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way of the
Lord...

MARK 1:3

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Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart.

— LUKE 2:19

Dear Readers:



For twenty-eight years, I lived down a country lane in New England, six miles out of town. The red barn on this issue's front cover is evocative of those happy years for me. While I did not own a barn, many neighbors did. Barns offer shelter and protection for animals and storage for crops, feed, hay, tack or parking for tractors in winter. A barn sees activity in every season. Depending on the enterprise, barn contents might be quite diverse or even unexpected. And that brings me to my favorite barn story: One night, a long time ago, our Savior was born and lain in a manger in someone else's barn.

The Promised One was expected, but his arrival time was unknown. It is the same with his coming again. His forerunner's voice calls to us, still: "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Mark 1:3).

■ PAT GOHN, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

See page 103 for exciting news of two *Living Faith*
Retreats coming to New York and Wisconsin!

OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2026

Living Faith®

Volume 42 + Number 3

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Pat Gohn, Editorial Director

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James E. Adams, Founding Editor

Living Faith provides daily reflections based on a Scripture passage from the daily Mass. With readings for daily Mass listed with each devotion, this booklet helps Catholics pray and meditate in spirit with the seasons of the Church Year. Citations are from the Mass Lectionary, which is based on the *New American Bible*.

IMPRIMATUR

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Job 19:21-27 ✦ Psalm 27:7-9, 13-14 ✦ Luke 10:1-12

Eyes on the Prize

Yet know this: the Kingdom of God is at hand. LUKE 10:11

Jesus gives specific instructions as he sends the disciples forth: Bring nothing extra. Don't get distracted. Accept what peaceful households give you; don't waste time among those who reject you. Always remember the Kingdom of God is at hand. Clear instructions, but they can be daunting.

Consider the life of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Some of the older nuns gossiped about the teenager's very presence, opining that she got special treatment in the convent. When one of her sisters repeatedly splashed dirty water on her as they did the laundry, Thérèse refrained from betraying her annoyance. She stayed focused on the Lord, never trading an insult for an insult and refusing to be distracted from her charism of love.

Those who reject Jesus (or us) may be in our own families. We still love, of course. But with God's help, we can focus on the Kingdom rather than their slings and arrows.

St. Thérèse, intercede for me, that I may follow your example and keep my heart and soul focused on Jesus.

Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5 + Psalm 139:1-3, 7-10, 13-14 + Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Little Prophets

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. MATTHEW 18:4

When my children were small, I used to call them my “little prophets.” The things they spoke to me were often more insightful and interesting than anything I could come up with myself. In matters of faith, they consistently surprised me, sharing their ideas and images of God with a holy imagination far beyond my own. Their understanding seemed from another place entirely; many a song I have written was inspired by those little prophets.

As adults, we may tend to brush off children. Though usually not out of malice, our distraction, busyness or exhaustion may keep us from taking the time to truly see life in the way that they do.

Jesus, in setting children apart as an example, reminds us that not only are children deeply important to God but that we ourselves are children of a loving Father, who wants us to learn from him with the wide-eyed openness of children.

Give me the heart of a child, Lord, and humble my heart that I may know you.

Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17 + Psalm 119:66, 71, 75, 91, 125, 130
Luke 10:17-24

Dependent on God

*It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
that I may I learn your statutes.* PSALM 119:71

Popular culture often rewards the wealthy with fame and power. Sometimes, it seems like we love the rich and famous more than we love God. Yet, our Christian faith invites us to celebrate the countercultural Cross, that suffering and humility are pathways to holiness, to deep wisdom.

Consider the words from the psalmist above. Would you say that your afflictions have been good for you because they have helped you to learn God's ways? I'll speak for myself. When I've been hurt it's not easy for me to see the goodness. Usually, I need to move through grief in order to acknowledge that my hardships offer grace. Humility helps me learn. I learn how I am powerless, weak and dependent on God. I learn that God's ways are better than my own. God's grace frees me. It's better to follow Jesus. After all, Christ's glorious Cross and resurrection point to the best rewards, like the power of love.

Jesus, help me to trust in You.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 5:1-7 + Psalm 80:9, 12-16, 19-20
Philippians 4:6-9 + Matthew 21:33-43

Pointers From Paul

...the God of peace will be with you... PHILIPPIANS 4:9

Every now and then, St. Paul's letters sound like some advice from Dear Abby. The passage we hear today is one of those.

Feeling anxious? Stressed? Worried about politics, wars, divisions? Listen to some tips from the tentmaker from Tarsus. "Have no anxiety at all," Paul writes, "but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God" (v. 6).

That's just for starters. There's more.

Aim higher. Focus on what is lovely, just, pure, true, honorable, gracious, he says. The result? You will know God's peace. In our polarized world, ripped apart by conflict and bitterness, here is uplifting advice for the first Christians—a message of quiet reassurance and hope that still resonates. Paul's point is so simple: Strive to seek the good, live in gratitude, pray to a merciful God. Trust him. He will handle it.

Looking for some advice on how to find peace? There it is.
Who would not want to follow it?

■ DCN. GREG KANDRA

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

St. Faustina Kowalska, Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos

Galatians 1:6-12 + Psalm 111:1-2, 7-10 + Luke 10:25-37

Whose Gospel Are We Following?

I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel...

GALATIANS 1:6

St. Paul scolds the Galatians for forsaking the Gospel of Christ for a different gospel. This raises the question, how do we come to know the *true* Gospel of Christ? We can start by reading the Gospel for ourselves. Firsthand familiarity lays a solid foundation. We can also consult Scripture scholars who can offer us guidance and valuable insights. A booklet such as this, where a variety of authors offer suggestions for our pondering of the daily readings, can be a helpful tool. (I've been praying with *Living Faith* for decades!)

We can also look at the examples of individuals who based their lives on the Gospel—especially the saints. But, finally, one of the best ways to come to know the Gospel of Christ is to come to know Jesus personally through our daily prayer.

Jesus, I profess to be your follower. May my words and actions show that I really am.

■ SR. MELANNIE SVOBODA, S.N.D.

Confidence

There is need of only one thing. LUKE 10:42

I wish I could say that, like Mary in today's Gospel, I consistently choose the "one thing" that matters, "the better part." The truth is that, not infrequently, I am Martha, the *other* sister. I allow negative and self-absorbed judgments to color my attitude, focusing on what I don't have, and on what others could be—and should be—doing. My thinking becomes "worried about many things," (v. 41) rendering my heart anxious and burdened.

Yet, when I contemplate further Martha's response, I am moved by her candid words, by the familiarity they convey between her and her dear friend, Jesus. I easily imagine Martha's joy when she welcomed Jesus into their home, excited to listen to him, to just "be" with him. From this vantage point, Martha's comments to Jesus, her "do you not care" and "tell her to help me," (v. 40), have the voice of a real friend. She is visibly confident in Jesus' love for her.

In confident trust, what do you want to tell Jesus today? How will you listen?

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

Our Lady of the Rosary

Galatians 2:1-2, 7-14 ✦ Psalm 117:1-2 ✦ Luke 11:1-4

Prayer Guide

Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.

LUKE 11:1

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. He instructs them to praise the Father, ask for their daily bread and beg for forgiveness. The Son reveals the fatherhood of God.

God the Father loved us so much that he sent his only Son, born of a Virgin. He died for our sins so that we could become sons and daughters of that same Father. As Jesus directed his disciples, many of us also received guidance from our families and loved ones about how to pray.

On this feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, we celebrate Our Lady as a teacher of prayer and model of Christian living. Let us give thanks for the gifts of all who have taught us how to pray and offer the Rosary for them as we contemplate, along with Mary, the mysteries of her Son.

■ SR. MARY MERCY LEE, F.S.E.

Have you ever prayed a daily Examen? See page 100.

I Want to be Smart

O stupid Galatians! GALATIANS 3:1

Sometimes I might say, “That’s stupid.” If one of the students at our school hear me, they often will remind me that saying *stupid* is not nice. They treat it as if it were a swear word. Some Bible translations offer the word “foolish.” What St. Paul refers to with this statement is the Galatians’ spiritual confusion. They have had Jesus proclaimed to them and learned the message of the Gospel yet still choose to live contrary ways.

If we are honest, reflecting on our own lives, St. Paul might say the same thing to us. Sometimes, I think of the good Lord in heaven looking down and shaking his head: “Why are they doing that again?” We are wise and intelligent but sometimes are our worst enemies.

Reflect today about some of your foolish ways, and really think about this: Why do I do that when I know I shouldn’t? Then pray, asking the Lord to make you smart and diligent when faced with that situation in the future.

■ FR. EDWARD LOONEY

Fr. Edward Looney is a priest of the Diocese of Green Bay, a noted author and podcast host.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

St. Denis and Companions; St. John Leonardi

Galatians 3:7-14 + Psalm 111:1-6 + Luke 11:15-26

Boundaries

But upon returning, [the unclean spirit] finds it swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there, and the last condition of that man is worse than the first. LUKE 11:25-26

This reminds me so much of the dear clients who come to my office and do the sacred work of healing, forgiveness and transformation. They do what it takes to sweep the past clean and create internal order. This feels amazing—for them and for me, as a collaborator and witness to their progress.

However, if we want to maintain this clean and orderly internal space, our work does not stop here. There is one important component for protecting our peace—boundaries. Boundaries are how we define what can enter our sacred space and what cannot. The idea is that people are free to act however they wish, but not everything is acceptable in order to remain in proximity or in a relationship. Having wise, loving, strong boundaries ensures that our peace will remain impenetrable and our hard work will remain intact.

■ KRISTIN ARMSTRONG

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
27th Week in Ordinary Time

Galatians 3:22-29 ✚ Psalm 105:2-7 ✚ Luke 11:27-28

One In Christ

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. GALATIANS 3:28

More than one year ago, I stood in St. Peter's Square when white smoke arose, signaling the election of Pope Leo XIV. What an experience! Folks from all over the world, so different in some ways but all filled with joy, one in Christ.

What's amazing is that I don't have to go to Rome to experience that. Every time I'm at Mass, even if there's only a few other people present in the dimness of 6:30 a.m. in our Cathedral, it's the same, really. The emotional temperature may be lower, but here I'm surrounded by brothers and sisters from all walks of life, joined by Baptism and Communion in the Lord and each one of us—no matter who we are—called to go forth from that place—a square, a quiet church—into the world, carrying his Good News.

Lord, deepen my love for this Body of Christ.

■ AMY WELBORN

*Amy Welborn has authored more than thirty books.
She lives in Birmingham, AL.*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 25:6-10a + Psalm 23:1-6
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20 + Matthew 22:1-14

With the Eyes of God

*On this mountain, he will destroy
the veil that veils all peoples,
the web that is woven over all nations;
he will destroy death forever. ISAIAH 25:7-8*

Isaiah offers us an image of a tender, caring God who feeds us richly, who wipes away our tears and who removes our reproach. This same Holy One, insists the prophet, will destroy the veil that veils all peoples.

Could this veil be anything superficial that stands in the way of our seeing one another as beloved and held in God's unconditional love? And once the web that is woven over all nations has been lifted, might we catch at least a glimpse of what God sees in every soul: God's unique and cherished Creation? How might this unveiling, this new way of seeing, transform the way we approach every person in our beautiful yet wounded world?

Loving God, Holy One, help me to see as you do.

■ SR. CHRIS KOELLHOFFER, I.H.M.

Galatians 4:22-24, 26-27, 31—5:1 ✚ Psalm 113:1-7 ✚ Luke 11:29-32

One Sign Really Matters

This generation is an evil generation, it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah. LUKE 11:29

It's fair to ask why Jesus becomes so animated about seeking signs. Referring to his contemporaries as an “evil generation” for doing so, he's clearly pulling no punches.

Here's how I make sense of it. Seeking a sign is a form of hedging my bets, stopping short of entrusting myself fully to Christ's lordship over my life. *What have you done for me lately*, I am wont to ask, as if to be so presumptuous to put God to the test. This “show me” attitude is a disguise for my reluctance to let go and let God. This is what I am brought to see.

Most regrettably, it turns my attention away from the one sign that really matters, the love of God poured out in the Paschal Mystery.

■ FR. DENNIS GALLAGHER, A.A.

Visit LivingFaith.com, and feel free to join the conversations around the daily devotion.

Faith in Action

For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness. GALATIANS 5:5

Maybe, like me, you've heard stories about a random donation made to a food bank or shelter just as the volunteers had exhausted their budget or given away the last bag of groceries. Their faith never faded, even when everything looked bleak. Hope remained vibrantly alive.

If only we could let go of our own opinions about what we need or what's good for us and, instead, stay hopeful even in the emptiness of not knowing. That's the power of faith in action, trusting completely in the Spirit to lead us.

Having faith doesn't mean we do nothing to help ourselves; rather, in faith, we remain *actively* open to the countless ways God answers our prayers. We place our hope in the truth that living the Gospel with our lives has one sure outcome.

Holy Spirit, guide us every hour to a closer walk with Jesus as we meet the joys and challenges of life.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14
St. Callistus I

Galatians 5:18-25 + Psalm 1:1-4, 6 + Luke 11:42-46

Dying to Self, Rising With Christ

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. GALATIANS 5:24

St. Paul gives us a useful key to understanding how to follow Jesus. True disciples seek to discern God's will and follow his commandments. But to do so we must first die to our own desires and passions—to the flesh, as St. Paul says—through the death and resurrection of Christ.

I've found that family life is a great way to practice this “dying” because it offers daily opportunities to offer acts of love for my kids—by helping them with a project, engaging in conversation about their interests or just taking them with me to the store. I've failed many times in this call, which is probably why God, in his mercy, gives me so many opportunities! In seeking the good of others, rather than our own, we build up the virtues in our lives and grow (even slowly!) in holiness.

Dearest Jesus, give me opportunities to crucify my flesh and extend love to others.

■ JONATHAN F. SULLIVAN

Ephesians 1:1-10 + Psalm 98:1-6 + Luke 11:47-54

More Than a Simple Greeting

Grace to you and peace from God...and...Jesus Christ.

EPHESIANS 1:2

The first line of an email often stumps me. Should I start with “Greetings”? “Dear ____”? Or simply, “Hello”?

St. Paul didn’t share my dilemma. He crafted his own, putting a Christian twist on the standard Greek *chairein* (“greetings”) to offer *charis*: “grace.” This he paired with “peace”—which to the Jews means not just the absence of conflict but inner wholeness and tranquility.

He starts nearly every letter this way: “Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” It’s not a way to say hello; the Apostle is bestowing God’s grace and peace on those who will hear his letter.

One of whom is you.

It’s not easy to live the way God asks. But there is real help in God’s grace and real comfort in his peace. And those blessings are poured out for us in Word and Sacraments.

Today, may you live in the power of his grace!

■ SARAH CHRISTMYER

Ephesians 1:11-14 + Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 12-13 + Luke 12:1-7

Christ First

In Christ we were also chosen...so that we might exist for the praise of his glory... EPHESIANS 1:11-12

My mother is ninety-one and part of “The Greatest Generation.” True to the definition, she lives for others and for Christ by going to daily Mass, praying constantly and joyfully giving the shirt off her back to anyone in need.

In the other extreme, I’m raising three teens who are part of the “Me Generation.” I have to work doubly hard raising them as I fight against the messages they’re being bombarded with: immediate gratification, self-importance and self-promotion. They aren’t the only ones.

At the time Paul wrote to the Ephesians, Ephesus was made up of many immoral, self-centered and idolatrous people. Paul’s words were meant to inspire the believers to become their time’s “Greatest Generation” by putting others and Christ before themselves and existing for the praise of his glory.

Supreme Lord, inspire me to put you before all else in my thoughts and in my actions.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ephesians 1:15-23 + Psalm 8:2-7 + Luke 12:8-12

Angels Among Us

What is man that you should be mindful of him...

You have made him little less than the angels...

PSALM 8:5-6

Surveys have indicated more than half of Americans believe extraterrestrial aliens exist beyond our planet. It is thought these mysterious creatures may have visited and, even, landed on earth. Most space scientists do not rule out the existence of life outside this planet we inhabit.

I have my own opinion about aliens: I believe these cosmic visitors have come to earth from far away. In a certain sense, angels are supernatural aliens. Angels are mentioned over 300 times in the Old and New Testaments. We even have some of their names: Raphael (Tobit 12:15), Michael (Revelation 12:7), Gabriel (Luke 1:26).

Some people who believe in aliens may also refuse to believe in angels. What's the problem? Maybe you even know another person who is really an angel in disguise.

Thank God for giving us our helpful angelic visitors and friends.

■ FR. JAMES MCKARNS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6 + Psalm 96:1, 3-5, 7-10
1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b + Matthew 22:15-21

Called by Name

I have called you by your name... ISAIAH 45:4

We are called by name from birth. As parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, teachers, co-workers and neighbors call us by name, our identity is confirmed. We understand who we are and whose we are whenever we hear our name.

Scripture tells us that God calls each one of us by name. As the prophet Isaiah reminds his anointed, Cyrus, “I have called you by your name.” This call is more than an endearing word. For whenever God calls us by name, our identities as God’s sons and daughters are confirmed.

God, the Creator of the Universe, creates us in love and for love. With living faith, we can be confident that we are not random molecular combinations but unique creatures loved by God into being and called by name.

May we hear the loving and merciful voice of God calling us by name today.

■ JEM SULLIVAN, PH.D.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19

Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues and Companions

Ephesians 2:1-10 ✦ Psalm 100:1-5 ✦ Luke 12:13-21

Created for Good

For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them. EPHESIANS 2:10

I recently watched an interview with a Sherpa, a member of a Tibetan ethnic group renowned for their mountaineering efforts in the Himalayas. The interviewer asked him what he does when gets scared in this dangerous work. He replied: “When I get scared, I remember who I am.”

It’s easy enough to get scared as we navigate our lives and work. We sometimes come upon challenges we’re not sure we can overcome. If only we had the confidence of this Sherpa. If only we could say with confidence: “I am God’s handiwork, the beloved of the Lord, made to be an instrument for sending God’s good works out into the world. This is why I am here. This is my identity and purpose. This is everything I am. And I will not be afraid.”

Help me remember, O Lord, that you have made me for your purpose and plan.

■ STEVE GIVENS

Steve Givens is a spiritual director and has written for Living Faith since 1988. Visit GivensCreative.com.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

St. Paul of the Cross

Ephesians 2:12-22 ✦ Psalm 85:9-14 ✦ Luke 12:35-38

Jesus the Capstone

Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

EPHESIANS 2:21-22

I love this Scriptural analogy. Living in Italy, the architectural marvels there spoke volumes, and I experienced arches like nowhere else in the world. Plentiful but never commonplace, they characterized the cities and countrysides around me. They demonstrated first-hand the critical nature of a capstone keeping everything together, strong and beautiful against the test of time.

Jesus—the capstone: Isn't this *who* and *what* he truly wants to be for every one of us? When I intentionally allow our Master Builder to be that centerpiece of my life, holding all else together, I, too, become an incredible dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Thank you, O Lord, for holding us together as nothing else can and for building us into that sacred space in you.

■ KATHLEEN SWARTZ MCQUAIG

As an author and teacher, Kathleen shares stories from the heart. Go to KathleenSwartzMcQuaig.com.

Ephesians 3:2-12 + Isaiah 12:2-6 + Luke 12:39-48

‘Entrusted With Much’

Much will be required of the person entrusted with much...

LUKE 12:48

Luke's Gospel passage starts with Jesus' warning that we be prepared, for we do not know the hour when "the Son of Man will come" (v. 40). Fair enough. None of us know when our time on earth will end and we'll meet the Son of Man.

Peter, of course, wants to know if this message is particularly applicable to him and his fellow Apostles, and Jesus responds with an emphatic yes. "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."

It is a blunt answer that should be not lost on us. Like the Apostles, we have been entrusted with much, that is, with the saving message of Christ and the mandate to share that Good News. It is a weighty responsibility. Thank goodness we are not bearing this alone. The grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit sustain us.

O Holy Spirit, help me to be worthy of what I'm entrusted with.

■ GREG ERLANDSON

Greg Erlandson is a husband, father of four and a writer.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

St. John Paul II

Ephesians 3:14-21 + Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 11-12, 18-19 + Luke 12:49-53

Enduring Difficulties

That you, rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength...to know the love of Christ...so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. EPHESIANS 3:17B-18A, 19

Many years ago, I came across this passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, describing what he was asking for them in prayer. It was a time of significant struggle in my life, and when I opened to a sense of being "rooted and grounded in love," it carried me through many difficult days. And it continues to give me a sense of God's presence when a new challenge comes.

When I hear news of so many in our world enduring great difficulties, I have begun to pray for each of them, that they may experience in some way that they are "rooted and grounded in love."

Dear Lord, help us all to have the strength to know the love of Christ.

■ PATRICIA LIVINGSTON

*Got a prayer need? Post it at
LivingFaith.com/prayer-center.*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

St. John of Capistrano

Ephesians 4:1-6 + Psalm 24:1-6 + Luke 12:54-59

Interpreting the Present Time

Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

LUKE 12:56B

There is never an easy—or at least *ideal*—time to be a disciple of Jesus. Every season of life, and every era of history over the last two millennia, has featured the difficulty in living faithfully according to the Gospel. But no matter the trials we face, whether from misguided messages, temptations or other distractions from modeling our life on the Good News, we are called to fidelity and patient discipleship.

St. John of Capistrano, whom we celebrate today, was aware of *how to interpret the present time*. Throughout his life of adoring Jesus, he defended the truth of Christ thoroughly and ardently. May we look to his example in using the present time to embrace Christ's teaching.

We thank you, Lord God, for the example of your servant St. John de Capistrano in living the Gospel with zeal and courage. May we have that same eagerness to follow you.

■ MR. JUSTIN MCCLAIN, O.P.

Justin McClain is a veteran Catholic educator, author and consultant. He lives with his family in Maryland, within the Archdiocese of Washington.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

St. Anthony Mary Claret

Ephesians 4:7-16 + Psalm 122:1-5 + Luke 13:1-9

‘Joined and Held Together’

...we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love. EPHESIANS 4:15-16

With God's love and mine was the phrase she used to close her messages. Those words continue to stay with me, especially when I'm feeling blue. *With God's love and mine* reminds me I'm more than just myself. Without a doubt, you are too. Loneliness has been described as a public health epidemic. And I believe it. We get so caught up in ourselves at times, it's hard to believe we're linked together. But we are.

Scripture describes us as individuals intentionally *joined and held together* by the Creator's love. That's not wishful thinking—it's God's truth. John Donne said it this way: *No man is an island entire of itself*. If you get to feeling like an island, the remedy is simple. Rather than wait for others to reach out to you, extend yourself as a bridge. All it takes is God's love and yours.

■ GAIL GOLEAS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 22:20-26 + Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51
1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 + Matthew 22:34-40

What Governs My Choices?

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. MATTHEW 22:37-38

In my sixties, now, minor memory issues had started to irritate me. Then one day I was volunteering with folks who were at least ten years older, and humorous stories about memory lapses started flying. This was normal, it seemed. Who knew?

Perhaps I didn't, I realized, because most of my friends—the people I sort through life with—are younger than I, as they're the parents of my kids' friends, whom they'd birthed in their twenties and thirties while I had my sons in my forties. In other words, my sense of “normal” had developed in that bubble, and it made me think: What about my sense of the fundamental purpose and direction of my life? What “greatest commandment” governs my choices? Is that shaped by my conversations with the world—or the conversation with Christ?

Jesus, I listen to you.

Kindness Versus Politeness

Be kind to one another... EPHESIANS 4:32

My fourteen-year-old son is currently enrolled in an etiquette class. Spoiler alert: He's not thrilled about it. "Why does it matter if I don't know the difference between a dinner and a dessert fork?" he bemoans. The mom in me who wants to raise a polite man poised for success insists these things do matter, but my Christian heart acknowledges there are far more important "skills" to cultivate in life.

Manners are nice, cloaked in civility and etiquette. They can get you far in life—but not far enough. As followers of Jesus, we're called to be kind, not just nice. Kindness requires the gift of self. It's more than chewing with your mouth closed. It's inviting a lonely kid to the table to sit with you. It's showing compassion to coworkers who would be easier to avoid because they can act annoying. Sure, I'd rather my son not tear apart his bread like *Oliver Twist*, but I pray for his kindness far more than his politeness and success.

Keeping It Real

What is the Kingdom of God like? LUKE 13:18

We make it so complicated, don't we? When we start to talk about religion, we can end up wading into all the "ologies"—theology, anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology and more—subjects that challenge the brain (and frustrate the spellcheck on your laptop.)

So, what a relief to encounter passages like this one from Luke, where Jesus deals in things that are easier to grasp: seeds, a bush, birds, flour, dough. Christ often spoke of things we recognize from everyday life: he preached about sparrows, grains of sand and lost coins—what we can see, touch, hold. We realize, with delight and gratitude, how Jesus made his lessons relatable and real. The Kingdom of God, we discover, is not abstract. We encounter it every day. Maybe some of the most important work we can do is to pray to embrace that—and to live each day with a sense of imagination, wonder and faith. From that, loaves may rise and branches grow!

■ DCN. GREG KANDRA

Deacon Greg will be "keeping it real" at our next Living Faith retreat. Details on page 103.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

Sts. Simon and Jude

Ephesians 2:19-22 + Psalm 19:2-5 + Luke 6:12-16

Marriage Advice

Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord. EPHESIANS 2:21

Sometimes, at a bridal shower, a lovely small notebook is passed around for guests to write marital advice for the bride-to-be. I remember the occasion of my niece's shower, and I wrote something short but what I believed to be helpful and true: "*Keep God at the center.*"

Fifty-three years into my own marriage, I find myself quite often saying to my husband, "I am so thankful we have kept our faith!" As in any decades-long marriage, our promises of "good times and bad, sickness and health" have been lived into and tested. There were so many times that our only recourse was to turn to the Lord and trust that he was working in whatever challenge confronted us.

Truly, it is the Lord who has held this messy, very human endeavor together and has slowly, and painstakingly, built us into his dwelling place.

Perhaps St. Paul is telling the Ephesians and us: *Trust the process!*

■ JENNIFER CHRIST

Ephesians 6:10-20 + Psalm 144:1-2, 9-10 + Luke 13:31-35

The Prophet Weeps

Jerusalem, Jerusalem... LUKE 13:34

We see appropriate extremes of gentility and power in Jesus in today's Gospel. When some Pharisees warn him, "Herod wants to kill you" (v. 31). Jesus explodes, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons...'" Does he suspect a setup? His answer is itself a warning; he will continue his mission "today and tomorrow," but look out for that "third day"! (v. 32).

But then, when Jesus catches sight of Jerusalem, he immediately breaks down: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem..." He called Herod a fox, but he calls himself a mother hen, longing to "gather her brood under her wings" (v. 34). He knows what awaits him in Jerusalem, the death of a "prophet" (v. 33), like so many before him. He is, on the one hand, threatened with death, on the other hand, desperate to save the little ones in his care. Where do I fit in? Is not my heart touched by the cry of Jesus? Can I see where there are others who are in need that I can gather and protect and hold?

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30
30th Week in Ordinary Time

Philippians 1:1-11 + Psalm 111:1-6 + Luke 14:1-6

Deeper Healing From Jesus

In front of him there was a man suffering from dropsy.

LUKE 14:2

Dropsy is a common term for generalized swelling or any excessive fluid build-up in the body. It is not a disease *per se*. Rather it is a symptom of some serious underlying cause, such as congestive heart failure, kidney malfunction or liver disease. Yet, we are told Jesus *healed* this man of dropsy. This means he must have directed his healing powers not merely to the symptom but to the deep underlying cause of the symptom.

Jesus wants to do the same for our spiritual unwellness. He wants to heal not merely a symptom, such as frequent irritability, a sense of hopelessness, judgmentalism, the lack of joy. Jesus, desires to heal the possible underlying causes, such as the absence of prayer, a lack of trust in God, fixation on material things, forgetfulness of God's personal love for each one of us.

Jesus, lead me to see the deeper underlying causes of my spiritual unwellness.

■ SR. MELANNIE SVOBODA, S.N.D.

Philippians 1:18b-26 + Psalm 42:2-3, 5 + Luke 14:1, 7-11

The Road to Joy

I shall...continue in the service of all... PHILIPPIANS 1:25

Want to do something good for yourself today? Do something for someone else. This is a consistent finding in research studies. When we help others, it helps us. It can result in a kind of “helper’s high,” which elevates our mood, reduces stress and boosts our self-esteem. Moreover, serving others gives our life a deeper sense of meaning and purpose.

With the decline in practice of the Faith in our society today, and what appears to be an increasing self-focus, people report being increasingly unhappy. But the most joyful people I know are strong women and men of faith whose lives were given in service. When we serve others in faith, as Jesus did, we ironically find ourselves.

Start small. Do one good thing for someone else today. It just might begin for you a new road to joy.

■ MSGR. STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

The holiday season will be upon us soon. Make a plan to support those in need via a gift to the Living Faith Foundation. See pages 104-105.

Prayers & Blessings

Prayers for the Morning

Oh, Lord, a teacher once told me there were two ways to greet a new day: “Good morning, God!” vs. “Good God, it’s morning.” I still chuckle at that, for I recognize the truth in it. Lord of Everything, help me to always be happy to greet you, to receive your love in my heart and your help through my day. Deliver me from negativity. Keep me in your peace. **AMEN.**

Jesus, help me to delight in you this day. Send me into the world with your Spirit and your joy. Make me your instrument. Help me to stay alert to your movements and workings, and let me move in concert with you. Be my strength and my song. **AMEN.**

Lord, Jesus, may your Advent at Christmas, and the promise of your Second Coming, bring peace, hope and wonder to my day and to all the world. I call upon the intercession of Mary, Our Blessed Mother, and St. Joseph to pray for all those seeking truth and meaning in their lives to receive the gift of faith in your coming. **AMEN.**

Prayers & Blessings

Prayers for the Evening

What a day, Lord! I could not have predicted half the things that happened. But you know and have seen it all. Help me to rest in you as the night draws near. Be my shelter and my shield, my safe refuge. Renew me so that I may be strengthened and equipped to listen to you and do your will when I awake. **AMEN.**

Jesus, you know everyone and everything. Yet, in faith, I place all my petitions in your hands. As I sleep, you see the now and the not yet, those I love and those in need. You see the sick and those soon to die, those suffering from wounds we can see and the hidden ones, those under threat from violence, wars, storms or peril. Send us your peace and Presence. **AMEN.**

Come, Lord Jesus, come. You are the Prince of Peace, the Promised Messiah. Come into my heart and into our troubled world to save us. Grant that this night brings us closer to you, even as we sleep. I thank you for this day that has passed and for the blessed hope of Christmas. **AMEN.**

Prayer Prompt

The Daily *Examen*

The *Examen* is at the heart of St. Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*; it is his way of entering into the habit of daily reflective prayer. It remains the central exercise in a spirituality that is focused on "finding God in all things." So it's not just another kind of prayer but, rather, a way of becoming more prayerful, more aware of and open to God throughout our days.

It's for this reason that the *Examen* has become an important daily prayer practice for so many people. It's a prayer that forces us to slow down and pay attention, a prayer that ends with that most powerful of prayers: "Thank you." It's a prayer that St. Ignatius says we should pray every day, even if we have time for no other prayer.

Normally prayed near the end of the day, the *Examen* is an opportunity, before the day slips away from us, to recall (or perhaps to see for the first time) where we encountered God. For when we do not stop and do this, we miss the blessings. We often operate on autopilot, and we just don't see. We just don't know. But when we stop and pay attention, we can begin to live lives of gratitude. For we can't say "thank you" for something we don't recognize as gift.

The Five Steps of the *Examen*

The exact language of the steps of the prayer varies a little between

interpretations, but in its simplest form, the *Examen* includes some version of these five steps, and it can be done in as little as five or ten minutes.

Be in God's presence: Relax and be still. Let the tensions of the day slip away. Ask for God's help in looking at your day with honesty.

Review your day: Hour by hour, notice your blessings and challenges. See your day as you imagine God sees it. Notice your interactions and opportunities, and don't forget the ordinary blessings and miracles of modern life.

Pay attention to your emotions: Savor a few of these moments, and pray from them. Positive or negative, both hold meaning. Look for those things that drew you closer to or further away from God.

Speak to God: Reflect on what has happened during your day, and talk to God about what you have learned in your reflection. Ask God to show you what is most important. Rejoice in the times you were drawn closer to God. Ask forgiveness for the times you resisted God's presence and action. Thank God for the awareness of it all.

Look to tomorrow: Ask God to be a bigger part of your day tomorrow. Ask for the grace you need to be more aware and more grateful. Be practical and specific. Be open to change.

The *Examen* very well may become the most important personal prayer of our lives or perhaps the prayer that begets all other forms of prayer.

■ STEVE GIVENS

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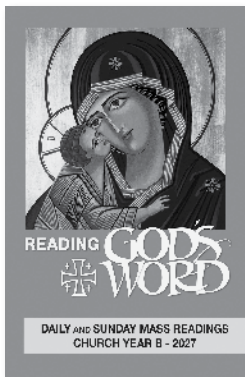
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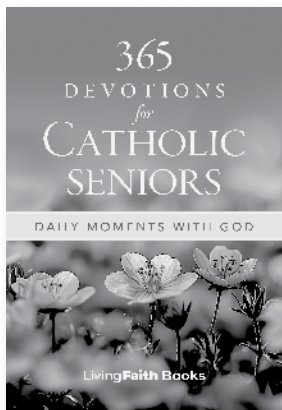
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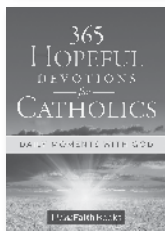
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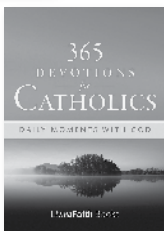
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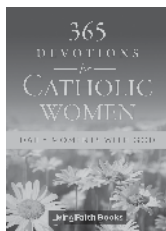
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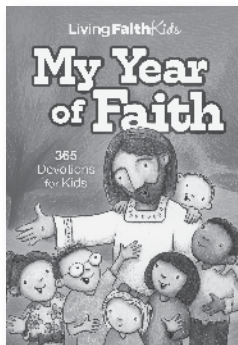
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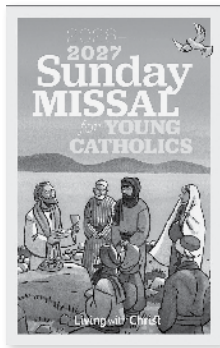


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A Christmas Prayer

Word Made Flesh,
You came to share our humanity
so we might share
Your Divinity.

As our voices rise in praise
throughout this Christmas Season,
we pray that the Good News of
Your Birth
might spread far and wide
to a world that is sorely in need of
Your Love.



AMEN



...make straight his paths.

MARK 1:3

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