

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

*Fifteenth to Twenty-First Week
in Ordinary Time*

*July 11 to August 28, 2021
Cycle B - Year 1*

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CONTENTS

What is the Anawim Spirituality	5
Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time	7
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>Missionaries are Called to be Christ-centered and Poor</i>	8
Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time	43
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>The Shepherd's Verbs:</i>	
<i>To See, To Have Compassion, and To Teach</i>	44
Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time	78
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>Like Jesus, We Must Be Attentive to All Types of "Hunger"</i>	79
Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time	110
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>Jesus Himself is the Bread the Father Has Given to Humanity</i> ..	111
Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time	147
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>Reject Evil and Cling to Good</i>	148
Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time	183
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>We are Called to Serve and Glorify God</i>	
<i>with Our Whole Being, Soul and Body</i>	184
Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time	217
Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis	
<i>"You Have the Words of Eternal Life!"</i>	218
List of Outlets and Distributors	252
Subscription Forms	255

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.

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

***Jesus summoned the Twelve
and began to send them out two by two.***

Mark 6:7

Theme for the Week

Through our Baptism, we share in Jesus' mission of salvation. As his witnesses in the world, let us deepen our relationship with him so that we can reflect his words and actions to those we meet each day. As we reach out to others with compassion, forgiveness, patience and humility, we truly preach with our lives.

**MISSIONARIES ARE CALLED TO BE
CHRIST-CENTERED AND POOR**
A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mk 6:7-13) narrates the moment Jesus sends the Twelve [Apostles] on mission. After calling each of them by name "to be with him" (Mk 3:14) – listening to his words and observing his gestures of healing – he now calls them again to "send them out two by two" (6:7) to the villages he is going to visit. It is a sort of "internship" of what they will be called to do following the Resurrection of the Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel passage pauses on the *style of the missionary* which we can sum up in two points: the mission has a *center*; the mission has a *face*.

First of all, the missionary disciple has his *center* of reference who is Jesus himself. The narrative indicates this by using a series of verbs which have him as the subject — "He called to him"; he "began to send them"; he "gave them authority"; "he charged them"; "he said to them" (vv. 7, 8, 10) — so that the going out and working of the Twelve appears to be radiating from a center, reaffirming the presence and work of Jesus in their missionary actions. This demonstrates that the Apostles have nothing of their own to proclaim, nor any abilities to manifest, but rather that they speak and act as "emissaries," as messengers of Jesus.

This episode of the Gospel also applies to us, not only to priests but to all baptized people, called to witness to the Gospel of Christ in the various spheres of life. And for us too, this mission is authentic only in so far as its unchanging center is Jesus. It is not an initiative of faithful individuals nor of groups and not even of large gatherings. It is the mission of the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. No Christian proclaims the Gospel "on his/her own," but is only sent by the Church who received the mandate from Jesus himself. Indeed it is Baptism that makes us missionaries. A baptized person who does not feel the need to proclaim the Gospel, to proclaim Jesus, is not a good Christian.

The second characteristic of the missionary's style is, so to speak, a *face*, which consists in the *poverty of means*. His accoutrement responds to the criteria of modesty. Indeed the Twelve have the order to

“take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts” (6:8). The Teacher wants them to be free and unhampered, without reserves and without favors, certain only of the love of the One who sends them, strengthened only by his Word which they go to proclaim. The staff and the sandals are the gear of pilgrims because that is what the messengers of the Kingdom of God are, not omnipotent *managers*, not irreplaceable officials, not celebrities *on tour*. Let us think for example of this Diocese of which I am Bishop. Let us think about some saints from this Diocese of Rome: Saint Philip Neri, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, Saint Alessio, Blessed Ludovica Albertoni, Saint Frances of Rome, Saint Gaspare del Bufalo and many others. They were not officials or business people, but rather humble workers of the Kingdom. This was the face they had. And to this “face” also belongs the way the message is received: it can happen that one is not welcomed or listened to (cf. v. 11). This too is poverty: the experience of failure. The experience of Jesus who was rejected and crucified anticipates the destiny of his messenger. And only if we are united to Him, who died and rose, can we find the courage to evangelize.

May the Virgin Mary, the first disciple and missionary of the Word of God, help us to convey to the world the message of the Gospel in a humble and radiant exultation, beyond any rejection, misunderstanding or tribulation.

Pope Francis, Angelus, July 15, 2018
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July 11, 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time



First Reading: Amos 7:12-15

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, “Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king’s sanctuary and a royal temple.” Amos answered Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD—for he proclaims peace.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,
glory dwelling in our land.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation



Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14
(Short Form: Ephesians 1:3-10)

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 him 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.

In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel Acclamation: see Ephesians 1:17-18

Alleluia, alleluia. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick— no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.” So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.



Meditation:

At some point in life, everyone asks the question, “Why am I here?” An important first step in responding is to acknowledge that we are not here accidentally; God deliberately created us. The next question, often remembered from a popular catechism, is, “Why did God make you?” And the given answer: “God made me to know him, love him and serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in the next.” This brief statement sheds a bright light on a most fundamental question, the very purpose of our existence. God created us to share with him the joy of Heaven.

St. Paul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, articulates this fundamental truth of our existence in today's reading from his Letter to the Ephesians. He writes: “In love God 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.” Our Lord Jesus Christ came for this purpose: that we enjoy the glory of God in Heaven.

Knowing that he would not be physically on earth for ever, the Lord instituted the Church to continue his saving mission. The Church, the Body of Christ, continues to proclaim the truth of salvation, calling all people to repentance and serving as the instrument through which people of all nations can attain the glory of God. This is how the *Catechism* describes the missionary mandate given by Christ to his Church: “Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be ‘the universal sacrament of salvation,’ the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men” (CCC 849).

This missionary mandate is anticipated in today’s Gospel in Jesus’ sending out of the Twelve two by two. When the Lord tells them to “take nothing for the journey” – “no food, no sack, no money in their belts” – he is inviting them to live in total dependence on him who is the Lord of the mission. Their missionary success depends not on themselves and what they can carry but on the One who sends them.

With this instruction in mind, the Twelve “went off and preached repentance,” that is, they called people to turn back to God. It is a great message, ultimately leading people to their share in God’s glory. Missionaries want all people to know why God made them and what God has prepared for those who love him. However, sometimes the Gospel message will be rejected. Jesus alerted the Twelve to this possibility. Some people will not welcome the call to repentance or listen to the missionaries. What are they to do? They are to continue the work elsewhere, without letting the dust of such rejections and disappointments cling to them.

Today’s first reading recalls the experience of the prophet Amos, who foreshadowed the missionary and prophetic task of Christ and his Church. Amos was called by God to abandon his work as a shepherd and take up the difficult mission of preaching repentance to the people of Israel. If Amos thought the religious leaders would welcome his mission, he was in for a surprise: Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, insists that Amos must be exiled. Amaziah’s conscience is disturbed, and his jealousy is aroused. His response to the prophetic mission is typical of those who resist the truth: to stop the message he attacks the messenger. Amos, for his part, does not give in. The authority for his mission is not man but God.

Like Amos in the first reading and the Twelve in the Gospel, we too have been chosen and sent forth. By virtue of our Baptism, we too are prophets and missionaries. Pope Francis in this week's Spiritual Reflection tells us: "It is Baptism that makes us missionaries. A baptized person who does not feel the need to proclaim the Gospel, to proclaim Jesus, is not a good Christian."

We do not all have the same specific tasks – there are many ways to serve for the glory of God – so we do not need to compare ourselves with others. What must be common to us all is the love that we have for God and the love we have for our brothers and sisters for the sake of God. Whatever our circumstances or state of life, God asks us to serve him in such a way that people may come to know him through our way of life. This fruit will certainly be the result if we continually strive to "know him, love him and serve him in this world," confident that he wants us, and all people, to be happy with him forever in the next.

As a Christian, do I hear Jesus inviting me to live in total dependence on him as the Apostles did? Is Amos an example for me to continue to speak the truth despite difficulties and resistance? How am I called to be a prophet and missionary in my vocation in life?

Mary, Queen of the Apostles, inspire me to serve God in such a way that people may come to know him through my way of life.

Notes



First Reading: Exodus 1:8-14, 22

A new king, who knew nothing of Joseph, came to power in Egypt. He said to his subjects, “Look how numerous and powerful the people of the children of Israel are growing, more so than we ourselves! Come, let us deal shrewdly with them to stop their increase; otherwise, in time of war they too may join our enemies to fight against us, and so leave our country.”

Accordingly, taskmasters were set over the children of Israel to oppress them with forced labor. Thus they had to build for Pharaoh the supply cities of Pithom and Raamses. Yet the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread. The Egyptians, then, dreaded the children of Israel and reduced them to cruel slavery, making life bitter for them with hard work in mortar and brick and all kinds of field work – the whole cruel fate of slaves.

Pharaoh then commanded all his subjects, “Throw into the river every boy that is born to the Hebrews, but you may let all the girls live.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 124:1b-3, 4-6, 7-8

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Had not the LORD been with us–

let Israel say, had not the LORD been with us–

When men rose up against us,

then would they have swallowed us alive,

When their fury was inflamed against us.

R. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Then would the waters have overwhelmed us;

The torrent would have swept over us;

over us then would have swept

the raging waters.

Blessed be the LORD, who did not leave us

a prey to their teeth.

R. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

We were rescued like a bird

from the fowlers’ snare;

Broken was the snare,

and we were freed.

Our help is in the name of the LORD,

who made heaven and earth.

R. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:10

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



Gospel: Matthew 10:34 – 11:1

Jesus said to his Apostles: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set

a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one’s enemies will be those of his household.

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple— amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

When Jesus finished giving these commands to his Twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.



Meditation:

Last week, we read from the Book of Genesis about how Jacob and his whole family were saved from famine when they went to Egypt and were welcomed by Joseph. This week we begin reading from the second book in the Bible, Exodus. Today we learn that over the years, Egypt changed from a place of refuge into a place of severe oppression. Joy and freedom were replaced with sorrow and slavery. The Egyptians, in their fear of the Israelites, eventually resorted to the horrible sin of infanticide. Perhaps the Israelites, during their four centuries in Egypt, remembered the Promised Land and thought of going back there. But at some point, they no longer had this option; they were slaves. If we take Egypt as a symbol for a life in sin, we can see that the longer we remain in sin, the worse our slavery becomes. Even if we want freedom, we cannot free ourselves. We need a Savior.

Most of us do not suffer anything at all as severe as what the Israelites experienced in Egypt. However, many of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world do suffer from oppression and persecution, and the disturbing phenomenon of modern slavery – human trafficking – is increasing everywhere. Such practices raise challenges to our faith. Where is God when people suffer from brutal oppression? From a human perspective, it seems that he has abandoned his own people. However, God’s unchanging plan is for our salvation, not our oppression. Even when it is impossible to see with our natural eyes what God is doing, we can perceive by faith that he is faithful to his covenant of love, and that his plan cannot be thwarted by the shrewd dealings of evil men.

Today’s reading is quite bleak, yet even here there is a hint that another power is at work on behalf of God’s people: “Yet the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread.” Egypt is not more powerful than God. It may seem like man is in control, but in fact, God is the one who directs the unfolding of historical events – always working for the eternal salvation of those who follow him.

Today’s Gospel presents a different kind of challenge, not the contradiction of evil seeming to prevail over goodness, but of the pursuit of goodness seeming to have an evil effect, the “sword” of division. We read the conclusion of Jesus’ instructions to the Twelve before sending them out on mission. His statements are quite provocative! He says that his mission is not to bring peace on earth but a sword. He has come to divide households, making members of our own families our enemies.

These words force us to pause and question, especially in light of yesterday’s Gospel, where Jesus instructed the Twelve to shake the dust off their feet and move on when they are not welcomed. We did not think that this would apply to our own household. It is one thing to leave strangers in order to evangelize other strangers, but it is another to become divided from those we love the most, our own family members!

The point of this jolting teaching is not that we should hate or reject our relatives but that love of God must be our absolute highest priority. We cannot take up our cross and follow Jesus with a divided heart. Missionaries – that is, all of us – must put God before everything else. To love anyone, even our parents or children, more than we love God makes us unworthy of him. As we strive to be more wholehearted lovers of God, we allow love to move us beyond ourselves, beyond all the self-centered elements in our human relationships. Love moves us to take

up our cross and persevere, even when divisions arise from our faithfulness to God.

There is no real conflict between love of God and love of our family as long as we love them as he loves them. Conflicts arise when we – or our family members – choose a way that is outside the love of God. It is actually selfishness and pride that divide us, not God. When we love God first, his word becomes the “sword” that divides us from anything that stands in opposition to his Kingdom. The resulting divisions in our lives are not directly intended by the Lord, but they are an inevitable outcome if others reject truth or love. A false peace, a compromise between the world and the Kingdom of God, may look appealing, but it leads us away from the true peace that comes from union with God. Jesus will not tolerate a false peace. He cuts into it with the sword of his word, separating truth from error, setting free all who love the truth. “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”

In this pandemic and in all my trials, do I believe that God is always working for my eternal salvation? Do I love God fully and put Him before everything else? How has speaking the truth caused division in my relationship with those whom I love?

Mary, instill in my heart true peace that comes from union with God.

Notes

July 13, Tuesday, 15th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Henry



First Reading: Exodus 2:1-15a

A certain man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, who conceived and bore a son. Seeing that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took a papyrus basket, daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and putting the child in it, placed it among the reeds on the river bank. His sister stationed herself at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe, while her maids walked along the river bank. Noticing the basket among the reeds, she sent her handmaid to fetch it. On opening it, she looked, and lo, there was a baby boy, crying! She was moved with pity for him and said, "It is one of the Hebrews' children." Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" "Yes, do so," she answered. So the maiden went and called the child's own mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will repay you." The woman therefore took the child and nursed it. When the child grew, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her son and called him Moses; for she said, "I drew him out of the water."

On one occasion, after Moses had grown up, when he visited his kinsmen and witnessed their forced labor, he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his own kinsmen. Looking about and seeing no one, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out again, and now two Hebrews were fighting! So he asked the culprit, "Why are you striking your fellow Hebrew?" But the culprit replied, "Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses became afraid and thought, "The affair must certainly be known."

Pharaoh, too, heard of the affair and sought to put Moses to death. But Moses fled from him and stayed in the land of Midian.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 69:3, 14, 30-31, 33-34

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

I am sunk in the abysmal swamp
where there is no foothold;
I have reached the watery depths;
the flood overwhelms me.

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

But I pray to you, O LORD,
for the time of your favor, O God!
In your great kindness answer me
with your constant help.

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

But I am afflicted and in pain;
let your saving help, O God, protect me;
I will praise the name of God in song,
and I will glorify him with thanksgiving.

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

“See, you lowly ones, and be glad;
you who seek God, may your hearts revive!
For the LORD hears the poor,
and his own who are in bonds he spurns not.”

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 95:8

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



Gospel: Matthew 11:20-24

Jesus began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum:

Will you be exalted to heaven?

You will go down to the netherworld.

For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”



Meditation:

As we ponder the account of Moses’ early life, we see how God chose him and marvelously prepared him for his future mission as an instrument of salvation. Moses was born under the threat of death, since the Egyptian law at that time required that newborn boys be thrown into the Nile river. His mother took the risk of hiding him as

long as possible. Then, technically, she obeyed the law, putting Moses in the river – but she did it in order to save his life. She seems to have deliberately placed him where he was most likely to be found, and his sister remained attentive to him.

God used three women, each doing her small part, to bring about the rescue of Moses. His good mother, with a creativity inspired by love, did everything she could to save him. His sister (probably Miriam) dared to approach Pharaoh's daughter and to reunite the baby with his mother. The princess of Egypt was "moved with pity" for the boy, and, defying her own father's rules and his hatred for the Israelites, saved the very one who would bring about their liberation. None of these three knew the plan of God, yet all three cooperated with it, simply by doing the right thing at the right time, for the life of one, small, helpless child. Their actions bring to mind the line from the Jewish Talmud, "For whoever saves one life, it is as if he saved the entire world." Every mother who has the courage to bring a new life into the world, every caregiver who protects the life of a vulnerable little one, every family that adopts an abandoned child, cooperates – whether they are aware of it or not – in God's marvelous plan for the salvation of the world.

God's plan of love remains in place, even when it seems that goodness is being overcome by evil, and even when we ourselves become obstacles to our own salvation. After Moses had grown up, being in a unique position to do something on behalf of his oppressed kinsmen, he begins to take a stand one day when he defends a Hebrew slave. However, it seems the Hebrews are not ready to accept him as their liberator. "Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us?" The answer to this defiant question is God. But even Moses himself does not know it yet. Suddenly his life of luxury and privilege in Egypt comes to an end and he must flee into the desert. Yet God is still at work. God is present in Midian, just as he was in Egypt. God is always with us, as he was with Moses. He is always acting on our behalf, even when we feel like we are in exile.

God's love is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. He is the perfect expression of the Father's plan. As we read on Sunday, the Father has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens"! Jesus did most of his amazing miracles in the area around Capernaum, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. However, most of the people there

were not moved to conversion. This put them in a very dangerous position, as Jesus warns in today's Gospel. God's love does not change, but what can he do if his love is refused? How can he save those who resist salvation? The towns favored with Jesus' presence will not be favored on the day of judgment. Jesus is right in their midst; what excuse can they give for not believing? Other towns, such as the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon, have not had the blessing of the Lord's public ministry, so it will go easier for them on judgment day, since they are more ignorant.

The most shocking part of Jesus' reproach is his statement that on judgment day, Capernaum will be worse off than the city of Sodom. Sodom was infamous for embracing the worst kinds of immorality, and was destroyed by fire from Heaven – yet Capernaum is worse? Normally, we are advised not to compare ourselves with others. We do not have sufficient knowledge to make correct judgments about anyone's status before God. But when Jesus makes a comparison and finds us wanting, it is a serious warning.

This is meant to disturb and challenge us, as it must have disturbed and challenged his listeners from Capernaum. We have experienced much more than they have. For all we have received and witnessed, have we changed? Many other people, who have received less than we have, have responded with more faith and love. But it is not too late for us to change. God who calls as his missionary disciples is revealing his plan of love to us once more. He has chosen us, as he chose Moses, and his choice is irrevocable. Today he is calling us again to repent of our sins and be his instruments, to bring the Good News of salvation to others.

Do I humbly and joyfully accept all that happens as God's loving plan for my life? Have my attitudes or way of life become obstacles to my salvation? Am I constantly repenting for not thanking God for choosing me?

Mary, encourage me to be faithful to God's call to bring the Good News of salvation to others.

St. Henry, pray for us.

Henry II was born in Bavaria in 972 and received an excellent education under the care of St. Wolfgang, Bishop of Ratisbon. In 995 he succeeded his father as Duke of Bavaria, and in 1002 he became King of Germany and was crowned King of Italy in 1004. Firmly grounded in his Catholic faith, which the practice of meditation kept alive in his heart, he sought in all things the greater glory of God. In 1014 he was crowned Emperor of Rome. He respected the Church's freedom, fostering ecclesiastical and monastic reform, and persuaded the pope to authorize the Creed to be recited on Sundays and major feasts. His ultimate purpose was to establish a stable peace in Europe. He and his wife, St. Cunigunde of Luxembourg, lived in perpetual chastity, to which they bound themselves by a vow. He died in 1024. He is the only king of Germany to be canonized.

Notes

July 14, Wednesday, 15th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Camillus de Lellis, Priest
Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin (USA)



First Reading: Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, “I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned.”

When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.” God said, “Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,” he continued, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. The cry of the children of Israel has reached me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them. Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?” He answered, “I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1b-2, 3-4, 6-7

The Lord is kind and merciful.

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

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

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

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

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

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

The LORD secures justice
and the rights of all the oppressed.
He has made known his ways to Moses,
and his deeds to the children of Israel.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:25

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



Gospel: Matthew 11:25-27

At that time Jesus exclaimed: “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.”



Meditation:

God is invisible. No one has ever seen him (cf. Jn 1:18; 1 Jn 4:12). Therefore, there will always be something hidden and incomprehensible about God, even when he reveals himself. He far exceeds our capacity to know. The Fathers of the Church call him “the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable” (CCC 42). On the other hand, because God wants us to know him, and because he has made us in his own image and likeness, we can know him, though imperfectly. Today’s readings give us insight into the revelation of the mystery of God.

Moses certainly knew about God. Perhaps when he was in Egypt, he felt a certain closeness to God, knowing the unique circumstances of his life and upbringing. It is likely that when he fled Egypt and began a whole new life as a shepherd in Midian, he felt far from God. Everything changed one day when God revealed himself personally to Moses in the desert, in the form of a burning bush. This is one of the most significant moments, not only in Moses’ life, but also in the whole Old Testament. When God enters our lives and reveals himself to us, we are forever changed.

The phenomenon of the bush is at first surprising and attractive. Moses sees a combination of two things that simply do not belong together: *fire* and a *bush*. They are opponents: if the fire prevails, the bush is consumed; for the bush to survive, the fire must be extinguished. Yet here they are together. With Moses, we are attracted by this remarkable phenomenon. The fire represents God; the bush represents the physical universe, especially the highpoint of physical creation, man.

Moses does not yet know that he is in the presence of God; he cannot see him; he only sees the fire. But God sees Moses and knows him. He calls him by name, “Moses! Moses!” Moses readily responds, “Here I am.” God not only identifies himself, he also reveals that he knows the sufferings of his people. He has chosen Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Moses humbly protests, but God is determined to save his people through the mission of Moses.

Does the overwhelming presence of God consume the mere man, like fire burning up an ordinary desert shrub? That is what we would expect, but no. When God reveals himself, we may be awestruck, frightened, humbled, but we are not destroyed. In fact, we find that we are more alive than before. In revealing himself to us, God also reveals us to ourselves. We grow in awareness of our identity and mission. Like the Apostles in the morning of Pentecost, we discover that a heavenly fire descends on us, not to burn us up but to set us on fire with divine love.

We are not always open to the presence of this divine fire. We are attracted by it, but we do not want to get too close. We are intimidated and guarded, still afraid that if we allow God to get too close, he will somehow harm or deprive us. This shows us another reason why, even though God reveals himself, we do not see him. Not only are we too limited, but also we are sometimes not open to receive him.

Jesus reflects on all this as he praises the Father for the marvelous way he both reveals and hides himself. The difference is not based on the intention of the Giver but on the disposition of the receivers. For those who are “wise and learned,” God is hidden. For the “childlike,” God is revealed. This prayer of Jesus becomes an instruction for us. Being “wise and learned” here means being self-sufficient and proud. It

means being closed to the call of God, who draws us out of ourselves and sends us into the world. We can be so preoccupied with our own projects, or so distracted by our gadgets and entertainments, that God remains hidden to us. Indeed, at times we do not even notice the person sitting across the table from us. If we neglect the brother we can see, how do we expect to meet the God we cannot see? When we are caught up in ourselves, we can as easily walk by a needy brother as by a burning bush, thereby entirely missing the presence of God. And then we complain that he is too hidden!

The opposite attitude is that of the “childlike.” This condition is not measured by age but by humility. The spiritually little are those who know their innate poverty and their absolute dependence on God for everything. Moses himself is a good example. He was wise and learned in Egypt, being raised in the household of the Pharaoh, but in the presence of God, he was simple and childlike. He teaches us how to respond to the call of God. Even though we may be afraid or confused, with trust in the Lord we are to say to him, promptly and firmly: “Here I am!”

When did I become aware that God entered my life and revealed himself to me? Do I allow my preoccupation with my projects and gadgets prevent God’s work in me? Can I humbly acknowledge that God is my Creator and I am his creature?

Mary, teach me to trust in the Lord so I can firmly respond “Here I am!”

St. Camillus de Lellis, pray for us.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

Camillus de Lellis was born in Italy in 1550. His mother died when he was a child, and afterward he was neglected since his father was an officer in both the Neapolitan and French Royal armies. He grew up with an excessive love for gambling. He joined the Venetian army while still a youth. While in battle, he suffered an injury to his leg that never fully healed. By age 24, Camillus had gambled away everything he had and was forced to accept work at a Capuchin friary. One day he was greatly moved by a sermon which brought about a conversion that changed his whole life. He became a Capuchin novice but was not accepted for profession because of his diseased leg. With the advice of his confessor, St. Philip Neri, he was ordained a priest at the age of 34. He began serving the sick (though incurably ill himself), and after gathering others to this work, he founded the Camillians (official name: “Order of Clerics Regular, Ministers to the Sick”), a congregation which cared for the sick

with great affection. The members bound themselves to serve prisoners and persons infected by the plague, as well as those dying in private homes. Camillus died in 1614 and was named the patron of nurses, the sick, and hospitals.

Kateri Tekakwitha, daughter of a Mohawk Indian chief and an Algonquin mother, was born in Auriesville, New York, in 1656. She became an orphan in 1660, when a smallpox epidemic nearly destroyed the entire village. The disease also attacked Kateri and left her face scarred. She was adopted by an uncle who had a great hatred for the Christian people. After the epidemic she moved to Kahnawake, and for the first time she saw the Catholic priests who were spreading the Faith among the natives. She was drawn to the Faith but feared her uncle's reaction. On Easter in 1676, at the age of twenty, in spite of the disapproval of her family, Kateri was baptized. Because of increasing hostility, she left her village in 1677 to live in a Catholic Mission in Quebec, Canada, and dedicated her life to prayer, penance, and care for the sick and aged. She died in 1680 at the young age of 24. Those who were with her when she died said that her scars disappeared and she became very beautiful. Kateri, called the "Lily of the Mohawks," is the first Native American Saint. She was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on October 21, 2012.

Notes

July 15, Thursday, 15th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church



First Reading: Exodus 3:13-20

Moses, hearing the voice of the LORD from the burning bush, said to him, “When I go to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?” God replied, “I am who am.” Then he added, “This is what you shall tell the children of Israel: I AM sent me to you.”

God spoke further to Moses, “Thus shall you say to the children of Israel: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

“This is my name forever;
this my title for all generations.

“Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and tell them: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said: I am concerned about you and about the way you are being treated in Egypt; so I have decided to lead you up out of the misery of Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.

“Thus they will heed your message. Then you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him: “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent us word. Permit us, then, to go a three-days’ journey in the desert, that we may offer sacrifice to the LORD, our God.

“Yet I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go unless he is forced. I will stretch out my hand, therefore, and smite Egypt by doing all kinds of wondrous deeds there. After that he will send you away.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 105:1 and 5, 8-9, 24-25, 26-27

The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

or *Alleluia.*

Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;
make known among the nations his deeds.

Recall the wondrous deeds that he has wrought,
his portents, and the judgments he has uttered.

R. The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

or *Alleluia.*

He remembers forever his covenant
which he made binding for a thousand generations –
Which he entered into with Abraham
and by his oath to Isaac.

R. The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.
or *Alleluia*.

He greatly increased his people
and made them stronger than their foes,
Whose hearts he changed, so that they hated his people,
and dealt deceitfully with his servants.

R. The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.
or *Alleluia*.

He sent Moses his servant;
Aaron, whom he had chosen.
They wrought his signs among them,
and wonders in the land of Ham.

R. The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.
or *Alleluia*.

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:28

Alleluia, alleluia. Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest, says the Lord. *Alleluia, alleluia.*



Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”



Meditation:

In the Scriptures, mountains are often places of encounter with God. Today’s first reading takes us once again to Mt. Horeb, also known as Mt. Sinai, the mountain where God revealed himself in fire. We reflect on the profound experience of Moses, who at this point is no longer thinking about the unusual phenomenon of the burning bush, for now he is in conversation with God himself. They are not speaking as equals, yet it is a very personal, face-to-face conversation.

God knows Moses’ name, but Moses does not know what to call God, so he asks, in a respectful, indirect way, what he should say, in case he is asked about God’s name. God’s reply is both revealing and

mysterious: “I am who am.” This personal God who speaks to this one man in a specific moment in time is infinitely above everything in creation. He is not part of the world of time, he simply *is*. This divine name, “I am who am” (in Hebrew, *YHWH*), is considered by the Jews to be so holy that, out of respect for God, they do not pronounce it, but substitute the title “LORD.”

God reveals not only his name to Moses, he reveals his heart. In addition to being a mysterious transcendent divinity, he is also a loving Father. He tells Moses that he is concerned about his people. The short passage selected for use in today’s liturgy does not include all that God says to Moses. He tells him, “I have *witnessed* the affliction of my people in Egypt and have *heard* their cry against their taskmasters, so I *know well* what they are suffering” (Ex 3:7). “Now indeed the outcry of the Israelites has reached me, and I *have seen* how the Egyptians are oppressing them” (v. 9). In sending Moses to the people, he tells him to say to them, “I am *concerned* about you and about the way you are being treated in Egypt.”

When we pray, we enter into conversation with the same LORD *YHWH* who spoke with Moses on the holy mountain. Prayer is not simply sitting alone with our thoughts or speculating about what we want to happen. We are face to face with God. As we ponder God’s words to Moses, we learn something essential about our own prayer: God is near us. When our prayers seem to go unanswered, we can be tempted to think the Lord is not listening. Surely the Israelites were tempted to think that God was not paying attention to them while they suffered so terribly in Egypt. *The Lord does not see us; he does not know what we are suffering; he does not hear our prayers; and he is not doing anything!* This is how it seems at times, but it is not true. The truth is, God sees and hears and knows very well all that is happening. He is concerned about us. He has a marvelous plan to save us.

The savior that God sent to the Israelites in Egypt was Moses. The Savior he sends to us is much greater, and reveals God much more perfectly: Jesus Christ, eternal Son of the Father. Jesus identifies himself as the eternal I AM (cf. Jn 8:58). In today’s Gospel, Jesus’ words reflect what the Lord revealed about himself to Moses, but here he reveals his heart even more simply and tenderly. God is “meek and humble of heart.” He sees all the people in the world “who labor and are

burdened.” He sees us today. If we but come to him, he promises to give us “rest.” These tender words of the Lord give us greater consolation than Moses’ words to the people of Israel.

In our natural longing for instant liberation from all suffering, we latch onto words like “rest,” “easy,” and “light.” However, we tend to overlook Jesus’ mention of “my yoke” and “my burden.” Jesus calls us to come to him to be relieved of the heavy burdens that he does not want us to carry – the burdens of sin, fear, guilt, anxiety and hopelessness. These burdens were never meant for us in the first place. But this does not mean we have no burdens at all. We still bear the “burden” of love. We still have the responsibility of taking up our cross and following in Jesus’ footsteps (cf. Mt 16:24).

As we learned on Sunday, we also have the “burden” of making known to the world the great love and mercy of God. We are his witnesses, his missionaries. When we focus on how difficult this task is, we certainly find it too heavy. Any task we try to accomplish on our own, any cross we try to bear alone, even a small one, quickly becomes very burdensome – too heavy for us! Moses, when the Lord tells him to lead the people out of Egypt, thinks first of his own weakness and sinfulness. It is obvious to him that he is neither competent nor worthy for such a mission. The very idea is burdensome. God gives to him the same answer he gives to us whenever we are burdened: “I will be with you.” What makes our mission truly “easy” and “light” is that God is with us. Like Moses, we acknowledge that we are in his Presence. We call upon his Holy Name. We carry out our mission with the strength that comes from him.

Do I always use and speak the name of the Lord with reverence and holy fear? Do my words and actions manifest to God and others my love for him? When I find my life burdensome, do I seek rest and security only in the Lord?

Mary, walk with me as I go to Jesus to be refreshed and renewed in soul and body.

St. Bonaventure, pray for us.

Bonaventure was born in Italy in 1221. He was cured of a serious illness as a boy through the prayers of St. Francis of Assisi. Later he studied in Paris and then entered the Franciscan Order to become a priest. His teachings and writings were always

filled with God's burning charity, as were his actions: he was always kind, even to unkind people. He authored many biblical commentaries and many spiritual treatises, especially *Journey of the Soul into God*. Bonaventure was an exceptionally gifted person in soul, intellect, and personality, and became the Minister General of the Franciscans. He died in 1274.

Notes

July 16, Friday, 15th Week in Ordinary Time
Our Lady of Mount Carmel



First Reading: Exodus 11:10 – 12:14

Although Moses and Aaron performed various wonders in Pharaoh's presence, the LORD made Pharaoh obstinate, and he would not let the children of Israel leave his land.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall stand at the head of your calendar; you shall reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a family is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join the nearest household in procuring one and shall share in the lamb in proportion to the number of persons who partake of it. The lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole assembly of Israel present, it shall be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb. That same night they shall eat its roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It shall not be eaten raw or boiled, but roasted whole, with its head and shanks and inner organs. None of it must be kept beyond the next morning; whatever is left over in the morning shall be burned up.

"This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It is the Passover of the LORD. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every first born of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, the LORD! But the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thus, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you.

"This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD, as a perpetual institution."



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:12-13, 15 and 16bc, 17-18

I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

How shall I make a return to the LORD

for all the good he has done for me?

The cup of salvation I will take up,

and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

Precious in the eyes of the LORD

is the death of his faithful ones.

I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;

you have loosed my bonds.

R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,

and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

My vows to the LORD I will pay

in the presence of all his people.

R. I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

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 12:1-8

Jesus was going through a field of grain on the sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the sabbath." He said to the them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, how he went into the house of God and ate the bread of offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the sabbath and are innocent? I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. If you knew what this meant, *I desire mercy, not sacrifice*, you would not have condemned these innocent men. For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath."



Meditation:

We have been reflecting all week on our missionary vocation and on how we can be more effective instruments of the Lord for the sake of his people. The Blessed Virgin Mary, *Our Lady of Mount*

Carmel, whose feast we celebrate today, points us in the direction of Jesus Christ. She is an effective instrument – the most effective human instrument – for the building up of his Kingdom because she remains humble and her heart is always focused on her Son. She tells us to do whatever he tells us (cf. Jn 2:5).

In today's Gospel, we are taught about what we should *not* do, from the contrary example of the legalistic Pharisees. Instead of focusing on Jesus, they see his disciples picking and eating grain on the Sabbath, and they accuse them of violating the Sabbath rest. Jesus explains to the Pharisees that they are condemning innocent men; they are placing the law above those whom it is meant to serve. In their rigidity, they are following the letter of the law, but violating its real meaning. One valuable principle we can learn from this: the law of God is never to be used as a weapon against innocent people.

The situation of the disciples is actually very simple: they are hungry, and hungry people have a right to eat. Perhaps they could have gone elsewhere to get food, but they prefer to stay with Jesus wherever he goes, even if they have to risk getting hungry along the way. If they were to get into a dispute with the Pharisees, they probably could not win an argument over what they should do or not do on the Sabbath. But they know in their hearts that it is more important to follow Jesus than to follow the letter of the law. The disciples sense that they are in the presence of “something greater than the temple” – that is, the Lord himself. If the priests do not incur guilt when they serve in the temple on the Sabbath, surely the disciples do not incur guilt if they pick some grain while following Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

The detailed Sabbath laws that so absorbed the Pharisees are not of much interest to us today, since we are no longer obliged by them. However, we can learn much about human nature by reflecting on the reaction of the Pharisees. Their “righteousness” is not based purely on love for God and his holy law. Their service of God is mixed with self-glorification. The Pharisees expose to us how much we love to be “right,” how we love to judge others, how quick we are to criticize, how important it is to us that we look better than others. We can even use and distort the law of God if it will satisfy our selfish ends.

The tragic thing about the Pharisees is that their focus on their own holiness prevents them from recognizing the presence of the Holy One in their midst. They are very well aware of the traditions associated with Passover – as described in today’s first reading – and they observe the rituals meticulously each year, as prescribed by the law. But when the true Passover Lamb comes, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, they do not recognize him. It is something like saving a precious map that points the way to a buried treasure, but never actually taking the steps to find the treasure itself.

We do not celebrate the annual Jewish feast of Passover or the weekly Sabbath. We celebrate instead what they pointed to and prepared for, the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Our weekly observance of the Lord’s Day, with our participation in the Sunday Mass, is an important part of how we fulfill the law. We show that we love God above everything and everyone else. We give thanks that we have been saved by the Blood of the Lamb. We are nourished by his own Body when we receive Holy Communion.

Today’s Psalm helps us ponder what we do at Mass. It plants a reflective question in our hearts: “How shall I make a return to the LORD for all the good he has done for me?” We very quickly realize that it is truly impossible for us to repay the Lord for his many gifts. And yet we do have a way to give him fitting thanks and praise. The Psalm reminds us that we can “take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.” That is, we can offer to the Lord the very sacrifice that he has offered for us, his own Body and Blood, made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

If some people arrive late for the Mass, or do not attend at all, we should not condemn them. Their “breaking of the law” should not become an occasion for us to become Pharisees. Some people – such as our close relatives and friends – we may be able to instruct and guide, but in most other cases we are in no position to judge or to act. We do not know what is in their minds or hearts, or what circumstances they face. Perhaps they are hungry, or overworked, or simply ignorant. Rather than condemn those who may be innocent, we can ponder in our hearts the words of the Lord. “*I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*”

Do I have the tendency to follow the letter of the law rigidly, thus violating its real meaning? Can I identify with the Pharisees who loved to be right, and loved to judge others? Do I participate in the Sunday mass to fulfill the law or to show that I love God above everything?

Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, may I always have a humble heart that is focused only on your Son, Jesus.

According to the traditions of the Carmelite order, on July 16, 1251, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Simon Stock, a Carmelite. During the vision, she revealed to him the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, popularly known as the "Brown Scapular." A century and a quarter later, the Carmelite order began to celebrate on this date the Feast of **Our Lady of Mount Carmel**. The Carmelites had long claimed that their order was founded on Mount Carmel in Palestine by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. In 1609, after Robert Cardinal Bellarmine examined the origins of the feast, it was declared the patronal feast of the Carmelite order. The celebration of the feast began to spread, with various popes approving it. Benedict XIII placed the feast on the universal calendar of the Latin Church in 1726. The feast celebrates those who are devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary and who signal that devotion by wearing the Brown Scapular. According to tradition, those who wear the scapular faithfully and remain devoted to the Blessed Virgin will be granted the grace of final perseverance.

Notes



First Reading: Exodus 12:37-42

The children of Israel set out from Rameses for Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, not counting the little ones. A crowd of mixed ancestry also went up with them, besides their livestock, very numerous flocks and herds. Since the dough they had brought out of Egypt was not leavened, they baked it into unleavened loaves. They had rushed out of Egypt and had no opportunity even to prepare food for the journey.

The time the children of Israel had stayed in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. At the end of four hundred and thirty years, all the hosts of the LORD left the land of Egypt on this very date. This was a night of vigil for the LORD, as he led them out of the land of Egypt; so on this same night all the children of Israel must keep a vigil for the LORD throughout their generations.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 136:1 and 23-24, 10-12, 13-15

His mercy endures forever.

or *Alleluia.*

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever;
Who remembered us in our abjection,
for his mercy endures forever;
And freed us from our foes,
for his mercy endures forever.

R. His mercy endures forever.

or *Alleluia.*

Who smote the Egyptians in their first-born,
for his mercy endures forever;
And brought out Israel from their midst,
for his mercy endures forever;
With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
for his mercy endures forever.

R. His mercy endures forever.

or *Alleluia.*

Who split the Red Sea in twain,
for his mercy endures forever;
And led Israel through its midst,
for his mercy endures forever;

But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea,
for his mercy endures forever.

R. His mercy endures forever.

or *Alleluia*.

Gospel Acclamation: 2 Corinthians 5:19

Alleluia, alleluia. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. *Alleluia, alleluia.*



Gospel: Matthew 12:14-21

The Pharisees went out and took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

When Jesus realized this, he withdrew from that place. Many people followed him, and he cured them all, but he warned them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved in whom I delight;
I shall place my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
He will not contend or cry out,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break,
a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory.
And in his name the Gentiles will hope.*



Meditation:

We began this week reflecting on how we participate in the saving mission of Jesus, who sends us out into the world as his representatives. The foundation of our mission is Jesus Christ himself, who was sent by the Father. Entering into time as a man, he revealed the fullness of the saving love of God. We read on Sunday that “God 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.”

All of history is a record of the love and saving work of God. One of the most significant and dramatic examples of his love at work is the great exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. After four hundred and thirty years – years in which it seemed that nothing was happening, that God was not listening to their cries – the whole Israelite community was set free in a single day. The transition from slavery to freedom was so rapid that they were barely ready for it. They had no opportunity to prepare food for the journey. They had to journey in faith, trusting that the Lord would provide for them as they entered the desert. This event is so significant that it remains in the memory of the Jews to this day. Their annual vigil for the feast of Unleavened Bread is also the historical basis for our annual Easter Vigil, when we celebrate our liberation from the “Egypt” of sin and death.

How long does it take for God to rescue us from slavery to sin? No time. He can do it in an instant. In the time it takes us to repent and ask for God’s mercy, we are set free. The power of Satan, represented by Pharaoh, is no match for the “mighty hand and outstretched arm” of the Lord. One good Confession is enough for the Lord to free us from many years of slavery to sin.

After we are set free, we still have a long and difficult journey through the desert, as we are purified of the attachments and habits that enslaved us in the first place. But we journey in the presence of God, in freedom, in love, in the power of his Spirit. The joy of being free from sin sustains us as we struggle to grow in a new way of life. The Psalm captures the spirit of joy and thanksgiving that comes from being set free: “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever; who remembered us in our abjection, for his mercy endures forever; and freed us from our foes, for his mercy endures forever!”

The Pharisees know the Psalms and the writings of the prophets, but they cannot see that the Scriptures are being fulfilled before their very eyes. Jesus has just freed a man by curing his withered hand – a sign of God’s power and love at work in their midst – but their reaction is only to grow more hostile. Jealousy

enslaves them so completely that they do not even desire to be freed. They only want to destroy Jesus.

Our focus today is not on the sin of the Pharisees but on the love of God, so evident in the ministry of Jesus. This time he does not confront the Pharisees. He knows that, given their disposition, it would only provoke them into further sin. Instead he withdraws and continues his ministry to the sick. Jesus is not trying to gain popularity. He does not “*contend or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.*” He is attracting humble souls to the love of the Father, giving hope to those who are longing for him.

We ourselves are the “*bruised reeds*” and the “*smoldering wicks*” that Jesus so gently serves. We are born in a weakened condition, and we have been battered by life in a fallen world. Every one of us is wounded and in need of healing. Jesus sees our great need and comes to strengthen and to save us. He loves us so much that he will allow himself to be bruised for our sake, to be crushed by the weight of our sins, so that we may be set free. The only real obstacle is our own pride. The Lord never gives up on us – “His mercy endures forever” – but he will not force salvation upon us.

We learn from Jesus how to relate to the other “bruised reeds” in our midst. We are sent as their servants. Guided by his Spirit, we quietly serve our brothers and sisters who need us. We learn how to remain silent, not to judge, and not to overreact when we are being opposed. We strive to build up, not break; to invigorate, not quench. God can work through anyone who accepts the gift of freedom and love which he has come to give to us all.

Is my life a journey in faith, trusting that the Lord will provide for me in my needs? How is the Lord purifying me of my attachments and habits that are enslaving me? How does my pride hinder the work God wants to do in my soul?

Mary, my model, show me how to remain silent, not to judge, and not to overreact when I am being opposed.

Notes