

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

*Twenty-First to Twenty-Seventh Week
in Ordinary Time*

*August 25 to October 12, 2024
Cycle B - Year 2*

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What is the Anawim Spirituality?

Our spirituality has three essential characteristics:

Liturgical

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

Eucharistic

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

Marian

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

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

Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time

*As for me and my household,
we will serve the LORD.*

Joshua 24:15

Theme for the Week

Jesus, having given his life for us, leads us in the path to everlasting life. Let us faithfully and wholeheartedly follow him and serve him with our lives.

**MAY WE BE PROVOKED AND CONVERTED
BY JESUS' WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE**
A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis

The Gospel for today's Liturgy (*Jn* 6:60-69) shows us the reaction of the crowd and the disciples to Jesus' discourse following the multiplication of the loaves. Jesus invited them to interpret that sign and believe in him, who is the true Bread come down from Heaven, the Bread of Life; and he revealed that the Bread he will give is his Body and Blood. These words sound harsh and incomprehensible to the ears of the people, so much so that, from that moment, the Gospel says, many of his disciples turn back; that is, they stop following the Master (vv. 60, 66). Then Jesus asks the Twelve: "Do you also wish to go away?" (v. 67), and Peter, on behalf of the whole group, confirms their decision to stay with him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (*Jn* 6:68-69). And it is a beautiful confession of faith.

Let us look briefly at the attitude of those who withdrew and decided not to follow Jesus any more. Where does this disbelief come from? What is the reason for this rejection?

Jesus' words enkindled great scandal: he was saying that God decided to manifest himself and accomplish salvation in the weakness of human flesh. It is the mystery of the Incarnation. The Incarnation of God is what provoked scandal and presented an obstacle for those people — but often for us too. Indeed, Jesus affirms that the true bread of salvation, which transmits eternal life, is his very flesh; that to enter into communion with God, before observing the laws or satisfying religious precepts, it is necessary to live out a real and concrete relationship with him. Because salvation came from him, in his Incarnation. This means that one must not pursue God in dreams and in images of grandeur and power, but he must be recognized in the humanity of Jesus and, as a consequence, in that of the brothers and sisters we meet on the path of life. God made himself flesh. And when we say this, in the Creed, on Christmas Day and on the day of the Annunciation, we kneel to worship this mystery of the Incarnation. God made himself flesh and blood; he lowered himself to the point of

becoming a man like us. He humbled himself to the extent of burdening himself with our sufferings and sin, and therefore he asks us to seek him not outside of life and history, but in relationship with Christ and with our brothers and sisters. Seeking him in life, in history, in our daily life. And this, brothers and sisters, is the road to the encounter with God: the relationship with Christ and our brothers and sisters.

Even today, God's revelation in Jesus' humanity can cause scandal and is not easy to accept. This is what Saint Paul calls the "folly" of the Gospel in the face of those who seek miracles or worldly wisdom (cf. 1 *Cor* 1:18-25). And this "scandalousness" is well represented by the Sacrament of the Eucharist: what sense can there be, in the eyes of the world, in kneeling before a piece of bread? Why on earth should someone be nourished assiduously with this bread? The world is scandalized.

Faced with this prodigious deed of Jesus, who with five loaves and two fish fed thousands of people, everyone acclaimed him and wanted to lift him up in triumph, to make him king. But when he himself explains that the gesture is a sign of his sacrifice, that is, of the gift of his life, his flesh and blood, and that those who want to follow him must resemble him, his humanity given for God and for others, then no, this is not pleasing; this Jesus throws us into crisis. Rather, we should be worried if he does not throw us into crisis, because we might have watered down his message! And we ask for the grace to let ourselves be provoked and converted by his "words of eternal life."

And may Mary Most Holy, who bore her Son Jesus in the flesh and joined herself to his sacrifice, help us to always bear witness to our faith in our real lives.

Pope Francis, Angelus Message, August 22, 2021
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First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges, and their officers. When they stood in ranks before God, Joshua addressed all the people: “If it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

But the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the peoples through whom we passed. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

I will bless the LORD at all times;

his praise shall be ever in my mouth.

Let my soul glory in the LORD;

the lowly will hear me and be glad.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

The LORD has eyes for the just,
and ears for their cry.

The LORD confronts the evildoers,
to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

When the just cry out, the LORD hears them,
and from all their distress he rescues them.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Many are the troubles of the just one,
but out of them all the LORD delivers him;
he watches over all his bones;
not one of them shall be broken.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.



Second Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32
(Short Form: Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32)

Brothers and sisters: Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

Gospel Acclamation: John 6:63c, 68c

Alleluia, alleluia. Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life; you have the words of everlasting life. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: John 6:60-69

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."



Meditation:

Following Jesus involves *decisions*. We may not notice this when the way seems easy, when we have joyful fellowship, spiritual consolations, and approval from the world. But since Jesus calls us to follow him on the “narrow way” that leads to Heaven (cf. Mt 7:13-14), at times the need for clear decisions becomes obvious and challenging. Our flesh will want to know in advance the outcome of every decision – whether life will get easier, and we will have enough support, and everything will work out as we wish. But that is not how it works. A decision to follow the Lord is based on faith in him, not on our desired outcomes.

In today’s first reading, Joshua gathers all the Israelite tribal leaders and sets this challenge before them: “Decide today whom you will serve.” Joshua is near the end of his life; he wants to set his people on course for their future in the Promised Land. In the verses that are not included in today’s reading, Joshua reminds the Israelites of how the Lord has guided, protected, and provided for them for many years. Speaking in the name of the Lord, he concludes his message saying, “I gave you a land you did not till and cities you did not build, to dwell in; you ate of vineyards and olive groves you did not plant” (Josh 24:13). Therefore, the decision to serve the Lord is not a leap in the dark. When we recall the facts, the evidence of God’s goodness throughout our life, it is a most reasonable decision.

Still, it is a challenge, so the word of God urges us, “Decide today...” We will make no progress in our spiritual lives until we *decide* and then act upon the decision. God can only guide us if we are willing to move. As the saying goes, “God can’t steer a parked car.” We can never know exactly how everything will work out in the future – whether this is really the “right time,” or the “right person,” or the “right job.” But if we do nothing at all, waiting for everything to be perfect, there is no chance of being directed toward the good end that the Lord has in store for us.

Joshua does not merely insist that the Israelites “decide today.” He also inspires them with his leadership and example by boldly declaring his own decision. Without knowing what anyone else is going to do, he states clearly, “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

The reading notes that the people “stood in ranks *before God*,” indicating that they understood that Joshua was speaking in the name of God. In the Church, our clergy speak in the name of God. In particular, the Pope, called by Christ to lead the Church, is empowered to speak the truth to us in special and intentional proclamations, just as Joshua did in today’s reading.

A famous example of a Church leader speaking the truth and calling us to decide took place in 1968, when Pope St. Paul VI issued his encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life). The Pope reiterated the Church’s traditional teaching on married love and responsible parenthood, rejecting contraception as immoral. The message the Pope delivered was not what many had expected, nor desired. Many declared, like the disciples in today’s Gospel, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Catholics had to *decide*: would they trust God? Would they seek to understand something that baffled modern minds? Would they declare, “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD”? Like the Israelites in Joshua’s day, Catholics had an opportunity to look at the history of God’s care and guidance of his Mystical Body, the Church, and trust that a decision to follow the Lord in this matter was the right one. Unfortunately, many people “returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.”

There are many passages in the Bible and many teachings of the Church about which we might react, “This saying is hard.” When the word of God is difficult to understand, or – more likely – difficult to follow, we can be tempted to withdraw and “return to our former way of life.” One example of a hard saying can be found in the longer form of today’s second reading, where St. Paul says that “wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord.” Since this passage is bound to cause difficulties, the Church allows a shorter form that omits it. The admonition to husbands, “love your wives,” will be read in every Catholic parish today, and no one will object, but the part about wives being “subordinate” may be omitted. It is indicative of our fallen nature that we bristle at the very idea of being “subordinate” to anyone.

Here St. Paul is teaching us about the “great mystery” of the marriage relationship of Christ and the Church. It is tragic that we can fail to appreciate the greatness of this gift because of our *pride*, our

foundational sin, the sin that caused the original man and woman to defy the Lord in the first place. Its opposite, *humility*, is still difficult for us! Even when we see the disorder and the terrible consequences of living as our own bosses, our proud, broken selves still fight against being subordinate to the Lord. This is why we must renew our surrender to him every day. It is a daily *decision*, a “daily offering,” following the example of Mary, our Blessed Mother: “Let it be done to me according to your word.”

When we are faced with confusion, lack of understanding, and fear, our best option is to turn *to* the Lord, not *away* from him. Today, we learn from St. Peter, the first Pope, to cling to Jesus with a strong *decision of faith*, saying, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Why is it difficult for me to make the decision to follow Jesus no matter what? Why does my proud, broken nature fight against being subordinate to the Lord? How does pride affect my decisions?

Mary, help me to cling to Jesus with a strong decision of faith.

Notes



First Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, as is fitting, because your faith flourishes ever more, and the love of every one of you for one another grows ever greater. Accordingly, we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God regarding your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions you endure.

This is evidence of the just judgment of God, so that you may be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God for which you are suffering.

We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5

Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Sing to the LORD a new song;

 sing to the LORD, all you lands.

Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

R. Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Announce his salvation, day after day.

Tell his glory among the nations;

 among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

For great is the LORD and highly to be praised;

 awesome is he, beyond all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are things of nought,

 but the LORD made the heavens.

R. Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27

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



Gospel: Matthew 23:13-22

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You lock the Kingdom of heaven before men. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens you make him a child of Gehenna twice as much as yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If one swears by the temple, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gold of the temple, one is obligated.’ Blind fools, which is greater, the gold, or the temple that made the gold sacred? And you say, ‘If one swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gift on the altar, one is obligated.’ You blind ones, which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? One who swears by the altar swears by it and all that is upon it; one who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it; one who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it.”



Meditation:

For the next few days, the first readings will be taken from St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians. Today the Letter begins by identifying the senders, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, and then extends the beautiful greeting so often used by Paul: “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul then praises the local church, saying that he, Silvanus, and Timothy, “boast of you” to the other churches.

In general, boasting has a negative connotation. Those who boast, or brag, are seen as taking too much credit for their achievements and being overly proud of them. This kind of boasting is a manifestation of the sin of pride, the opposite of speaking humbly. The boasting Paul speaks of, however, is a positive thing. He is applauding the Thessalonians’ faithfulness to God, praising them publicly, as a form of encouragement to the other churches.

Today’s Responsorial Psalm repeatedly encourages us to boast about the Lord and to declare how great he is: “Proclaim God’s marvelous deeds to all the nations.” “Announce his salvation, day after day. / Tell his glory among the nations.” “Great is the LORD and highly

to be praised; / awesome is he, beyond all gods.” Boasting rightly in this way brings us joy because it orients our hearts and minds toward the good, the true, and the beautiful as objects to be sought after and admired. We tend to imitate that which we admire. Paul is very specific about the content of his boasts concerning the Thessalonians: “... regarding your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions you endure.”

The Gospel presents us with an opposite message, not one of encouragement but rather of warning. Today we read the first section of the seven “woes” that Jesus issued against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. His first criticism of them is to say, “You lock the Kingdom of Heaven before men. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter.” Since Jesus has repeatedly said that he has come to proclaim the Kingdom, it is easy to understand why he is angry at those who mislead the people and hinder their entrance to the Kingdom. Spiritual leaders are supposed to help their people get to Heaven, not hinder them.

One of the terms of criticism Jesus repeatedly uses is *blind*: “Woe to you, blind guides... blind fools... blind ones.” Someone who is blind is not qualified to guide others; he needs to be guided himself. Dangers arise when a blind person does not realize or admit the deficit he is living with, and so does not ask for help. It gets even worse if one who cannot see steps up confidently to give direction to others!

We can learn from Jesus’ warnings to the Pharisees not to be overconfident about what we think we can see. We are just as capable of being “blind” and deluded as they were. And we can cause much damage if we then set out to direct others. If we are sincere in seeking the Lord, and if we truly want to help others, our prayer will always include a plea to be shown any errors: “O search me, God, and know my heart! / O test me and know my thoughts! / See that I follow not the wrong path / and lead me in the path of life eternal” (Ps 139:23-24). The downfall of the scribes and Pharisees – the cause of their fearsome *woe* – is not simply that they are wrong, but that they lack humility. It is pride that blinds them to their errors, and thus they make no effort to change.

When Jesus established the Church, he entrusted to St. Peter the “keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt 16:19) because he wants us all to enter eternal life; he does not want anyone to be locked out. One of

the greatest aids in our journey to Heaven is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The first step in preparing for this Sacrament is an *examination of conscience*, in which we look at our actions in light of eternal truths. Our conscience is a reliable guide only if it has been formed correctly and is aligned with what is true. This is a challenge in modern times, when many people do not believe in eternal truth; they consider their own opinions and preferences to be a trustworthy foundation for their consciences. How essential it is that we encounter Jesus Christ, who is Truth itself! When we meet him, we have a standard by which to evaluate ourselves, and a merciful Savior who leads us into light and life.

The scribes and Pharisees, unlike modern secular people, have been formed in the knowledge of truth. Their familiarity with the word of God and the ministry of the prophets should give them abundant light. However, they are still “blind” because they have chosen not to look at what is true. It is not ignorant blindness but deliberate blindness. We have the same fallen nature as the scribes and Pharisees; we can easily choose to go down the wrong path. The Lord calls us to avoid their woeful error. If we humbly ask him to open the eyes of our hearts, we can come to see the truth. If we are willing, we can change, by the power of his grace.

Is my boasting a sign of my pride or am I boasting about the Lord and all that he does for me? How does the sin of pride blind me from seeing my sin and my need to make changes in my life? In what ways do I resemble the Pharisees?

Mary, open the eyes of my heart so I may see the truth.

Notes

August 27, Tuesday, 21st Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Monica



First Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a, 14-17

We ask you, brothers and sisters, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him, not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a “spirit,” or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand. Let no one deceive you in any way.

To this end he has also called you through our Gospel to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement and good hope through his grace, encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96:10, 11-12, 13

The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Say among the nations: The LORD is king.

He has made the world firm, not to be moved;

he governs the peoples with equity.

R. The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;

let the sea and what fills it resound;

let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!

Then shall all the trees of the forest exult.

R. The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Before the LORD, for he comes;

for he comes to rule the earth.

He shall rule the world with justice

and the peoples with his constancy.

R. The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Gospel Acclamation: Hebrews 4:12

Alleluia, alleluia. The word of God is living and effective, able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Matthew 23:23-26

Jesus said: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity. But these you should have done, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean.”



Meditation:

Jesus continues to censure the scribes and Pharisees for their gross insincerity. He describes them as “hypocrites” and “blind guides.” Their blindness is not physical but moral, not accidental but deliberate. Thus they deserve to be rebuked. They are experts at caring for matters that have no real significance, like paying tithes on tiny garden plants, while carefully avoiding matters that are really important: “judgment and mercy and fidelity.” Jesus is not against their paying tithes, but he rebukes them for making a show of their scrupulous obedience to the Law while evading its real demands.

How does this sharp word of Jesus cut into our hearts? If we look closely, we can see that we too fall into the trap of dedicating time and energy to trivial matters while neglecting what is much more important. Actually, we may be worse than the Pharisees, since our useless diversions are not even as pious as theirs. We do not think very much about tithes, but we keep up with all the latest news and with the personal lives of movie stars and sports figures. We watch our favorite programs and read our favorite authors. Many people seem to be more devoted to their on-line “friends” than to their own spouses and children.

The rebuke of Jesus is for neglecting “the weightier things of the Law.” For us Christians, the Law has been summarized by Jesus as the two-fold commandment: love of God and love of neighbor. How much of our daily activity is really motivated by love, as opposed to self-interest or self-righteousness? Fulfilling our responsibilities each day may not appeal to our nature, and it may not look particularly holy, but it is a true fruit of love; it is a true sign of holiness. If we neglect our responsibilities in the family, especially if we justify ourselves by

claiming that we are occupied with important religious matters, we are just like the scribes and Pharisees. We are never justified in using God as an excuse to avoid doing what is right!

The Pharisees' devotion to external cleanliness was almost fanatical. They practiced elaborate ritual purifications (cf. Mk 7:3-4). So when Jesus reproaches them for cleansing only the outside of cup and dish, he is certainly not speaking literally. We cannot imagine that anyone would wash the outside of his cups and dishes without washing the inside. Jesus is using these vessels as a metaphor for the person. He can see the hearts of the Pharisees; he knows that interiorly they are not "clean." Perhaps they avoid the obvious sins of stealing or adultery, but inside they are "full of plunder and self-indulgence."

Whenever we care only for external appearances of holiness, the censure that Jesus directs at the scribes and Pharisees is also directed at us. Sometimes our only reason for avoiding sins is that we do not want to look bad before others. Our apparent righteousness is a shallow façade. Behind it is selfishness and sin that defiles our inner life. The Lord is telling us to cleanse the inside of the cup. When we repent and change our hearts by the power of his grace, we become truthful, pure, and virtuous. If our outer behavior comes from a clean heart, it will naturally be clean.

In the first reading, St. Paul corrects the Thessalonians, but not in the same way as Jesus corrects the Pharisees. Paul recognizes that the Thessalonians are not hypocrites or morally blind; they are simply frightened because their faith is still weak. So the solution is not to reprimand them but to strengthen them in faith. Like a loving father Paul encourages them, "Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught." It is faith in the mercy of God that will dissipate their fears about the coming of the end of the world.

We have many more opportunities to build people up in faith than to chastise them for their hypocrisy. When we see people who are being "shaken out of their minds" or easily alarmed, disturbed by news of wars and climate change and economic collapse, we can serve to give them hope in the Lord. If we ourselves are not caught up in the trivial concerns that preoccupy the hearts of many, we can be messengers of good news: that the Lord loves us and in his mercy has given us "everlasting

encouragement and good hope through his grace.” The Gospel has the power to encourage our hearts “and strengthen them in every good deed and word.”

When do I fall into the trap of focusing on trivial matters while neglecting more important ones? Which of my activities are motivated by self-interest or self-righteousness rather than love? In what ways do I strengthen the faith of others as Paul did for the Thessalonians?

***Mary, open my eyes to see what is really important in life.
St. Monica, pray for us.***

Monica was born of a Christian family in Roman Africa in 332. One can say her entire life was a prayer for the conversion of her family. Through her patience and prayers she was able to convert her husband and his mother to the Catholic faith. For seventeen years she prayed for her son Augustine, begging the prayers of priests, who for a while tried to avoid her because of her persistence at this seemingly hopeless endeavor. One priest did console her by saying, “It is not possible that the son of so many tears should perish.” This thought gave her much hope. Augustine was finally baptized in 387, and Monica died the following year. She is the patroness of despondent and troubled parents.

Notes

August 28, Wednesday, 21st Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church



First Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, 16-18

We instruct you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to shun any brother who walks in a disorderly way and not according to the tradition they received from us. For you know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you. Not that we do not have the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

This greeting is in my own hand, Paul's. This is the sign in every letter; this is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 128:1-2, 4-5

Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Blessed are you who fear the LORD,
who walk in his ways!

For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.

The LORD bless you from Zion:

may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: 1 John 2:5

Alleluia, alleluia. Whoever keeps the word of Christ, the love of God is truly perfected in him. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Matthew 23:27-32

Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every

kind of filth. Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the memorials of the righteous, and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in shedding the prophets’ blood.’ Thus you bear witness against yourselves that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets; now fill up what your ancestors measured out!”



Meditation:

In the first reading, St. Paul speaks out against those who are living “in a disorderly way.” Looking back to Sunday’s readings, we can understand what is an “orderly” way to live. Joshua stated it clearly: “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua challenged the people to declare for themselves whom they will serve, and they responded, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. . . . Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

In Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus similarly challenged his followers to choose whom they will follow. Peter answered, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Both Joshua and Peter showed us clearly what is an orderly way of life – that is, a life in which everything is placed in its proper order. God is first, and we must never forsake his service to serve other gods, whatever those might be. There is no one else to whom we can go to find eternal life.

In the second reading from Sunday, St. Paul taught us what comes next in the proper order of things: love of others. He spoke about how husbands and wives should love each other with the same love with which “Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her.” This is sacrificial love! Only if our relationship with God is in the first place in our lives, and we are depending entirely on his grace, can we ever love this way.

Love of God and love of neighbor: if we follow these two commandments, which are the summation of all of God’s word to us (cf. Mt 22:36-40), then we will be living an orderly life.

Sadly, as we see in today's Gospel, it is all too easy to live in a "disorderly way." The scribes and Pharisees whom Jesus is rebuking are placing their own outward appearance in the first place in their lives. Thus they put all their attention on making sure that they look holy to others, while neglecting true love of God and neighbor. Jesus describes their condition in stark terms: "You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth."

While it is easy for us to see the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, the reading is not simply about them; it is even more a challenge for us to look at our own lives and examine where we may be caught in our own hypocrisy. How much effort do I put into following the Lord with my whole heart, and on the other hand, how much effort do I put into maintaining a good outward appearance for others? How concerned am I to look after my own security and comfort, as opposed to reaching out in sacrificial love to serve the needs of others?

Let us take the time right now to invite the Lord into the disordered places of our own hypocrisy, so that he may shine his healing light into our hearts and show us where and how he wants to place things back into right order.

In what ways am I living a disorderly life? Is God the center of my life? If no, why not? In what areas of my life am I a hypocrite?

Mary, intercede for me, that the Lord may enter my heart and put my life into right order.

St. Augustine, pray for us.

Augustine was born in Roman Africa in 354. His life was unsettled, and he restlessly searched for the truth until he was converted to the Faith and baptized at age thirty-three. Later he was ordained a priest, and then as Bishop of Hippo. He guided his flock as a dedicated pastor for thirty-four years. By his sermons and writings, he fought the errors of his time – Manichaeism, Donatism, Pelagianism, and Arianism. His writings are the foundation for much of Catholic social teaching and theology. In his *Confessions* he reveals God's great love for him and his great love for God. Augustine died in 430 and is one of the four great doctors of the Latin Church.

August 29, Thursday, 21st Week in Ordinary Time
The Passion of Saint John the Baptist

Optional Readings for the Memorial of St. John the Baptist: Jer 1:17-19 / Ps 71:1-6, 15, 17 / Mk 6:17-29



First Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the Church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Every day will I bless you,
and I will praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD and highly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.

R. I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Generation after generation praises your works
and proclaims your might.

They speak of the splendor of your glorious majesty
and tell of your wondrous works.

R. I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

They discourse of the power of your terrible deeds
and declare your greatness.

They publish the fame of your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your justice.

R. I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:10

Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Mark 6:17-29

Herod was the one who had John the Baptist arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. Herodias’ own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, “Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you.” He even swore many things to her, “I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom.” She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” She replied, “The head of John the Baptist.” The girl hurried back to the king’s presence and made her request, “I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.



Meditation:

Today’s Gospel tells of the Passion of Saint John the Baptist and shows the price John paid for telling the truth. Like so many of the prophets, his faithfulness to the Lord resulted in his martyrdom at the hand of someone he tried to save.

Everyone makes mistakes; everyone sins; and our sins always affect the community to some extent. King Herod’s sin, however, was particularly grave. It was a public and ongoing scandal, committed by the leader of the nation. Living in an adulterous relationship with his own brother’s wife, Herod was flagrantly violating the Mosaic Law. John the Baptist was sent by the Lord to speak the truth without fear, following in the footsteps of Jeremiah, to whom the Lord said: “stand up and tell them all that I command you” (Jer 1:17). John stated the truth

clearly to Herod: “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Telling the truth is not the same as being judgmental. John did not say, “you are a bad person,” or any such thing. He simply stated what was obvious, that Herod’s behavior was not in accord with the law. The Mosaic Law was accepted by all the Jews as the standard of behavior for the Chosen People.

John gave his correction directly to Herod, not to Herodias, but it was Herodias’s reaction that led to John’s death. When she heard what John had said, she grew angry, angry enough to want to kill him. Usually when people get so upset that they shout, “I could kill him!”, it is only a figure of speech, an expression of an excess of emotion. But Herodias actually did want to kill John, “but was unable to do so.” She did not regard his message as an opportunity to look at herself, and to consider whether she might, in fact, be in the wrong. Rather than making a potentially painful and pride-deflating examination of conscience, she hardened her heart. She kept the furious fire of her anger burning within.

Scripture says Herodias “harbored a grudge” against John. A harbor provides shelter for a ship. A harbored ship is protected from storms or threats, and can be re-supplied and refreshed for the next journey. When Herodias decided to harbor her grudge, she deliberately “protected” it from the light of her conscience or from any thought that might make it look different. She re-supplied and refreshed her anger, justifying herself, defending herself over and over in her mind, and probably gossiping to others about how strange and cruel John was.

What in our own lives can make us this angry? None of us likes to be corrected. We easily get upset when an unflattering truth is pointed out to us. We are embarrassed, and our pride reacts violently. We want to lash out at the one who “exposed” us. We might even get so upset that we feel like killing someone.

If we treasure our relationship with the Lord, we might still initially be disturbed by the sting of correction, but by grace we can repent, come to acceptance of the truth, and be healed of our sin. On the other hand, if we place greater value on our image, on how we are perceived by others, or on our selfish pleasures, then we will feel that any accusation of an imperfection is like a fatal blow. We will be driven to fight back, to “kill” the one who seems intent on “killing” us.

There is freedom in knowing the truth of who and what we are. When we recognize and accept our brokenness, we are not devastated when others see it as well. We may still be embarrassed, but we do not feel threatened, as if our lives depend on it. As Jesus taught, “The truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). In sharp contrast to Herod and Herodias, enslaved by their own sins, St. John the Baptist lived in true freedom. He is the model we honor and strive to imitate today. He reminds us that we do not need to fear the truth, nor the opposition of anyone. When we rely on the Lord, we have the strength to persevere in love and truth. As St. Paul says, “He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Why should I not harbor a grudge? What are my inner reactions when I am corrected? When do I find it most difficult to speak the truth?

***Mary, help me to accept the truth that sets me free.
St. John the Baptist, pray for us.***

Notes



First Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:17-25

Brothers and sisters: Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the learning of the learned I will set aside.*

Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who have faith. For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Exult, you just, in the LORD;

praise from the upright is fitting.

Give thanks to the LORD on the harp;

with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

For upright is the word of the LORD,

and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right;

of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

The LORD brings to nought the plans of nations;

he foils the designs of peoples.

But the plan of the LORD stands forever;

the design of his heart, through all generations.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 21:36

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



Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise ones replied, ‘No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.’ While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’ But he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”



Meditation:

In Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus’ disciples were divided over whether to continue following him or not. His words were hard to accept. Some disciples made the foolish decision to abandon him, but Peter and the Twelve were wise enough to recognize that Jesus is the Holy One of God and that he has the words of eternal life. Today’s readings invite us to reflect more deeply on foolishness and wisdom.

St. Paul declares that the Gospel is not based on the “wisdom of human eloquence” but on the power of the Cross of Christ – and he points out that the wise message of the Cross is pure foolishness to the world. Paul quotes a prophecy from the Old Testament in which God declares that he will “destroy the wisdom of the wise” (cf. Is 29:14). This prophecy is fulfilled when Jesus dies on the Cross and rises from the dead. The Roman Empire used crucifixion to humiliate and destroy its opponents. Worldly wisdom says that we should do everything to avoid suffering. But earthly power and wisdom are overthrown, exposed as foolishness when Jesus triumphs over suffering and death. He shows us that “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

Today’s Gospel also teaches about foolishness and wisdom, with Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins, five of whom are foolish and five wise. This parable comes from the section of Matthew’s Gospel where Jesus

emphasizes the wisdom of “staying awake,” that is, being prepared for the coming of the Lord (cf. Mt 24:42). To all outward appearances, all ten of the virgins were ready for the big event they were eagerly awaiting. They all had lamps in their possession, so they seemed to be prepared for their duty of lighting the way for the groom when he arrived. However, only the five wise ones brought extra oil, and they were admitted to the wedding feast. The five foolish ones were locked out.

We will be confused by this parable if we interpret it too literally. We will make the mistake of thinking that the wise virgins should have shared some of their oil, and we will not be able to figure out why Jesus approves of their selfishness. He seems to be contradicting his own lessons about love of neighbor and sharing with the needy. The “oil” here is not literal oil, a product we can buy and share; rather it is a symbol for something that cannot be shared: our love for God, our faith, our personal response to his grace. We cannot get this “oil” from others. We are not saved because we belong to the right crowd, or because others around us have faith. Being part of a Catholic family or Catholic culture is not a ticket to Heaven. Each of us has a personal responsibility to believe and to love.

In the Church, we are all part of one community of faith. We show up for Mass on Sundays and holy days; we volunteer to help; we contribute to the collection. All of us are like the ten virgins, seemingly prepared for our Bridegroom. But how much extra oil do we have? We may be building our life more on human wisdom than on the “divine foolishness” of the Cross – making what seems like a certain amount of progress with our own power and talents. Eventually such self-reliance will fail us; we will run out of oil. If we want to be ready for the Lord in the middle of the night, we need more than good intentions. We need “the power of God and the wisdom of God” – that is, we need Jesus Christ and the power of his Cross. By his grace, by the indwelling of his Spirit, we have all that we need to persevere in faith, hope, and love.

*How am I like the wise virgins? How am I like the foolish ones?
Why does spiritual wisdom sometimes look foolish to me?
When does my sense of self-reliance interfere with my journey
of faith?*

Mary, help me to always be prepared for the coming of the Lord.



First Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, *Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord.*



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:12-13, 18-19, 20-21

Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he has chosen for his own inheritance.
From heaven the LORD looks down;
he sees all mankind.

R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

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

R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield,
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust.

R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Gospel Acclamation: John 13:34

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



Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told his disciples this parable: “A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one – to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five

talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"



Meditation:

Today we read another parable in which Jesus exhorts us to be prepared – to take our spiritual responsibilities and our mission seriously while we await his return. But to set the stage for pondering the parable, we first read a passage from 1 Corinthians in which we learn that we belong to the Lord, not because we earned it, but because he has chosen us. "Consider your own calling," St. Paul tells us. We were not chosen because of any special human qualities such as wisdom or power or noble birth. No, the Lord prefers "the lowly and despised of the world," the *anawim*, because they look to him and depend on him. They know they have no basis for boasting except in the Lord. And the Lord can do great things in them.

We recall that in Monday's reading, Paul spoke of "boasting" to the other churches about the faith of the Thessalonians. Now he again speaks about boasting, to clarify what kind of boasting is acceptable. Usually, "boasting" is a negative term, a description of someone's excessive claims to greatness or pride in one's accomplishments. Paul rightly points out that, before God, no human being has any right to boast. Then he reminds us, "*Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord*" (cf. Jer 9:23).

We do have a reason for boasting: the greatness of God and the favor he has shown us! Today's Psalm is an example of boasting in the Lord. We proclaim, "Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own!" We are the people who are "blessed" because the Lord has chosen us to be his own, and we rejoice to give him glory. Sometimes we see Christian professional athletes put this into practice when they publicly give credit to the Lord for their success in sports, saying in the media, "To God be the glory! I give all the credit to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!" Another example of giving glory to God is the custom of writing "JMJ" at the top of one's written pages. This is a prayer to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to help us do our best – and a reminder that all our work belongs to the Lord, to be done through him and for him. The Jesuits are known for writing "AMDG" on their works, the acronym for the motto of the Society of Jesus: *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* – "For the greater glory of God." These are all reminders for believers to give credit where credit is due, and to boast in the Lord, not in themselves.

When we boast in the Lord, we acknowledge that we have been chosen by him, and that apart from him we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15:5). We also show our willingness to do our small part in giving him glory. To emphasize that we still have personal responsibility, even though we are lowly servants, Jesus tells the parable of a master giving "talents" to some servants before leaving on a journey. We think of talents as special abilities or gifts, but a talent in those days was a huge sum of money. How did the master decide how much to give? It was based on his knowledge of each servant's ability. One of his servants had proven reliable in the past, so was given five talents, and so on. The talents are clearly gifts, not earnings. With the gift comes a responsibility to use it well, according to the will of the master.

The servant who buried his single talent, the “useless servant,” is ready with an excuse for doing nothing with it, saying that the master was known to be a demanding man, and he was afraid of him. He feels justified in his actions because he was afraid. But the master does not accept this excuse. His rebuke is not, “You *fearful* servant!”, but “You *wicked, lazy* servant!” There are moments when fear might cripple us and we are unable to serve. Such moments are passing evidence of human weakness, and the Lord does not condemn us for it; he knows that he has chosen “the weak of the world.” It is a different case, however, when we *decide* to let fear interfere with our duty. Then we are not simply fearful and weak but wicked and lazy. We are relying on our own strength rather than “boasting in the Lord.” We are using our fear to try to justify our disobedience. This parable reminds us we have no reason to fear the demands of the Lord. He is extraordinarily generous and patient with us. He gives us time – today – to accept the truth, to repent of our wickedness and laziness, and to begin again to serve him with confidence and joy. Let us conclude this week as we began it, saying with Joshua, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!”

What are my thoughts when I ponder that the Lord chose me in my lowliness and poverty? Why do I boast about my accomplishments? How have I misused or buried the talents that the Lord has given me?

Mary, help me to overcome my fear with faith.

Notes