

*Pondering the Word...*

# **THE ANAWIM WAY**

*Daily Liturgical Meditations*

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

*October 13 to November 30, 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.***



## ***Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time***

***“Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor  
and you will have treasure in Heaven;  
then come, follow me.”***

Mark 10:21-22

### *Theme for the Week*

God is our treasure, our life, our greatest love. We are all called to abandon whatever interferes with our union with him. As true disciples of Jesus, let us follow him in faith.

**FAITH MOVES US NOT SIMPLY TO DO OUR DUTY  
BUT TO GIVE OURSELVES IN LOVE**  
*A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis*

Today's Liturgy offers us the encounter between Jesus and a man who "had great possessions" (*Mk* 10:22), and who went down in history as "the rich young man" (cf. *Mt* 19:20-22). We do not know his name. The Gospel of Mark actually speaks of him as "a man," without mentioning his age or name, suggesting that we can all see ourselves in this man, as though in a mirror. His encounter with Jesus, in fact, allows us to test our faith. Reading this, I test myself on my faith.

The man begins with a *question*: "What must I do, to have eternal life?" (v. 17). Notice the verbs he uses: "*must do*" – "*to have*." Here is his religiosity: a duty, a doing so as to obtain; "I do something to get what I need." But this is a commercial relationship with God, a *quid pro quo*. Faith, on the other hand, is not a cold, mechanical ritual, a "must-do-to-obtain." It is a question of freedom and love. Faith is a question of freedom; it is a question of love. Here is a first test: what is faith for me? If it is mainly a duty or a bargaining chip, we are off track, because salvation is a *gift* and not a duty, it is free and cannot be bought. The first thing to do is to free ourselves of a commercial and mechanical faith, which insinuates the false image of an accountant God, a controlling God, not a Father. And very often in life we experience this "commercial" relationship of faith: I do this, so that God will give me that.

Jesus, in the second step, helps this man by offering him the true face of God. Indeed, the text says, "Jesus looking upon him loved him" (v. 21): this is God! This is where faith is born and reborn: not from a duty, not from something that is to be done or paid, but from a *gaze* of love to be welcomed. In this way Christian life becomes beautiful, if it is not based on our abilities and our plans, but rather based on God's gaze. Is your faith, is my faith tired? Do you want to reinvigorate it? Look for God's gaze: sit in adoration, allow yourself to be forgiven in Confession, stand before the Crucified One. In short, let yourself be loved by him. This is the starting point of faith: letting oneself be loved by him, by him who is Father.



After the question and the gaze there is – the third and final step – *an invitation* from Jesus, who says: “You lack one thing.” What was that rich man lacking? Giving, gratuitousness. “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor” (v. 21). It is perhaps what we are missing too. We often do the bare minimum, whereas Jesus invites us to do the maximum possible. How many times are we satisfied with doing our duties – the precepts, a few prayers, and many things like that – whereas God, who gives us life, asks us for leaps of life! In today’s Gospel we can see this passage from duty to giving, clearly; Jesus begins by recalling the Commandments: “Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal,” and so on (v. 19) and arrives at a positive proposal: “Go, sell, give, follow me!” (cf. v. 21). Faith cannot be limited to [a series of] “no” because Christian life is a “yes” – a “yes” of love.

Dear brothers and sisters, a faith without giving, a faith without gratuitousness, is an incomplete faith. It is a weak faith, a faith that is ill. We could compare it to rich and nourishing food that nonetheless lacks flavor, or a more or less well-played game, but without a goal: no, it isn’t good; it lacks “salt.” A faith without giving, without gratuitousness, without works of charity, makes us sad in the end: just like that man who returned home “sorrowful,” with a fallen countenance, even though he had been looked upon with love by Jesus in person. Today we can ask ourselves: “At what point is my faith? Do I experience it as something mechanical, like a relationship of duty or interest with God? Do I remember to nourish it by letting myself be looked at and loved by Jesus?” Letting oneself be gazed at and loved by Jesus; letting Jesus look at us, love us. “And, attracted by him, do I respond freely, with generosity, with all my heart?”

May the Virgin Mary, who said a total “yes” to God, a “yes” without “but” – it is not easy to say “yes” without “but”: Our Lady did just that, a “yes” without a “but” – let us savor the beauty of making life a gift.

Pope Francis, Angelus Message, October 10, 2021  
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October 13, 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

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**First Reading: Wisdom 7:7-11**

I prayed, and prudence was given me;  
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.

I preferred her to scepter and throne,  
and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,  
nor did I liken any priceless gem to her;  
because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,  
and before her, silver is to be accounted mire.

Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,  
and I chose to have her rather than the light,  
because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.

Yet all good things together came to me in her company,  
and countless riches at her hands.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17**

**Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Teach us to number our days aright,  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.

Return, O LORD! How long?

Have pity on your servants!

**R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,  
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.

Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us,  
for the years when we saw evil.

**R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Let your work be seen by your servants  
and your glory by their children;  
and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;  
prosper the work of our hands for us!  
Prosper the work of our hands!

**R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

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**Second Reading: Hebrews 4:12-13**

Brothers and sisters: Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

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**Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:3**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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**Gospel: Mark 10:17-30 (Short Form: Mark 10:17-27)**

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: *You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.*” He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God.” Peter began to say to him, “We have given up everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come.”

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**Meditation:**

The theme of today’s readings is *Wisdom*. The first reading is from the Old Testament book formerly known as *The Wisdom of Solomon*, now referred to as the *Book of Wisdom*. It was written in the century before the birth of Jesus. In today’s passage, the author is speaking in the voice of Solomon, who was famous for his wisdom. When Solomon was young, the Lord told him to ask for anything he wanted, and he chose to ask for wisdom (cf. 2 Chr 1:10). Perhaps this experience is what he is referring to when he says, “I prayed, and

prudence was given me; / I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.” We learn from this reading that divine wisdom is more valuable than anything – gold, silver, gems, health, beauty, light. In comparison with wisdom, all these are worthless.

The Gospel tells of another man seeking wisdom. Just as Solomon turned to God, this man turns to Jesus with his request. The man already has enough wisdom to know that we are made for fullness of life. The wisdom he seeks from Jesus is how to attain this highest good: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus reminds him that only God is good, but that there is a way for us to participate in the goodness of God. He tells the man about the part that he must play, keeping the commandments, and the price he must pay, sacrificing lesser goods in order to attain the highest good of Heaven.

Anyone who has worked toward a goal knows that it involves not only desire but also labor and sacrifice. A serious athlete gives up his time, certain foods, and other activities in order to focus on becoming the best in his sport. A student who wants to become valedictorian or earn a scholarship sacrifices other interests and pushes herself in order to achieve that end. It is not a secret that anything worth having is worth working for, and if we have something else that is getting in the way of our goal, we need to discard it.

The man in the Gospel seems not to have taken the wisdom of Solomon seriously. He does not “deem riches nothing in comparison with her.” He wants to have *both* riches and wisdom, *both* his will and God’s will. He does not see the love with which Jesus looks at him, so when Jesus gives him the priceless treasure of a personal invitation to become a disciple, he is overcome not with joy but with sadness. “His face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.”

The man was on the right track in seeking his answer from *Jesus*. He did not approach the Pharisees to ask them about eternal life. He sought wisdom from Wisdom himself, the Word made flesh. But when he received the wisdom he sought, he was not willing to put it into practice. Today’s reading from the Letter to the Hebrews gives us some insight into what happened. The man experienced the piercing effect of the word of God, which is “living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword.” The Lord, like a master surgeon, was using the word like a scalpel to cut away man’s harmful attachment to his wealth. Surgery can be painful!

Before undergoing surgery in a hospital, a patient is required to sign a consent form. While still awake and alert, he gives the surgeon permission to cut away whatever is hindering his health. The surgeon uses a sharp knife to reach that which “is concealed from him,” so that any hidden malignancy or infection is seen, and “everything is naked and exposed” to his eyes. Why would anyone voluntarily consent to be cut open and have everything exposed? We do this only if we sense that something is wrong and that there is hope for improved health. Knowing that there is more to life than our present state, we are willing to suffer great loss for an even greater gain. Though we may be frightened or sad, if we are wise, we give our permission.

For our spiritual health we also “give consent” to the Lord. With our free will, we give him permission to use his word – “sharper than any two-edged sword” – to expose any hidden sin and to cut away whatever makes us spiritually sick. The Holy Spirit of Wisdom moves us to give consent when we ponder the word each day. We give consent in our Morning Offering: “*O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart.*” We give consent when we pray the *Our Father*: “Thy will be done.” As the day progresses, we can find ourselves feeling pierced, exposed, cut, challenged. Our work gets difficult, or we have conflicts with others, or aches and pains. We get irritated. We might wonder why God is not treating us with more love. Then we remember that we *gave consent* this morning, that we have already said that whatever he is doing, it is with our permission. We have already surrendered to his healing skills.

Let us thank the Lord for looking at us with love and healing us with his word! May we always welcome his wisdom and remain in a state of consent to his will, so that he can free us from the sadness of sin and lead us to the true desire of our hearts, *eternal life*.

*Do I treasure divine wisdom more than anything else – money, status, health? Why do I strive for earthly honors but make so little effort to attain the highest good of Heaven? In what areas of my life am I struggling to give God consent to heal me with his word which is sharper than any two-edged sword?*

***Mary, strengthen me as I do my daily chores in union with your Son Jesus.***

**October 14, Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Callistus I, Pope and Martyr**

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***First Reading: Galatians 4:22-24, 26-27, 31-5:1***

Brothers and sisters: It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the freeborn woman. The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise. Now this is an allegory. These women represent two covenants. One was from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. But the Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our mother. For it is written:

*Rejoice, you barren one who bore no children;  
break forth and shout, you who were not in labor;  
for more numerous are the children of the deserted one  
than of her who has a husband.*

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are children not of the slave woman but of the freeborn woman.

For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 113:1b-2, 3-4, 5a and 6-7***  
***Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.***

or ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

Praise, you servants of the LORD,  
praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD  
both now and forever.

***R. Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.***

or ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

From the rising to the setting of the sun  
is the name of the LORD to be praised.

High above all nations is the LORD;  
above the heavens is his glory.

***R. Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.***

or ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

Who is like the LORD, our God,  
who looks upon the heavens and the earth below?

He raises up the lowly from the dust;  
from the dunghill he lifts up the poor.

***R. Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.***

or ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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**Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 95:8**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.  
**Alleluia, alleluia.**

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**Gospel: Luke 11:29-32**

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.”

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**Meditation:**

Yesterday’s readings were about wisdom, and again today we read about the great wisdom of Solomon, with a reminder that Jesus’ wisdom is even greater. The many people who have gathered to hear Jesus in today’s Gospel, however, are not wise. He is bringing them the highest possible gift – the message of the Kingdom of God – and they are resistant. He has just cast a demon out of a mute person, and some of them have accused him of collaborating with Beelzebul! So in today’s account, instead of his usual teaching and healing, Jesus speaks directly about the spiritual condition of the crowd: “This generation is an evil generation.” He points out that when Jonah urged the Ninevites to repent, they did. And when the queen of the south sought wisdom, she was willing to travel “from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” In contrast, the people of “this generation” have Jesus right before them, with even greater wisdom, performing greater miracles, and it is not enough for them. They are hard of heart, so he warns them that “at the judgment” they are at risk of grave eternal consequences.

We are “this generation” today, and hardness of heart is a danger for us all. The Gospel Acclamation warns us, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” The Church frequently includes this refrain in the Mass. We need to hear it often, to remind ourselves to look out for ways we may be hardening our hearts. We can be resistant to Jesus, too, and get caught up with “seeking a sign.” Are we superior to

the people who had Jesus right there with them yet remained stubborn? We have Jesus speaking to us today in the Scriptures and offering himself to us in the Eucharist. If that was an “evil generation” long ago, what does Jesus see today?

St. Paul shows us in the first reading that we have two options before us. We do not have to live in hardness of heart because Christ has set us free. This is our inheritance as Christians, to be free of slavery to the old law. Paul speaks of Abraham’s two sons as an allegory of two different ways we can relate to God. One way is to rely on our own strategies, as Abraham and Sarah did when they conspired to have Hagar the slave woman bear them an heir, Ishmael. They did not trust that God would fulfill his promise, and so, with a certain hardness of heart they took matters into their own hands. The other way, the wiser way, is to let God be in charge, as in the case of Sarah some fourteen years later, when God showed his power by allowing her to conceive Isaac. At her advanced age there was no natural way that she could have conceived; Isaac was the fruit of God’s promise to Abraham.

St. Paul uses these Old Testament events to remind us that God is faithful, and that we can trust him to fulfill his promises. We do not have to take matters into our own hands. The background of Paul’s message is that the “Judaizers” have been telling the Galatians to follow the old way, to justify themselves by enslaving themselves to the law. But Paul proclaims the new way, the way of faith, by which we are reborn to freedom. He urges us: “stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.”

“Stand firm” does not mean hardness of heart but firm commitment to the Lord and to following his law of love. Standing firm means not looking for spectacular signs but rather seeing the Lord at work in our ordinary daily life. We do not need to look for more proof that he is with us; the people and duties and opportunities of today are the will of God for us. Our spouse is a “sign”; our children are “signs”; our circumstances are “signs.” Perhaps these are not the signs we wanted to see today! Very often the ordinary signs of daily life are a “sign of Jonah” for us, that is, a call for us to repent. But if we are wise, following the wisdom of Jesus who is far greater than Solomon, we will not harden our hearts to the real people and the actual life that God has given to us.



*In what ways and in what circumstances do I tend to harden my heart? How am I enslaved by the law of the old way, not welcoming the new way of faith? How am I opening my heart to see the Lord at work in my ordinary daily life?*

***Mary, teach me to stand firm in the Lord.  
St. Callistus I, pray for us.***

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**Callistus** (Callixtus) was born a slave, but was later ransomed by some Christians. He was eventually ordained a deacon by Pope Zephyrinus, who put him in charge of the Roman public burial grounds, which are still known as the St. Callixtus catacombs. He then became pope after the death of Zephyrinus. During his papacy, he extended mercy to all repentant sinners, even those who had committed grave sins. At the time, his strongest opponent was the rigorist theologian St. Hippolytus, who was so convinced that Callistus was being too lax that he allowed himself to be elected as a rival pope – the first anti-pope. Callistus also proclaimed that differences in economic class were no barrier to marriage. He died a martyr in 222.

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## Notes

**October 15, Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Teresa of Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church**

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***First Reading: Galatians 5:1-6***

Brothers and sisters: For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

It is I, Paul, who am telling you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I declare to every man who has himself circumcised that he is bound to observe the entire law. You are separated from Christ, you who are trying to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48***

***Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

Let your mercy come to me, O LORD,  
your salvation according to your promise.

***R. Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

Take not the word of truth from my mouth,  
for in your ordinances is my hope.

***R. Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

And I will keep your law continually,  
forever and ever.

***R. Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

And I will walk at liberty,  
because I seek your precepts.

***R. Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

And I will delight in your commands,  
which I love.

***R. Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

And I will lift up my hands to your commands  
and meditate on your statutes.

***R. Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.***

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***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.***

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***Gospel: Luke 11:37-41***

After Jesus had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal. The Lord said to him, “Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you.”

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***Meditation:***

Today we continue to ponder freedom and slavery, mercy and the law. St. Paul again reminds us that we have been set free! He does not want us to be confused by anyone telling us that we must try to justify ourselves by following the rules. We have already been set free, so relying on religious legalism is a huge step backward. Paul says, “For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.” This is not a minor detail or a matter of personal preferences about spirituality; it is the difference between true freedom and spiritual slavery.

It must have been frustrating for Paul to see his new converts getting deceived by the evil one. Although Paul had brought the Good News in its fullness to the pagan Galatians, others had come afterwards with a different message which was undermining his. The “Judaizers” (cf. Gal 2:14) were telling the Galatian believers that Paul had given them an incomplete version of the Gospel, that in addition to faith in Jesus, Christians were also required to follow the whole Mosaic law. The Judaizers specifically insisted on circumcision. They planted doubts among the Galatians, questioning Paul’s authority to proclaim the Gospel and his whole mission to the Gentiles.

So in his Letter to the Galatians, Paul reiterates the message he had preached to them, that, “through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness.” In other words, we cannot buy or earn our own salvation by doing certain works, such as circumcision. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything.” In fact, Paul says, if they want to justify themselves by following the law instead of by faith in Christ, then they are “bound to observe the entire law.” By being circumcised, they have proclaimed that they do not really accept the freedom that Jesus gave them.

Jesus often encountered this mentality in his public ministry, especially among the Pharisees. He repeatedly pointed out the hypocrisy of following certain rules while failing to practice love. In today's Gospel, Jesus enters a Pharisee's home to dine with him, but he does not wash his hands before the meal. The expected elaborate hand-washing ritual was not included in the law of Moses but was an established part of "the tradition of the elders" (cf. Mt 15:2). Since Jesus knew all these traditions well, we can assume that his omission was intentional – and it did provoke a reaction! His host was "amazed" to see that he had skipped the ritual. The Jewish rituals were not bad, in and of themselves. The problem was that the Pharisees equated such external behavior with interior purity.

Jesus and Paul both speak forcefully against this kind of thinking. "You fools!", Jesus says to them. He does not bother being "nice" to the Pharisees, politely and privately correcting their error. Their eternal salvation is at stake, and they need to be shocked into looking at themselves. Jesus exposes what he sees in their hearts: "inside you are filled with plunder and evil." Then he immediately offers them a remedy: "give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you."

But wait – giving alms is an exterior action; it is "works"! If faith is what saves us, why suggest to the Pharisees that they can cleanse themselves by giving alms? Isn't that similar to getting circumcised in order to assure one's salvation? No. Since Jesus has just emphasized what is "inside," he clearly means almsgiving based on love, gifts from the heart. The mere dropping of a few coins in the collection are an exterior action, "clean" but not sufficient – and certainly not enough to buy our salvation. Genuine alms are for the benefit of another, not for self-righteous display. We can grasp this message well if we return to Paul's conclusion at the end of the first reading: the only thing that "counts for anything" is "faith working through love."

*Why do I still get caught in religiosity? How do I respond interiorly when I see others being deceived by the evil one? Why is giving alms a necessity in my spiritual life?*

***Mary, guide me to express my faith through the work of love.***

## *St. Teresa of Jesus, pray for us.*

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**Teresa of Jesus**, also known as Teresa of Ávila, a Spanish mystic, was born in 1515. As a young teenager, she was quite flirtatious and vain. When she was sixteen, her father decided she was out of control and sent her to a convent for her education. At first she hated it, but eventually she began to enjoy it, because of her growing love of God and because the convent was a lot less strict than her father. In 1535 she entered the Carmelite convent in Avila. Liking to be liked, she entertained many visitors, and these frivolous conversations checked her progress towards perfection, but at last, in her thirty-first year, she gave herself wholly to God. A vision showed her the very place in hell to which her light faults would lead her, and she lived ever after in the deepest distrust of self. This led her to intensely seek union with God through prayer and contemplation. From her own experience of laxity in the Carmelite convent, she, together with St. John of the Cross, eventually began a reform of many convents in her order. She reached high summits of wisdom and has given guidance to the whole Church. One of her famous poems begins with the words, *“Let nothing disturb you; let nothing dismay you; all things pass away: God never changes.”* After many severe trials and difficulties, Teresa died at age 67. In 1970, she and St. Catherine of Siena became the first women to be named Doctors of the Church. St. Teresa is honored as the “Doctor of Prayer.”

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## Notes

October 16, Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
Saint Hedwig, Religious  
Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin

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**First Reading: Galatians 5:18-25**

Brothers and sisters: If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 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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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6**

***Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life.***

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

***R. Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life.***

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

***R. Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life.***

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

***R. Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life.***

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**Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27**

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

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***Gospel: Luke 11:42-46***

The Lord said: “Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others. Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces. Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk.”

Then one of the scholars of the law said to him in reply, “Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too.” And he said, “Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.”

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***Meditation:***

In today’s Gospel, Jesus is still at table in the home of a Pharisee, where, as we read yesterday, he criticized the Pharisees for cleaning the outside without purifying the inside. He continues in today’s reading with the same theme. As an example of his point, he says that the Pharisees pay tithes on insignificant herbs, but they neglect love for God. There is nothing wrong with washing cups and paying tithes, but if the motive is not love, these are empty works – and worse, in this case they mask the Pharisees’ inner corruption. Jesus warns the Pharisees that they are “like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk.” Their efforts to be honored in the synagogues and to be praised for their generosity are rooted in pride, not in love of God and neighbor. They may look good on the outside but inside, spiritually, they are decaying and defiled.

After Jesus criticizes the empty works of the Pharisees, the scholars of the law raise a protest: “Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too.” We can recognize in their complaint our own tendency to try to distance ourselves from someone who is being rebuked. We want to stress that we are not like them at all! When we see members of the Church, both individuals and groups, who go astray and need correction, it is tempting to list all the mistakes they have made and reassure ourselves that we would never do something like that. A more mature response is to see them, together with us, as parts of the one Body of Christ. When some in the Church are off track, or trapped in error or sin, we are all part of it in some way. Anyone’s work of love and sacrifice builds up the Body, and any personal sin likewise diminishes the Body.

Jesus identifies for the legal scholars a specific way in which they sin: “You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.” The scholars were good at the thinking part of the law, reading the books and clarifying the meaning of prophecies and wisdom sayings. Their shortcoming was in the acting part. They set themselves apart, as if the law did not apply to them. Their motto seemed to be, “Do what I say, not what I do.” Such behavior not only interferes with the message of the law, it also harms the scholars themselves. People notice when they are being asked to follow difficult rules but are not given any help to do so. Great leaders inspire others by being willing to work hard themselves first, rather than merely directing. Jesus’ own example is the greatest of all; he came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

St. Paul writes further about the freedom that we Christian believers have when we are guided by the Holy Spirit, rather than by rules alone. When our lives are rooted in the life-giving water of the Holy Spirit, we can bear good fruit, that is, acts of love based on faith. The Psalm describes this process by using the image of a tree. By grace we become “like a tree / planted near running water, / that yields its fruit in due season.” The fruits of the Spirit are abundant and varied! Paul lists some of them: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

In contrast to these, he also mentions the life-draining “works of the flesh.” Hatred, jealousy, and selfishness, to name just a few, are against God’s law, and the consequences are grave: “those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” Since we are made for God, created for eternal life with him, every act of the “works of the flesh” harms us, taking us away from him and deeper into misery – both in this life and for eternity.

Today we choose again to reject the works of the flesh, “crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires,” so as to live in the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit.

*Why am I so attentive to exterior cleanliness but do not cleanse my soul from sin? When am I most tempted to judge others and insist that I am not like them? What sacrifices do I make to help build up the Body of the Church?*



*Mary, help me to put into action the words that I speak.*

*St. Hedwig, pray for us.*

*St. Margaret Mary, pray for us.*

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**Hedwig** was born in Bavaria around the year 1174. She married Henry I, the Duke of Silesia, Prussia, at age twelve. She raised seven children, founded hospitals to care for the sick, and was like a mother to the poor and to prisoners. After the death of her husband, she entered the Cistercian convent that Henry had founded. She had to leave several times to bring peace to her family. Hedwig died in 1243 and was canonized in 1267.

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**Margaret Mary** was born in Alacoque, France in 1647. After much opposition from her mother, Margaret entered the Visitation Convent in 1671. She was subjected to many trials to prove the genuineness of her vocation. In 1673, Margaret began to receive revelations of the Sacred Heart. The visions revealed what we now know as First Friday Devotions and the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart. These apparitions drew much criticism from the community, but her obedience, humility, and charity towards those who persecuted her finally prevailed, and the sisters celebrated privately the first feast of the Sacred Heart in 1686. Margaret Mary received support from St. Claude de la Colombiere, the community's confessor, who declared that the visions were genuine. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been a great gift to the Church. It originally helped to free the Church from the rigid spirit of Jansenism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and continues to enrich the lives of the faithful. Margaret Mary died in 1690. After her death devotion to the Sacred Heart was fostered by the Jesuits. She was canonized in 1920 and her feast was inserted in the General Roman Calendar in 1929.

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## Notes

**October 17, Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr**

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***First Reading: Ephesians 1:1-10***

Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the holy ones who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

In Christ we have redemption by his Blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

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

***The Lord has made known his salvation.***

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

***R. The Lord has made known his salvation.***

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

***R. The Lord has made known his salvation.***

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

***R. The Lord has made known his salvation.***

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

***R. The Lord has made known his salvation.***

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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: Luke 11:47-54***

The Lord said: “Woe to you who build the memorials of the prophets whom your fathers killed. Consequently, you bear witness and give consent to the deeds of your ancestors, for they killed them and you do the building. Therefore, the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and Apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute’ in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood! Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter.” When Jesus left, the scribes and Pharisees began to act with hostility toward him and to interrogate him about many things, for they were plotting to catch him at something he might say.

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***Meditation:***

God is so good to us! He loves us more than we can possibly understand or imagine. In today’s first reading, St. Paul writes about the grace which God has showered upon us: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ.”

This is another way of saying that God has invited us, like Jesus invited the rich young man, to have treasure in Heaven, and to be united to him in love for all eternity. Paul goes on to say that God “has made known to us the mystery of his will.” And the Psalm repeats this: “The Lord has made known his salvation.” This is important: God has not only prepared heavenly treasure for us, he has also made known to us what he has done, and he has told us how we can accept his invitation. This is why he sent us the prophets, to “make known” the way to union with him.

Sadly, Jesus says that, although his hearers honor the prophets, they do not follow their instruction. He rebukes the scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel, telling them, “You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter.” Although the scribes and Pharisees taught many truths about God, they did not teach the key, that which allows one to truly understand and make use of this knowledge. This key is love. As Jesus said, the summation of the law and the prophets is love for God and love for our neighbor (cf. Mt 22:40). Without love, one cannot understand God’s invitation to the heavenly banquet, nor know how to enter into it.

Knowledge is not an end unto itself; there is little value in simply obtaining more and more knowledge for its own sake. Knowledge is for love. We cannot love what we do not know, but the more we know someone the more we can love them. The invitation to follow Jesus is an invitation to become one with God – one mind, one heart, and one will with him. This is the purpose of knowledge – to know God and his creation so as to love him more and more truly.

The Gospel Acclamation for today is, “I am the way and the truth and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father except through me.” We know that Jesus Christ is perfectly united with the Father. This is the relationship into which we are being invited! This is what Paul means when he says, “In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ.” We are invited to share in the love relationship that Jesus has with the Father – the love which is the Holy Spirit.

So we must, in a sense, “become” Christ. We must be transformed in his likeness; we must look like him; and for this to happen we must allow God to change us. Paul says that God chose us “before the foundation of the world.” If he chose us before the world was created, then his choice clearly preceded any choice of ours, whether good or evil. It is also clear that his favor is never anything we can earn, or take for ourselves, because we already had it before we were even conceived.

Our relationship with God is like a dance, and he is the leader. In any good dance, one partner must lead, and the other must learn to pick up all the smallest signals of how the leader is moving and follow gracefully and quickly as they are led. It is a frustrating and ultimately failed dance if both try to lead and neither will follow.

Jesus rebukes the Jewish elders for their refusal to follow. The accuracy of his rebuke is confirmed at the end of the reading, where they begin “to act with hostility toward him” and to plot against him. They are not listening to God’s words, and they are not following his lead. Rather, they have their own plans already set. In a sense, they are expecting God to follow their lead.

As we examine our own hearts today, we look out for ways in which we suffer from the same hardness of heart as the scribes and Pharisees. We act much of the time as if we were – or should be – the leader in the dance. We have already decided what we want to do, and what our plans are, and we “pray” for God to do what we want him to do. Let us repent of our stubborn self-will and our hardness of heart and ask God today to give us the Heart of Mary, who always and in everything followed the leading of God quickly and gracefully. She shows us the way to share fully in the heavenly treasure!

*What sort of knowledge best helps me to know God and love him more? As I examine my own heart, what do I find that is similar to the hardness of heart of the scribes and Pharisees? Why do I cling to my own will and not welcome the way God is leading me?*

***Mary, help me to follow the leading of God gracefully as you did.  
St. Ignatius, pray for us.***

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**Ignatius** was born in Syria. Nothing is known of his early life. He converted to Christianity, and was perhaps a disciple of St. Peter and St. Paul, or possibly of St. John. Ignatius became the bishop of Antioch in Syria and was a wise and articulate leader. He called the Eucharist “the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death.” When arrested during one of the persecutions of the emperor Trajan, he refused to worship the official gods and was sentenced to die in the Coliseum in Rome. The soldiers who accompanied him to Rome allowed him to visit some of the Christian communities along the way. He wrote seven letters on this long journey – five to the churches in Asia Minor, one to Bishop Polycarp, and one to the church of Rome. These letters are an important source of knowledge about the early Church. Ignatius longed to be martyred in order to enter more quickly into eternal life with Christ. He said that if the animals in the amphitheater were not hungry, he would urge them on. In his final letter he begged the Christians in Rome not to try to stop his martyrdom. He wrote, “The only thing I ask of you is to allow me to offer the libation of my blood to God.” Sometime around the year 107 Ignatius bravely met the lions in the Coliseum.

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October 18, Friday, Feast of Saint Luke, Evangelist

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**First Reading: 2 Timothy 4:10-17b**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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***Gospel Acclamation: John 15:16***

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

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***Gospel: Luke 10:1-9***

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

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***Meditation:***

In honor of the great Feast of St. Luke, the Church ponders specially chosen Scripture readings. Rather than continuing our study of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, today we turn to his Second Letter to Timothy. He is writing from his prison cell in Rome, aware that he may soon be put to death, and he is experiencing a painful loneliness. One of his disciples has deserted him, others are out on mission, and “Alexander the coppersmith,” he says, “did me a great deal of harm.” In this moment of desolation, Paul is all the more grateful for the presence of his friend Luke, “the only one with me.”

He does not specify the ways in which Luke assisted him, but we know that in times of suffering, we long for supportive companionship. Being deserted by a friend is a painful betrayal. On the other hand, the mere presence of those who stand with us in our hardship provides comfort and encouragement. At the end of the reading, we see that Paul, partly because of the support he receives from Luke, is still strongly committed to his mission, despite all his losses. He is clear about what he must do; he has been sent by God and strengthened by God, “so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it.” Luke, who was with Paul as he wrote these words, and

perhaps even wrote them himself as Paul dictated, took this message to heart. He too dedicated himself to the work of evangelization, “so that through me the proclamation [of the Gospel] might be completed.”

We are speaking of Paul and Luke, among others, when we pray today’s Psalm: “Your friends make known, O Lord, the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.” Who qualifies to be called “friends” of the Lord? Jesus says that we are his friends, not his slaves, when we live by his commandment of love (cf. Jn 15:14-15). Paul speaks as a true friend of the Lord; he knows he is loved and he is committed to love. He holds no resentment about being deserted by everyone, and even prays for them, “May it not be held against them!” Paul is ready to lay down his life for his friends – that is, for the sake of the Gentiles, the people to whom Jesus has sent him.

We too are called to live as friends of the Lord! And if we truly want to live as his friends, then we need to examine the criteria for being such, including the statement, “Your friends make known, O Lord, the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.” We can ask ourselves, *Are we making known the glorious splendor of the Lord’s Kingdom? What do our words and our way of life proclaim to others? Are we telling others about Jesus? If we are not, are we truly his friends?*

Similarly, today’s selection from the Gospel according to St. Luke tells of Jesus sending out his friends, the seventy-two disciples, with his message. They are to prepare people for his visit, and say to them, “The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.” We can compare the work of the seventy-two to that of the advance teams that go ahead of political candidates and famous singers. When celebrities plan a concert or a tour, they send people ahead of them to prepare each site for the visit. The message or performance is too important to suddenly throw out to a group of distracted people, so the advance team builds focus by speaking enthusiastically about the celebrity who will soon visit. The team arranges a suitable site for the event and gets the news out in the media. That way, when the celebrity arrives, people’s hearts are prepared. They have cleared their schedules and become interested in the message that will be given. The seventy-two are Jesus’ advance team, preparing the way for the Lord.



The Great Commission applies to St. Paul, St. Luke, the seventy-two disciples, and to each of us. We have been chosen by the Lord as his advance team today. To be equipped to proclaim the Kingdom, we need to prepare our own hearts first. We ponder the word of God before Mass so that our hearts will be focused and ready to receive what will be proclaimed, and to welcome the greatest of the Lord's gifts, the Holy Eucharist. Then, overflowing with the grace we ourselves have received, we go forth to prepare the way of the Lord by being present to others, allowing them to meet Jesus.

*When have I been deserted or betrayed by a friend? How does my way of life proclaim to others that I am a Christian? How am I preparing my heart with the word of God to spread the Gospel to those I meet?*

***Mary, form me as a spiritual friend to others.  
St. Luke, pray for us.***

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Tradition indicates that **St. Luke the Evangelist**, a former slave, was born a Gentile in Antioch, Syria, c. AD 9 and was trained as a physician. Author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles (over a quarter of the New Testament), he is the only Gentile to have written books in the Bible. His methodical, detailed Book of Acts gives us the only thorough record of what happened after Jesus ascended to Heaven. In his writings Luke emphasizes Christ's mercy, his tenderness and compassion for the less fortunate, and the importance of the evangelization of the Gentiles. Unlike the other Gospels, he mentions the importance of Mary and other women in the ministry of Jesus. Luke accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey. Tradition states that he died a martyr in the Greek city of Thebes.

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## Notes

**October 19, Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saints John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, Priests,**  
**and Companions, Martyrs**  
**St. Paul of the Cross, Priest**

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***First Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23***

Brothers and sisters: Hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the holy ones, I do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 8:2-3ab, 4-5, 6-7***

***You have given your Son rule over the works of your hands.***

O LORD, our LORD,

how glorious is your name over all the earth!

You have exalted your majesty above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings

you have fashioned praise because of your foes.

***R. You have given your Son rule over the works of your hands.***

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars which you set in place—

What is man that you should be mindful of him,

or the son of man that you should care for him?

***R. You have given your Son rule over the works of your hands.***

You have made him little less than the angels,

and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him rule over the works of your hands,

putting all things under his feet.

***R. You have given your Son rule over the works of your hands.***

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**Gospel Acclamation: John 15:26b, 27a**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** The Spirit of truth will testify to me, says the Lord, and you also will testify. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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**Gospel: Luke 12:8-12**

Jesus said to his disciples: “I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.

“Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say.”

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**Meditation:**

Today’s readings provide us with both encouragement and practical advice. St. Paul’s Letter praises the faith of the Christians in Ephesus and the way they love and care for others. He prays with thanksgiving for their faith, and also asks the Lord to grant them an ever-greater increase in wisdom and insight. We do well to ponder this profound prayer slowly, word by word, for every part of it is rich with meaning – a feast of the word of God, expressed in the words of Paul.

Paul prays, “May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened.” This expression is reflected in our daily prayer to Our Lady of the Liturgical Life, where we ask Mary, “Open the eyes of our hearts with your faith.” We know that our “hearts” do not literally have “eyes”; we can intuitively understand that such language refers to an interior, spiritual perception. The “heart” is the core of our spiritual life, the home of our identity and our deepest experiences, particularly our experience of God. And “eyes” are what enable us to see and understand, to take in information and compare things. Eyes cannot see in the dark; they must be provided with light in order to be useful. Paul is asking the Lord to turn on the lights in our hearts.

On our own, we cannot produce any more light or wisdom than we already have. We spin in circles of ignorance if we rely only on our own insights. We need God to provide us with light, to “enlighten the eyes of

our hearts,” so that we may better see and understand. Paul describes some of what we can see when we are spiritually enlightened: the meaning of Christian hope, the riches of glory that God wants us to inherit, and the surpassing greatness of God’s power on our behalf.

In the Gospel Jesus also speaks of a certain spiritual enlightenment that we can depend on, especially in moments when we are called on to defend the faith. He says, “do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say.” The Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts is an unending Source of wisdom and light.

Perhaps many of us can recall moments when we found ourselves saying aloud something we had no intention of saying – when we were instructing one of our children, or when we had to correct some misunderstanding about the faith, or when we were on the spot to give an answer about the Church. In these moments, the insight or admonition or prophetic word came from the Lord for the benefit of his people. Even we who were the speakers could realize that the words really came from the Lord; we were being instructed even as we were instructing others. This is an example of what Jesus is talking about in today’s Gospel. He is teaching us to be at peace, to live in faith in each moment, trusting that what we need will be provided when we need it.

At times we are tempted to fear that since we do not know right now what to say we might not know then either. A story from the life of Corrie ten Boom can teach us how to overcome this fear. She was a Dutch Christian who, together with her family, protected Jews when the Nazis invaded their country. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, she tells of how her father taught her to trust that the Lord will provide what is necessary at the right time. She had expressed her fear that she would not be able to endure the suffering that was likely to come to them. Her wise father used an analogy to strengthen her. He sat down beside her and said gently, “Corrie, when you and I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?” Young Corrie thought for a moment: “Why, just before we get on the train!” “Exactly,” said her father. “And our wise Father in Heaven knows when we’re going to need things, too. Don’t run out ahead of him, Corrie. When the time comes ... you will look into your heart and find the strength you need – just in time.”

Sometimes young people, when they receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, are troubled by the teaching that they are now “soldiers of Christ,” and that this Sacrament will give them the strength to die for their faith if needed. They do not feel confident that they can face being martyred. They secretly suspect that the Sacrament may not work! Their wise teachers will tell them that, yes, it is true – they are not ready right now to die for their faith. But the Holy Spirit, dwelling in them, will give them what they need when the time is right. They need only to continue to live in faith in each moment and entrust the future to God. Through the Sacraments, the eyes of their hearts will be enlightened. Although they may not feel it, the Lord has given them, and all of us, “a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him.”

*What is my experience of having the eyes of my heart enlightened? When have I, inspired by the Spirit, said things that I had no previous intention of saying? Why do I lack trust that the Lord will provide for all my needs?*

***Mary, open our hearts to receive the Spirit of Wisdom.***

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

***St. Paul of the Cross, pray for us.***

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Today we honor eight French Jesuit missionaries who were martyred in North America between 1642 and 1649. Their holiness is reflected in their extraordinary courage in enduring torture from the native tribes they were trying to evangelize. **John de Brébeuf** was mocked by being “baptized” with boiling water, severely mutilated, and scalped. **Isaac Jogues** faced similar tortures, including having his fingers chewed off. When he escaped and returned to France, he received papal permission to say Mass with mutilated hands. In his zeal for souls, he returned to the missions. He was captured again and cruelly tortured. Before his death he said, “These tortures are great, but God is greater.” All eight martyrs are honored at two shrines: one in Ontario, Canada, and one in New York. The martyrs, the patron saints of North America, were canonized in 1930.

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**Paul of the Cross** was born in 1694 in northern Italy. Son of a wealthy merchant, he experienced a conversion to a life of prayer at age 19. His reading of the *Treatise on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales and direction from priests of the Capuchin Order taught him the primacy of love and the need to go beyond our own images of God. It became St. Paul’s lifelong conviction that God is most easily found in the Passion of Jesus Christ, being the most overwhelming sign of God’s love for us. His life was devoted to bringing this message to all and founding a community (the Passionists) whose members would do the same. He died in 1775 and was canonized in 1867. In 1869, his feast day was inserted in the General Roman Calendar.

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