

*Pondering the Word...*

# THE ANAWIM WAY

*Daily Liturgical Meditations*

*Pentecost to Thirteenth Week  
in Ordinary Time*

*May 19 to July 6, 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.***



*Pentecost Sunday  
and  
Seventh Week in Ordinary Time*

*“Peace be with you.  
As the Father has sent me,  
so I send you.”*

John 20:21

*Theme for the Week*

The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit who comes in power to restore all things in Christ. Empowered by the Spirit, let us live the good news of reconciliation in all our relationships.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US  
STRENGTH, FREEDOM, AND UNITY**  
*A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis*

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles (cf. 2:1-11) recounts what happened in Jerusalem 50 days after the Pasch of Jesus. The disciples were gathered in the Upper Room, and the Virgin Mary was with them. The Risen Lord had told them to remain in the city until they had received the gift of the Spirit from on High. And this was revealed with a “sound” they suddenly heard coming from Heaven, like the “rush of a mighty wind” that filled the house they were in (cf. v. 2). Thus, it concerns a real but also symbolic experience. Something that happened but also gives us a symbolic message for our whole life.

This experience reveals that the Holy Spirit is like a strong and freely flowing wind; that is, he brings us strength and brings us freedom: a strong and freely flowing wind. He cannot be controlled, stopped, nor measured; nor can his direction be foreseen. He cannot be understood within our human exigencies — we always try to frame things — he does not let himself be framed in our methods and our preconceptions. The Spirit proceeds from God the Father and from his Son Jesus Christ and bursts upon the Church; he bursts upon each one of us, giving life to our minds and our hearts. As the Creed states: he is “the Lord, the giver of life.” He has authority because he is God, and he gives life.

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus’ disciples were still disoriented and fearful. They did not yet have the courage to go out in the open. We too, at times, prefer to remain within the protective walls of our surroundings. But the Lord knows how to reach us and open the doors to our hearts. He sends upon us the Holy Spirit who envelops us and overpowers all our hesitations, tears down our defenses, dismantles our false certainties. The Spirit makes us new beings, just as he did on that day with the Apostles: he renews us, new beings.

After receiving the Holy Spirit, they were no longer as they had been before — he changed them, but they went out and began to preach Jesus, to preach that Jesus is risen, that the Lord is with us, in such a way that each one understood them in his or her own language. Because the Spirit is universal; he does not remove cultural differences,



differences of thought, no. He is for everyone, but each one understands him in his or her own culture, in his or her own language. The Spirit changes the heart, broadens the view of the disciples. He enables them to communicate to everyone the great, limitless works of God, surpassing the cultural confines and religious confines within which they were accustomed to thinking and living. He enables the Apostles to reach others, respecting their possibilities of listening and understanding, in the culture and language of each one (vv. 5-11). In other words, the Holy Spirit puts different people in communication, achieving the unity and universality of the Church.

And today this truth tells us so much, this reality of the Holy Spirit, where in the Church there are small groups who always seek division, to separate themselves from others. This is not the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is harmony, it is unity, it unites differences. A good Cardinal, who was the Archbishop of Genoa, said that the Church is like a river: the important thing is to be inside; whether you are a little on that side and a little on the other side is not important; the Holy Spirit creates unity. He used the image of a river. The important thing is to be inside, in the unity of the Spirit, and not look at the pettiness that you are a little on this side and a little on that side, that you pray in this way or the other... This is not of God. The Church is for everyone, for everyone, as the Holy Spirit showed on the day of Pentecost.

Today let us ask the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to intercede so that the Holy Spirit descends in abundance, fills the hearts of the faithful and kindles the fire of his love in everyone.

Pope Francis, *Regina Caeli*,  
Solemnity of Pentecost, May 23, 2021  
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## May 19, Pentecost Sunday

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**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 / Ez 37:1-14; Ps 107:2-9 / Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-2, 24, and 35, 27-28, 29-30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39

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### **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.”

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### **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.***

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***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 ***Galatians 5:16-25***

Brothers and sisters, live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, lust, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.

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***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.

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***Gospel Acclamation:***

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

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***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 15:26-27; 16:12-15**

Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

“I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”

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***Meditation:***

The Easter Season concludes with this glorious Solemnity of Pentecost, sometimes referred to as “the birthday of the Church.” This conclusion, then, does not imply an end but a launch forward, as we are sent out into the world, and into the future, in the power of the Spirit.

The Church was conceived at the foot of the Cross. As Jesus offered himself in his Passion and Death, Mary united herself with him, trusting in the promise of the Resurrection. After Jesus ascended to the Father, Mary joined the disciples in the Upper Room, where together the Church awaited the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. How her nurturing, prayerful presence there strengthened the faith of the disciples! This is still Mary’s role on our behalf, spiritually nurturing each of her children, her poor ones, the *anawim*.

Today’s Gospel takes us back to Jesus’ first appearance to the disciples on the evening of Resurrection Day. In their fear, the disciples were hiding behind locked doors. Jesus, who easily broke free from the sealed tomb, has no trouble entering the Upper Room. He stands in their midst and says to them, “Peace be with you.” The disciples rejoice as the truth begins to dawn on them. They receive the first breath of the Holy Spirit and are empowered to forgive sins in Jesus’ Name. The

newly conceived Church's mission is a continuation of the mission of Jesus himself: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." But as yet, the disciples are still in the room, as in a womb. We recall that Jesus had told them to wait there for the promised outpouring of power from on high.

Today, we celebrate that momentous event! The reading from Acts tells in detail the story of what happened "when the time for Pentecost was fulfilled." The Holy Spirit comes as divine wind clearing away the dust of doubt. The disciples are set on fire, a fire of love that overcomes all fear. They immediately begin to proclaim the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. The time of gestation is over; the missionary Church is born.

The first people to hear the Spirit-filled disciples are "devout Jews from every nation." Perhaps many of them have been searching for something more than the oppressive judgments placed on them by the scribes and Pharisees in the name of the Mosaic Law. The exuberant joy of the disciples proclaiming "the mighty acts of God" gives them new hope. For the message they receive is that in Jesus Christ their sins are forgiven and they are free to live a new way. Yes, they are amazed that the disciples can speak to them in their various native languages, but the greater miracle is the message: in Jesus Christ we are fully reconciled to the Father who has loved us so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (cf. Jn 3:16). This message of hope is also an invitation to become a part of the Body of believers, to follow this new way of life in the Spirit, together with the disciples. This is the Church's mission from the beginning on that first Pentecost right up to this very day.

Living by the Spirit, however, is a daily challenge. While we are reconciled with God, we still bear the lingering effects of original sin which confuses our thinking, weakens our will, and disorders our desires. St. Paul in his Letter to the Galatians points out the ongoing war between the flesh and the Spirit within us. He says that "the works of the flesh are obvious" and then lists some examples. These sins lose their influence over us when we welcome the power and guidance of the Spirit. We have all received the Holy Spirit in Baptism and more fully in Confirmation. We have been set aflame with the same divine

Fire who filled the Apostles. We can see the fruit of his action in our lives: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Paul urges us, then, to live according to the gift we have received: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.”

*How does Mary’s prayerful presence in my life strengthen my faith? How have I experienced the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in my ongoing battle against the works of the flesh? When has the fire of love in my life overcome my fears?*

***Mary, Mother of the Church, open my heart daily to the life of the Spirit within me.***

**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 Solemnity 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, December 3, 2023. Advent led into the Christmas Season, which continued through the Baptism of the Lord, January 8, 2024. January 9 was the start of Ordinary Time, which lasted until the day before Ash Wednesday, February 13 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 March 30, 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, May 19, we celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost. Monday, May 20, 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 30, the Saturday following the Solemnity of Christ the King, and a new liturgical year begins with the First Sunday of Advent, December 1.

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 (May 26) and the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (June 2). Friday, June 7, is the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Saturday, June 8, 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

**May 20, Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Mary, Mother of the Church**

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***First Reading: Genesis 3:9-15, 20***

After 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.

or ***Acts 1:12-14***

After Jesus had been taken up into heaven, the Apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away.

When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

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**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!

And 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.**

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**Gospel Acclamation:**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** O happy Virgin, you gave birth to the Lord; O blessed mother of the Church, you warm our hearts with the Spirit of your Son Jesus Christ. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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**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.

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***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 perseveres 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” (Lk 1:38), 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.

*Why is it difficult for me to take responsibility for my actions?  
How do I find strength in Mary’s faithful and resolute “yes” to  
God? How does Mary encourage me in my spiritual journey?*

***Mary, Mother of the Church, grant me a deeper love and reverence for the Church.***

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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). (The memorial of St. Bernardine of Siena is not celebrated this year.)

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**May 21, Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Christopher Magallanes, Priest, and Companions, Martyrs**  
**Saint Eugène de Mazenod, Bishop (Philippines)**

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***First Reading: James 4:1-10***

Beloved: Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that the Scripture speaks without meaning when it says,

*The spirit that he has made to dwell in us tends toward jealousy?*  
But he bestows a greater grace; therefore, it says:

*God resists the proud,  
but gives grace to the humble.*

So submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you of two minds. Begin to lament, to mourn, to weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 55:7-8, 9-10a, 10b-11a, 23***

***Throw your cares on the Lord, and he will support you.***

And I say, “Had I but wings like a dove,

I would fly away and be at rest.

Far away I would flee;

I would lodge in the wilderness.”

***R. Throw your cares on the Lord, and he will support you.***

“I would wait for him who saves me

from the violent storm and the tempest.”

Engulf them, O Lord; divide their counsels.

***R. Throw your cares on the Lord, and he will support you.***

In the city I see violence and strife,

day and night they prowl about upon its walls.

***R. Throw your cares on the Lord, and he will support you.***

Cast your care upon the LORD,  
and he will support you;  
never will he permit the just man to be disturbed.

***R. Throw your cares on the Lord, and he will support you.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: Galatians 6:14***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 9:30-37***

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.” But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they remained silent. For they had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” Taking a child, he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, “Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.”

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***Meditation:***

As we continue in this Seventh Week in Ordinary Time, we are still in the “glow” of the great feast of Pentecost – that moment of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which can be considered the “baptism” of the Church. Baptism implies mission. Like the Apostles who came forth from the Upper Room and proclaimed the Gospel, we have been called and chosen, and are being sent forth to communicate the merciful love of the Lord to others. Now is the time to rededicate ourselves to our mission. The readings tell us that the key to conveying this merciful love of God is *humility*. Plain and simple. Humility. Easy to say, hard to do.

We know we face obstacles, both within ourselves and in the people we encounter. The first reading explains the origins of these obstacles in the twisted condition of the human heart. Wars and conflicts

come from greed, pride, and disordered attachments to the things of this world. With these sins we choose power and material gain above love for God and neighbor. This behavior James equates with marital infidelity: “Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” The prophets often used the image of marriage to describe the covenant between God and his people. We are called to be faithful to this covenant of love, which can be derailed by our selfishness and pride.

Even our prayer can be distorted into a self-centered exercise if we seek only to satisfy our selfish desires and do not open our hearts to God who loves us. In prayer, we fix our attention not on ourselves but on the Father. “Not my will, Lord, but your will be done!” (Lk 22:42). The proper disposition for authentic prayer is submission to God, expressed in repentance and humility. James spells it out clearly: “*God resists the proud, / but gives grace to the humble.*”

One of the fruits of humility is perseverance: we can continue to pray because we place all our hope and trust in the Lord’s care for us. “Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer” (CCC 2737; Evagrius Ponticus).

In the Gospel, the disciples do not understand what Jesus is trying to tell them about his upcoming Passion and Death, and they are afraid even to question him about it. Perhaps they cannot bear to think of what will happen to him. Or they may be dreading what it will mean for themselves. Whatever the reason, it is *fear* that keeps them from asking him for clarification, the same fear that kept them locked in the Upper Room after his Death. It seems that this fear also provoked their argument about who among them was “the greatest,” for such a discussion is evidence of some deep insecurity.

Jesus surprises the disciples with a reversal of their expectations. He tells them that the way to the “greatness” they seek is to be *humble*, to be “the last of all and the servant of all.” When he sees that they are slow to get the point, he gives them a demonstration. He chooses a little child and puts his arms around him. That child represents “the last of all and the servant of all”; a child represents our total dependence on God.



We can imagine what that child felt as Jesus embraced him; he was given such special treatment, in front of everyone. What love, peace, security, and joy must have filled him! He felt like *he* was the greatest – and he was, because he was loved so much. This is how we are loved by God. Because we are so loved, there is no need for us to seek “greatness” in the world or in the opinion of others. Rather, we can forget our insecurities and reach out to others. Jesus tells us to “receive one child such as this” in his name, as a way to share his love with others. When we give, we receive. When we give Jesus’ love to the little ones, we receive him ourselves, and in receiving him, we receive the Father.

We are faced with a choice: to put ourselves first and demand that others serve us, or to make God first and humbly put ourselves at his service and the service of our neighbor. With God’s grace, we can make the deliberate choice to serve, for God who is greater than all serves us all. James sums up the lesson for us: “Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.”

*How am I being called to rededicate myself to the mission of sharing with others the merciful love of the Lord? How do selfishness and pride derail my faithfulness to my covenant of love with God? In what ways do I tend to live in a prideful and self-centered way?*

***Mary, Model of humility, be my example of true littleness and love for all.***

***St. Christopher Magallanes, pray for us.***

***St. Eugène de Mazenod, pray for us.***

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**Christopher (Cristóbal) Magallanes** was born in Mexico in 1869. He was ordained a priest at age 30 and became the parish priest of his hometown. When the anti-Church government closed all the seminaries, he gathered the displaced students and conducted classes in private homes, secretly spreading the Gospel and ministering to the people. He wrote and preached against armed rebellion but was falsely accused of promoting an uprising. He was arrested on May 21, 1927, while on the way to celebrate Mass at a farm, and was executed without a trial – but not before giving his remaining possessions to his executioners and giving them absolution. Fr. Christopher and twenty-one other diocesan priests, and three laymen, were either shot or hung for their association with the *Cristero* movement which opposed the anti-Catholic Mexican government in the 1920’s. The *Cristero* motto was, *¡Viva Cristo Rey! ¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe!* (“Long live Christ the King and the Virgin of Guadalupe!”) These Mexican martyrs were canonized in 2000 by Pope St. John Paul II.

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**Eugène de Mazenod** was born in France on August 1, 1782, of a wealthy family. As a child, he witnessed constant fighting in his family and interference from relatives. The family had to leave France because of the upheaval of the French Revolution. The following years were very tumultuous, causing him much heartache and concern. His parents eventually divorced. St. Eugène is patron of dysfunctional families and families in crisis.

His conversion happened in 1807 when, during the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, he had a spiritual experience of the love of Christ for him and the forgiveness of his sins. This was so moving that he decided to dedicate his life to Jesus his Savior. Eugène was ordained a priest in 1811. The goal of his priestly preaching and ministry was to lead others to develop themselves fully as humans, as Christians, and finally as saints. With this motivation, he founded the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in 1826. He was ordained a bishop in 1832. By 1841, the Oblates had sailed for missions in five continents. Pope Pius XI once said that the Oblates are “the specialists in the most difficult missions of the Church.” Bp. Eugène died on May 21, 1861. St. Pope John Paul II canonized him on December 3, 1995, stating “his influence is not limited to the times in which he lived but continues even in our time. Indeed, the good accomplished by virtue of the Holy Spirit does not perish, but continues in every ‘hour’ of history.”

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## Notes

May 22, Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
Saint Rita of Cascia, Religious

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**First Reading: James 4:13-17**

Beloved: Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we shall go into such and such a town, spend a year there doing business, and make a profit”— you have no idea what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears. Instead you should say, “If the Lord wills it, we shall live to do this or that.” But now you are boasting in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 49:2-3, 6-7, 8-10, 11**

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

Hear this, all you peoples;  
hearken, all who dwell in the world,  
Of lowly birth or high degree,  
rich and poor alike.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

Why should I fear in evil days  
when my wicked ensnarers ring me round?  
They trust in their wealth;  
the abundance of their riches is their boast.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

Yet in no way can a man redeem himself,  
or pay his own ransom to God;  
Too high is the price to redeem one’s life; he would never have enough  
to remain alive always and not see destruction.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

For he can see that wise men die,  
and likewise the senseless and the stupid pass away,  
leaving to others their wealth.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

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**Gospel Acclamation: John 14:6**

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** I am the way and the truth and the life, says the Lord;  
no one comes to the Father except through me. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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**Gospel: Mark 9:38-40**

John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us.” Jesus replied, “Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us.”

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**Meditation:**

This week we are focused on opening our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can be witnesses of God’s love. To fulfill our mission as conveyors of his merciful love, we need the grace of humility. Humility is knowing and accepting the truth of who we are, including our need for a Savior. Through the merciful love of God, we come to know who we are and whose we are. We are creatures; God is the Creator. He created us out of love and sustains us with his grace. The truth is that we are dependent upon him for our every breath, at every moment.

It is ignorance and arrogance to act as if we are in total control of our life, as if we are the master of our destiny – but this is how we sometimes behave. We begin to take it for granted that our life belongs to us and we can do as we please with it. Today’s reading from the Letter of James warns us against this sort of thinking. If we have begun to think the future is entirely in our own hands, James’ words are addressed directly to us: “You have no idea what your life will be like tomorrow.” And if that statement is not enough to wake us up, he adds: “You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears.” What an effective antidote to our tendency to rise up in pride!

James does not say we should make no plans at all. It is good and prudent to make plans for the future, but always with awareness of our dependence on God. Then we will not be puffed up by our successes or crushed by our failures, for we are in the hands of God. There is a saying that addresses this idea: “Plan your life as if you will live forever; live your life as if you will die tomorrow” (author unknown).

Pride – and fear – tend to make us waste our energy trying to control the future – which often includes trying to control the people around us. But God calls us rather to live in the present and choose his will above all things. God is beyond our controls; he does not act according to our plans. When we let him reign over our lives, he unfolds

day by day the mystery of his plan, much more wonderful than our plans. Each day is another gift, a visitation from the Lord. We must guard against being so engrossed in our plans for the future that we fail to hear God's voice in the present moment.

The Gospel gives us a further insight into the wisdom that comes with humility. Jesus teaches us that our pride can get in the way of our ability to recognize his work in the efforts of others. The disciples come running to Jesus to report that someone is driving out demons in his name. Their main concern is not the spread of the Kingdom of God but the protection of their own "kingdom." They are proud of belonging to Jesus' inner circle, of being part of the "in" crowd. The "someone" who is acting in Jesus' name is not of their company and is therefore suspect. Jealousy can make even the good actions of others look bad in our eyes. When someone else is getting attention, our nature feels slighted. We do not like to share the limelight with anyone else. Jesus is quick to correct this error. He counsels us to be broad-minded and big-hearted. Rather than assume someone is in the wrong, we should take the position that "whoever is not against us is for us." Then we will not prevent anyone from doing what is good.

The contrast between humility and arrogance, between trusting in God and trusting in ourselves, is also set forth in today's Psalm. It is addressed to everyone, "of lowly birth or high degree, / rich and poor alike," because we are all equally dependent on God. It is easy to see why "trust in ... wealth" is attractive, but the Psalm reminds us that such trust is misplaced and will ultimately lead to bitter disappointment. We will never have enough money to pay for our sins or to prevent us from dying. "In no way can a man redeem himself, / or pay his own ransom to God; / Too high is the price to redeem one's life; he would never have enough / to remain alive always and not see destruction." The truly wealthy ones are those whose treasure is the Lord – the "poor in spirit," the *anawim*. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs!"

*In what ways do I act as if I am the master of my own destiny?  
How do jealousy and arrogance affect my growth in the Spirit?  
Why do I put so much trust in wealth and dependence on  
myself?*

*Mary, guide me to be humbler and more trusting in the Lord.  
St. Rita of Cascia, pray for us.*

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**Rita of Cascia** was born in 1381 in Umbria, Italy. As a young woman, she was attracted to religious life, but her parents arranged a marriage for her. When her husband was murdered, her young sons were expected, in the culture of the time, to avenge the murder to defend the family honor. Instead, Rita forgave her husband's murderers and tried to convince her sons to do the same. She prayed intensely, and within a year, both sons died of a serious illness. Being left a childless widow, she then worked to bring about peace between the two families, who eventually signed a peace agreement to put the vendetta to rest forever. At the age of 36 she finally became an Augustinian nun. After forty years of prayer and penance she died content, believing she would be united with her family. Her body is still incorrupt and lies in the Basilica of Cascia. St. Rita was canonized in 1900 by Pope Leo XIII. At her canonization, he called her the Precious Pearl of Umbria. In 2000, her feast day was placed in the universal calendar as an optional memorial.

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## Notes

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## May 23, Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time

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*For those who are celebrating today the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, an obligatory Feast in the Philippines, see pp. 34-37.*

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### **First Reading: James 5:1-6**

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance.

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### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 49:14-15ab, 15cd-16, 17-18, 19-20**

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

This is the way of those whose trust is folly,

the end of those contented with their lot:

Like sheep they are herded into the nether world;

death is their shepherd and the upright rule over them.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

Quickly their form is consumed;

the nether world is their palace.

But God will redeem me

from the power of the nether world by receiving me.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

Fear not when a man grows rich,

when the wealth of his house becomes great,

For when he dies, he shall take none of it;

his wealth shall not follow him down.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

Though in his lifetime he counted himself blessed,

“They will praise you for doing well for yourself,”

He shall join the circle of his forebears

who shall never more see light.

***R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!***

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***Gospel Acclamation: see 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 9:41-50**

Jesus said to his disciples: “Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where *their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*

“Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid, with what will you restore its flavor? Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another.”

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**Meditation:**

On Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit’s presence was like fire, igniting the hearts of the Apostles with zeal to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. Today’s readings also speak of *fire*, but in a much more threatening way. St. James warns us against the dangers of storing up earthly wealth, because “it will devour your flesh like a fire.” Jesus speaks an even worse fire, the “unquenchable fire” of Gehenna, that is, hell. As we ponder these harsh-sounding words, we rely on the Holy Spirit to enlighten us on what God is saying to us through them.

When James says, “Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries,” he does not condemn all who are rich. Rather, he severely denounces those who become excessively rich at the expense of others or who fail in their responsibility to care for those who are less fortunate. This denunciation is reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets (for example, Amos 8:4-8). James is warning the faithful of his time, and us today, of the terrible fate of those who abuse the gift of wealth. To “store up treasure” without the commitment to use it according to the will of God is equivalent of fattening our hearts “for the day of slaughter.” Our fine clothes and gold and silver will only rot away in time. Our treasure will not benefit us in the least but will rather expose the guilt of our heartless injustices.



Even if we do not act like the rich, exploiting others and taking advantage of them, we can still find ourselves in the category of the abusive rich when we are insensitive to the needs of other people and are unfair in our relations with those whom we encounter every day. Deeper than the question of what we do with our money is the question of the disposition of our hearts. To be rich in money yet poor in love is a pathetic spiritual condition. Our concern for others should not be only for their material, physical, and emotional welfare. Of greater importance is their spiritual wellbeing.

This is what Jesus is talking about when he warns: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” The worst form of misery is a life of sinfulness and unfaithfulness to God. This leads to eternal damnation. Therefore, the worst of unjust acts would be for us to cause someone to sin and or lose faith in God. Because of the seriousness of this crime, Jesus describes its consequence in harsh tones when he talks about “Gehenna” and “unquenchable fire.” He is not simply trying to scare us, for he is a merciful and compassionate Savior. But he urges us to examine ourselves more deeply and see that we run the real risk of destroying ourselves when we reject and scorn his mercy and are obstacles to the salvation of others.

Jesus advises us not to hesitate to sacrifice anything here on earth that can cause us to sin, no matter how useful it may be. He is not encouraging us to mutilate our bodies, which, after all, are temples of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that “everyone will be salted with fire.” The Holy Spirit is poured out upon us all. The fire of his divine love both purifies and transforms. He makes us into true witnesses of God and strengthens us to assist others in their effort to inherit the Kingdom of God.

*When have I felt the Holy Spirit igniting my heart with zeal to proclaim the Gospel? When have I abused the gift of wealth to the detriment of my spiritual life? Why am I often insensitive to the needs of others?*

***Mary, open my heart to the needs of others.***

May 23, Thursday

**Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest (Philippines)**

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**First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers: the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

or **Hebrews 10:11-18**

Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying:

*This is the covenant I will establish with them*

*after those days, says the Lord:*

*“I will put my laws in their hearts,  
and I will write them upon their minds,”*

he also says:

*Their sins and their evildoing*

*I will remember no more.*

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 110:1, 2, 3**

***You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.***

The LORD said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand  
till I make your enemies your footstool.”

***R. You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.***

The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion:

*“Rule in the midst of your enemies.”*

***R. You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.***

“Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor;  
before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you.”

***R. You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: Hebrews 5:8-9***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** Since he was Son, he learned obedience through those things which he suffered, and having been made perfect, he has become for all who obey him the author of eternal salvation. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Mark 14:22-25***

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my Body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, “This is my Blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”

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***Meditation:***

Today’s Feast is a wonderful gift from Mother Church, focusing our eyes on the Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The more we understand about what it means that Jesus is our Eternal High Priest, the more we are filled with amazement and gratitude at his love for us.

One of the most beautiful summaries of what Jesus did, and does, for us as our High Priest is found in St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: “Though he was in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8). Throughout the Old Testament, priests offered sacrifices to God, to worship him and to beg for forgiveness of sins. What Jesus does as our High Priest is offer *himself* to the Father as an eternal sacrifice, the perfect act of worship which also wins us forgiveness and freedom from slavery to sin. This eternal self-offering entered into time with the Incarnation, when Jesus, in the words of St. Paul, “emptied himself.” He who is eternal God, one in being and glory with the Father, emptied himself of his godliness in some way, and humbled himself to be born of the Virgin Mary and to live as a human being. His whole life was one sacrifice of self for love of us. Every moment of his life, especially in his public ministry, consisted of giving himself – in his teaching and healing, and simply in his presence with others.

Of course, the culmination of his priestly sacrifice was offered at Calvary, when he freely and willingly gave up his life on the Cross. We are so familiar with this that we perhaps do not allow it to astonish us and fill us with gratitude as it should. When we look at a crucifix, we should recognize an awesome self-sacrifice, not a powerless victim, not someone caught up in a tragic injustice which he could not escape. Jesus Christ freely entered into the world in the Incarnation precisely to offer his life as a sacrifice for us. He very deliberately chose to die for love of us, to win for us freedom from sin, to break the power of sin and death over us. He did not have to do this; he was not forced. He willed to do it with ardent longing. In fact, he spoke very emphatically of his death when he said, “There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!” (Lk 12:50).

The Letter to the Hebrews confirms that Jesus “offered one sacrifice for sins,” and “by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.” And in the Gospel, we hear Jesus specifically saying at the Last Supper that he is offering his very Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sin. The wonderful prophecy of Jeremiah, in which God promises to place his law in our hearts, so that all will know him, is only fulfilled by the sacrifice of Jesus. Only by the sacrificial offering of our great High Priest it is possible for God’s word to be fulfilled, in which he says, “I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.”

This sacrificial offering is what we celebrate at every Mass – which is not simply a remembrance of Jesus’ sacrifice but is also the very presence of the events we remember. “Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present” (CCC 1104). At every Mass we are present at the Cross with Jesus in the moment of his one, eternal sacrifice. Thus, when we say that Jesus is our Eternal High Priest, we do not simply mean that he is eternal and he is our High Priest. We mean that he is exercising his Eternal Priesthood in the eternal now moment of his sacrifice at Calvary, which continues to be present to us throughout the world at each celebration of the Eucharist.

As we have been filled with the Holy Spirit whose coming we celebrated on Pentecost Sunday, we are now called in the power of the Spirit to enter into our own priestly vocation. There is no more fitting gift which we can return to the Lord in gratitude for his sacrifice for us than that we join him in his sacrificial offering of self for love of others. Our perfect model for this is Mary, who stood at the foot of the Cross,

completely uniting herself to the sacrifice of her Son. Let us ask today for the grace to stand with her, and to give ourselves completely in sacrificial love, in union with Jesus Christ, our Eternal High Priest. May praise, honor, and glory be his forever and ever!

*What is my spiritual insight as I ponder on Jesus' total emptying of himself for love of me? How can I join Jesus in his sacrificial offering of self for love of others? In the power of the Spirit, how am I called to enter my own priestly vocation?*

***Mary, grant me the grace to give myself completely in sacrificial love to God and others.***

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**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. In the Philippines, the liturgical Feast honoring Our Lord Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest was first introduced as a Memorial in 2021; since 2022, it has been celebrated as a Feast.

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## Notes



**First Reading: James 5:9-12**

Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers and sisters, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, because *the Lord is compassionate and merciful*.

But above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your “Yes” mean “Yes” and your “No” mean “No,” that you may not incur condemnation.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8-9, 11-12**

***The Lord is kind and merciful.***

Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
and all my being, bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits.

***R. The Lord is kind and merciful.***

He pardons all your iniquities,  
he heals all your ills.

He redeems your life from destruction,  
he crowns you with kindness and compassion.

***R. The Lord is kind and merciful.***

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,  
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.

He will not always chide,  
nor does he keep his wrath forever.

***R. The Lord is kind and merciful.***

For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he put our transgressions from us.

***R. The Lord is kind and merciful.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: see John 17:17b, 17a***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** Your word, O Lord, is truth; consecrate us in the truth.  
***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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### **Gospel: Mark 10:1-12**

Jesus came into the district of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds gathered around him and, as was his custom, he again taught them. The Pharisees approached him and asked, “Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?” They were testing him. He said to them in reply, “What did Moses command you?” They replied, “Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her.” But Jesus told them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, *God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this. He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

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### **Meditation:**

The Scriptures repeatedly remind us that “*the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*” This is a solid foundation for our whole life and for all our relationships. From the Lord we can learn what it means to be compassionate and merciful to one another, and the Holy Spirit gives us the power to love as we are loved. One of the most beautiful, and also most challenging, images of the love of God for us is that of *marriage*, about which Jesus speaks in today’s Gospel.

Like many of us today, the Pharisees do not have a clear understanding about God’s plan for marriage. Trying to trap Jesus, they ask him a question that was fraught with controversy in those days, and is even more controversial today: “Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?” Jesus responds with a question of his own: “What did Moses command you?” When they answer that Moses permitted divorce, Jesus shows himself to be a more reliable source of divine wisdom, as he points out that Moses was only permissive because of the people’s hardness of heart. Then he takes the opportunity to reveal the plan of God for marriage in greater clarity.

Jesus goes back to “the beginning of creation,” reminding them that when God created the human family, he intended husband and wife to “become one flesh.” Jesus strongly reaffirms this divine plan: “So

they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” Jesus clearly reveals that God’s plan from the beginning has always been that the marriage bond is indissoluble. When the disciples question him further about this, he very plainly says: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” This is not a human idea, based on historical developments and changing cultural traditions. Rather it is God’s original plan, revealed in the Gospel by Jesus himself.

What about divorce? Because civil governments have their own standards and laws concerning marriage, there is such a thing as civil divorce, through which the government declares a marriage bond to be dissolved. But such declarations have no real effect on the marriage bond in the eyes of God. God is not subject to man’s law; man is subject to God’s law. God does not allow *anyone* to divide what he himself has joined.

There are times when the bond of marriage appears to have been established, but when it is examined more closely, it becomes clear that no true marriage ever took place. When the Church comes to this conclusion, she declares that the supposed union is “null” – which in popular language is described as “getting an annulment.” The Church does not dissolve the marriage; she has no power to do so, as Jesus says. Thus, an “annulment” is very different from a divorce.

Divorce is not the only serious attack on marriage. Today even the very foundations of marriage are questioned and denied. In many places, governments have entirely abandoned the original plan of God and the natural complementarity of man and woman. They claim that it is more loving to allow any two people to be “married,” even two men or two women. Many people are growing comfortable with this idea, thinking that it is more merciful, loving, and tolerant, while God’s plan for marriage is attacked as prejudiced and unfairly discriminatory. The world is being deceived by a false compassion. We who know that “*the Lord is compassionate and merciful*” know that his plan is good and beautiful. If we love one another, we will not accept deception to rob anyone of knowledge of the truth that sets us free.



As the tide of worldly opinion turns against God's plan for marriage, we find ourselves more often facing opposition for our faith. Today's reading from St. James urges us to patience and perseverance in such times of hardship. James points to the example of the prophets and of Job. We can also think of the inspiring witness of the martyrs. "Indeed we call blessed those who have persevered." As children of God, filled with his Spirit, we are called to love in truth, and to persevere in love, for he loves us with an everlasting love.

*When have I experienced the Lord's compassion and mercy for me? What is my response when I am asked to defend the truth of God's law? In what ways is my heart hardened against the truth?*

***Mary, may I always uphold the sanctify of marriage no matter the cost to my reputation.***

## Notes

**May 25, Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Bede the Venerable, Priest and Doctor of the Church**  
**Saint Gregory VII, Pope**  
**Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, Virgin**

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***First Reading: James 5:13-20***

Beloved: Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing a song of praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the Church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. Elijah was a man like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land. Then Elijah prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back, he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 141:1-2, 3 and 8***

***Let my prayer come like incense before you.***

O LORD, to you I call; hasten to me;

hearken to my voice when I call upon you.

Let my prayer come like incense before you;

the lifting up of my hands, like the evening sacrifice.

***R. Let my prayer come like incense before you.***

O LORD, set a watch before my mouth,

a guard at the door of my lips.

For toward you, O God, my LORD, my eyes are turned;

in you I take refuge; strip me not of life.

***R. Let my prayer come like incense before you.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: see Matthew 11:25***

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

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### ***Gospel: Mark 10:13-16***

People were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.” Then he embraced the children and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

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### ***Meditation:***

On Sunday we celebrated the Feast of Pentecost and saw the effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and Mary in the Upper Room. Mary’s heart was filled with joy as she witnessed a marvelous transformation in her Son’s beloved Apostles. Fears and doubts were replaced by courage and a faith filled with love. It was a glorious experience of the power of the Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge and praise the Holy Spirit for the growth of the Church and for the powerful gifts which he has given throughout history. But sometimes we forget that the Holy Spirit is being poured out on the Church *today*, sending *us* forth to all nations. He challenges us to step beyond our fears and mediocre ways. God has a unique plan for each one of us. What a powerful and revolutionary work the Holy Spirit could do if we were all more aware of him and cooperated better with the grace he offers.

We can learn much about how to be led by the Spirit from the example of children. Earlier this week, on Tuesday, Jesus corrected our tendency to seek worldly “greatness” by embracing a child and telling the disciples, “Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.” We can extend his lesson by recalling that if we receive the Son and the Father who sent him, we certainly also receive the Holy Spirit. When we open our hearts to one little child, then, we open ourselves to the presence and power of God.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus sees that his disciples still do not understand his message. They are scolding people for bringing their children to him. He grows indignant and declares that “the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Jesus reiterates that not only are we to

welcome children, we are also to learn from them the proper disposition for accepting the Kingdom of God. Children have a natural sense of their own limitations and their dependence on others. If we are wise, we recognize that we too are limited and dependent. Humble acceptance of our littleness opens us to the love of God. Childlikeness makes us great in the Kingdom of God!

We are all children of God, created in his image to live with him eternally. We are also brothers and sisters of one another, with a responsibility to support each other. In today's first reading, St. James reminds us of the gifts and the duties that go with being members of the Body of Christ. When our brothers or sisters are sick, we should intercede for them, thereby bringing them to Jesus for healing. Our faith is like a *stretcher* or a *wheelchair* for others in need, making it possible for them to find peace as they make their way to Jesus. We are not to commit the error of the disciples and prevent anyone from being brought to the Lord. Rather, we do our part so that everyone can come to him, so that he can embrace them and bless them, placing his hands on them.

How can people know the Lord unless someone tells them about him? How can they believe in something they have never heard of or experienced? (cf. Rm 10:14). There are many ways we can serve as the Lord's hands and feet. We can pray with and for others, offering an arm of friendship or a word of encouragement, having Masses offered or making sacrifices for them. It takes faith to pray for someone's healing. It takes courage to approach another in love. In their spiritual or physical distress, they may not know how much they are longing for help until they find a hand stretched out to them. The Lord's consolation often flows through those whom he sends into the world. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether we are a relative or a friend, our mission is to serve as witnesses of hope and love, of faith and compassion, to bring our brothers and sisters – our fellow children of God – to Jesus Christ.

*How have I experienced the Holy Spirit replacing fear and doubt in my life with courage and faith? How do little children inspire me to accept my littleness and be open to the love of God? How am I a witness of faith, hope, and love?*

*Mary, grant me the spirit of childlikeness.*

*St. Bede, pray for us.*

*St. Gregory VII, pray for us.*

*St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, pray for us.*

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**Venerable Bede** was born in Durham, England, in 673. He became one of the first members of a monastic community at Jarrow, where he was ordained a priest at age thirty. He very seldom traveled outside of this area but became one of the most learned men of Europe. Bede wrote *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, for which he won the title "Father of English History." He composed the first known Western sermons on Mary, the Mother of God. Bede popularized the system of dating historical events *Anno Domini* (A.D., "in the year of the Lord"). In the last chapter of his work on the history of the English people, Bede gives us a glimpse into his humility, simplicity, and piety: "I spent my whole life within that monastery, devoting my pains to the study of Scripture, amid the observances of monastic discipline, and the daily charge of singing in the Church; it has ever been my delight to learn or teach or write," and concluded: "I pray, loving Jesus, that as you have graciously given me to drink with delight in the words of your knowledge, so you would grant me to be united with you, the fountain of all wisdom, and to appear forever before your face." He died in 735 and was canonized in 1899.

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**Gregory VII** was born in Tuscany, Italy, in 1020, and was named Hildebrand. When he was a young monk, he became the counselor to Pope Leo IX, and in time served a number of other popes. He himself was elected to the papacy in 1073. Gregory is considered one of the most important popes in history. With reform as a centerpiece of his pontificate, he assembled synods and issued decrees that forbade, under pain of excommunication, clerical marriage, concubinage, and simony (the buying or selling of ecclesiastical pardons and offices). Gregory also demanded that newly elected bishops take an oath of obedience and visit the Holy See. His papal letters decreed the supremacy of the Church of Rome over other churches and the supremacy of clerical authority over lay authority. The new laws were met with violence. Opposition to the decrees resulted in struggles with the royal houses of Europe which dominated his pontificate. He died in 1085 after being exiled by the Roman Emperor Henry IV. Before his death he said, "I have loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile." He was canonized in 1728.

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**Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi** was born into a noble family in Florence in 1566. At age sixteen she entered the Carmelite monastery in Florence. One year later she became critically ill. Death seemed so near that her superiors let her make her profession of vows. Immediately after, she fell into a two-hour ecstasy. This was repeated after Communion on the following forty days. These ecstasies were rich experiences of union with God and contained marvelous insights into divine truths. God was preparing her for the five years of desolation that followed, when she experienced spiritual dryness. She endured great physical sufferings and violent temptations and saw nothing but what was horrible in herself and all around her; yet she persevered in prayer and charity. Mary Magdalene was also instrumental in the reform of her order. She died in 1601 and her body is still incorrupt. She was canonized in 1669.

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