directs us into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

Adapted from the writings of Fr. Francis J. Marino,
Founder of the Anawim Community

June 6, Monday, 10th Week in Ordinary Time
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

Alternate Readings: Acts 1:12-14 or Revelation 21:1-5; Judith 13:18, 19 or Isaiah 12:2-6; John 2:1-11 or Luke 1:26-38



First Reading: Genesis 3:9-15, 20

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree, the LORD God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!” The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me— she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.” The LORD God then asked the woman, “Why did you do such a thing?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the serpent:
“Because you have done this, you shall be banned
from all the animals
and from all the wild creatures;

On your belly shall you crawl,
and dirt shall you eat
all the days of your life.

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;

He will strike at your head,
while you strike at his heel.”

The man called his wife Eve, because she became the mother of all the living.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 87:1b-3, 5, 6-7

Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!

His foundation upon the holy mountains
the LORD loves:

The gates of Zion,
more than any dwelling of Jacob.

R. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!

Glorious things are said of you,
O city of God!

Of Zion they shall say:

“One and all were born in her;

And he who has established her
is the Most High LORD.”

R. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!

They shall note, when the peoples are enrolled:

“This man was born there.”

And all shall sing, in their festive dance:

“My home is within you.”

R. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia. Happy are you, holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise, for from you arose the sun of justice, Christ our God.
Alleluia, alleluia.



Gospel: John 19:25-34

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.



Meditation:

Today we celebrate the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. This celebration, instituted by Pope Francis in 2018, is also an extension of yesterday’s celebration of Pentecost.

In pondering the readings chosen for this feast, at first it can seem that there is little connection between the first reading and the Gospel. We go suddenly from the garden of Eden to the foot of the Cross. However, it is fitting that on the day that we honor Mary as the Mother of the Church, we look back to our first mother, Eve, “the mother of all the living.” The Genesis reading takes us to the moment after Adam had eaten the forbidden fruit. God calls out to him and confronts him about his sin, and Adam immediately deflects the blame, saying, “The woman whom you put here with me – she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.” Adam blames not only Eve, but God as well: “*You* put her here.” When God questions Eve, she behaves in much the same way, saying, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.” Both Adam and Eve admit that they ate the fruit, but both shirk any responsibility for their action.

Our first mother, Eve, the mother of humanity, failed us. Along with Adam, she brought sin into what began as a perfect world. However, this is not the end of the story. With Mary, we see a new example of motherhood, both physical and spiritual. Mary endures where Eve fell short. Therefore, side by side with the account of the fall, the liturgy places the Gospel account of Mary at the foot of the Cross, which presents almost the inverse of the events.

In Jesus and Mary we can see the “new Adam” and the “new Eve” – in a sense what Adam and Eve could have been and should have been, had they remained obedient to God. Adam and Eve almost immediately disobeyed God and broke the only rule that he gave them. Jesus the New Adam, fully human and fully divine, remains obedient to his Father up until his death, even a death as excruciating and public as death on the Cross. Mary the New Eve, faithful and resolute, gives her “yes” to God when the angel Gabriel appears to her. She continues to give her “yes” for the rest of her life. Despite the struggles and heartbreak of the road that she walks, she does not falter, but remains faithful to God to the very end. Obedience to God by the power of the Spirit is the root of Mary’s motherhood. Her simple statement, “Let it be done to me according to your word,” captures the inner attitude which God can make so abundantly fruitful. Jesus and Mary show us how we are called to follow God, even in the smallest ways – which we can do if we rely on the divine power we receive in the Holy Spirit.

There is no limit to the abundant life that God has for us. This gift is on full display in today's Gospel, flowing from the pierced Heart of Christ on the Cross: "one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out." The river of divine life did not simply fall fruitlessly to the ground; rather, it was received with perfect receptivity by the Church, represented by Mary. She in turn becomes a channel of this life for her spiritual children, beginning with the Beloved Disciple standing at her side. It was to him that Jesus announced Mary's new identity as a spiritual mother: "Behold, your mother." This is the Mother who was with the Apostles in the Upper Room, preparing them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. This is the same Mother whom we honor today as Mother of the Church.

There is so much in today's world that can shake our faith, but nothing can shake the faith of Mary our Mother. Each of us who has been re-born by Baptism into the life of the Church is a beloved disciple of Jesus and a beloved child of Mary. We who are filled with the Holy Spirit and nurtured in the Heart of Mary can go forward with confidence into a troubled world, bringing to everyone the new life we have received.

When have I shirked any responsibility for my actions? What prevents me from relying on the divine power that I receive from the Holy Spirit? How do I honor Mary as my spiritual mother?

Mary, may your fiat to God and your steadfast faith permeate my soul.

In 2018, Pope Francis proclaimed an additional feast in honor of Mary: The **Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church**. This feast, celebrated each year on the Monday after Pentecost, highlights the connection between Pentecost as the "birthday of the Church" and Mary through whom the Church is born. Mary's maternal role was revealed when Jesus from the Cross said to the beloved disciple, "Behold your Mother." Her mission was manifest in the Upper Room as she prayed with the Apostles in the days of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mary is thus fittingly honored as the spiritual Mother of all who are saved by the Death and Resurrection of Christ and who are filled with his Spirit. The title "Mother of the Church" was officially established in a decree of St. Pope Paul VI at the end of the Second Vatican Council (November 21, 1964).

Notes



First Reading: 1 Kings 17:7-16

The brook near where Elijah was hiding ran dry, because no rain had fallen in the land. So the LORD said to Elijah: “Move on to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have designated a widow there to provide for you.” He left and went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was gathering sticks there; he called out to her, “Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink.” She left to get it, and he called out after her, “Please bring along a bit of bread.” She answered, “As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.” Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go and do as you propose. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son. For the LORD, the God of Israel, says, ‘The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’” She left and did as Elijah had said. She was able to eat for a year, and Elijah and her son as well; the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, as the LORD had foretold through Elijah.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 4:2-3, 4-5, 7b-8

Lord, let your face shine on us.

When I call, answer me, O my just God,

you who relieve me when I am in distress;

Have pity on me, and hear my prayer!

Men of rank, how long will you be dull of heart?

Why do you love what is vain and seek after falsehood?

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Know that the LORD does wonders for his faithful one;

the LORD will hear me when I call upon him.

Tremble, and sin not;

reflect, upon your beds, in silence.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

O LORD, let the light of your countenance shine upon us!

You put gladness into my heart,

more than when grain and wine abound.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:16

Alleluia, alleluia. Let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”



Meditation:

On Sunday we welcomed the “power from on high,” the Holy Spirit, who fills us with divine life and love. Today the readings help us reflect more deeply on how the Lord continues to provide for our spiritual life, and how we can thereby become a source of “salt” and “light” for others.

God’s way of providing for us is almost always by means of other people. We see this in the case of the Eucharist, which we receive, not directly from the hand of God, but through the ministry of the priest. In today’s first reading, we find a distant parallel to the miracle of the Eucharist in another miraculous food, which God provides for the prophet Elijah through the selflessness of a striking *anawim* figure, a poor widow. Israel is suffering from a drought which has led to famine. The Lord tells Elijah to go to Zarephath, in pagan territory, where a specially designated widow will provide for him. In the Scriptures, as in most periods of human history, a widow is seen as one of the poorest of all people. This particular widow is on the brink of starvation.

From a human perspective, the situation looks hopeless for both the prophet and the widow. There is simply no more food. The woman has no idea that God has a special design for her. But God promises that her flour and oil will not run out, so she gives her very last bit of food to the man of God. She is not blindly obeying Elijah; she is putting her trust in the word of the Lord. She believes that the Lord is faithful to his promises. Elijah receives the benefit of the Lord’s miracle through her willingness to live in total dependence on God. At the same time, the

widow and her son receive the benefit of Elijah's presence and his intercession. If he had not come, she would have starved. If she had not fed him, he would have starved. Each experiences the goodness of the Lord, but only through the cooperation of the other with the Lord. This teaches us the communal dimension of our dependence on God.

When we put our trust in the Lord and follow his word in faith and love, then not only does he provide for us, but he makes us instruments for the benefit of others. This is the central meaning of our being "salt" and "light" for the world, the images the Lord uses in today's Gospel. He tells us, "You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world." In Jesus' time, salt was used as a preservative. Salt does more than give flavor to food, it saves food. It is not supposed to draw attention to itself. If it does, we find the food too salty. Our mission as the "salt of the earth" implies that we are to preserve the world from the corruption of sin.

On our own, we do not have the power to save the world, any more than the poor widow had the power to feed Elijah for one year. But if in poverty of spirit we entrust ourselves to the power of God, he can use us for the salvation of others. God prefers to work through intermediaries, including us.

We are also "the light of the world." Again, as a light, our role is not to attract attention to ourselves, but to illuminate the darkness of the world with the light of Christ. Jesus makes it clear that the effect of allowing our light to "shine before others" is not that they admire us or even notice us, but that they may see goodness in our acts and glorify our heavenly Father. Often we cannot see the goodness in ourselves, and we may have no idea what others see or what God is doing in the moment. Yet, if people are drawn to give glory to God, then we are fulfilling our role, serving as a shining lamp for them. We can find great joy in knowing that the Lord is making use of us in our poverty to enrich others with his own life.

When have I put my complete trust in the Lord like Elijah and the widow? How have I experienced being an instrument to benefit others by following the word of God? How am I a firm support to others in moments of doubt, fear, temptations, and trials?

Mary, help me to be a shining witness to others of the love of God.

Notes



First Reading: 1 Kings 18:20-39

Ahab sent to all the children of Israel and had the prophets assemble on Mount Carmel.

Elijah appealed to all the people and said, “How long will you straddle the issue? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him.” The people, however, did not answer him. So Elijah said to the people, “I am the only surviving prophet of the LORD, and there are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Give us two young bulls. Let them choose one, cut it into pieces, and place it on the wood, but start no fire. I shall prepare the other and place it on the wood, but shall start no fire. You shall call on your gods, and I will call on the LORD. The God who answers with fire is God.” All the people answered, “Agreed!”

Elijah then said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one young bull and prepare it first, for there are more of you. Call upon your gods, but do not start the fire.” Taking the young bull that was turned over to them, they prepared it and called on Baal from morning to noon, saying, “Answer us, Baal!” But there was no sound, and no one answering. And they hopped around the altar they had prepared. When it was noon, Elijah taunted them: “Call louder, for he is a god and may be meditating, or may have retired, or may be on a journey. Perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” They called out louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until blood gushed over them. Noon passed and they remained in a prophetic state until the time for offering sacrifice. But there was not a sound; no one answered, and no one was listening.

Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” When the people had done so, he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been destroyed. He took twelve stones, for the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the LORD had said, “Your name shall be Israel.” He built an altar in honor of the LORD with the stones, and made a trench around the altar large enough for two measures of grain. When he had arranged the wood, he cut up the young bull and laid it on the wood. “Fill four jars with water,” he said, “and pour it over the burnt offering and over the wood.” “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he said, and they did it a third time. The water flowed around the altar, and the trench was filled with the water.

At the time for offering sacrifice, the prophet Elijah came forward and said, "LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things by your command. Answer me, LORD! Answer me, that this people may know that you, LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to their senses." The LORD's fire came down and consumed the burnt offering, wood, stones, and dust, and it lapped up the water in the trench. Seeing this, all the people fell prostrate and said, "The LORD is God! The LORD is God!"



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 16:1b-2ab, 4, 5ab and 8, 11

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the LORD, "My Lord are you."

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

They multiply their sorrows
who court other gods.

Blood libations to them I will not pour out,
nor will I take their names upon my lips.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

O LORD, my allotted portion and cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

R. Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 25:4b, 5a

Alleluia, alleluia. Teach me your paths, my God, and guide me in your truth. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Matthew 5:17-19

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these

commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.”



Meditation:

Today’s readings take us up two sacred mountains. The Gospel comes from the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus reveals that he has come to fulfill the law and the prophets. He encourages us to imitate him in wholehearted devotion to the will of God. The first reading takes us up Mount Carmel, which becomes a place of decision: *will we follow the Lord or not?*

The great contest on Mount Carmel is not only between Elijah and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. It is even more a contest between the Lord and Baal, a Canaanite fertility god. For many generations the people had believed that the rituals associated with the worship of Baal were what kept the cycle of fertility going – the annual harvests, the offspring of the flocks and herds, even the gift of children for their families. Their pagan beliefs left them in fear: to offend Baal or to neglect the worship of Baal was to risk famine and infertility.

Of course, in comparison with the true God, the Lord of life, Baal is nothing, and he has nothing to do with the gift of life and fertility. So the contest that Elijah sets up between the Lord and Baal is really no contest at all. Elijah can be so confident because he knows that truth is always more powerful than falsehood. It does not matter how many prophets of Baal there are. Truth, especially the truth about God, is not determined by popular vote. Truth is truth even if no one believes it. The truth in this case is that the Lord is God and Baal is not.

Prior to the contest, the people were straddling the issue, not fully committed to either side. They were “sitting on the fence,” trying to hold two contradictory positions. They thought they could worship the Lord *and* Baal, and that was the best way to make sure they get an answer to their prayers. It is an error to think this way. We cannot follow two masters. If we are relying on our money, or consulting horoscopes, or following the “experts” who claim to be wiser than the Church, we are not being faithful to the Lord, which is disastrous for us.

Elijah sees that the people are in this kind of spiritual danger, so he makes the choice before them very clear: “If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him.” But they do not answer. Their fear of being wrong prevents them from being right. This is the worst decision of all. If they sincerely thought Baal was the true God, they would be better off deciding to follow Baal, because then they could be proven wrong. It is worse to sit in indecision than to make a sincere but wrong decision. The Lord’s words in the Book of Revelation come to mind: “How I wish you were either cold or hot. Because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:15-16). After the dramatic contest, in which the Lord answers with fire, the people are finally moved to decision. The fire convinces them to be “hot”! They prostrate themselves and cry out, “The LORD is God! The LORD is God!”

During the competition, the prophets of Baal perform all sorts of rituals, dancing, shouting and hopping about, just so that their god will hear them. They look silly to us – and they are silly. Whenever we give “glory” to our own false gods – money, career, comfort, fame – we are making fools of ourselves. There are many false gods today, and they have many prophets. Oddly, it seems that people are now more attracted to “infertility gods” than to fertility gods, more devoted to contraception and abortion than to Baal. In our mission of promoting the Gospel of life, we can feel badly outnumbered. Like Elijah, our hearts must be focused on fidelity to the one true God, not on the number of our opponents, or the strength of their influence in the media and in the government. The world may have forgotten that “the LORD is God,” but we must not forget or be indecisive!

When Jesus proclaims on the mountain that he is not abolishing even the smallest part of the letter of the law, he is not encouraging scrupulosity, but fidelity. He himself was sometimes accused of breaking the law – for example, when the Pharisees charged him with violating the Sabbath. Jesus was no lawbreaker. He came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it – that is, to bring out the real meaning of the law, as he himself lived it. Jesus was not “yes” and “no” (cf. 2 Cor 1:19). He was wholeheartedly committed to the will of the Father. He took seriously even “the least” of his commandments, knowing that what the Father wants is always good and true. Jesus’ commitment to the will of

the Father is the model we strive to follow. He shows us the way of commitment, which is the way of love. Love does not tolerate indecision about the truth.

What are my experiences of truth being more powerful than falsehood? When have I given more importance to the observance of the law than love and mercy to others? In what issues do I “straddle the fence,” not fully committed to either side?

Mary, help me to be firm in my decision to follow the law and the Lord.

Notes

June 9, Thursday, 10th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Ephrem, Deacon and Doctor of the Church
Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest (Philippines)

Optional Readings for Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest:
Isaiah 6:1-4, 8 or Hebrews 10:11-18; Psalm 23:2-3, 5-6; John 17:1-2, 9, 14-26



First Reading: 1 Kings 18:41-46

Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” So Ahab went up to eat and drink, while Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, crouched down to the earth, and put his head between his knees. “Climb up and look out to sea,” he directed his servant, who went up and looked, but reported, “There is nothing.” Seven times he said, “Go, look again!” And the seventh time the youth reported, “There is a cloud as small as a man’s hand rising from the sea.” Elijah said, “Go and say to Ahab, ‘Harness up and leave the mountain before the rain stops you.’” In a trice the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and a heavy rain fell. Ahab mounted his chariot and made for Jezreel. But the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, who girded up his clothing and ran before Ahab as far as the approaches to Jezreel.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13

It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

You have visited the land and watered it;
greatly have you enriched it.

God’s watercourses are filled;
you have prepared the grain.

R. It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

Thus have you prepared the land:
drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods,
Softening it with showers,
blessing its yield.

R. It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

You have crowned the year with your bounty,
and your paths overflow with a rich harvest;
The untilled meadows overflow with it,
and rejoicing clothes the hills.

R. It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

Gospel Acclamation: John 13:34

Alleluia, alleluia. I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: “I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.* But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, *Raqa*, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”



Meditation:

The word of God continues to guide us in the way of life in the Spirit, into the fullness of life in Jesus Christ. Today’s liturgy instructs us on some specific aspects of the way of life to which the Lord calls us – the way of holiness or “righteousness.” The first reading gives us the prophet Elijah as a model of perseverance in prayer. In the Gospel, Jesus gives us a practical lesson on the danger of anger.

At the beginning of the Gospel, again taken from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.” Righteousness, then, means something more than what we can see in the lives of the scribes and Pharisees. It means more than looking holy or saying holy words. Our fulfillment of the commandments must go deeper than external rituals if we really want to enter the Kingdom of God. The kind of worship God seeks is “worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:25).

In the Sermon, Jesus addresses a series of specific areas in which we are called to grow holier. His first point takes us beyond the prohibition against murder and goes to its root, which is *anger*. Anger, abusive language, ridicule of a brother or sister – these make us liable to judgment, Jesus says. He is not talking about anger simply as a passion, a natural movement that arises in us when we perceive injustice or wrongdoing. Anger in that sense is not chosen, so it is not morally good or bad in itself. It is simply part of being human. He cannot mean that we should never experience anger. That would make us inhuman, whereas holiness makes us more fully human. Jesus’ warning is against the *sin of anger*, that is, when we misuse or misdirect or overuse the natural passion. We sin when we use anger in destructive rather than constructive ways, when we use it to hurt others rather than to help them.

When we look at our inner selves, we should be able to see how we are tempted and how we fall into sins of anger. The obvious cases are when we “explode” – when we lose control and say hurtful things even to people whom we love. When anger comes out like that, at least we can see it, so we have an opportunity to repent quickly.

There is another kind of anger that remains smoldering inside. Resentment and bitterness can sink into the heart and hide there for years. We may no longer know why we are angry, or even admit that we are. Since it is not immediately obvious, we do not pay attention to it, and therefore, we fail to repent of it. We get irritable and impatient, or sarcastic; we avoid people or give them the silent treatment. This is still part of the sin of anger, a challenge for anyone who is striving for holiness.

How important is it for us to repent of the sin of anger? We see from this Gospel that it is very important! Jesus says we should even interrupt our worship of God and be reconciled rather than continue our worship and remain in angry division against our brother or sister. We cannot truly love God – we cannot worship him in spirit and truth – if we are deliberately holding our brother or sister in contempt. Our worship is blocked, not by the offense of the other person, but by our own sin. We will not make any progress in the spiritual life if we are not willing to reconcile.

Anger is often difficult to overcome because it has such strong emotional roots. The key is not simply to change how we feel, but to use the energy of our passion to correct the problem – and to change ourselves. Since sin is rooted in our will, we can only overcome anger if we change our will, to decide for the good of the other person.

In yesterday’s reading, Elijah was angry at the people’s infidelity to God. He energetically brought the matter to a resolution by proposing the contest on Mount Carmel. Today’s reading takes place after the Lord showed them all that he is the true God. It seems that Elijah is no longer angry, for he announces to King Ahab the end of the drought – the drought which was a punishment for the people’s infidelity. Elijah is not gloating in victory or seeking further punishments. He moves on to the next step in his service of the Lord. He climbs back up the mountain to pray for rain. Prostrating himself before the Lord, he prays fervently and confidently, even when there is not a cloud in the sky. Elijah knows the Lord will send rain, just as he had sent fire earlier. The only question is when. Six times his servant reports to him, “There is nothing,” but Elijah is not discouraged. He perseveres until he receives the report of a small cloud on the horizon. This small sign, received in faith, is enough for the prophet to take action.

From his example we learn three important lessons for our own spiritual journey: to let go of past conflicts, to persevere in prayer for what is good, and to recognize the small signs which tell us that God is doing great things. Like Elijah, we should not stop praying to God to pour a “heavy rain” of grace – forgiveness, patience, and understanding – even on our enemies. If we hold onto our anger after it has already served its purpose, or if we give up on prayer when we do not see immediate results, we will not be able to identify what God wants us to do next. The Lord wants our holiness to surpass that of the scribes and the Pharisees, so he calls us to a continuous and progressive change of heart.

Do I have the habit of killing someone “softly” by unkind remarks, gossip, or bullying? Why? How open am I to forgive and reconcile when I am offended? Why do I find it difficult to persevere in prayer?

*Mary, guide me in my prayer life.
St. Ephrem, pray for us.*

Ephrem was born around 306 in Nisibis (now Turkey). He became a deacon in the Syrian Church. Because of his great love of Christ and the Virgin Mary, he instructed others in all the Christian truths, mainly in poetical form. His theology became liturgy and music, so he is called “harp of the Holy Spirit.” He is the only person from the Syrian Rite to be acclaimed a Doctor of the Church. His great prayer and desire was that the Lord shed the brilliant light of His wisdom upon all souls so that enlightened we may serve him with renewed purity. The exact date of Ephrem’s death is not known, but it is generally accepted that he died in Edessa in 373, while caring for the sick.

The **Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest** is celebrated annually on the Thursday after Pentecost. Approval for this feast was first granted by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 1987 as a fitting and effective way to promote greater appreciation for the gift and mystery of the priesthood. The feast focuses on Jesus’ Priestly Office, particularly in the Eucharistic sacrifice, our central act of worship. The Second Vatican Council taught many things about the Priesthood of Christ. Because we all share in his Priesthood through the Sacrament of Baptism, he is the model for all believers. He is represented in a special way by ordained priests, who in administering the Sacraments of the Church act in persona Christi Capitis (“in the person of Christ the Head”; cf. CCC 1548). The laity are thus urged to pray that priests be more like Jesus Christ, the compassionate and trustworthy High Priest (cf. Heb 2:17), ever living to intercede for humanity before the Father (cf. Heb 7:25). This is also a day of prayer for priestly vocations. The liturgy of Christ the Eternal High Priest was first introduced in the Philippines as a Memorial in 2021; this year it is celebrated as a Feast.

Notes



First Reading: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-16

At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave, where he took shelter. But the word of the LORD came to him, “Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by.” A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD – but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake – but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire – but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, “Elijah, why are you here?” He replied, “I have been most zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. But the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.” The LORD said to him, “Go, take the road back to the desert near Damascus. When you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king of Aram. Then you shall anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king of Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 27:7-8a, 8b-9abc, 13-14

I long to see your face, O Lord.

Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call;

have pity on me, and answer me.

Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

R. I long to see your face, O Lord.

Your presence, O LORD, I seek.

Hide not your face from me;

do not in anger repel your servant.

You are my helper: cast me not off.

R. I long to see your face, O Lord.

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD

in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD with courage;

be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

R. I long to see your face, O Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Philippians 2:15d, 16a

Alleluia, alleluia. Shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Matthew 5:27-32

Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery*. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

“It was also said, *Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce*. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”



Meditation:

We continue to reflect on the section of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus teaches us the deeper meaning of the Commandments. In today’s Gospel he addresses the Sixth Commandment – “*You shall not commit adultery*” – revealing some of its further implications, such as the evils of lust and divorce. Here we see once again that the law of God is not limited to mere prohibitions of sinful behavior. The commandment against adultery gives us great wisdom for how to live, and touches on a wide range of issues related to what it means to be a human person. Indeed, “the tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality” (CCC 2336).

One of the specific topics Jesus mentions here is the problem inherent in the practice of divorce and remarriage. Because there is an ever-growing number of Catholics in this difficult situation, and because many are troubled by the Church’s practice of forbidding such couples from receiving Holy Communion, this issue has been discussed extensively in recent years. However, much of the discussion loses sight of the basic teaching of Jesus himself. We can be sure that the Church will never deviate from what he says: “whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Speculations about changes that will justify adultery or that will distort or obscure the beauty of marriage are of no value to us. What we need is growth in wisdom and love as we help all people pursue their call to holiness. Part of love for our neighbor is to speak the truth, even

when it is very challenging. This is exactly what Jesus does in today's Gospel. He knows that we will struggle with the temptation to look "with lust"; he even compares the effort to overcome lust to tearing out an eye or cutting off a hand! Because he loves us, he tells us that we are better off cutting out sin, no matter the cost. But love for neighbor is not exhausted in pointing out peoples' sins and telling them what must or must not be done. It does not begin with such corrections either. Love involves us in a journey with our brothers and sisters, with patience and mercy. Jesus' own pastoral love for adulterous women in the Gospels is the example we follow. He did not tell the Samaritan woman to cut off her hand but to quench her thirst for love at the spring of life-giving water (cf. Jn 4:13). He did not condemn the woman caught in adultery but told her to go and sin no more (cf. Jn 8:11).

Very often our discussions of current moral issues get noisy and confused. Emotions get stirred up and make it difficult for anyone to listen or to reason. We can compare our experience of this tumult of voices and opinions with the experience of Elijah in the cave. Elijah has faced a series of strident controversies, both religious and political. He has just passed through a contest with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and now the wicked Queen Jezebel is determined to have him executed. There is a lot of noise in his life, both exteriorly and interiorly, and he feels alone and abandoned. In his prayer on the mountain of God, he searches for the voice of the Lord, but he cannot find it in the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire. Elijah must wait and listen until the noise passes. Only then is the Lord's presence revealed in "a tiny whispering sound." Actually that "sound" was present all along, but Elijah could not hear it.

This is what happens to us. As we go through our days, we are surrounded with many noises, some so loud and demanding that we can barely think of anything else. We face many issues in our personal lives – responsibilities at work, tense relationships at home, temptations and weaknesses – and all the while we are bombarded by the insistent voices of the media. What is God saying to us? In our prayer time, we pull aside, into the "cave" of our interior life, where we listen for the one voice that is different from all the rest, the voice of the Lord.

Sometimes God reveals himself in the form of a "strong and heavy wind," as he did on the day of Pentecost. Even on that day, however, there were some in the crowd who did not hear the Lord; in the midst of

the commotion, they simply thought the Apostles were no more than morning drunkards. Usually the voice of the Lord is much more subtle. He truly speaks to us, but in a “tiny whispering sound” which only a listening heart can hear. As we ponder the word of God each day, we listen interiorly for his voice, saying to him: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:9-10).

What hinders me from hearing the voice of the Lord in my daily life? Where is the “cave” of my interior life where I can listen more clearly to the voice of God? Why do I approach others with judgment and harsh corrections and not patience and mercy?

Mary, grant me a listening heart like yours.

Notes

June 11, Saturday, 10th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Barnabas, Apostle



First Reading: Acts 11:21b-26; 13:1-3

In those days a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The news about them reached the ears of the Church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to go to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart, for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith. And a large number of people was added to the Lord. Then he went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the Church and taught a large number of people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

Now there were in the Church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4, 5-6

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
His right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 119:36a, 29b

Alleluia, alleluia. Incline my heart, O God, to your decrees; and favor me with your law. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Matthew 5:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.* But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the Evil One.”



Meditation:

The story of Barnabas is inseparable from the story of Paul. In fact, we do not know what would have happened to Paul if it were not for Barnabas. On Paul’s first trip back to Jerusalem after his extraordinary conversion on the road to Damascus, he was not readily welcomed by the Christian community. They were all afraid of him! They could not believe that he was really a disciple of Jesus (cf. Acts 9:26). We can understand why: Paul had a reputation in Jerusalem as a fierce persecutor. All the Christians knew what had happened to Stephen, so they had good reason to suspect Paul’s intentions. Barnabas was the first to recognize the authenticity of Paul’s conversion, and he was the one who introduced him to the Apostles.

Barnabas seems to have had a naturally friendly personality; he was the type of person who can build up others. He also had a special gift, a charism, for recognizing what God was doing in people and in situations and encouraging people to continue growing in the Lord. We see this charism at work in today’s reading. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, where the Church was blossoming, and when he “saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart, for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith.”

Shortly after this, Barnabas used his charisma in his pursuit of Saul, who at that time was still in Tarsus. He found Saul and brought him to Antioch, an action that immensely benefitted both Saul and the church of Antioch. While they were in Antioch, the Holy Spirit told the church, “set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” – that is, their missionary work. Saul was one of the greatest missionaries the Church has ever had. We normally think of Barnabas as his collaborator. At the beginning, however, Barnabas was the leader and Paul was his companion. For example, when they were in Lystra and the people thought they were gods, they named Barnabas “Zeus,” the head of all the Greek gods; Paul they called “Hermes,” who was the messenger of the gods (cf. Acts 14:12). It is clear that Barnabas had the more significant role in the beginning. But gradually, as a result of Barnabas’ encouragement, Paul rose to greater maturity and effectiveness as a missionary, and in time was able to continue without him. Barnabas went to Cyprus; the tradition is that he was martyred there.

What can we learn from this man whom the Church honors as an Apostle? We learn the importance of encouraging others to be strong in faith. Everyone needs spiritual support, including our pastors and leaders. Those who are newly converted, even if they have received a powerful grace, are still in special need of spiritual friendship from those who are more mature in the Christian way of life. We can be a “Barnabas” to others when we discern in them the action of God’s grace and encourage them to persevere. Our joyful fidelity to our own vocation, when we are “filled with the Holy Spirit and faith,” is one of the best ways to encourage others to be faithful.

As missionary disciples, we are also called to live as witnesses to the truth. The truth is both our safeguard and our gift. This is what Jesus teaches us in today’s Gospel. When we violate the integrity of the truth – represented here by the taking of a *false oath* – we lose our way, and we rob others of the gift we are sent to give them. Jesus tells us plainly, “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the Evil One.” It is as simple as that: *Tell the truth*.

And yet, in practice, it does not seem so simple. There are so many ways we can be tempted to deceive people: by telling outright lies, by twisting the meaning of words, or simply by omitting information that people need. We rationalize our manipulations as necessary to protect our reputation or to avoid being blamed. The truth can make us feel so

vulnerable at times. We might try to brush off our lies as “harmless,” mere “white lies.” Yet, lies are never harmless. When we lie, we weaken the very foundation we are standing on.

God’s power exists in truth. The Holy Spirit whom we welcomed on Pentecost Sunday is “the Spirit of Truth.” When we submit to the truth, we become powerful. This is what we see in the powerful ministry of Barnabas, a man filled with the Holy Spirit. He let his “yes” mean “yes” and his “no” mean “no.” Like him, we are called to trust in God, who is the Truth, and rely on the power of the Spirit.

How am I influenced by the charism of St. Barnabas? How do I encourage others to live a life of holiness and build up their faith? What are my attitudes and negative responses that may discourage others in their walk of faith?

***Mary, Queen of Apostles, lead me on the road of holiness.
St. Barnabas, pray for us.***

We honor **Barnabas** as an Apostle, but he was not one of the Twelve. He is never mentioned in the Gospels but is quite prominent in the Acts of the Apostles. He is first introduced in Acts 4:36-37: “There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the Apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet.” Barnabas’s background prepared him well to serve as a missionary. As a Levite, he had a solid formation in Jewish traditions. As a native of Cyprus, he was from the Greek-speaking Jewish diaspora and had experience in traveling. While living in Jerusalem he became a very early convert to Christianity. St. Clement of Alexandria even includes Barnabas among the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus (cf. Lk 10:1). With his charism of encouragement, it is no surprise that the Holy Spirit set him apart with Saul to take on the enormous task of bringing the Gospel to the Gentile world.

Notes