

*Pondering the Word...*

# THE ANAWIM WAY

*Daily Liturgical Meditations*

*Baptism of the Lord to Sixth Week  
in Ordinary Time*

*January 8 to February 13, 2024  
Cycle B - Year 2*

**Scripture Texts:** Excerpts from the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition* © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970  
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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.***



*The Baptism of the Lord  
and  
First Week in Ordinary Time*

*“You are my beloved Son;  
with you I am well pleased.”*

Mark 1:11

*Theme for the Week*

The Baptism of Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father, opens the way for our own Baptism, the beginning of our new life in Christ, who calls us to share in his saving work. Through us, the Lord shines forth his light into the world. Let us remain open to the Lord’s action within us as we strive to live out our baptismal grace.

## THE FATHER REVEALS HIS MERCY IN THE HUMBLE LIFE OF HIS SON JESUS

*A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis*

Today we are celebrating the Baptism of the Lord. A few days ago, we left Baby Jesus being visited by the Magi; today we find him as an adult on the banks of the Jordan. The Liturgy has us take a leap of some 30 years, 30 years about which we know one thing: they were years of hidden life, which Jesus spent with his family — some, firstly in Egypt, as a migrant to escape Herod’s persecution, the others in Nazareth, learning Joseph’s trade — with family, obeying his parents, studying and working. It is striking that the Lord spent most of his time on Earth in this way: living an ordinary life, without standing out. We think that, according to the Gospels, there were three years of preaching, of miracles and many things. Three. And the others, all the others, were of a hidden life with his family. It is a fine message for us: it reveals *the greatness of daily life*, the importance in God’s eyes of every gesture and moment of life, even the simplest, even the most hidden.

After these 30 years of hidden life, Jesus’ public life begins. And it begins precisely with his baptism in the River Jordan. But Jesus is God; why does Jesus get baptized? John’s baptism consisted in a penitential rite; it was a sign of one’s willingness to convert, to be better, asking forgiveness of one’s sins. Jesus surely did not need it. In fact, John the Baptist tries to prevent it, but Jesus insists. Why? Because he wants to be with the sinners: for this reason he gets in line with them and does the same thing they do. He does so with the attitude of the people, with their attitude [of the people] who, as a liturgical hymn says, approached “with bare soul and bare feet.” A bare soul, that is, without anything covered, like this, a sinner. This is the gesture Jesus makes, and he goes down into the river to immerse himself in the same condition we are in. Indeed, baptism actually means “immersion.” On the first day of his ministry, Jesus thus offers us his “programmatically manifesto.” He tells us that he does not save us from on high, with a sovereign decision or act of force, a decree, no: he saves us by coming to meet us and taking our sins upon himself. This is how God conquers the world’s evil: by humbling himself, taking charge of it. It is also the way that we can lift up others: not by judging, not by suggesting what to do, but by drawing



near, empathizing, sharing God's love. Closeness is God's way with us; he himself says so to Moses: "Think: what people has its gods as close as you have me?" Closeness is God's way with us.

After this gesture of compassion by Jesus, an extraordinary thing happens: the heavens open and the Trinity is finally revealed. The Holy Spirit descends from the heavens in the form of a dove (cf. *Mk* 1:10) and the Father says to Jesus: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (v. 11). God manifests himself when mercy appears. Do not forget this: God manifests himself when mercy appears, because that is his face. Jesus becomes the servant of sinners and is proclaimed the Son; he lowers himself among us and the Spirit descends upon him. Love calls upon love. It also applies to us: in each act of service, in every work of mercy we perform, God manifests himself; God sets his gaze upon the world. This applies to us.

But even before we do anything, our life is marked by the mercy that was laid upon us. We have been saved freely. Salvation is free. It is the freely given gesture of God's mercy toward us. Sacramentally this is done on the day of our Baptism; but even those who are not baptized always receive God's mercy, because God is there, waiting, waiting for them to open the doors of their hearts. He draws near, allow me to say, he caresses us with his mercy.

May Our Lady, to whom we now pray, help us to cherish our *baptismal identity*, that is, the identity of being shown mercy, which lies at the base of faith and life.

Pope Francis, Angelus Message, January 10, 2021  
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## January 8, Monday, the Baptism of the Lord

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### ***First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-11***

Thus says the LORD:

All you who are thirsty,  
come to the water!

You who have no money,  
come, receive grain and eat;  
come, without paying and without cost,  
drink wine and milk!

Why spend your money for what is not bread,  
your wages for what fails to satisfy?

Heed me, and you shall eat well,  
you shall delight in rich fare.

Come to me heedfully,  
listen, that you may have life.

I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,  
the benefits assured to David.

As I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander of nations,

So shall you summon a nation you knew not,  
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,

Because of the LORD, your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call him while he is near.

Let the scoundrel forsake his way,  
and the wicked man his thoughts;  
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;  
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

As high as the heavens are above the earth  
so high are my ways above your ways  
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

For just as from the heavens  
the rain and snow come down

And do not return there  
till they have watered the earth,  
making it fertile and fruitful,  
Giving seed to the one who sows  
and bread to the one who eats,  
So shall my word be  
that goes forth from my mouth;  
My word shall not return to me void,  
but shall do my will,  
achieving the end for which I sent it.

or *Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7*

Thus says the LORD:  
Here is my servant whom I uphold,  
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,  
Upon whom I have put my spirit;  
he shall bring forth justice to the nations,  
Not crying out, not shouting,  
not making his voice heard in the street.  
A bruised reed he shall not break,  
and a smoldering wick he shall not quench,  
Until he establishes justice on the earth;  
the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,  
I have grasped you by the hand;  
I formed you, and set you  
as a covenant of the people,  
a light for the nations,  
To open the eyes of the blind,  
to bring out prisoners from confinement,  
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

or *1 John 5:1-9*

Beloved: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And

the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one who testifies, and the Spirit is truth. So there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and the three are of one accord. If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is surely greater. Now the testimony of God is this, that he has testified on behalf of his Son.

or *Acts 10:34-38*

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”

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***Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6***

***You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.***

God indeed is my savior;

I am confident and unafraid.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.

With joy you will draw water  
at the fountain of salvation.

***R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.***

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;  
among the nations make known his deeds,  
proclaim how exalted is his name.

***R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.***

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;  
let this be known throughout all the earth.

Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,  
for great in your midst  
is the Holy One of Israel!

***R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.***

or *Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10*

***The Lord will bless his people with peace.***

Give to the LORD, you sons of God,  
give to the LORD glory and praise,  
Give to the LORD the glory due his name;  
adore the LORD in holy attire.

***R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.***

The voice of the LORD is over the waters,  
the LORD, over vast waters.

The voice of the LORD is mighty;  
the voice of the LORD is majestic.

***R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.***

The God of glory thunders,  
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"  
The LORD is enthroned above the flood;  
the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

***R. The Lord will bless his people with peace.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: see John 1:29***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** John saw Jesus approaching him, and said: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 1:7-11***

This is what John the Baptist proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

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***Meditation:***

The readings today give us a renewed appreciation of the Rosary's first Mystery of Light: the Baptism of the Lord. They draw us into the heart of two servants: Jesus, fully human and fully divine, sent to serve humanity through his life, death and resurrection; and John the Baptist, the man sent to serve humanity by preparing the

way for Jesus. As Jesus comes to the Jordan to submit to John's baptism, we see how the lives of these two men intersect in order that Jesus' public ministry may begin and his messianic mission be fulfilled.

In the Gospel, we hear John the Baptist humbly proclaim his role in the unfolding of this divine plan. Through the grace of God, John understands his place and recognizes that his baptizing ("immersing") the people is only a prelude to what "One mightier than I" will bring. He realizes that the Messiah will bring an *immersion in the Holy Spirit* – far greater than the immersion in water that was only a sign of repentance. John rightly sees himself only as a predecessor, not even worthy to perform the task of a slave in loosening the thongs of Jesus' sandals. He is very clear about his role, and this clarity helps him get out of the way so he can make a way for Jesus.

Someone once said that true humility is knowing your place... and taking it. John demonstrates such humility, and this makes him an effective servant of the Lord. When we know our place and take it, we open a space for God. We get out of the way so that he can fill us with his Spirit, who makes us servants of the Lord. John the Baptist did exactly that. In baptizing Jesus he serves him, and before John's very eyes, Jesus' divinity becomes manifest in the Jordan River.

We might wonder why Jesus would need to go through this symbolic purification. After all, he has no sins to wash away. Jesus' submission to John's baptism shows us that he too has humility. He humbly submits to a baptism of repentance not because he needs it but because he is uniting himself totally with us sinners. Jesus shows that he is with us, he understands us, and he is one with us.

St. Mark tells us that the heavens are "torn open" when Jesus comes out of the water. It is a sign that the barrier between God and man has been removed. When the Spirit descends upon Jesus, we learn that Divine Love has come upon the human family. The voice of the Father announces: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." This passage is a revelation of the beauty of the Trinity in action. God the Son is baptized, God the Father speaks from Heaven, and God the Holy Spirit descends like a dove. It is the moment of a *new creation*. In Jesus, the Father is once again well pleased with man, just as he was pleased at the creation of man in the beginning when he "saw that it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

The Baptism of Jesus sanctifies the waters of creation, opening the way for the Sacrament of Baptism. In the Sacrament of Baptism, we become a new creation: we are cleansed; the heavens are torn open for us; we are filled with the Holy Spirit; and the Father accepts us as his own beloved children. We receive Baptism only once, but the grace of Baptism is continually at work in us. We need to renew our baptismal commitment again and again as we journey and grow in faith. Each time we enter a church and bless ourselves with holy water, we call to mind our Baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We renew our commitment to the Lord as his obedient servants.

Among the optional readings, one is taken from Isaiah 42, where the Lord speaks through the prophet to describe the character of his obedient servant. Jesus fulfills this prophecy fully. The words of the Father at the Baptism of the Son echo the words of the LORD to his servant, “my chosen one with whom I am pleased, / Upon whom I have put my spirit.” The servant of the LORD is described as one who is gentle but strong, who will establish justice on the earth, who will be a light for the nations, “To open the eyes of the blind, / to bring out prisoners from confinement / and from the dungeons, those who live in darkness.”

In light of the powerful grace we receive in Baptism, we can see ourselves in this description of those whom Jesus, the Servant of the LORD, has come to save. He saves us from our mental and spiritual *blindness*, from the *confinement* of our disordered emotions, from the *dungeons* of our fears and addictions, from the *darkness* of our sins. Jesus, in doing the will of the Father, unceasingly serves us every day through the power of the Spirit. We can be absolutely confident in his constant love, care, guidance, and intercession in our lives. He is our model in the call to live as servants of the Lord.

*How do I manifest my gratitude to God for the great gift of Baptism that I have received? Why is true humility necessary for me to open a space for the Spirit to work in my life? Why is it important for me to renew my Baptismal commitment again and again?*

***Mary, grant me the desire to be a humble servant of God.***

## SEASONAL INTRODUCTION: ORDINARY TIME

Beginning today, the day after the Baptism of the Lord, until Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (January 9 – February 13), we enter into the first part of what is called Ordinary Time. In Advent we pondered the dark, chaotic condition of man before the birth of Jesus. During Christmas we celebrated his birth and the promise of the restoration of our fallen condition. In the next five and one-half weeks, we will be pondering the fuller revelation of Jesus as he leads us interiorly through his spirited word.

Two major Feasts set the tone for this time: the Baptism of the Lord, which we celebrated yesterday, and the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple (February 2). The Baptism of the Lord, a prefiguration of sacramental Baptism, gives this time a sacramental character. Jesus, the Source of divine power, instituted the sacramental life of the Church through which he communicates to us the capability for transformation into his likeness. In the Presentation of the Lord, Mary acts in the name of us all, returning to the Father the gift of his Son. The Feast of the Presentation also prepares us for the thrust of the whole Lenten Season that follows. It leads us into our Lenten journey of purification. At the same time it means to keep us in an interior awareness of the presence of Jesus within us individually and corporately as the Mystical Body. We are a “temple people,” and as Mary offered Jesus, we are to offer our lives back to the Father by living in his will.

The themes for the next few weeks center around the call to discipleship. Christ is present, giving us the power to follow this call into transformation and union with God.

From the writings of Fr. Francis J. Marino  
Founder of the Anawim Community



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## January 9, Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time

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*When the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord occurs on Monday of the First Week in Ordinary Time (as it does this year), the readings normally assigned to Monday may be joined to those of Tuesday so that the opening of each book will be read. Monday's readings: 1 Sm 1: 1-8/ Ps 116: 12-13, 14-17, 18-19/ Mk 1: 14-20. Tuesday's readings: 1 Sm 1: 9-20/ 1 Sm 2: 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd/ Mk 1: 21-28.*

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### **First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:9-20**

Hannah rose after a meal at Shiloh, and presented herself before the LORD; at the time, Eli the priest was sitting on a chair near the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In her bitterness she prayed to the LORD, weeping copiously, and she made a vow, promising: "O LORD of hosts, if you look with pity on the misery of your handmaid, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the LORD for as long as he lives; neither wine nor liquor shall he drink, and no razor shall ever touch his head." As she remained long at prayer before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth, for Hannah was praying silently; though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli, thinking her drunk, said to her, "How long will you make a drunken show of yourself? Sober up from your wine!" "It isn't that, my lord," Hannah answered. "I am an unhappy woman. I have had neither wine nor liquor; I was only pouring out my troubles to the LORD. Do not think your handmaid a ne'er-do-well; my prayer has been prompted by my deep sorrow and misery." Eli said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." She replied, "Think kindly of your maidservant," and left. She went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and no longer appeared downcast. Early the next morning they worshiped before the LORD, and then returned to their home in Ramah.

When Elkanah had relations with his wife Hannah, the LORD remembered her. She conceived, and at the end of her term bore a son whom she called Samuel, since she had asked the LORD for him.

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### **Responsorial Psalm: 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd**

***My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.***

"My heart exults in the LORD,  
my horn is exalted in my God.  
I have swallowed up my enemies;  
I rejoice in my victory."

***R. My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.***

“The bows of the mighty are broken,  
while the tottering gird on strength.  
The well-fed hire themselves out for bread,  
while the hungry batten on spoil.  
The barren wife bears seven sons,  
while the mother of many languishes.”

***R. My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.***

“The LORD puts to death and gives life;  
he casts down to the nether world;  
he raises up again.

The LORD makes poor and makes rich;  
he humbles, he also exalts.”

***R. My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.***

“He raises the needy from the dust;  
from the dung heap he lifts up the poor,  
To seat them with nobles  
and make a glorious throne their heritage.”

***R. My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: 1 Thessalonians 2:13***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** Receive the word of God, not as the word of men,  
but as it truly is, the word of God. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 1:21-28***

Jesus came to Capernaum with his followers, and on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!” Jesus rebuked him and said, “Quiet! Come out of him!” The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, “What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.” His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

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***Meditation:***

Today’s Gospel begins simply enough: Jesus “entered the synagogue and taught.” We are not told precisely what he said. Instead St. Mark informs us of the effect of Jesus’ words: “the people

were astonished at his teaching.” They had never heard anyone speak as he did, with a unique authority, with divine power. The people are encountering the living and effective quality of the divine word, and it commands their attention like no other. As we ponder the word of God, we too are astonished. Jesus is speaking to us with authority. We may read and be touched by the words of other learned teachers who sometimes have helpful and even profound things to say. But nothing compares to the word of God.

Jesus’ authority is immediately contested by a man with “an unclean spirit.” What is an “unclean spirit” if not one who rejects the holiness of God and resists his authority? In some sense, we all have within us something “unclean”: tendencies to be selfish, to resist submitting to God, to cling to some sin patterns, or to hide from God what we want for ourselves. These tendencies and patterns must be driven out by Jesus’ divine power.

The man who shouts at Jesus in the synagogue, however, is not simply being proud or selfish or stubborn. He is under the influence of someone else, a real, malevolent spirit, a demon. Such spirits are bent on destroying us and disrupting God’s plan for our salvation. In modern culture many people have a strange inconsistency in the way they think about evil spirits. On one hand, they say it is silly to believe in such things; on the other hand, they give them a lot of attention, treating them as a kind of harmless entertainment. Either way, the reality of unclean spirits is not recognized as a serious threat.

One of Satan’s greatest victories is to get people to believe that he does not even exist. Meanwhile he has caused terrible destruction in people’s lives by means of astrology, occult practices, psychic readings, and New Age beliefs. The culture considers these merely as popular diversions, which they definitely are not. They are instead gateways through which evil spirits can enter into our lives as we read, watch, or open ourselves to forces that may be supernatural, but are not of God. Although the power of God is always infinitely stronger than any demonic power, our own human nature is weak, and unclean spirits can easily wreak havoc in our lives if we open those doors. The only spiritual authority we should allow to reign in our lives is the authority of Jesus Christ!

Jesus reveals this authority as he casts out the demon, not through any magical incantation or complicated procedure but simply by the power of his words. All he needs to say is, “Quiet! Come out of him!” and the unclean spirit is gone. Once again, the people are amazed at his authority. This is the same power that is at work in the divine word today. As we ponder the word, allowing God to speak to our hearts, the “two-edged sword” cuts through all darkness and cuts out all that is not of God (cf. Heb 4:12). His power is more than enough to cast out unclean spirits from our hearts and minds.

In the first reading, the holy woman Hannah is in deep grief. She is not troubled by unclean spirits but is afflicted with infertility. Many women try evil means to overcome this affliction, but Hannah turns to the only one who can really help her. She pours out her troubles to the Lord, praying and weeping in his presence for a long time in the shrine in Shiloh. The priest Eli misreads her behavior as drunkenness, but in fact, Hannah is placing herself under the authority of God. She goes so far as to vow that if God grants her a son, she will dedicate him to God. In time God grants her petition, giving her a son: Samuel, the great prophet.

After Hannah prays, she experiences inner peace. She returns to her normal life and no longer appears downcast. Even before she knows how God will respond to her prayer, she knows that she is in his hands. This is the fruit of trusting in the authority of God. When we truly allow God to be in charge of our lives – whether we are facing unclean spirits or experiencing grief, whether our needs and problems are large or small – we discover a peace that no other power can give us. The power of God at work in our hearts is “astonishing” and “amazing.” We join Hannah in singing his praises: “My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior!”

*How does the example of Hannah, who turns to the Lord in prayer, enkindle my spirit to trust the Lord more? How am I interiorly touched with the unique authority and divine power of Jesus’ teachings? Have I ever been involved in astrology, occult practices, or psychic readings? What harm did this do to my spiritual life?*

***Mary, grant me the grace to always exalt in the Lord for all he does for me.***



**First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20**

During the time young Samuel was minister to the LORD under Eli, a revelation of the LORD was uncommon and vision infrequent. One day Eli was asleep in his usual place. His eyes had lately grown so weak that he could not see. The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, “Here I am.”

Samuel ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. You called me.” “I did not call you,” Eli said. “Go back to sleep.” So he went back to sleep. Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. “Here I am,” he said. “You called me.” But Eli answered, “I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.” At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet. The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, “Here I am. You called me.” Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. So Eli said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, “Samuel, Samuel!” Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect. Thus all Israel from Dan to Beersheba came to know that Samuel was an accredited prophet of the LORD.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:2, and 5, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10**

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

I have waited, waited for the LORD,  
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.  
Blessed the man who makes the LORD his trust;  
who turns not to idolatry  
or to those who stray after falsehood.

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

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***Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord. I know them, and they follow me. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 1:29-39***

On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon’s mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, “Everyone is looking for you.” He told them, “Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.” So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

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***Meditation:***

“*Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.*” Today’s beautiful Psalm response expresses the simplicity and humility of heart that marks a true disciple of God. The beginning of Samuel’s spiritual life is marked by this fundamental disposition. And its most perfect revelation is found in the whole life and ministry of Jesus. He is entirely devoted to doing only the Father’s will.

Jesus’ first exorcism in the Gospel of Mark is followed by his first physical healing, the cure of Simon’s mother-in-law. There is a progressive unfolding of the will of God in this Gospel passage. First Jesus enters Simon’s house. His presence and authority open the

possibility of countless new wonders. The disciples immediately tell him about the woman's fever. In doing so, they show us the right thing to do whenever we or our loved ones are facing troubles. We cannot know what Jesus will do when we go to him with our needs, but we can be sure that he is the right one to turn to.

The woman's reaction to being immediately healed is also a model of discipleship for us: "she waited on them." She could not serve while she was ill, but now by the grace of God she is well, and she can use her health and strength to serve others. The right response to an experience of Jesus' healing power in our lives, whether it be a physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional healing, is to re-dedicate ourselves to service of the Lord and of his people, a service that begins right in our own home.

Jesus continues to do the Father's will by attending to the crowds of sick and possessed people. His mission as a healer is welcomed by all. However, the Father has something more in mind, and Jesus is most attentive to his voice. After a long and tiring day, he rises very early the next morning and seeks a place of solitude and silence where he can be alone with the Father. We can imagine him praying the words of the Psalm: "*Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.*" Jesus discovers in prayer that the Father's will – contrary to the will of the people who clamor for him to stay – is that he go elsewhere to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' example is a stirring reminder of the importance of prayer. It is only through this personal connection with the Father that we can know his will and be renewed in our dedication to it, recharged to face whatever lies ahead. No matter how much or how little "power" we may feel we have, none of it comes from ourselves. In our weakness, we need to connect with the one and only true "power source" – the Lord. So often we let the busyness and stress of the day be an excuse not to find time to pray. Jesus shows us that the pressures of life should lead us *to* prayer, not *away* from it. Everything we have, everything we do, and everything we are comes from God, and it is to him that we need to return again and again to drink of the inexhaustible fountain of his will.

Young Samuel learns how to come to this inexhaustible fountain when the Lord calls him in the night. Samuel is ready and eager to respond, but at first, he does not recognize the Lord's voice. Eli guides

him to make a response of active listening: “Speak, for your servant is listening.” Samuel perseveres in this inner disposition of listening as he grows up, and in time he comes to be known as “an accredited prophet of the LORD.”

What a beautiful illustration of how our relationship with God grows. God calls us again and again, never giving up on us even when we fail to recognize his voice. Often we need the guidance of another Christian to help us discern the voice of God. We keep falling asleep spiritually. We mistakenly think that we must answer the “call” of human authorities around us, or of the world, or of our own flesh. But if, like young Samuel, our hearts are open and we are sincere in our desire to hear God, we will hear him. Throughout our life, before, during, and after hearing his voice, our response is always the same: *“Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.”*

*How do the words of the psalm “Hear am I Lord; I come to do your will,” motivate my life? Is doing the will of God a delight or a burden for me? How? Why do I find it difficult to persevere in listening and waiting for the Lord to speak to me?*

***Mary, open my heart to truly listen to the voice of the Lord when he speaks to me.***

## Notes





**First Reading: 1 Samuel 4:1-11**

The Philistines gathered for an attack on Israel. Israel went out to engage them in battle and camped at Ebenezer, while the Philistines camped at Aphek. The Philistines then drew up in battle formation against Israel. After a fierce struggle Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who slew about four thousand men on the battlefield. When the troops retired to the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD permitted us to be defeated today by the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the LORD from Shiloh that it may go into battle among us and save us from the grasp of our enemies.”

So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned upon the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were with the ark of God. When the ark of the LORD arrived in the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth resounded. The Philistines, hearing the noise of shouting, asked, “What can this loud shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” On learning that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, the Philistines were frightened. They said, “Gods have come to their camp.” They said also, “Woe to us! This has never happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods that struck the Egyptians with various plagues and with pestilence. Take courage and be manly, Philistines; otherwise you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they were your slaves. So fight manfully!” The Philistines fought and Israel was defeated; every man fled to his own tent. It was a disastrous defeat, in which Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were among the dead.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 44:10-11, 14-15, 24-25**

***Redeem us, Lord, because of your mercy.***

Yet now you have cast us off and put us in disgrace,  
and you go not forth with our armies.

You have let us be driven back by our foes;  
those who hated us plundered us at will.

***R. Redeem us, Lord, because of your mercy.***

You made us the reproach of our neighbors,  
the mockery and the scorn of those around us.

You made us a byword among the nations,  
a laughingstock among the peoples.

***R. Redeem us, Lord, because of your mercy.***

Why do you hide your face,  
forgetting our woe and our oppression?  
For our souls are bowed down to the dust,  
our bodies are pressed to the earth.

***R. Redeem us, Lord, because of your mercy.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 4:23***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom and cured every disease among the people. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 1:40-45***

A leper came to him and kneeling down begged him and said, “If you wish, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched the leper, and said to him, “I do will it. Be made clean.” The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. Then he said to him, “See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.” The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

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***Meditation:***

The readings today present us with nations battling for power, with wrong ideas about God, and a person battling for health, with the right idea about God. There is no substitute for trusting and surrendering to God. Without this disposition, we become so full of ourselves that we harden our hearts against the love and mercy he is ready to pour down on us. It is through our submission to his will that we can be healed and strengthened for the battles we face as we work in service of his Kingdom.

The Gospel gives an account of another of Jesus’ miraculous healings. A leper approaches the Lord, kneels before him, and begs, “If you wish, you can make me clean.” Leprosy was one of the most horrific diseases of the ancient world. It literally ate away at the body until the person wasted away and died. As horrible as the physical condition was, the worst part of being a leper may have been the way they were treated. They were considered like the walking dead, shunned and despised by all of society; they were not allowed to come anywhere

near people, and had to shout out the warning, “Unclean!” wherever they went. We can marvel, then, at the actions of this man who has the courage, born of faith, to approach Jesus. Everyone knew that leprosy could not be cured – except by a miracle from God. This man knows that Jesus can work this very miracle; he can cleanse him entirely of the whole burden of leprosy.

The disease of leprosy does to man on the outside what the disease of sin does to man on the inside. Sin eats away at our very soul and kills what is good in us. When we remain in sin, love and virtues and good character can wither and drop away. Sin leaves us unclean, and there is no cure – except by a miracle from God. We may sometimes wrongly think that we need just a little healing, or a slight improvement in one area of our life or another to put us back on the road to spiritual health. That is like a leper thinking he only needs one part of his body healed. The Lord does not want us to live with “just a little sin.” He wants us to be cleansed completely!

Jesus heals the leper with a touch. He healed others in many different ways, but in the case of this untouchable man, he chooses to touch him. Jesus often does the same for us. No matter what our untouchable condition may be, he touches us, saying, “I do will it. Be made clean!” No sin is too disgusting for him to touch. This is most beautifully revealed in the Sacraments, in which the Lord touches us with grace through visible signs. When we come to him in Confession, for example, and kneel before him with contrition and confidence in his mercy, we experience his healing touch. The leprosy of our sin leaves us immediately and we are made clean.

In the first reading, however, we see a different way to approach God, not in humility and obedience, but with a spirit of pride and control. The Israelites are humiliated by their enemies the Philistines and are desperate to find a way to victory. They decide to bring the Ark of the Covenant into their next battle, hoping it will give them the power to win the war. But their disposition is all wrong. Instead of humbly repenting and seeking God, their idea is to use God, to “force” God to fight for them. Rather than looking to the Lord, they look to the Ark, as if it were their ultimate good-luck charm. Their plan utterly backfires. The Israelites suffer “a disastrous defeat.” God does not bless their superstitious belief in the power of the Ark.

The defeat of the Israelites serves as a warning to us not to replace God with any created thing. We have many wonderful devotions, shrines, images, sacramentals, and aids to prayer. God gives us all these to help us live by faith in him. If instead we use them in superstitious ways, we are setting ourselves up for a defeat. There is a big difference between coming sincerely to God in humble petition, confident in the Lord's goodness and power, and treating him like a big vending machine into which we insert some prayers and get what we want. We must guard against our human tendency to think that we are and should be in control. Genuine prayer is founded on loving submission to God. Like the leper who comes quietly and humbly on his knees before the Lord, who believes that it is the Lord and the Lord alone who is in charge of the battles of our daily life, we pray with the psalmist, "Redeem us, Lord, because of your mercy."

*Why can sin be called spiritual leprosy? What is the "leprosy" in me that needs the healing power of God? In what ways do I try to control my life and not let God control it?*

***Mary, form me in the way of humility and obedience.***

## Notes



**First Reading: 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22a**

All the elders of Israel came in a body to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, “Now that you are old, and your sons do not follow your example, appoint a king over us, as other nations have, to judge us.”

Samuel was displeased when they asked for a king to judge them. He prayed to the LORD, however, who said in answer: “Grant the people’s every request. It is not you they reject, they are rejecting me as their king.”

Samuel delivered the message of the LORD in full to those who were asking him for a king. He told them: “The rights of the king who will rule you will be as follows: He will take your sons and assign them to his chariots and horses, and they will run before his chariot. He will also appoint from among them his commanders of groups of a thousand and of a hundred soldiers. He will set them to do his plowing and his harvesting, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will use your daughters as ointment makers, as cooks, and as bakers. He will take the best of your fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his officials. He will tithe your crops and your vineyards, and give the revenue to his eunuchs and his slaves. He will take your male and female servants, as well as your best oxen and your asses, and use them to do his work. He will tithe your flocks and you yourselves will become his slaves. When this takes place, you will complain against the king whom you have chosen, but on that day the LORD will not answer you.”

The people, however, refused to listen to Samuel’s warning and said, “Not so! There must be a king over us. We too must be like other nations, with a king to rule us and to lead us in warfare and fight our battles.” When Samuel had listened to all the people had to say, he repeated it to the LORD, who then said to him, “Grant their request and appoint a king to rule them.”

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89:16-17, 18-19**

***For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.***

Blessed the people who know the joyful shout;

in the light of your countenance, O LORD, they walk.

At your name they rejoice all the day,

and through your justice they are exalted.

***R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.***

For you are the splendor of their strength,  
and by your favor our horn is exalted.  
For to the LORD belongs our shield,  
and to the Holy One of Israel, our King.

***R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: Luke 7:16***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** A great prophet has arisen in our midst and God has visited his people. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 2:1-12***

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to him, “Child, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?” Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, “Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, pick up your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth” – he said to the paralytic, “I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.” He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

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***Meditation:***

Yesterday’s Gospel concluded with the observation that, after he had cured a leper, Jesus’ reputation spread so rapidly that it was impossible for him to enter a town openly. Crowds who had heard that he was capable of healing and driving out demons kept gathering around him everywhere he went. We are not surprised, then, to read in today’s Gospel that Jesus is once more surrounded by crowds when he returns to Capernaum. But in this crowd, four men stand out. They have come not for themselves but for the sake of their paralyzed brother. No

obstacle is too great for them to overcome: they resort to making a hole in the roof and lowering their friend down before Jesus. What a scene that must have been!

No doubt the crowd had plenty to say about this bold initiative. Jesus, however, looks up at the four men and *sees their faith*. It is a faith which opens a path to forgiveness and healing. We do not know if the paralyzed man has faith; the faith of his friends is sufficient to carry him until he is healed. The healing Jesus gives him is two-fold. The first part comes in the Lord's first words to him: "Child, your sins are forgiven."

This was not what anyone expected! Jesus often does not answer our prayers as we expect. He sees our hearts. He knows what we really need, and what we are really asking for, even when we ourselves are not aware of it. Jesus' answer to our prayers always goes to the root of our deeper paralysis, the interior crippling that comes from sin.

The scribes have a sort of spiritual paralysis. The crowds in general are amazed at Jesus, but the scribes suspect him of blaspheming. "Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus, who read the hearts of the four men and saw their faith, now reads the hearts of the scribes and sees their pride and confusion.

He reads our hearts as well. There is nothing we can hide from God. He knows us inside and out, our spiritual condition and our physical condition. He is the only one who knows us. Do we accept this? If we are resistant to him, or want to hide our sins from him, the idea that he knows us makes us quite uncomfortable; we tend to protect our vulnerable paralysis. But if we are willing to give up the exhausting work of hiding from God, we find that he has for us extraordinary gifts of forgiveness, freedom, and inner healing.

Jesus wants us to have these gifts. He performs a second, more obvious miracle, the healing of the paralyzed man's physical condition, in order to show everyone "that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth." Which miracle is easier? Neither one is easy, but to say "rise" to a paralyzed man is to risk being shown up as a failure. In any case, Jesus reveals that he has authority and power to do both. He is the Lord of the body and of the soul. He brings us freedom from sickness

and from sin. This is good news! We welcome it with the exultant astonishment of the crowd, glorifying God and saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

The elders of Israel in the first reading have a bad case of spiritual paralysis. They do not trust the authority of God, so they insist that Samuel appoint a king to rule over them, “as other nations have.” Instead of looking to God, who has chosen them as a people set apart, they look at the nations around them and are envious. Samuel gives them some “reality therapy,” explaining in detail exactly what it will mean to have a king, but they refuse to listen to his warning. God explains to Samuel that the heart of their problem is spiritual: “They are rejecting me as their king.”

Envy makes the grass on the other side of the fence look greener. Forgetting the good that we already have, we look around and see what others have, and we want it, even though we have been told clearly that it is not good for us. How easily we fall for the world’s advertising, its “easier way” of doing things, its more prosperous and enjoyable and secure lifestyle. We accept the lie that we are better off under the oppressive regime of man than under the gentle yoke of God.

We need the light of faith, which allows us to see that the Lord is our true King. The faith of others helps us when we are weak, and our faith moves us to carry our loved ones to the Lord. For there is no one above the Lord. We present all our needs to him. We do need help; we need someone “to rule us and to lead us in warfare and fight our battles.” Faith assures us that the Lord himself is the supreme answer to these needs. We are truly blessed to belong to his Kingdom. He delivers us from the paralyzing effects of sin so that we can walk the path that leads us to freedom and salvation.

*What are the sins that cripple me? When have I gone out of my way to help someone in need as the four men did to the paralytic? How does faith open a path to forgiveness and healing?*

***Mary, guide my path in life as I strive to think of the needs of others before mine.***



January 13, Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
Saint Hilary, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

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**First Reading: 1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1**

There was a stalwart man from Benjamin named Kish, who was the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite. He had a son named Saul, who was a handsome young man. There was no other child of Israel more handsome than Saul; he stood head and shoulders above the people.

Now the asses of Saul's father, Kish, had wandered off. Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go out and hunt for the asses." Accordingly they went through the hill country of Ephraim, and through the land of Shalishah. Not finding them there, they continued through the land of Shaalim without success. They also went through the land of Benjamin, but they failed to find the animals.

When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD assured him, "This is the man of whom I told you; he is to govern my people."

Saul met Samuel in the gateway and said, "Please tell me where the seer lives." Samuel answered Saul: "I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the high place and eat with me today. In the morning, before dismissing you, I will tell you whatever you wish."

Then, from a flask he had with him, Samuel poured oil on Saul's head; he also kissed him, saying: "The LORD anoints you commander over his heritage. You are to govern the LORD's people Israel, and to save them from the grasp of their enemies roundabout.

"This will be the sign for you that the LORD has anointed you commander over his heritage."

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 21:2-3, 4-5, 6-7**

**Lord, in your strength the king is glad.**

O LORD, in your strength the king is glad;  
in your victory how greatly he rejoices!  
You have granted him his heart's desire;  
you refused not the wish of his lips.

**R. Lord, in your strength the king is glad.**

For you welcomed him with goodly blessings,  
you placed on his head a crown of pure gold.

He asked life of you: you gave him  
length of days forever and ever.

**R. Lord, in your strength the king is glad.**

Great is his glory in your victory;  
majesty and splendor you conferred upon him.  
For you made him a blessing forever;  
you gladdened him with the joy of your face.

***R. Lord, in your strength the king is glad.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: Luke 4:18***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** The Lord sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor and to proclaim liberty to captives. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 2:13-17***

Jesus went out along the sea. All the crowd came to him and he taught them. As he passed by, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. Jesus said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed Jesus. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus heard this and said to them, “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

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***Meditation:***

The readings today give us examples of God calling people whom he has personally chosen. Saul is called from shepherding the donkeys of his father to serve God as shepherd of his chosen people. Levi is called from the disgrace of his customs post to follow Jesus who has come to call sinners. These examples invite us to reflect on our own unique and personal call from God.

When we first hear of Saul, he is out searching for the stubborn and wayward donkeys. He meets with nothing but failure. Success is not one of the Lord’s criteria when he chooses us. The Lord chooses Saul long before Saul himself knows anything about it. Even the wise prophet Samuel, an expert at listening to the voice of the Lord, does not know whom the Lord has chosen until the Lord points out Saul. We are not told what Saul thinks of all this. The point of the reading is that it is God who chooses whom he wishes. He chooses Saul “to govern the LORD’s people Israel and to save them from the grasp of their enemies roundabout.” He chooses us as well, for his own good purposes, which in time he reveals to us – if we respond with obedient faith.

In the Gospel, a large crowd gathers around Jesus as he walks along. Jesus does not see them only as a crowd, a sea of anonymous faces; he sees each unique person. The account tells us of the moment when he sees one particular man, Levi (also known as Matthew). Levi is not even part of the crowd; he is seated, minding his own business, in the middle of his usual work as a tax collector. Men in his profession were despised because they drained the poor of their livelihood in order to benefit the Romans and themselves. Jesus is not bound by the cultural prejudice of his day. He addresses Levi with two words that effect a sudden and radical transformation in his life: “Follow me.” Without hesitation, Levi gets up and follows him.

It is a double surprise: that Jesus would invite such a man into his inner circle, and that Levi would respond so quickly and so well. What was Levi thinking and feeling as he received this extraordinary summons? We do not know. But we do know that Jesus’ call has a profound effect on people. The call of Levi gives us pause to think about our own faith journey. We recall experiences of hearing Jesus call us. When was it? What were the circumstances? How did we respond to the divine summons? Did we get up immediately and say ‘yes’? This is what Jesus is hoping to hear from us right now.

Jesus and Levi solidify their new relationship by sitting together at table, surrounded by “many tax collectors and sinners.” Some Pharisees are there too, though they do not identify themselves with either of these two labels; they are neither tax collectors nor sinners. They are scandalized to see Jesus eat with “them” and not with “us.” Jesus, who knows what is in their hearts, offers them a brief saying that gives a profound insight into his messianic mission: “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.” Jesus reveals that he is a physician and his mission is to heal. He has come not only for those with body-sickness but especially for those with soul-sickness. Sin is the most debilitating ailment of all, and he has come to heal, to save, to call all who are afflicted by it.

It may seem that Jesus’ statement about coming only for sinners would exclude the morally upright. But he is not excluding anyone. The truth of the matter is that no one is righteous. All of us are sinners, including the Pharisees. The only difference is that some of us admit that we are sinners and some do not! When we acknowledge our sin, we find it very comforting to hear Jesus’ words. Sin is a disturbing, and all-

too-often recurring part of our lives. At times, we might suspect that our sins exclude us from God's company. But here Jesus reveals that just the opposite is true: he has come to call *us*. We are included *because* we are sinners! No matter what our past or present sins may be, he is inviting us to follow him.

*When did the Lord call me to follow him unconditionally as he called Saul and Levi? What are my inner thoughts as I ponder on the fact that Jesus has called me even though I am a sinner? In what areas of my life do I need the healing touch of Jesus, the divine physician?*

***Mary, may I experience the joy of forgiveness of my sins.  
St. Hilary, pray for us.***

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**Hilary** was born into a wealthy family around 310 in Poitiers, France. He received a solid education which is apparent in his writings. He did not grow up in a Christian environment, but his quest for truth led him to study the Bible, and he literally read himself into the faith. He, his wife, and his daughter were baptized in 345. So greatly was he respected by the people of Poitiers that they unanimously elected him bishop in 353. As bishop, he opposed the emperor's attempt to run Church matters, and for this he was exiled. While in exile he wrote many works explaining and defending the faith, among which is his famous treatise, *De Trinitate* (On the Doctrine of the Trinity). He was also a staunch opponent of the Arian heresy and became known as the "Hammer of the Arians." Hilary died in 367.

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## Notes