

*Pondering the Word...*

# **THE ANAWIM WAY**

*Daily Liturgical Meditations*

*Twenty-Second to Twenty-Eighth Week  
in Ordinary Time*

*August 30 to October 17, 2026  
Cycle A - Year 2*

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## The Roman Catholic Bishop of Parañaque

34 A. Aguirre Ave. cor J. Cruz St., Bf Homes Phase III  
Parañaque City

### 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.***



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

***“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”***

Matthew 16:25

### ***Theme for the Week***

Jesus, the glorious Messiah, is a suffering Messiah. His Cross reveals the power of love. He calls us to participate in his way of sacrificial love – to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. Accepting lovingly our own cross, let us make an offering of our life for others.

## ***Love Alone Truly Quenches Our Thirst***

### **A Spiritual Reflection by Pope Francis**

With the words of the Responsorial Psalm, we prayed: “O God... my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Ps 63:2). This magnificent plea accompanies our journey through life, amid all the deserts we are called to traverse. It is precisely in those deserts that we hear the good news that we are not alone in our journey; those times of dryness cannot render our lives barren forever; our cry of thirst does not go unheard. God the Father has sent his Son to give us the living water of the Holy Spirit to satisfy our souls (cf. *Jn* 4:10). Jesus, as we heard in the Gospel, shows us the way to quench our thirst. It is the way of love, which he followed even to the Cross, and on which he calls us to follow him, losing our lives in order to find them (cf. *Mt* 16:24-25).

Let us reflect together on these two things: *the thirst within us*, and *the love that quenches that thirst*.

First, we are called to acknowledge the thirst within us. The Psalmist cries out to God in his aridity, for his life has become like a desert. His words have a particular resonance in a land like Mongolia: immense, rich in history and culture, yet a land also marked by the aridity of the steppes and the desert. Many of you know both the satisfaction and the fatigue of journeying, which evokes a fundamental aspect of biblical spirituality represented by Abraham and, in a broader sense, by the people of Israel and indeed every disciple of the Lord. For all of us are “God’s nomads,” pilgrims in search of happiness, wayfarers thirsting for love. The desert of which the Psalmist speaks, then, is our life. We are that dry land thirsting for fresh water, water that can slake our deepest thirst. Our hearts long to discover the secret of true joy, a joy that even in the midst of existential aridity can accompany and sustain us. Deep within us, we have an insatiable thirst for happiness; we seek meaning and direction in our lives, a reason for all that we do each day. More than anything, we thirst for love, for only love can truly satisfy us, bring us fulfillment; only love can make us happy, inspire inner assurance and allow us to savor the beauty of life. Dear brothers and sisters, the Christian faith is the answer to this thirst; it takes it seriously, without dismissing it or trying to replace it with tranquilizers

or surrogates. For in this thirst lies the great mystery of our humanity: it opens our hearts to the living God, the God of love, who comes to meet us and to make us his children, brothers and sisters to one another.

This brings us to the second thing: *the love that quenches our thirst*. First was our deep, existential thirst, and now we reflect on the love that quenches our thirst. This is the heart of the Christian faith: God, who is Love, has drawn near to you, to me, to everyone, in his Son Jesus, and wants to share in your life, your work, your dreams and your thirst for happiness. It is true that, at times, we feel like a “dry and weary land where there is no water,” yet it is equally true that God cares for us and offers us clear, refreshing water, the living water of the Spirit, springing up within us to renew us and free us from the risk of drought. Jesus gives us that water. As Saint Augustine tells us, “...if we recognize ourselves in those who thirst, we can also recognize ourselves in those who quench that thirst” (*On the Psalms*, 63:1). Indeed, if in this life we often experience the desert with loneliness, fatigue and emptiness, we should also remember, with Augustine, that, “lest we grow faint in this desert, God refreshes us with the dew of his word... True, he makes us feel thirst, but then comes to satisfy that thirst... God has been merciful to us; he has opened for us a highway in the desert: our Lord Jesus Christ.” And that is the path through the desert of our lives. “He has offered us a source of consolation in that desert: the preachers of his word. He has offered us water in that desert, by filling those preachers with the Holy Spirit, so as to create, in them, a fount of water springing up to life everlasting” (ibid., 1, 6).

These words, dear friends, speak to you of your own history. Amid the deserts of life and in the difficulties associated with being a small community, the Lord has ensured that you not lack the water of his word, thanks especially to the preachers and missionaries who, anointed by the Holy Spirit, sow among you the seeds of its beauty. That word always brings us back to what is essential, to the very heart of our faith: allowing ourselves to be loved by God and in turn to make our lives an offering of love. For love alone truly quenches our thirst. Let us never forget: love alone truly quenches our thirst.

That is precisely what Jesus tells the Apostle Peter in today’s Gospel. Peter cannot accept the fact that Jesus must suffer, be charged by the leaders of the people, undergo his passion and then die on the Cross. Peter reacts, he protests, he tries to convince Jesus that he is

wrong, because, in Peter's mind—and we too often have the same idea—the Messiah cannot possibly end in failure, dying on a cross like a criminal forsaken by God. The Lord then rebukes Peter because he thinks “as the world does,” and not as God does (cf. *Mt* 16:21-23). If we think that success, power, or material things suffice to satisfy the thirst in our lives, then we are thinking as the world does. That kind of worldliness leads nowhere; indeed, it leaves us thirstier than before. Jesus instead shows us the way: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (*Mt* 16:24-25).

This, dear brothers and sisters, is surely the best way: to embrace the Cross of Christ. At the heart of Christianity is an amazing and extraordinary message. If you lose your life, if you make it a generous offering in service, if you risk it by choosing to love, if you make it a free gift for others, then it will return to you in abundance, and you will be overwhelmed by endless joy, peace of heart, and inner strength and support; and we need inner peace.

This is the truth that Jesus wants us to discover, the truth he wants to reveal to all of you and to this land of Mongolia. You need not be famous, rich or powerful to be happy. No! Only love satisfies our hearts' thirst, only love heals our wounds, only love brings us true joy. This is the way that Jesus taught us; this is the path that he opened up before us.

May we too, dear brothers and sisters, heed what the Lord said to Peter in response: “Get behind me” (*Mt* 16:23). In other words, be my disciple, walk in my footsteps and stop thinking as the world does. If we do this, we will be able, with the grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit, to journey along the path of love, even when love calls for denying ourselves, combatting our personal and worldly forms of selfishness, and taking the risk of living a life of genuine fraternity. For while it is true that all these things entail effort and sacrifice, and sometimes taking up the cross, it is even more true that, when we lose our lives for the sake of the Gospel, the Lord gives them back to us abundantly, in the fullness of love and joy for all eternity.

Pope Francis, Homily, September 3, 2023  
Apostolic Journey to Mongolia  
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**First Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9**

You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped;  
you were too strong for me, and you triumphed.  
All the day I am an object of laughter;  
everyone mocks me.

Whenever I speak, I must cry out,  
violence and outrage is my message;  
the word of the LORD has brought me  
derision and reproach all the day.

I say to myself, I will not mention him,  
I will speak in his name no more.  
But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart,  
imprisoned in my bones;  
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9**

***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.***

You are my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.  
My soul clings fast to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

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

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### ***Second Reading: Romans 12:1-2***

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

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### ***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.***

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### ***Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27***

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay all according to his conduct.”

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### ***Meditation:***

The image of Jesus Christ crucified is so important for our liturgical life that the Church requires that a crucifix must be on or close to the altar at every Mass. In some parishes, however, the image of the Risen Christ now occupies the central and focal position where there used to be a crucifix. This trend reflects what seems to be a growing aversion to the crucifix. People say things like, “We are a resurrected Church and not a crucified Church!” The danger in this way of thinking is that we can lose the sense of what constitutes Christianity as a way of life. Happily, all three of today’s Scripture readings, with their emphasis on suffering and sacrifice, help us regain a proper appreciation of the Crucified Christ and of the place of the Cross in our Christian life.

Jesus Christ proves to us how much God loves us by suffering and dying on the Cross that we may have eternal life (cf. Rm 5:8). The greatest expression of Christ's love is the laying down of his life on the Cross (cf. Jn 15:13). The very center of his mission is his Death and Resurrection for the life of the world. We can recall that St. Paul declared, "may I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!" (Gal 6:14).

Today's Gospel begins with this topic: Jesus' prediction of his approaching suffering and death. Peter's immediate reaction to it, like our own natural reaction, is to reject the very idea. "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." To better understand what prompted this conversation, we can go back to what preceded it. It began in the passage we read last Sunday, where Peter boldly declared that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and Jesus declared that Peter is the rock on which he will build his Church. After that, Jesus "strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ." This was a surprise: Jesus affirmed Peter's insight, but then he told them not to tell anyone. The reason for this apparent contradiction comes out in today's reading: Jesus is a *suffering* Messiah. Because almost no one could understand this concept, there was no value in talking about it yet.

The challenge was not the idea that a Messiah was coming; all the Jews were expecting him. The challenge was the idea that suffering is actually part of God's plan. This idea is so foreign to our nature that we still find it very hard to accept. When we hear about people suffering, we feel sorry for them. When they die, we take consolation that at least their suffering has come to an end. When we ourselves suffer, we long for it to end. So we can readily understand Peter's reaction. This is always how we react when we think "as human beings do." Jesus reveals that there is another way to think about suffering, that is, as God does.

Just as Peter's realization that Jesus is the Messiah came as a revelation from the Father, so too our understanding of the real meaning of suffering must come from the Father, through his Son, the suffering Messiah. When we accept what God has revealed – even though our flesh will continue to resist it – we come to see the glory of the Cross of Jesus Christ, as well as how we are blessed to share in it. Jesus makes it

very clear that taking up our cross is an essential part of being a disciple: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” We can strive to save our lives by avoiding all suffering, but even if we succeed in doing so, what will we gain? Even if we “gain the whole world,” it is of no lasting profit for us if we lose the rich reward Jesus gives to his faithful followers.

The prophet Jeremiah often wrestled with the contradictory experience of following the will of God. In today’s first reading, he complains that he has obeyed the Lord and spoken in his name, and the result is that now he is an object of laughter. The people, instead of heeding the prophet’s message, mock and reject him. Jeremiah is doing what is right, yet he is suffering more because of his faithfulness. This is why he protests to the Lord, “You duped me!” Jeremiah is tempted to give up his preaching mission. He could save himself a lot of trouble if he simply remained silent. This superficially appealing option fails, however, because, in order to “save his life,” he would have to destroy himself interiorly. The word of God, he says, “becomes like a fire burning in my heart, / imprisoned in my bones.” This is the prophet’s personal experience of what Jesus means by saying, “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it.” When we think “as human beings do” and reject suffering, we actually ruin ourselves. When we think “as God does” and make an offering of our life for others, we find a much greater life.

Suffering, then, is not an end in itself; it is a pathway to glory. Jesus has taken on the full weight of human suffering and transformed it, giving it life-giving value. This is why we willingly display the crucifix instead of rejecting it. While we try to alleviate suffering through legitimate means, at the same time we strive to see it from God’s perspective, to find its deeper meaning. When we look at a crucifix, we are reminded that God does not see suffering as something to be avoided at all costs. He knows how to bring good out of suffering.

St. Paul understands that the way of the Cross is the way of glory. He has experienced it himself. This is why he can so strongly encourage us to embrace this way: “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.” Paul knows that the idea of sacrifice – which is voluntary suffering – does not fit the world’s way of thinking. We are no longer to think as the world does, or to judge by the world’s standards. Rather, we are called

to “be transformed by the renewal of our mind” so that we “may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” To be able to do this, we need to fix our gaze on Christ Crucified (cf. Heb 12:2). He is risen but his Cross, his Passion, is our strength. “The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism [self-discipline] and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes” (CCC 2015). Living by God’s will, no matter what form the Cross may take in our lives, is what leads to our glory with him.

*What aspect of my life am I trying to save myself from a cross that God is calling me to carry? How can I change my way of thinking so that I see my daily struggles through God’s eyes instead of my own? What is one small sacrifice I can offer today as a living gift to show my love for Jesus?*

***Mary, teach me to stay with Jesus and find glory in the Way of the Crucified.***

## Notes



**First Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102**

**Lord, I love your commands.**

How I love your law, O LORD!

It is my meditation all the day.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

Your command has made me wiser than my enemies,  
for it is ever with me.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

I have more understanding than all my teachers  
when your decrees are my meditation.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

I have more discernment than the elders,  
because I observe your precepts.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

From every evil way I withhold my feet,  
that I may keep your words.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

From your ordinances I turn not away,  
for you have instructed me.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

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**Gospel Acclamation: Luke 4:18**

**Alleluia, alleluia.** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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**Gospel: Luke 4:16-30**

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Is this not the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

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### ***Meditation:***

We saw yesterday that the Cross of Christ is the defining symbol of Christianity. Self-sacrificial love in imitation of Christ crucified is the distinguishing standard of the Christian life. Christ is not recognizable without the mystery of his Cross. All through his earthly life, there is always a shadow of the Cross. His birth in a manger and the gift of myrrh to the infant Jesus point to the Cross. In today's Gospel, as Jesus commences his public ministry, the reality of the Cross also looms large. "They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong." Even on his glorious, resurrected body, Christ bears the sacred wounds of his crucifixion. He reveals his wounds as a way of revealing his identity and of displaying the divine love that triumphed by way of the Cross.

The Cross stands at the center of the distinction Jesus made in yesterday's Gospel, between God's way of thinking and man's. The contrast between these two ways of judging (or evaluating) comes out again in both of today's readings. St. Paul describes it as the difference between the "human wisdom" and the "power of God." The Gospel portrays it in the reaction of the people of Nazareth, who end up judging Jesus by purely natural standards and thereby lose the opportunity to experience him as the fulfillment of the Scriptures in their midst.

The dramatic confrontation that unfolded in the Nazareth synagogue started out as an ordinary Sabbath service. Jesus attended this synagogue regularly. It was not unusual for him to read before the assembly, as any Jewish man was permitted to do. The passage he read was a prophecy from the book (scroll) of Isaiah (cf. Is 61:1-2). But then a startling thing happened: Jesus suddenly announced, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Since the passage is clearly about the Messiah, its fulfillment means that the Messiah is already here. Jesus is announcing that he himself is the Messiah, bringing glad tidings to the poor and liberty to captives. The "year acceptable to the Lord" has begun!

The people's reaction to this is positive – but only at first. Once the surprise wears off, their expectations and suspicions and resentments begin to come out. They want him to do some miracles, as they heard he had done in Capernaum. They begin to doubt his real importance, since he is only "the son of Joseph." Whatever their thoughts are, it is clear that their hearts are not really open to listening to Jesus. When he goes on to challenge them, and makes it sound like foreigners and pagans are somehow surpassing them, they are immediately "filled with fury" and attempt to kill him. Some Bible scholars have found this rapid change too extreme. How can people go from admiration to murderous frenzy in the space of a few minutes? Perhaps Luke is giving us an abbreviated version of what happened, but there is no doubt that this is precisely what Jesus experienced among his own people. There was some initial attraction to him, especially to his miracles and his compassion, but in the end, there was violent opposition – culminating in the crucifixion.

This incident teaches us that there is a great difference between listening to the Lord simply to affirm our own will and listening to the Lord to learn *his* will. The people of Nazareth are examples of how *not*

to be disciples of Jesus. They do not come to him with open hearts. They do not long to be shown how to follow God in sincerity and truth. We learn from them that pride and self-centered expectations block the word of God. We are not likely to forcibly exclude Jesus from our neighborhood, but in our pride we can drive him out of our hearts much more quickly.

As we learn from Paul's words to the Corinthians, the Gospel is not based on eloquent "sublimity of words" and worldly wisdom. If we expect God's word and his ways to make sense according to our narrow understanding, we will be disappointed. Paul is convinced that the way of faith is centered not on us but on "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This is the way that Peter found so difficult to accept in yesterday's Gospel, but Jesus insisted: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Paul knows that the message of the Cross will never appeal to the natural man, so he preaches it with "fear and much trembling." He knows that, like the crowd in Nazareth, people often become angry and even violent when they are confronted by the truth or challenged in their way of thinking.

How can we be freed of our human expectations and natural ways of thinking? By the power of the Holy Spirit, who touches our hearts through the divine word and empowers us to put our trust in God. There is no value in clinging to our ideas, our "wisdom," and our expectations. Such thinking "as human beings do" only leaves us locked in the narrow prison of our own perspective. Jesus has come to proclaim liberty to all who are captives of fear, recovery of sight to all who are blinded by prejudice and self-will, release to prisoners of sin and its destructive consequences. When we humbly welcome him into our hearts, we experience the glad tidings he brings to the poor.

*What human expectations am I letting get in the way of God's plan? What is my reaction when I am confronted by the truth or challenged in my way of thinking? Where can I see the shadow of the Cross in my life today?*

***Mary, help me not to judge by purely natural standards but only by the standards of Jesus.***

**September 1, Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation**

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*Readings for the Mass for the Care of Creation: Wis 13:1-19 or Col 1:15-20 / Ps 19:2-5 or Ps 105:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 24, 35 / Mt 6:24-34 or Mt 8:23-27*

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***First Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16***

Brothers and sisters: The Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God. Among men, who knows what pertains to the man except his spirit that is within? Similarly, no one knows what pertains to God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God. And we speak about them not with words taught by human wisdom, but with words taught by the Spirit, describing spiritual realities in spiritual terms.

Now the natural man does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it is judged spiritually. The one who is spiritual, however, can judge everything but is not subject to judgment by anyone.

For “who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to counsel him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13ab, 13cd-14***

***The Lord is just in all his ways.***

The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.

The LORD is good to all  
and compassionate toward all his works.

***R. The Lord is just in all his ways.***

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

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

***R. The Lord is just in all his ways.***

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

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

***R. The Lord is just in all his ways.***

The LORD is faithful in all his words  
and holy in all his works.  
The LORD lifts up all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.

***R. The Lord is just in all his ways.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: Luke 7:16***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** A great prophet has arisen in our midst and God has visited his people. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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***Gospel: Luke 4:31-37***

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!” Jesus rebuked him and said, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm. They were all amazed and said to one another, “What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

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***Meditation:***

In yesterday’s Gospel, Jesus announced that the Spirit of the Lord sent him “to let the oppressed go free.” Today we see him set a man free from a demonic oppression. This is a sign of why Jesus has come to this earth. As St. John tells us: “This was the purpose of the appearing of the Son of God, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8). The people are awestruck by the authority with which Jesus teaches and acts. They are experiencing the difference between divine power and human power, between divine ways and human ways. By his very words, Jesus is able to drive out the power of evil and utterly defeat it. His power surpasses any merely human power.

In the Corinthians reading, St. Paul contrasts the “natural man” with the “spiritual” man. From Paul’s description we see that the natural person lives by human wisdom alone. His focus is on life in this world and on gaining his own advantage. The ways of the Spirit of God strike

him as foolishness. Anytime we choose sinful pleasure over what is morally right, we are acting according to this kind of natural wisdom. Anytime we choose our own will over the will of God, we are acting according to this natural wisdom. The spiritual person, on the other hand, is one who lives according to the supernatural wisdom which comes from God. His focus is on eternal life, which begins here and now for anyone who chooses God's will above his own.

We are not limited to what comes naturally to us. "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God." Because we have received the Holy Spirit, we can recognize that living on a natural, worldly plane is a temptation and a trap. As we grow in the interior life, we also grow in understanding the ways of our flesh. Often God purifies us by interfering with our worldly desires and expectations. We learn, at such times, that we are still living in a very natural manner, and that we must relinquish our own will to allow his will to reign in our hearts.

While we have been given the Spirit of Christ in Baptism, we realize that the "spirit of the world" is still active in us, and so is our own natural tendency to try to escape from the authority of God. As Jesus cast out the demon in the Gospel, he can cast out from our lives all "spirits" which are contrary to his own, if we open ourselves to his working in us. Let us open ourselves to the power of the Spirit in us today, that we might take on more and more the mind and heart of Christ.

*What natural desire is currently keeping me from following God's spiritual wisdom? In what way is God currently interfering with my plans to help purify my heart? Which "spirit of the world" do I most need Jesus to cast out of my life today?*

***Mary, lead my soul into the peace of Jesus.***

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The late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I inaugurated the first Day of Prayer for Creation for the Orthodox Church in 1989. As the years passed, other communities adopted the practice. In August 2015, Pope Francis designated September 1 as the **World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation** for the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. In 2019, he officially invited the faithful to participate in an annual "season of increased prayer and effort on behalf of our common home." Pope Francis said, "The

annual World Day for the Care of Creation offers to individual believers and to the community a precious opportunity to renew our participation in this vocation as custodians of creation, raising to God our thanks for the marvelous works that He has entrusted to our care, invoking his help for the protection of creation and his mercy for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”

This World Day of Prayer also falls at the beginning of the “Season of Creation” which runs from September 1 until October 4. This is an ecumenical season dedicated to prayer for the protection of creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. The concluding date is significant to Christians who observe October 4 as the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

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## **Notes**



***First Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9***

Brothers and sisters, I could not talk to you as spiritual people, but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ. I fed you milk, not solid food, because you were unable to take it. Indeed, you are still not able, even now, for you are still of the flesh. While there is jealousy and rivalry among you, are you not of the flesh, and walking according to the manner of man? Whenever someone says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely men?

What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building.

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***Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:12-13, 14-15, 20-21***

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

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

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

From his fixed throne he beholds  
all who dwell on the earth,  
He who fashioned the heart of each,  
he who knows all their works.

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

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

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

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***Gospel Acclamation: Luke 4:18***

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** The Lord sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor and to proclaim liberty to captives. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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### ***Gospel: Luke 4:38-44***

After Jesus left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her. He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them.

At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them. And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ.

At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

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### ***Meditation:***

For several days now we have been reflecting on St. Paul's insights on the difference between living a spiritual life and living a merely natural or "fleshly" life. Today's reading continues on this topic with a practical example. The fleshly condition of the Corinthians has given rise to jealousy and all sorts of divisions. When we are living merely according to our nature, we tend to look for ways to surpass others, something that will make us look special. Paul exposes how this way of thinking has divided the Christian community in Corinth. They were boasting about which faction they belonged to, based on the idea that a person is better or worse because he was converted by Paul rather than Apollos. This strikes Paul as absurd! "What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one."

When we live according to the flesh rather than as "spiritual people," we are prone to jealousy, and we can find any number of reasons to claim superiority over one another. We live in the "right" neighborhood, we have a better job, we favor the better sports team, we have a certain color of skin or hair, we are wealthier, and on and on. Paul points out that this sort of thinking only shows that we are "still of the flesh." It is a sign of spiritual immaturity. When we see things on a

spiritual plane, our way of valuing everything is based on God and his will for us. Status and recognition before men mean nothing compared to the “status” that God gives us in his own heart. He loves us and has called us to be one with him. It is God who is great, and we are all great in him. In God, as members of the one Body of Christ, none of us is of greater importance than anyone else. “Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth.”

The Gospel gives us further insight into how different things can be when we live on a spiritual level, trying to follow God’s will and to act out of love, rather than looking for our own advantage. The first example is that of the people concerned about Simon’s mother-in-law, who is ill with a severe fever. “They interceded with him for her” – a reminder to us of the importance of intercessory prayer for the sick – and Jesus healed her in response to their prayers. Later, all those who had sick relatives and friends brought them to Jesus to be healed. There is a beautiful collaboration between Jesus and those concerned for the sick. The sick are healed when others bring them to Jesus. These servants of the sick remind us not to focus only on our own wants and needs. We share in the mission of healing when we bring others to Jesus.

Simon’s mother-in-law also gives us a good example. When she is healed by Jesus, she does not sit around and focus on her own needs. She immediately gets up and begins to wait on others. This shows a beautiful spirit of gratitude for what the Lord has done for her, and a desire to share his love by serving those around her. When we focus on ourselves and pursue our own will, we provoke jealousy and division. We block the healing power of God. The simple people of the Gospel show us another way: Look to the needs of the other. Bring those in need to Jesus, both by exterior acts of service and by intercessory prayer. Trust in his power to heal and save.

The most selfless servant of all is Jesus himself. Throughout the Gospel he never stops emptying himself for the sake of those in need. Well into the night he lays his hands on each sick person brought to him, healing them all. After serving countless people in Capernaum, the next morning he sets out for other towns. Jesus does not live according to the natural desires of the flesh, which no doubt would have preferred to rest a bit rather than set out right away. He does not choose the more comfortable route. His one criterion for action is to do what the Father

sent him to do. In this, Jesus shows us the essence of what it means to live on a spiritual plane. It means to continuously discern the will of God and strive to live by it.

*In what ways do I still try to rank myself above others or hunt for higher social status? Which struggling person should I bring to Jesus through my prayers today? How can I turn my gratitude for God's help into immediate service to those around me?*

***Mary, empty my heart of all pride so that I may live only to serve Jesus in my neighbor.***

### **Notes**

**September 3, Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church**

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**First Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23**

Brothers and sisters: Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you considers himself wise in this age, let him become a fool, so as to become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God, for it is written:

*God catches the wise in their own ruses,*  
and again:

*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*

So let no one boast about human beings, for everything belongs to you, Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future: all belong to you, and you to Christ, and Christ to God.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6**

***To the Lord belongs the earth and all that fills it.***

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;  
the world and those who dwell in it.

For he founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers.

***R. To the Lord belongs the earth and all that fills it.***

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?  
or who may stand in his holy place?

He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,  
who desires not what is vain.

***R. To the Lord belongs the earth and all that fills it.***

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,  
a reward from God his savior.

Such is the race that seeks for him,  
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

***R. To the Lord belongs the earth and all that fills it.***

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**Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 4:19**

***Alleluia, alleluia.*** Come after me, says the Lord, and I will make you fishers of men. ***Alleluia, alleluia.***

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**Gospel: Luke 5:1-11**

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were

washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

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### ***Meditation:***

Today we ponder how much greater the "foolishness" of following Jesus is than the "wisdom of this world." This is first described by St. Paul, the great "fool for Christ" (1 Cor 4:10), and then portrayed in the beautiful and profound story of the miraculous catch of fish and the call of Simon Peter and his companions.

Yesterday, Jesus entered Peter's home and healed his mother-in-law. Today he gets into Peter's boat. His purpose seems to be simply to avoid the press of the crowd while speaking to them. However, getting into the boat is also his way of entering into Peter's life. We can imagine the sort of ideas that must have swirled through Peter's mind when Jesus got into his boat. This incident can remind us of our own experiences of being in the presence of the Lord, the times when he climbs into the "boat" of our own lives. At first we are a little surprised that he comes so close to us. We feel honored that the Lord has entered into our life. We feel special, chosen, loved, and we are struck by the power of his words. It is worthwhile to stop a moment and ponder the tremendous love of the Lord who comes to each of us so personally. He is not far away and unconcerned; he is right in our boat with us!

The Lord does not come simply to impress us with appealing words. He has much more in mind for us, if we are willing to trust and obey him. Jesus tells Peter and his companions to put out into deep

water and lower their nets for a catch. The “deep water” is rich in meaning. It indicates to us the untested realm of greater possibility, the endless horizon of God’s unknown plan for us. It is also a place of risk, a place where we feel the loss of security, of control, of comfort. We are not accustomed to deep water. We tend to stay close to shore, in the shallow water where we can put our feet down and feel secure. But if we are pursuing maturity in the spiritual life, the Lord will always call us to “put out into deep water.” He himself is an ocean, an ocean of love and mercy that we have not yet fully explored. It can be frightening to open our hearts to the depths of God’s love, but this is the only way we can find the real “catch,” the real fruitfulness of our life.

In the first reading, Paul urges the Corinthians to forsake the shallow water of worldly wisdom and to go deeper into the wisdom of God. “For the wisdom of this world,” which seems so secure and comfortable to us, “is foolishness in the eyes of God.” It gives us the illusion that we can remain in control, as long as we keep a tight grip on our life. God wants to show us that this is absurd. “*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*” We are foolish if we think we are in control of God, or in control of how his plan is unfolding in our life. Real wisdom consists in surrendering control over our life to God and finding our security in him. This is the “deep water” into which God is inviting us.

While Jesus helps the disciples to catch many fish, his deeper purpose is to “catch men” – starting with Simon himself. The fish are symbolic of the people whom we are called to draw into a relationship with Jesus and into his Church. Our fruitfulness depends completely on the Lord’s grace. Just as Peter and his companions worked all night and caught nothing, so we will catch nothing of real and lasting value by our own efforts. We may have, in our own minds, very good plans and projects, but the huge catch, more than we can even haul in, is always the result of following Jesus’ word, his absurd suggestion that we do things a different way. When we “let go and let God,” God can bring about abundant fruit from our smallest efforts.

*Where am I staying in the “shallow water” because I am afraid to lose control? What is one unexpected thing God might be asking me to do differently today? How can I let go of my own plans to make room for God’s growth?*

*Mary, guide my heart into the deep waters of God's will.  
St. Gregory the Great, pray for us.*

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**Gregory the Great** was born in Rome in 540 to a family of saints. His father Gordianus, mother Silvia, and two aunts, Trasilla and Emiliana, are all canonized saints. During his life he went from being Prefect of Rome to being a Benedictine abbot, and later became the first monk to be chosen as pope (590-604). Gregory's name is forever connected with the development of the Church's greatest sacred music, Gregorian chant. He was also responsible for re-energizing the Church's missionary efforts, including the evangelization of England. In the midst of all his accomplishments, Gregory remained a deeply contemplative man. "In that silence of heart, while we keep watch within through contemplation, we are as if asleep to all things that are without." He summed up the responsibilities of his office by describing the pope as the "servant of the servants of God." Gregory died on March 12, 604, and was immediately canonized by popular acclaim. He was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Boniface VIII in 1295.

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## Notes



**First Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5**

Brothers and sisters: Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. It does not concern me in the least that I be judged by you or any human tribunal; I do not even pass judgment on myself; I am not conscious of anything against me, but I do not thereby stand acquitted; the one who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, do not make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes, for he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts, and then everyone will receive praise from God.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 37:3-4, 5-6, 27-28, 39-40**

***The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.***

Trust in the LORD and do good,  
that you may dwell in the land and be fed in security.  
Take delight in the LORD,  
and he will grant you your heart's requests.

***R. The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.***

Commit to the LORD your way;  
trust in him, and he will act.  
He will make justice dawn for you like the light;  
bright as the noonday shall be your vindication.

***R. The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.***

Turn from evil and do good,  
that you may abide forever;  
For the LORD loves what is right,  
and forsakes not his faithful ones.  
Criminals are destroyed  
and the posterity of the wicked is cut off.

***R. The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.***

The salvation of the just is from the LORD;  
he is their refuge in time of distress.  
And the LORD helps them and delivers them;  
he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,  
because they take refuge in him.

***R. The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.***

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**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.***

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### **Gospel: Luke 5:33-39**

The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, “The disciples of John the Baptist fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink.” Jesus answered them, “Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.” And he also told them a parable. “No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins. And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”

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### **Meditation:**

Over the past few days, we have been pondering St. Paul’s words of wisdom describing the difference between the person who lives by the Spirit of God and the person who lives on a purely natural plane. Today Paul speaks about another area which distinguishes the spiritual man from the natural man, the matter of *passing judgment*. He reminds us that the Lord is the one who judges the hearts and minds of us all, so we should not rush to pass judgment on others.

By our natural perception, all we can see is a person’s exterior performance. We cannot read the heart, nor determine whether a person is trustworthy in God’s eyes. We cannot even accurately read our own hearts, much less the inner motivations of others. This is why Paul says he does not even pass judgment on himself. He humbly and wisely leaves such judgments in the hands of God: “the one who judges me is the Lord.” A time of judgment will indeed come, not when we can judge others but when we ourselves will be judged. The Lord will come again and “will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts.” Meanwhile, our task is to serve as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” – no matter what others may think of us.

The scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel do not have the advantage of knowing what Paul has learned by his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. They are full of religious ideas, but they apply them in a purely natural way. When they pass judgment, they condemn the sins of others

and congratulate themselves for their own great holiness. In this reading they are scrutinizing the actions of Jesus' disciples. They pass judgment on them because the disciples are not following all the exterior practices which were customary among devout Jews at that time. Jesus points out to the Pharisees that they are missing the essential point. They are so concerned with external rituals that they forget the reason for the rituals. The reason for fasting is to empty oneself of lesser things in order to receive something greater, the grace of God. The value of fasting is not in the self-denial itself but in the fruit it can bear.

Why do Jesus' disciples not fast? Because the fullness of God's grace is already present! They are like wedding guests, and Jesus is the groom. It makes no sense to continue preparing for the coming of the groom, the Messiah, when he has already arrived! The implication of Jesus' instruction is that the wedding banquet is already taking place. He is inviting the scribes and Pharisees to come to the feast. We can evaluate our own acts of self-denial based on whether they help us grow in union with Jesus. If our fasting is simply making us proud and self-righteous, we would be better off eating and drinking freely.

Jesus continues the instruction with a comparison between the Old Covenant and the New. The Old Covenant, with its various laws, rituals, and practices, had an important purpose, which was to prepare God's people for the New Covenant and the law of love. The Old Covenant was like old wine in its original leather container, the old wineskin. The New Covenant Jesus establishes with us is a "new wine." The new wine far surpasses the old! Jesus fills us with the fullness of divine life and love. This awesome gift cannot be contained in the practices and ways of thinking that characterized the Old Covenant. "New wine must be poured into fresh wineskins."

We are continually in the process of leaving behind our old ways and opening ourselves to the eternal newness of the Gospel. We have already received the "new wine" of life in Christ, but it keeps spilling out because we cling to the old ways of our fallen nature. This is why Jesus taught, as we read last Sunday, that each of us, if we want to be his disciple, "must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." This self-denial is the kind of fasting we need daily. It is the abandonment of the old wineskins of our natural self, so that we can follow Jesus and rejoice in the new life he gives us. If we are still examining the lives of

everyone else and passing judgment on them, we are wasting our time and energy, and we risk losing the greatest gift we have ever received. It is like saying, “The old is good” – which is nonsense. There is no comparison! There is no greater gift than the new wine of life in Christ!

*How can I overcome my tendency to pass judgment on others?  
What is one old habit or way of thinking that I need to let go of  
today? How does my pride interfere with the new life Jesus  
wants to give me?*

***Mary, empty my heart of old judgments so I may be filled with  
the new wine of Divine Love.***

### **Notes**

September 5, Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Virgin (Mother Teresa)

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**First Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:6b-15**

Brothers and sisters: Learn from myself and Apollos not to go beyond what is written, so that none of you will be inflated with pride in favor of one person over against another. Who confers distinction upon you? What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it? You are already satisfied; you have already grown rich; you have become kings without us! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we also might become kings with you.

For as I see it, God has exhibited us Apostles as the last of all, like people sentenced to death, since we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and men alike. We are fools on Christ's account, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clad and roughly treated, we wander about homeless and we toil, working with our own hands. When ridiculed, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we respond gently. We have become like the world's rubbish, the scum of all, to this very moment.

I am writing you this not to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

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**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:17-18, 19-20, 21**

***The Lord is near to all who call upon him.***

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

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

***R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.***

He fulfills the desire of those who fear him,  
he hears their cry and saves them.

The LORD keeps all who love him,  
but all the wicked he will destroy.

***R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.***

May my mouth speak the praise of the LORD,  
and may all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

***R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.***

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***Gospel Acclamation: John 14:6***

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

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***Gospel: Luke 6:1-5***

While Jesus was going through a field of grain on a sabbath, his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. Some Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Have you not read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry? How he went into the house of God, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions?” Then he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.”

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***Meditation:***

Yesterday Jesus used the image of new wine in new wineskins to explain that the Christian life is a whole new way of living. There is no value in trying to take a little bit of Christianity and apply it like a decoration onto a non-Christian way of life. We will only lose the little bit we have. The truth is, we have not received only a little bit. The Lord has given us a new mind and a new heart. He has made us a new creation, by the power of his Spirit dwelling in us. Today’s readings reveal two further aspects of this new way of living. In the Gospel we are challenged to think differently about the letter of the law. The first reading reveals a new way of thinking about what it means to be an Apostle of Christ.

The Pharisees had a very strict view of how to honor the Sabbath. Thus, when they saw the Apostles reaching down to pick a few grains to snack on as they walked, the Pharisees were shocked that they were “harvesting” and therefore breaking the Sabbath. What looks quite trivial to us was to them a grave violation of the holy law – and the law had become, in a sense, their god. Jesus challenges the Pharisees to adjust their way of thinking – to become new wineskins – by reminding them of how the great King David acted in the past. David did not simply pluck a few grains; he and his men ate the holy “bread of offering” that was reserved only for priests; yet he was not held accountable for this “violation” of the law. The example shows that the law is not absolute; it is not the highest criterion for right action. Jesus

goes on to explain that he himself has an authority that is higher than the letter of the law: “The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.” He is the Lord of everything. Jesus is really challenging the Pharisees, not to break the law, but to follow the new law he has come to establish, the law of love.

When it came to “keeping holy the Sabbath,” the Pharisees were extremely strict; but in our time, we are inclined to be extremely lax. In the past, the Third Commandment was widely observed throughout Christian countries, but no longer. Sunday used to be set aside for the Lord – no unnecessary work, no shopping. In fact, stores were not even open. Sunday was a time for worship, rest, and family recreation. Now Sunday has become a very busy day, with little attention given to the Lord. It is a day for catching up on work and for shopping. Often we are busier on Sundays than on weekdays. When Jesus declares that he is Lord of the Sabbath, he asks us whether we are honoring him as the Lord of our Sundays. We are not obliged to become Pharisees, but are we honoring other gods rather than the Lord?

The faith of the Corinthians was being distorted by a spirit similar to that of the Pharisees. They were getting “inflated with pride.” They were boasting, arguing about which faction had greater credentials, and growing self-satisfied. They seem to have begun thinking that being a Christian meant receiving some sort of earthly glory and recognition. Because of this, St. Paul corrects them with his Letter. He reminds them what it really means to follow Christ, and he points to the example of the Apostles. These acknowledged leaders of the Church are not first and highest, but lowest, “the last of all.” The Christian life has made them fools in the eyes of the world.

We can apply Paul’s description of the Apostles to ourselves. We too are called to bear persecution patiently and with love, to bless those who ridicule us, and to respond gently when slandered. We are to take the lowest place, even as we are looked down upon as “the world’s rubbish, the scum of all.” This way, the way of the “spiritual man,” goes against the preferences of the “natural man” in us. We hate to look foolish, to be scorned, to be treated like rubbish. We can only persevere if we stop clinging to human respect and cling instead to Jesus. We do not need to be in the “in” group. We do not need to look for a place in the world if we know that we have a place in the heart of God. With

praise and thanksgiving, we abandon ourselves to him, confident that he is the Lord of the Sabbath, of creation, of life and death – and the Lord of our own lives.

*How can I move from merely following religious rules to truly loving Jesus? In what ways do I tend to seek the world's approval instead of God's? Where in my life am I still too proud to take the lower place?*

***Mary, teach me to welcome the Cross and anchor my security in Jesus.***

***St. Mother Teresa, pray for us.***

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Anjezë (“Agnes”) Gonxha Bojaxhiu, the future **Mother Teresa of Calcutta**, was born August 26, 1910, in Skopje, Macedonia; she was the daughter of an ethnic Albanian grocer. At the age of twelve, she felt strongly that God was calling her to be a missionary to spread the love of God. At eighteen, she entered the Sisters of Loreto, an Irish congregation with missions in India. From 1931 to 1948 Mother Teresa taught at St. Mary’s High School in Calcutta. On a train trip in 1946, she experienced her “call within a call” – to work among the poorest of the poor. Once she was allowed by her superiors, Mother Teresa set forth, depending solely on Divine Providence. Her first mission was an open-air school for children in the slums of Calcutta. In time, she opened centers for the blind, aged, disabled, lepers, and the dying. The Holy See gave her permission to start her own order, “The Missionaries of Charity,” on October 7, 1950. Their work was to love and care for people that nobody cared for, the rejects of society. The order grew into an international religious family, which now includes active and contemplative sisters, priests, and brothers. In 1971, Mother Teresa was awarded the Pope John XXIII Peace Prize; in 1973, the Nehru Prize for her promotion of international peace and understanding; and in 1979, the Nobel Peace Prize. One of her famous quotations is: “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” She died on September 5, 1997. Considered one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s greatest humanitarians, Mother Teresa was canonized in 2016 by Pope Francis, who on February 11, 2025, added her feast day to the Church’s liturgical calendar as an optional memorial.

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