

Pondering the Word...

THE ANAWIM WAY

Daily Liturgical Meditations

*Pentecost to Fourteenth Week
in Ordinary Time*

*May 24 to July 11, 2026
Cycle A - Year 2*

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ENDORSEMENT

A good homily should have, at least, these two important qualities: it should be faithful to the Gospel proclaimed, and it should speak to people in the context of their respective life-situations.

In all my years of preaching to the people of all ages and social backgrounds. I have found **“Pondering the Word”** published by the Anawim Community, a great help. Not only does it present the Word of God in its simplicity and richness, it likewise offers points for prayer, meditation and sharing which speak to the hearts of modern men and women as they move about in our fast-paced world.

I wish to recommend the Anawim Community for this truly blessed endeavor, and may the Spirit of God continue to touch the readers of their publication and allow them to encounter the Living Word in their busy world.

+ Jesse E. Mercado
+ **JESSE E. MERCADO, DD**
Bishop of Parañaque

What is the Anawim Spirituality?

Our spirituality has three essential characteristics:

Liturgical

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

Eucharistic

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

Marian

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

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

*Pentecost Sunday
and
Eighth Week in Ordinary Time*

*“Peace be with you....
Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

John 20:21, 22

Theme for the Week

The Gift of God, the Holy Spirit, poured into our hearts at Baptism, never ceases to do his greatest work, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. With gratitude to God, let us open our hearts each day to his extraordinary Gift, so that the work of the Spirit may come to its fullness.

Pentecost: the Holy Spirit Frees Us from Fear
A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis

Today, the Solemnity of Pentecost, the Gospel takes us to the Upper Room, where the Apostles had taken refuge after the death of Jesus (*Jn* 20:19-23). On the evening of Passover, the Risen One presents himself precisely into that situation of fear and anguish and, breathing on them, says: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (v. 22). In this way, with the gift of the Spirit, Jesus wishes to free the disciples from fear, from this fear that keeps them holed up at home, and he frees them so that they may be able to go out and become witnesses and proclaimers of the Gospel. Let us dwell a little on what the Spirit does: he *frees from fear*.

The disciples had closed the doors, the Gospel says, “for fear” (v. 19). The death of Jesus had shocked them, their dreams had been shattered, their hopes had vanished. And they had closed themselves inside. Not only in that room, but within, in the heart. I would like to underline this: closed inside. How often do we too shut ourselves in? How often, because of some difficult situation, because of some personal or family problem, because of the suffering that marks us or the evil we breathe around us, do we risk slipping slowly into loss of hope and lack the courage to go on? This happens many times. And then, like the Apostles, we shut ourselves in, barricading ourselves in the labyrinth of worries.

Brothers and sisters, this “shutting ourselves in” happens when, in the most difficult situations, we allow fear to take the upper hand and let its stern voice prevail within us. When fear enters, we close ourselves off. The cause, therefore, is fear: fear of not being able to cope, of having to face everyday battles alone, of risking and then being disappointed, of making the wrong choices. Brothers, sisters, fear blocks, fear paralyzes. And it also isolates: let us think of the fear of others, of foreigners, of those who are different, who think in another way. And there can even be the fear of God: that he will punish me, that he will be angry with me... If we give space to these false fears, the doors close: the doors of the heart, the doors of society, and even the doors of the Church! Where there is fear, there is closure. And this is no good.

However, the Gospel offers us the remedy of the Risen One: the Holy Spirit. He frees us from the prisons of fear. When they receive the Spirit, the Apostles — we celebrate this today — come out of the Upper

Room and go out into the world to forgive sins and to proclaim the Good News. Thanks to him, fears are overcome and doors open. Because this is what the Spirit does: he makes us feel God's closeness, and thus, his love casts out fear, illuminates the way, consoles, sustains in adversity. Faced with fears and closure, then, let us invoke the Holy Spirit for us, for the Church, and for the whole world: let a new Pentecost cast out the fears that assail us and revive the flame of God's love.

May Mary Most Holy, the first to be filled with the Holy Spirit, intercede for us.

Pope Francis, Angelus Message, May 28, 2023
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May 24, Pentecost Sunday

Vigil Mass: *Gen 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-2, 24, 35, 27-28, 29, 30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39*

Extended Vigil: *Gen 11:1-9; Ps 33:10-15 / Ex 19:3-8, 16-20; Dn 3:52-56 or Ps 19:8-11 / Ez 37:1-14; Ps 107:2-9 / Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-2, 24, and 35, 27-28, 29-30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39*



First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or *Alleluia.*

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!

How manifold are your works, O LORD!

the earth is full of your creatures.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or *Alleluia.*

If you take away their breath, they perish
and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or *Alleluia.*

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD be glad in his works!
Pleasing to him be my theme;
I will be glad in the LORD.

**R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
or Alleluia.**



Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.



Sequence: Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!
Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.
You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul’s most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;
In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.
O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill!
Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:
Bend the stubborn heart and will;

Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
 Guide the steps that go astray.
On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
 In your sevenfold gift descend;
Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
 Give them joys that never end. Amen.
Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation:

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



Gospel: John 20:19-23

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."



Meditation:

If we were asked to say what is our ultimate goal in life, we might answer that it is to get to Heaven. And if we were asked further what Heaven will be like, we might say that we will be with God, enjoying eternal happiness in his presence. In the meantime, as we live our life here on earth, this final goal can seem very distant, having little connection with our day-to-day experience. We can sometimes act as if we have one life now, and we will have another life "someday" in Heaven, but we seldom think about how the transition will occur between "this life" and the "next life." If we think of this at all, we tend to suppose that, when we die, we will leave this life and begin the next one, and we let it go at that.

However, we do not need to wait until our death to begin sharing life with God; we can enter into this life now, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The reason that living in union with God can seem very far from our normal experience of life is that we know our weakness and

sinfulness. It can seem impossible to us that, poor and limited as we are, we could truly enter into Jesus' experience of union with the Father in our daily life. God is so holy, so exalted, and we are so lowly and sinful. We do have the hope of being united with him one day, in Heaven. But how can this happen now? The good news, of course, is that it is not something that we have to accomplish by our own efforts, for that would be impossible. It is something which God does in us, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can see an example of how this works in the first reading. The disciples were hidden away in the Upper Room, waiting in prayer with Mary. They were in no condition to accomplish the mission which Jesus gave them in the Gospel, when he told them, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." They were afraid even to show their faces in public. How could they be expected to carry on Jesus' mission in the world? But then the Holy Spirit descended on them and filled them. They immediately went out and began to proclaim Jesus to a large crowd of people. They were even able to speak many different languages. This is clearly not something they did on their own; it happened because they were open to the power of the Holy Spirit working in them.

Now the Church is called to carry on the same mission – to proclaim Jesus to everyone in the world, speaking to people's hearts in a way that all can understand. We are members of this Church, and we are all called to this mission. This is the life of God – to give oneself completely in love and to draw others to share in that love. It is the Holy Spirit who lives the very life of God within us, making us sharers in that life by his grace and power, thus making us children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

If we know our littleness and poverty, our desperate need for God's grace to lift us up, then we can rejoice that this is exactly what the Holy Spirit comes to do for us! When we ponder the Sequence for today, reading it slowly and carefully, what do we learn about the Holy Spirit? He is the Father of the poor, the best Comforter, sweet rest in our labor, coolness in the heat, light in our darkness, healing for our wounds, softener of our hard hearts, a giver of gifts and joys which never end. No wonder we cry out to him, "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love."

Let us stir in our hearts a longing to enter more deeply into the life of God, and let us cry out to the Holy Spirit to do this great transforming work in us. *Come, Holy Spirit, come!*

How does today's celebration change my view of my life here and my life in Heaven? In what ways am I currently relying on my own limited strength instead of inviting the Holy Spirit to work through my weakness? To whom is the Holy Spirit calling me to reach out right now, and what fears are holding me back from answering that call?

Mary, intercede for me so that the fire of God's love may transform me into a courageous witness for your Son.

Notes

SEASONAL INTRODUCTION TO ORDINARY TIME AFTER PENTECOST

Note: *The Easter Season concludes with Pentecost Sunday. From the Upper Room, the Church goes forth empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the life she has within her. Now we enter the period of Ordinary Time, which concludes on Saturday following the Solemnity of Christ the King.*

Before we move into a new Season, with its broad thrust through the remaining weeks of the Year, it is good to review the events that have brought us to this point. We recall that the new Liturgical Year began with the First Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2025. Advent led into the Christmas Season, which continued through the Baptism of the Lord, January 10, 2026. January 11 was the start of Ordinary Time, which lasted until Ash Wednesday, February 18 this year. The Season of Lent followed, preparing us for the great Easter Triduum: from Holy Thursday evening, through Good Friday and Holy Saturday, up to Easter Sunday. With the solemn Easter Vigil on the night of April 4, we saw the first dawning of the “Fifty Days” of Easter. This gives us an overview of what we have celebrated in the life of the Church thus far.

This Sunday, May 24, we celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost. Monday, May 25, begins the period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost. Now that we have been brought to a certain corporate maturity in the growth of the Body of Christ, we are called to proclaim this fullness of life to the whole world. It is through the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord that we have been given the fullness of the Spirit, which fills us with an ardor to go forth as Jesus charged the Apostles to do when he ascended to his Father. The period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost ends on November 28, the Saturday following the Solemnity of Christ the King, and a new Liturgical Year begins with the First Sunday of Advent, November 29.

The period of the Liturgical Year that is now before us represents in a symbolic way the period of time before the end of the world, whenever that will be. All of creation is waiting in expectation for all that is to be fulfilled (cf. Rm 8:19). The thrust of this Season is reconciliation: the restoration of all things in Christ – a total restoration

of creation itself. Finally, all creation must be filled with the one life of God to realize the glory that is to be revealed. This becomes our commission, our labor, our life.

Meanwhile, we must see ourselves here on earth as one Body of Christ: we must maintain our unity. That gives us the thrust of the Church and our commission, as we stand at the edge of this new liturgical Season. We operate out of this awareness to maintain the integrity of our faith and proclaim this unique restoration.

Several feasts central to the Church are celebrated during the first weeks of Ordinary Time in order to prepare us once more for what lies ahead. Pentecost is followed by the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (May 31) and the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (June 7). Friday, June 12, is the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Saturday, June 13, is the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This exceptional combination of feasts immediately gives to the Liturgy a sense of very deep mystery.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary also gives us the invaluable awareness of being nurtured in the “womb” of Mother Church. As we ponder the word of the Liturgy, Mary directs us into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

Adapted from the writings of Fr. Francis J. Marino,
Founder of the Anawim Community

May 25, Monday, 8th Week of Ordinary Time
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church



First Reading: Genesis 3:9-15, 20

After Adam had eaten of the tree, the LORD God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!” The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me— she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.” The LORD God then asked the woman, “Why did you do such a thing?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the serpent:
“Because you have done this, you shall be banned
from all the animals
and from all the wild creatures;
On your belly shall you crawl,
and dirt shall you eat
all the days of your life.

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;

He will strike at your head,
while you strike at his heel.”

The man called his wife Eve, because she became the mother of all the living.

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

After Jesus was taken up into Heaven the Apostles went back from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 87:1b-3, 5, 6-7
Glorious things are told of you, O city of God.

His foundation upon the holy mountains
the LORD loves:

The gates of Zion,
more than any dwelling of Jacob.

R. Glorious things are told of you, O city of God.

Glorious things are said of you,
O city of God!

Of Zion they shall say:

“One and all were born in her;

And he who has established her
is the Most High LORD.”

R. Glorious things are told of you, O city of God.

They shall note, when the peoples are enrolled:

“This man was born there.”

And all shall sing, in their festive dance:

“My home is within you.”

R. Glorious things are told of you, O city of God.

Gospel Acclamation:

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



Gospel: John 19:25-34

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately Blood and water flowed out.



Meditation:

We are presented today with two mothers, each of whom stood at the foot of a “tree” and listened to a “word,” which had profound consequences for her children.

The first reading takes us back to the story of Adam and Eve’s fall from grace. Eve was standing at the foot of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the fruit of which God had commanded her and Adam not to eat. She listened to the word of the serpent, who told her that she could not trust God. He urged her to take matters into her own hands and eat the forbidden fruit, in an effort to make herself like God. In effect, he told her that she could take God’s place.

We know the terrible “fruit” of Eve’s choice to listen to and act upon this word of the serpent – sin entered into the world. She broke her relationship with God, and convinced Adam to do the same. They lost their close friendship and communion with God. And the consequences of their sin were passed on to their descendants. Thus, we who are “children of Eve” by nature are born into this world with Original Sin, tending to fear and distrust God rather than love and trust him.

In today’s Gospel we see the other mother, Mary, standing at the foot of the “tree” of the Cross, upon which her Son is dying in order to bring reconciliation between God and humanity. She too is listening to a “word,” but this time it is the word of God which she treasures in her heart. She hears Jesus say from the Cross, “Woman, behold, your son,” and she hears the Holy Spirit tell her that her Son is giving his life in love to glorify the Father and to win salvation for all people. He is telling her to be united to her Son in his mission, to give her full “yes” to God even in this most awful trial, as her soul is pierced with sorrow (cf. Lk 2:35). And she chooses to listen to and act upon this word.

As Eve’s “no” to God had consequences for all her descendants, so Mary’s “yes” to God bears immense fruit for her children. We saw in yesterday’s celebration of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit lives within our hearts, introducing us into the very life of God. But in order for us to enter into that divine life, we must make a choice to say “yes” to God, “yes” to his action in us. This is where Mary acts as our Mother. As she always said a full and unreserved “yes” to God at every moment of her life, she gains for us the grace to do the same. Because of her obedience, we have “inherited” from her, in the order of grace, the ability to make the same choice as she did.

Our Gospel Acclamation for today is, “O happy Virgin, you gave birth to the Lord; O blessed mother of the Church, you warm our hearts with the Spirit of your Son Jesus Christ.” It is Mary who, in her womb, put flesh on the very Word of God. In her, that Word became incarnate. This is her role for all time, to help to “put flesh on the word.” Now she does this in us. As our Mother, she helps us to say “yes” to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit as he makes Christ present once again in the world in our own flesh.

This is what it means for Mary to be “Mother of the Church.” What is the Church, except the very Body of Christ on earth? That Body is made up of us, who are being transformed, like the Eucharist, from ordinary “bread” into the very Body and Blood of Christ.

This is a process of deepest mystery. We can only fully become the Body of Christ as we allow the power of the Holy Spirit to work in us. We need to enter into prayer, as the Apostles did. They “went to the upper room, and there they “joined in continuous prayer, together with ... Mary the mother of Jesus.” Like them, we need to take the time to retire to our own “upper room” – someplace where we can be quiet and undisturbed, to spend time with God. We ask Mary to be with us and to give us the grace to say our own “yes” with her to all that God means to do in us, to make us her children, true members of his Church, his Body on earth. Then we are no longer imprisoned in the disobedience of Eve, for we have died with Christ to that natural life and are now free to live a new life of grace as children of Mary.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives his Mother to us to be our Mother. Let us listen deeply today as he also says to us, “Behold, your Mother.” And, like John, let us then take Mary into our home, our heart. The *Jerusalem Bible* translates the end of this sentence as “the disciple made a place for her in his home.” Let us make a place for Mary in our lives, asking her to stay with us as our spiritual Mother and to teach us always to say our “yes” with her to God.

Which “word” am I choosing to listen to today – the serpent’s whisper of distrust or the Spirit’s invitation to trust God? How can I better welcome Mary into my “home” today so she can help me respond to God’s will? What part of my life am I still holding back from God, and how can I find the courage to give my full “yes” today?

Mary, stay with me and help me to trust in God's love above all else.

In 2018, Pope Francis proclaimed an additional feast in honor of Mary: The **Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church**. This feast, celebrated each year on the Monday after Pentecost, highlights the connection between Pentecost as the “birthday of the Church” and Mary through whom the Church is born. Mary’s maternal role was revealed when Jesus from the Cross said to the beloved disciple, “Behold your Mother” (Jn 19:27). Her mission was manifest in the Upper Room as she prayed with the Apostles in the days of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14). Mary is thus fittingly honored as the spiritual Mother of all who are saved by the Death and Resurrection of Christ and who are filled with his Spirit. The title “Mother of the Church” was officially established in a decree of St. Pope Paul VI at the end of the Second Vatican Council (November 21, 1964).

Notes

May 26, Tuesday, 8th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Philip Neri, Priest



First Reading: 1 Peter 1:10-16

Beloved: Concerning the salvation of your souls the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and investigated it investigating the time and circumstances that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the glories to follow them. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you with regard to the things that have now been announced to you by those who preached the Good News to you through the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven, things into which angels longed to look.

Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, live soberly, and set your hopes completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Like obedient children, do not act in compliance with the desires of your former ignorance but, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, *Be holy because I am holy.*



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

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.

Gospel Acclamation: see Matthew 11:25

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



Gospel: Mark 10:28-31

Peter began to say to Jesus, ‘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. But many that are first will be last, and the last will be first.’”



Meditation:

In this week’s Spiritual Reflection, Pope Francis tells us that Jesus gave his disciples the Holy Spirit to free them from fear. They had been hiding after his death, afraid of what would happen to them if the authorities found them and identified them as followers of Jesus. Yet, as Jesus breathes on them and gives them the Spirit, he tells them, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” He wants them to *go out* and continue his mission, to spread the Good News of God’s plan of salvation. We see the conflict between their fear of losing everything, perhaps even their lives, and Jesus’ commission to them to risk all to bring to others his message of reconciliation.

The fear which we see here has to do with self-preservation. *What will happen to me if I make my first concern following Jesus, and not taking care of my own needs and wants?* Peter seems to have some of this fear when he asks Jesus a question in today’s Gospel. This episode follows the invitation of Jesus to the rich young man, to give up everything to follow him. The rich man went away sad (cf. Mk 10:22). He could not get past his fear of not having what he needed if he sold all his possessions and followed Jesus. Peter is asking for some reassurance on the same question: *We DID leave everything to follow you, Jesus. Now what will happen to us? Will we be taken care of?* Jesus assures Peter that his followers will indeed have what they need, and in abundance – a hundred times more than they have given up. And they will have the much greater reward of “eternal life in the age to come.”

Yet Jesus does add that his followers will face persecution. And in many other places in the Gospels he is very clear that his followers will face hardships and persecution, and some will even be put to death. So if we are looking for reassurance that all will be fine for us in the way that the world sees things – *don’t worry, everything is going to be okay*

– then Jesus’ answer to Peter is not really satisfying. Jesus sends us out to proclaim his salvation to those around us, but it will cost us dearly in the worldly sense. How can we overcome our fear of loss to follow Jesus faithfully?

Peter gives us the answer in the first reading, when he tells us: “do not act in compliance with the desires of your former ignorance,” but instead, “set your hopes completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In the world, hope is based on expectations of worldly success and advantage. *I hope I get a promotion at work. I hope my investments will make a lot of money. I hope my children get into a good school and can get a good job.* These are fragile and limited hopes, which can be crushed at any time. But Peter is telling us that the coming of the Holy Spirit gives us certain hope that *we can be made holy*, and have “eternal life in the age to come,” united forever in glory with God!

We are being called, then, to let go of our vain hopes for the things and promises of the world, and instead open ourselves deeply to the action of the Holy Spirit, who comes to give us a hope which cannot fail, and which no one can take away from us. When we remain grounded in this hope, then we can go into the world and continue the mission of Jesus.

The Psalm for today proclaims, “The Lord has made known his salvation.” As Peter describes, the Lord has made salvation known through the prophets who anticipated the coming of Jesus. He has made it known through Jesus himself. He has made it known through the Apostles, and through the members of the Church through the ages. Now he means to continue to make it known through us, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit acting in us.

Let us today put our hope in the promise of God, letting go of the fears which are based on our “former ignorance,” and allow the Spirit to make us witnesses to the mercy and salvation won for us by Christ. The best and easiest way to do this is to take the hand of Mary, who was given to us as our Mother in yesterday’s celebration. She who strengthened John to be able to stand at the foot of the Cross will protect and lead us also as we strive to be faithful to the action of the Holy Spirit in us.

When do I tend to grow fearful that if I follow Jesus I will not have what I need and want? Why is it so difficult for me to let go of my worldly hopes and open myself fully to the action of the Holy Spirit? How can I more deeply entrust myself and my temporal needs to Jesus?

Mary, free me from my attachments so I can love the Lord more fully.

St. Philip Neri, pray for us.

Philip Neri was born in Florence, Italy, in 1515, and as a young man was educated by the Dominicans. In 1533 he moved to San Germano, and while in a chapel, he had a vision that his apostolate would be in Rome. After studying philosophy and theology for three years, he began to work actively for the Church, visiting and caring for the sick. He also worked with young men to foster the Christian life, and with them he founded an association for the sick and the poor. He was eventually ordained in 1551, after which he founded the Congregation of the Oratory to promote holiness of priestly life and to foster effective preaching. Philip was gifted with a special sense of humor and is known as the saint of joy. He died in 1595 and was canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622.

Notes

May 27, Wednesday, 8th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop



First Reading: 1 Peter 1:18-25

Beloved: Realize that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious Blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished Lamb. He was known before the foundation of the world but revealed in the final time for you, who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Since you have purified yourselves by obedience to the truth for sincere brotherly love, love one another intensely from a pure heart. You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and abiding word of God, for:

“All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of the field; the grass withers, and the flower wilts; but the word of the Lord remains forever.” This is the word that has been proclaimed to you.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or *Alleluia.*

Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem;

praise your God, O Zion.

For he has strengthened the bars of your gates;

he has blessed your children within you.

R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or *Alleluia.*

He has granted peace in your borders;

with the best of wheat he fills you.

He sends forth his command to the earth;

swiftly runs his word!

R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or *Alleluia.*

He has proclaimed his word to Jacob,

his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.

He has not done thus for any other nation;

his ordinances he has not made known to them. *Alleluia.*

R. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or *Alleluia.*

Gospel Acclamation: Mark 10:45

Alleluia, alleluia. The Son of Man came to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

The disciples were on the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went ahead of them. They were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him. “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him, spit upon him, scourge him, and put him to death, but after three days he will rise.”

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” He replied, “What do you wish me to do for you?” They answered him, “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the chalice that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” They said to him, “We can.” Jesus said to them, “The chalice that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared.” When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”



Meditation:

This week sets before us a great contrast between living according to the world’s notion of security and living in the Holy Spirit. We saw this contrast dramatically displayed in the readings of Pentecost Sunday, where the Apostles started out hiding in fear, and after they received the Spirit went out into the streets, fearlessly proclaiming the salvation won by Jesus Christ. In yesterday’s Gospel, Peter asked Jesus what would become of the disciples who had given up everything to follow him. Where would they find their security?

Jesus' answer was that they will receive many good things in this life – and persecution as well. Their true hope was to be based on his promise of eternal life in the age to come.

Today we once again see the challenge of lifting up our eyes: from focusing on security and success in this world to focusing on Jesus. Jesus has just finished telling his disciples that he will soon be delivered into the hands of his enemies, who will “mock him, spit upon him, scourge him, and put him to death.” This should have made it very clear to them that following him would not gain them worldly success! And yet we see James and John immediately afterward asking him to assign them places of glory at his side. How hard it is to let go of our striving for worldly security!

St. Peter tells us in the first reading that our former way of life, before turning to follow Christ, was “futile.” We were not ransomed from sin and death by such perishable things as silver and gold, but by “the precious Blood of Christ.” The final words of this passage are also significant: “You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and abiding word of God, for: ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of the field; the grass withers, and the flower wilts; but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ This is the word that has been proclaimed to you.”

We are made for Heaven. God longs for us to be with him, and he has poured out his extravagant mercy in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus to make it possible for us to be purified and united with him. This is the word that has been proclaimed to us! This world is not our final home. So it is futile to cling to the passing things of the world, which always wilt and fade away, and cannot secure us a place in Heaven. Any glory and honor we can gain in this life is as nothing compared to the glory we will know with God in eternity.

What is the way to enter into glory in Heaven? Jesus says it clearly. We must become servants. As the Gospel Acclamation tells us, “The Son of Man came to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This means that we are to use the things of this world to serve the needs of our brothers and sisters, not for our own comfort and pleasure. We can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit acting in our hearts. And so we fervently pray, especially all through this week, “Come, Holy Spirit!”

How well am I accepting the challenge of shifting my focus from worldly security and success to following Jesus? Why is it futile for me to cling to the passing things of the world? Am I using the things of this world to serve myself or to serve others?

Mary, help me to realize any glory I gain on earth is nothing compared to the glory of being united with God in eternity.

St. Augustine of Canterbury, pray for us.

Little is known of the early life of **Augustine of Canterbury**. He was a monk and prior of Saint Andrew's Abbey in Rome when Pope St. Gregory the Great sent him and forty brother monks to evangelize England in 597. Before reaching his destination, he heard terrifying tales of the Celts and returned to Rome. Pope Gregory told him he had no choice and sent him back without delay. King Ethelbert of Kent was baptized, followed by 10,000 of his people, which greatly extended the Church. Augustine was consecrated a bishop on a trip to Gaul and eventually established the Sees of London, Rochester, and Canterbury, the latter becoming his archdiocese. He died in 605 and is known as the "Apostle of England."

Notes

May 28, Thursday, 8th Week in Ordinary Time

For those who are celebrating today the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, an obligatory Feast in the Philippines, see pp. 33-36.



First Reading: 1 Peter 2:2-5, 9-12

Beloved: Like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk so that through it you may grow into salvation, for you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

You are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises* of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were *no people*
but now you are God's people;
you *had not received mercy*
but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and sojourners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against the soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100:2, 3, 4, 5

Come with joy into the presence of the Lord.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.

R. Come with joy into the presence of the Lord.

Know that the LORD is God;
he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.

R. Come with joy into the presence of the Lord.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
his courts with praise;
Give thanks to him;
bless his name.

R. Come with joy into the presence of the Lord.

The LORD is good:
his kindness endures forever,
and his faithfulness, to all generations.

R. Come with joy into the presence of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: John 8:12

Alleluia, alleluia. I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me.” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you.” He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man replied to him, “Master, I want to see.” Jesus told him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.



Meditation:

Today’s Gospel tells of the healing of the blind man, Bartimaeus of Jericho. In the tradition of Scripture, Jericho represents the sinful world, the world without God. Jesus was leaving Jericho and taking his followers with him. But Bartimaeus was unable to follow the Lord and pursue the journey of life. He must remain on the side of the road, blind and begging – truly a picture of hopelessness.

This is symbolic of all of us when we are stuck in our sin condition. Whenever we are in darkness, caught up in our own sufferings, blinded by our pride, greed, or any other sin, we are in a hopeless condition. We cannot make any progress in the spiritual life.

Things only get worse when other people discourage us. When Bartimaeus cried out, the bystanders, even those who were following Jesus, scolded him, telling him not to bother the Lord. The voices of these scolding people represent any voice that would prevent us from running to the Lord. Sometimes others mock our religious practices and express doubts about God’s love. Very often these voices come from within. Sometimes we place expectations on ourselves that we cannot fulfill, and then we condemn ourselves for failing. At other times we excuse our behavior saying, “That’s just the way I am.” Satan is always ready to drag us down as well. His voice subtly introduces doubts about whether God really cares about us; he wants us to question why God is not doing more for us.

Whatever the source of such voices, they must be dismissed as lies. God does care for us, and we are not hopeless cases. Jesus obviously loves Bartimeus as he loves each one of us. He probes his heart, asking him what he wants, and when the blind man simply and humbly says, “Master, I want to see,” Jesus immediately heals him.

But there is a further step. After healing him, Jesus tells him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.” This is a test. What “way” will this man go? Now that he can see, will he go back into Jericho and live in the world, or will he follow Jesus?

It is beautiful that Bartimeus immediately follows Jesus on the road out of Jericho. This is symbolic of the deep, genuine restoration that the Lord offers to each one of us, if we are open to it, if we are willing to throw aside our cloak of worldly attachments and to journey in faith.

We can reflect on the choice of Bartimeus in comparison with that of the rich young man (Mk 10:22). The rich man also approached Jesus with a desire in his heart. He wanted to know the way to eternal life. When Jesus extended to him the invitation and the grace to sell what he had and follow him, it was too much for the man, and he declined. Though he was able to see with his eyes, the man was so taken up with his worldly possessions that he was blind to the much greater gift the Lord was offering him.

In our hearts too there is a deep desire to follow the Lord, to “see” and enter into the life the Holy Trinity offers us. God wants to restore us. He has a divine plan for us, but he will not interfere with our free will. Like Bartimeus, we must call out to the Lord in faith and open our hearts to his healing grace, offered in abundance in the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Bartimeus refused to heed the discouraging and distracting voices around him. Instead, he kept crying out with a heart of trust, of faith. In the same way, let us cry out for the Holy Spirit to come to us this week and restore our spiritual sight.

What voices try to discourage me from walking in the way of the Lord? How is Bartimeus a model of faith and courage for me? In what areas in my life do I most need spiritual healing?

Mary, heal my spiritual blindness so that I can follow the Lord more closely today.

May 28, Thursday
Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest (Philippines)



First Reading: Genesis 22:9-18

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the LORD's messenger called to him from Heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Here I am," he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. Abraham named the site Yahweh-yireh; hence people now say, "On the mountain the LORD will see." Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from Heaven and said: "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing – all this because you obeyed my command."

or *Hebrews 10:4-10*

Brothers and sisters: It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats takes away sins. For this reason, when Christ came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight.
Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll,
behold, I come to do your will, O God.'"

First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:7-8a, 10-11ab, 17

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

Sacrifice or oblation you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.

Burnt offerings or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold, I come."

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

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;

I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

Your justice I kept not hid within my heart;

your faithfulness and your salvation I have spoken of;

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

May all who seek you

exult and be glad in you

And may those who love your salvation

say ever, "The LORD be glorified."

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

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia. Christ became obedient for us unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has exalted him and given him a name which is above every name. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Matthew 26:36-42

Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will."



Meditation:

Today we celebrate Jesus Christ as our great and eternal High Priest. Let us ponder the meaning of priesthood so that we might be able to enter more deeply into today's celebration. A priest is one who offers sacrifices to reconcile his people with God. In the Old Testament, this meant sacrificing animals, whose blood symbolically washed away the sins of the people. But in the case of the Priest Jesus Christ, what was the sacrificial offering that he made?

We immediately think of his saving death on the Cross, of course, and this is very true. But we see in today's Gospel that, before he made a physical sacrifice of his Body and Blood, he first offered the sacrifice of his own *will*. Jesus, having two natures, had both a human will and a divine will. In his human will, he did not want to die any more than we would. He expressed his human will when he prayed, "My Father, if it

is possible, let this cup pass from me.” But at the same time, he perfectly submitted his human will to the divine will, in which he is one with the Father and the Spirit. He made a gift of his will to the Father: “Not as I will, but as you will.”

In the Genesis reading, Abraham too makes a gift of his will to God. His son Isaac is one with his father in the offering; he offers not a word of resistance. “He submitted and did not open his mouth; like a lamb led to slaughter or a sheep silent before shearers, he did not open his mouth” (Is 53:7). Why would God ask for such a sacrifice? It seems to be such a contradiction. Isaac is the one through whom God’s promises will be fulfilled. In sacrificing Isaac, Abraham also sacrifices his own understanding and his will, laying them down as a gift before God. At the last moment, God stops him and provides a ram to take the place of Isaac. God provides!

We cannot ponder this story without feeling the weight of it. What is it like to surrender what is most precious to us? Abraham, our father and model of faith, trusted that God would somehow provide, in a way beyond his understanding. On today’s feast, we celebrate that, in Jesus, God truly did provide. When Jesus underwent his Passion, no angel came to stop the sacrifice. Jesus himself was both the Priest and the perfect Offering provided by the love of the Father.

Today’s other optional reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews, also speaks about the priestly offering that pleases God. The sacrifices and offerings of the past were not enough, but Jesus came with a new form of sacrifice: doing the Father’s will. “Behold, I come to do your will.” He did not offer animals or gifts; he gave everything. He offered his Body and Blood, his Love, his Soul, his Divinity – he offered himself in sacrifice. Whenever we fall into the mentality that holiness is a matter of doing many good things for God, this reading reminds us that what matters most is the gift of ourselves, the gift of our “yes” to God’s will. This is the core of our participation in the work of Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest.

As we ponder these readings and today’s feast, we are drawn into this salvific, priestly work. We see the offering Jesus makes of himself, the one perfect and eternal sacrifice. What are we being asked to place on the altar of our hearts? Like Abraham, we are asked to trust without seeing the outcome, to trust that God will provide. Like Jesus in Gethsemane, we are asked to say, “Your will be done,” when we would naturally prefer a different path. But we are never alone in our offering.

Jesus the Eternal High Priest is always interceding at the right hand of the Father. His “yes” to the Father includes us. His Spirit, poured in our hearts, makes it possible for us to offer our own small daily “yes,” trusting that he will carry it, purify it, and unite it to his perfect offering. Let us ask the Holy Spirit today for the grace to be able to follow in the way that our great High Priest has opened for us.

What is the most precious gift that I can offer in obedience, love, and sacrifice to the Father? How is Jesus calling me to make a gift of my will to the Father as he did? When am I most aware of uniting my personal sacrifices with the priestly offering of Jesus Christ?

Mary, walk daily with me and help me make a complete gift of myself to God.

Prayer for Priests

Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, we praise and thank you for the priceless gift and mystery of the priesthood. Bless, protect, and sanctify your priests. Fill them with the fire of your love, that they may grow daily in their total self-oblation to you and to the Church, and seek nothing but your greater glory and the salvation of souls. May Mary’s own pierced heart inspire them to embrace all who suffer at the foot of the Cross, and may the pure heart of St. Joseph fortify them in their mission of true spiritual fatherhood. Amen.

The Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest is celebrated annually on the Thursday after Pentecost. Approval for this Feast was first granted by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 1987 as a fitting and effective way to promote greater appreciation for the gift and mystery of the priesthood. The Feast focuses on Jesus’ Priestly Office, particularly in the Eucharistic sacrifice, our central act of worship. The Second Vatican Council taught many things about the Priesthood of Christ. Because we all share in his Priesthood through the Sacrament of Baptism, he is the Model for all believers. He is represented in a special way by ordained priests, who in administering the Sacraments of the Church act *in persona Christi Capitis* (“in the person of Christ the Head”; cf. CCC 1548). The laity are thus urged to pray that priests be more like Jesus Christ, the compassionate and trustworthy High Priest (cf. Heb 2:17), ever living to intercede for humanity before the Father (cf. Heb 7:25). This is also a day of prayer for priestly vocations. In the Philippines, the liturgical Feast honoring Our Lord Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest was first introduced as a Memorial in 2021; since 2022, it has been celebrated as a Feast.

May 29, Friday, 8th Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Paul VI, Pope



First Reading: 1 Peter 4:7-13

Beloved: The end of all things is at hand. Therefore be serious and sober-minded so that you will be able to pray. Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Beloved, do not be surprised that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as if something strange were happening to you. But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly.



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

The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Say among the nations: The LORD is king.
He has made the world firm, not to be moved;
 he governs the peoples with equity.

R. The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
 let the sea and what fills it resound;
 let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!

Then shall all the trees of the forest exult.

R. The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Before the LORD, for he comes;
 for he comes to rule the earth.

He shall rule the world with justice
 and the peoples with his constancy.

R. The Lord comes to judge the earth.

Gospel Acclamation: see John 15:16

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



Gospel: Mark 11:11-26

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple area. He looked around at everything and, since it was already late, went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The next day as they were leaving Bethany he was hungry. Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went over to see if he could find anything on it. When he reached it he found nothing but leaves; it was not the time for figs. And he said to it in reply, “May no one ever eat of your fruit again!” And his disciples heard it.

They came to Jerusalem, and on entering the temple area he began to drive out those selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. He did not permit anyone to carry anything through the temple area. Then he taught them saying, “Is it not written:

*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples?
But you have made it a den of thieves.”*

The chief priests and the scribes came to hear of it and were seeking a way to put him to death, yet they feared him because the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city.

Early in the morning, as they were walking along, they saw the fig tree withered to its roots. Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” Jesus said to them in reply, “Have faith in God. Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him. Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions.”



Meditation:

“I chose you from the world, to go and bear fruit that will last, says the Lord.” This is today’s Gospel Acclamation, and it can serve as the theme of our meditation. We have been seeing in the readings this week the contrast between living in the way of the world and living in God’s way, the contrast between seeking security and advantage from the things of the world and looking to God for our security and direction. Jesus explicitly tells us in this Acclamation that

he has chosen us *from* the world. We no longer belong to the world, so we must not follow the ways of the world. Instead, we are to go *into* the world and bear fruit for him.

Both the first reading and the Gospel today make it clear that this is a serious commission that Jesus gives us, with serious consequences. We can see what happens to the fig tree when Jesus looks for fruit on it but fails to find any. The tree was producing nothing but leaves, a kind of false advertising. The warning to us is that we are to do more than *look* good; we are called to bear fruit. When the time of Jesus' visitation arrives, we must not be found to be a den of thieves when we are called to be a house of prayer.

St. Peter's words in the first reading can be taken in a similar way, when he says, "The end of all things is at hand." He is telling us that the time for us to live according to the world's ways is over. The world seeks security and comfort, but the Lord leads us into "a trial by fire" by which we are privileged to be able to "share in the sufferings of Christ," so that we might likewise have a share in his glory. We are no longer to live by our own strength, but by the strength of the Spirit which has been poured out upon us, which enable us to love as Jesus loved us.

This is what our hearts were meant for—to offer the gift of pure worship to the Father, shown in love for our brothers and sisters. Anything else that we find in our hearts—greed, envy, lust, worldly ambition, avarice, pride, vainglory, and all the rest—must be cleaned out. Such things can never bear the fruit which Christ looks for in us. So we should not be surprised, as Peter tells us, and as we learn from Jesus' actions in the Gospel, that God means to drive out from our hearts all that makes them a "den of thieves." We should welcome this purification, so that we can be empowered to speak "with the words of God," and serve "with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" in us.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit today to purify our hearts with the burning flame of his love, so that we might leave behind our attachment to the things of the world and be enabled to bear true and good fruit for Jesus Christ.

How can I be more intent on living by the strength of the Spirit which has been poured upon me? What attitudes or attachments make me unable to bear fruit? Is my heart a “den of thieves” or a “house of prayer”?

Mary, help me to surrender my worldly attachments so that I may bear fruit that lasts for the glory of your Son.

Saint Paul VI, pray for us.

St. Pope Paul VI, Giovanni Battisti Montini, was born in Italy on September 26, 1897, to a well-to-do family. As a youth he was shy, retiring, intelligent, and ascetic. Because of his gifts, four years after his ordination on May 29, 1920, he began his service to the Holy See, serving both Pope Pius XI and Pius XII. In 1963 he was elected Pope and became the first Pope to travel by air, visiting twenty countries, including the Philippines, the United States, Fatima in Portugal, and the Holy Land. He was a man of great courage and stood firm on what he believed. He continued the Second Vatican Council which was opened by St. John XXIII. In 1968, after much prayer, he issued the landmark encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, reaffirming the Church’s teaching against contraception in the wake of the sexual revolution. Because of his tender devotion to Mary, Pope Paul was called Champion of the Rosary. He also emphasized that Our Lady is the model of Christian perfection. Before he died he said, “I pray that the Lord will give me the grace to make of my approaching death a gift of love to the Church. I can say that I have always loved her, and I feel that I have lived my life for her and for nothing else.” He died of a heart attack on August 6, 1978, the Feast of the Transfiguration, and was canonized by Pope Francis on October 14, 2018. In 2019, his feast day was changed from the date of his birth to the date of his sacerdotal ordination.

Notes



First Reading: Jude 17, 20b-25

Beloved, remember the words spoken beforehand by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. On those who waver, have mercy; save others by snatching them out of the fire; on others have mercy with fear, abhorring even the outer garment stained by the flesh.

To the one who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you unblemished and exultant, in the presence of his glory, to the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority from ages past, now, and for ages to come. Amen.



Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6

My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God whom I seek;
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts
like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary
to see your power and your glory,
For your kindness is a greater good than life;
my lips shall glorify you.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Thus will I bless you while I live;
lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.
As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied,
and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Gospel Acclamation: see Colossians 3:16a, 17c

Alleluia, alleluia. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; giving thanks to God the Father through him. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***



Gospel: Mark 11:27-33

Jesus and his disciples returned once more to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple area, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders approached him and said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do them?" Jesus said to them, "I shall ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was John's baptism of heavenly

or of human origin? Answer me.” They discussed this among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘Of heavenly origin,’ he will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ But shall we say, ‘Of human origin?’”– they feared the crowd, for they all thought John really was a prophet. So they said to Jesus in reply, “We do not know.” Then Jesus said to them, “Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things.”



Meditation:

We continue to see this week’s contrast between living in the world and living according to God’s way. The Psalm refrain is very important here: “My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.” The question is, what is my soul thirsting for? Is it thirsting for the Lord or is it thirsting for comfort, power, or security in this world?

It is easy to see that the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders in the Gospel are not thirsting for the Lord. They are thirsting for their own advantage. They are thirsting for position and worldly honor. If they had been thirsting for God, they would have listened deeply to John the Baptist and seriously pondered whether his words were coming from God or not. If their hearts were truly open, they would have discerned that John’s ministry came from God, and they would have repented as he called them to do. But because they were thirsting most of all for their own self-glorification, they did not really consider John’s words to be important because his words would not help them achieve their goals.

In the first reading, Jude directs us to focus all our attention on God. “Remember the words spoken beforehand by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” All these things are concerned with God and his way, his plan – not my way, my plans. Each of us must ask: Where is *my* focus? What is *my* soul thirsting for? God’s way or my way? God’s plan or my plan? God’s thoughts or my thoughts?

Jesus can see that the elders in the Gospel are not really thirsting for God. They are not really looking for truth. He does not answer them because there is no point in doing so. It is spiritually better for them to be left without an answer. Perhaps in the silence the void they experience will awaken in them a more authentic spiritual thirst.

Jesus' question about authority gives us an opportunity to examine our own motives and our own prayers. Do we come before God only seeking advantage for ourselves? Are we submissive to the authority of God, looking for his will to be done in our life? When we are focused on personal advantage, closing our hearts to the power of God's word, we should not be surprised when it seems that God is not speaking to us. It could be that he is speaking, and we are not listening. It could also be that his word to us is a period of purifying silence. He does not speak to us about gaining worldly advantages. God's word is intended to fill us with his life and to draw us into eternal life with him. The way to eternal life is by following the way of Jesus, the way of self-giving love. If our hearts are truly thirsting for God, then we will find this way because God will lead us to it.

This is the action of the Holy Spirit which we have received, which was poured out on the world at Pentecost. On our own, it is impossible for us to give up our own will and all our attachments to the things of the world. God is the one who makes it possible by the power of his Spirit. This is why the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated as our Spiritual Mother in Monday's feast, reminds us that nothing is impossible for God. Nothing is impossible for the Holy Spirit, who is intent on transforming us in the image of Jesus Christ. We conclude this week, looking forward to tomorrow's celebration of the Most Holy Trinity, by praying with Mary that the Spirit may come with power and do this work in us. Let us say with her: "May it be done to me according to your word."

When do I find my soul thirsting more for comfort, power, or security than for the Lord my God? When I come before God in prayer, what am I really seeking? What "impossible" situation in my life is the Lord calling me to entrust to him?

Mary, pray with me that I may be confident that nothing is impossible for God.