



A Year of Prayer

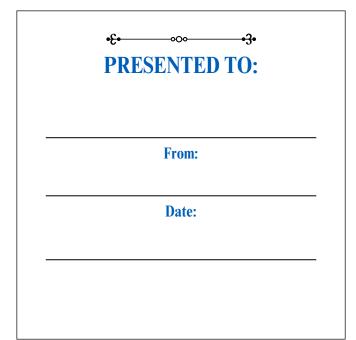
Vincentian Spirituality with CEO Luis Gonzalez



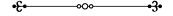


Vincentian Spirituality with CEO Luis Gonzalez





Letter from Luis Gonzalez



Two years ago I began writing short reflections on the daily Gospel readings, inspired by and grateful for the blessing of being here at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The graces He has poured out have been more abundant than I could ever hope for and it is with humble joy that I share them with you in this book and say THANK YOU for enabling us to serve our neighbors as we do. May His Grace and Peace be upon vou and your loved ones always.

January

1/1/2023

Gospel of the day: Luke 2:16-21 Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

Imagine being one of the shepherds that night, being told of the birth of the Savior and where to go to find Him, coming up to the simple manger and seeing the Infant Child held in His Mother's arms. Speaking to her and sharing the incredible story of the angelic vision and miraculous encounter must have been surreal, compounded by the gentle and peaceful manner in which she must have responded. The serenity of the moment would have been transformative to the shepherds and Mary herself, and we read in the Gospel that she pondered these things in her heart - as she always does. May she inspire us to reflect and ponder each day, to be filled with serenity and faith in Him, and to be humble to submit to the Will of God. Mary, Mother of God, please pray for us!

1/2/23

Gospel of the day: John 1:19-28 Memorial of Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen

The beginning of the new year is a time ripe with new intentions, goals, and aspirations, a time to begin the year with a new slate and leave behind the things of the past year that were perhaps not our finest moments or were profound struggles. New hope, new goals, and new aspirations are wonderful and uplifting - do any of these include a goal to grow in humility and meekness, to follow the example of John the Baptist and decrease oneself so that Christ might increase? We have a beautiful example today of what humility can look like in a life well lived that we should seek to emulate.



We all know that John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord and embraced his role completely. He preached specifically that he was not worthy to untie the sandal straps of the Lord and knew his place. What is amazing is that he did not know WHO Jesus was until this moment recorded in Scripture, so all he did, he did in complete faith and without having all the details provided. He acted without hesitation and yet without having all the answers provided. We often take the approach that we have a right to know God's plan before we act or that we won't act upon it until our questions are satisfied. John the Baptist simply needed to be told what to do and he did it - no questions asked. Pray for a faith like his.

1/4/23 •E• •Cospel of the day: John 1:35-42 Memorial of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Sharing in the joy and excitement of discovering the Messiah is the example we read in the Gospel today. Think of how this sharing changed the world and the lives of those they loved. John the Baptist sharing with Andrew and John, Andrew sharing with Simon Peter...the foundations of the church. We have the opportunity and obligation to do the same - to share in our example as faithful disciples the love, mercy, and joy of Christ. We must be vessels of His grace to bring His light to others - how blessed are we to have such ample opportunity to do so in a world that has become cold and dark to the Gospel message.



Gospel of the day: John 1:43-51 Memorial of St. John Neumann, Bishop

Have you stopped to consider the truth and reality that YOU were individually and uniquely called by Christ to follow Him and be His disciple because He knows and sees YOU? Each of us is called to a personal encounter and relationship with Christ. He seeks to know us and love us as individuals. The intimate encounter with Nathaniel after having called Phillip is an inspiring reminder of this fact no doubt He has called YOU already. My prayer this morning before the Blessed Sacrament is that you warmly and fully embrace Him for Who He is and allow Him to love you as He desires, especially on this eve of the Epiphany when He is manifested to all.

Gospel of the day: Mark 1:7-11 Memorial of St. André Bisette

The humility of John the Baptist, declaring he is not worthy to loosen the straps of the sandals of the One to come, is reflected today in the lowly porter of Mount Royal in Montreal, St. Andre Bisette. Over one million people attended his funeral, and this humble patron of St Joseph is a reminder that God works through every one of us in every place and in every age, if we submit ourselves to Him and humbly offer Him all that we are.



The wedding feast of Cana is the beginning of the public ministry of Christ, which is, of course, significant for us as Christians. But there is the added gift of witnessing the significance of seeking the intercession of our Blessed Mother. It is Mary who asks Jesus to perform His first public miracle and because of their perfect relationship, He does not deny His Mother's request. Furthermore, what does she tell the servants, who represent us? "Do whatever He tells you." A perfect circle of love between Mother and Son to inspire our own relationship with her.



Gospel of the day: Matthew 2:1-12 The Epiphany of the Lord

There is a bit of a cliché that says "It's all in God's timing," but what does that really mean? Do we live this truth, or do we use the phrase when we aren't sure what else to say? The Epiphany that we celebrate today to conclude the Christmas season is the epitome of God's timing. The birth of Christ changed human history and it was to those people on the outside, the fringes of life, who first came to know and believe. No fanfare, no grand arrival simple arrival in an obscure stable in a small town to unknown faces. But all of it was ordained by Him, planned by Him, created by Him as part of His plan for each one of us. It is His timing always, not ours.



Gospel of the day: Matthew 3:13-17 The Baptism of the Lord

In the story of the Baptism of the Lord, the theme of the Lord's humility is easy to focus on. His complete willingness to be labeled a sinner in need of repentance and be baptized just like everyone else is evident in this story. But consider also the marvelous grace upon John the Baptist when "he allowed" Jesus to be baptized despite his initial objection. He needed the grace to be part of this exercise of humility and open the door to grace for the whole world. It is a challenge and call for us to allow Christ into our lives and work even more abundantly - He does not force Himself.



1/10/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 1:21-28

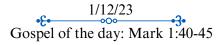
We like to think of Jesus as the kind, forgiving, loving, and gentle Son of God that He is, a joy to be around, serene, and easy-going. And He is. But we forget - or choose to overlook - that He is also The One who commands the wind and seas and has authority over all, The One who destroys sin and with a word commands evil away and crushes death. He has authority over all, and it is up to us to choose obedience and to submit to Him in order to discover peace and forgiveness in our lives.



1/11/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 1:29-39

Whether we realize it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, everyone is looking for Him. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus goes off to pray very early in the morning and the apostles go looking for Him. Upon finding Him in prayer, they tell Him that everyone is looking for Him, and they are speaking of us. We are continually seeking Him out, looking for peace, wisdom, fortitude, a sense of purpose and being. The more we come to realize this yearning and internal search, the deeper our prayer and relationship with Him becomes, and the greater the flow of grace in our lives.





Sometimes we overthink and complicate things, and we make things so difficult when the reality is that we need to take it to Jesus for an answer, as well as have the tranquility and humility to accept it. The leper came forward in complete humility, an outcast doomed to die, and put it simply - if You wish, You can make me clean. Simple. Straightforward. Christ responds just as simply - He willed it and the man was cured. So it is - or should be with us. Trust and believe with the strength and simplicity of the leper and be anointed with the grace and healing of God. Trust Him without failing, find peace in Him, and proclaim His glory to all. My prayer this morning before the Blessed Sacrament for you is to be blessed with the faith of that leper.

1/13/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 2:1-12

The healing of the paralytic today is about the story of the four who brought him to Jesus and lowered him from the roof, undeterred by the obstacles before them. Their faithfulness and perseverance are a model and reminder of our call and responsibility as disciples. Jesus could have healed the paralytic at any time, but He waited for the friends to act in such faith before miraculously healing him. He is waiting for you to do your part - will you?



1/14/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 2:13-17

Each of us is called and invited to follow Jesus, just as Matthew is in today's Gospel reading. His immediate response and acceptance should be ours as well, but consider the impact our YES to Him has on those around us. By accepting His invitation, we become a channel of grace for others and connect them to Him. We have no idea who is dependent on us to introduce them to Jesus - our YES extends beyond ourselves to all those we know and encounter.



Gospel of the day: John 1:29-34

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Every week, every day at Mass, we hear these beautiful and reassuring words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Christ came to save each and every one of us, and the Mass is our opportunity and blessing to be able to enter into this profound mystery and be reconciled to Him. It is in the receiving of the Blessed Sacrament, the Word made flesh, the Holy Eucharist, that we come face to face with Our Savior to experience His forgiveness and be united to Him. How humbling it is to be called to behold the Lamb of God and sit at the banquet table.

1/16/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 2:18-22

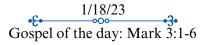
We have all heard the adage "can't fit a square peg in a round hole" and understand its meaning. We can't force things where they don't belong and today's gospel reading is a good example of that. Past understanding and experiences of faith, the Church, of God Himself, cannot be the experience we try to force into our current life. We must grow in understanding, deepen in faith, become wiser in knowledge to accept the truths of our faith and come into relationship with Him. It is this newness of faith and understanding that must be constantly renewed and enables us to fall more and more deeply in love with Him. Seek, therefore, renewed life in Christ.

Memorial of St. Anthony, Abbot

Sometimes in life, we get so wrapped up in the details and the minutiae of rules and order that we forget to step back and look at the broader picture. The old adage about seeing the forest for the trees is fitting to apply to today's Gospel, and Jesus reminds us to take that broader view and to live with compassion to be most like Him. A merciful heart, a sympathetic heart is most aligned to the love and mercy of God and enables us to truly live out our faith and be a witness to others.

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The Sabbath healing of the man with the withered hand is multi-layered in the richness of reflection. The active response in faith by the man to stand in the middle of the synagogue at the command of Jesus is a testament to faith. The rare occurrence of Jesus becoming angry is a reminder of the justice of God, as well as the accountability and expectation of discipleship. The silence of the Pharisees and their scheming should warn us of the resistance of the modern era to living faith. Ultimately, it is the compassion and mercy of God that we should focus on, for it is what Jesus drives home in His healing ministry that continues even today.

We read today how Jesus withdrew to the sea and the crowds followed Him - He did not withdraw from them, and he stopped when they came and gathered, seeking healing and His preaching, desiring in their hearts to encounter Him. Jesus never withdraws from us, never leaves us, and is always present to us. He is forever and is our constant - it is WE who turn away from Him, who withdraw from Him, and find ourselves trapped in our sins and lies. My prayer for you before the Blessed Sacrament this morning is that you would always seek Him out and not withdraw yourself from Him, that you would actively seek Him out with perseverance and not stop seeking Him and His Grace.

1/20/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 3:13-19

To appoint someone is to assign them a specific role or task, and today we read of the appointing as apostles of the Twelve. Jesus appoints each one of them from varied backgrounds and life experiences, different skills and personalities, and they are listed by name, each one unique. So too with each of us - we are uniquely created by God and specifically called into union with Him for a specific role that only we can fulfill. Each of us has a part to play in the kingdom of God and a role in salvation history. Embrace this reality - you are here for a purpose, loved beyond all measure and time, created with the opportunity to serve Him.



1/21/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 3:20-21

Memorial of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus tended to those in need and always helped those who came to Him. He is the Good Shepherd who tends His flock, never turning anyone away and continuously ministering to the sick, the blind, the hopeless, and the broken, so much so that His own relatives and townsmen thought He was a lunatic because He always serves others and took no time for Himself. He emptied Himself, the font of living water, for all and was ridiculed for it. We are called to the same ministerial attitude and approach - think of others before oneself, serve selflessly, and put the needs of others before oneself. Volunteer, give, tithe, console, listen, teach, and serve tirelessly, and let Him replenish your soul.

1/22/23

Gospel of the day: Matthew 4:12-23 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The calling of the brothers - Andrew and Simon Peter, and then James and John - in today's Gospel is such an inspiring reminder for us all that we are called into His family. Yes, He called individuals but His first apostles called were a pair of brothers. He calls us into fellowship and unity with others, not to be alone or isolated, but to walk with others and bring the light of Christ to others. We are called to communion, and it is in Union with our brothers and sisters in Christ that we bring Christ to the world, that we bring His Light to a world in darkness.



There is a saying about assumptions, that they can make you and me both look foolish, and never does that seem more apparent than in today's gospel when the scribes declare Jesus to be a prince of demons. He Who is holiness itself! Talk about foolishness! How often has something like that happened to you, where an assumption you made about someone is so far off the mark it makes you look foolish and seem so small and petty? Jesus takes it a step further by telling us that the real fool is the one who speaks out against the Holy Spirit and assumes he or she is not forgivable. That is the great sin - to assume one's own sins are beyond forgiveness and healing, in effect assuming one is greater than God Himself. It is this assumption that makes one a true fool.

1/24/23

Gospel of the day: Mark 3:31-35 Memorial of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

On the surface, it doesn't seem to be too difficult to be considered a brother or sister of Jesus. It's fairly straightforward to say one will do the will of God and POOF - brother of Jesus. But take a step back and look deeply into what that truly means. Means REALLY "letting go and letting God." It means embracing and SEEKING opportunities to suffer for self and others. It means giving until it hurts. It means placing others before yourself. It means intentionally conversing with Him and being guided by His words and promptings. It means hiding NOTHING from Him and bringing your brokenness to Him. Are you a brother or sister of Christ?

Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, Apostle

Each of us is called to personal conversion, a specific point in time when the authentic presence and knowledge of Jesus Christ are made manifest to us in a unique and powerful way. It may not be as dramatic as the conversion of Saul with the blinding light from Heaven and being thrown from his horse, but it is no less real and personal. He desires to know us as individuals and enter into relationship with Him. It doesn't matter what our past has been rather it is about who He made us to be. A favorite quote by Mary Magdalene from the TV series "The Chosen," is apropos:

"I was one way and am now completely different. And the thing that happened in between was Him."

1/26/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 4:21-25

Memorial of Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops

To be a defender of the faith seems to be a tall task and evokes the image of a knight in armor going into battle or some other similar imagery. Daunting, perhaps, and a calling better left for others more equipped and prepared, we might think, but the reality is that we are all called to courageous faith and witness. There is no room in this world for cowardice in faith, hiding our belief and devotion to God, avoiding opportunities to love the Gospel message. We are His sons and daughters and called to greatness in that. Our witness is not to be arrogantly or forcefully displayed but should be compelling and inviting, clear and compassionate and resilient. My prayer this morning before the Blessed Sacrament is that you are filled with the courageous faith of Sts. Timothy and Titus, defending the faith you are blessed to have in Christ Jesus.

1/27/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 4:26-34

The agrarian parables that Jesus uses are timeless and not just relevant to the farmers of His day. The lessons of patience, endurance, and faithfulness are applicable to us today, the so-called "enlightened man." We are called to plant the seeds of faith everywhere we go and to entrust things to Him. Our part is to sow - He will do the heavy lifting, and He will do so according to His plan and His timeline as He is outside of all time. We don't have the right to expect to see results - we entrust that to Him. It requires steadfast faith to continue to sow without always seeing the results, but the canopy of faith that provides us today with hope and understanding was sown well before us by those who had faith.



1/28/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 4:35-41

Memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church

We often think that a life of faith and discipleship comes without struggle or moments of doubt, but nothing could be further from the truth. We read the lives of the saints who struggle with deserts of desolation where they don't feel the presence of God and yet continue to believe. The reading today with the apostles in the boat with Jesus during stormy weather is meant to teach us that our life of faith will not be easy, but He is with us through it all. He reminds us that by faith, we find calm amidst the storm and can continue forward to the other side. The apostles were on a trip, they were headed to the other side as we read in the gospel. We are likewise in a boat, headed to the other side, with Christ beside us to face the stormy sea.

1/29/23

Gospel of the day: Matthew 5:1-12 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

I can't think of anyone who has told me "I want to be unhappy and downtrodden my whole life." Everyone I know desires happiness and fulfillment in their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Jesus wants that for us as well, which He discusses in today's Gospel reading, He shares the revolutionary truth about how to attain happiness and fulfillment in life. The Sermon on the Mount unlocks the mysteries of the human person and lays out a clear roadmap for us to discover true and authentic happiness in life. Living out the beatitudes given in this transformative sermon will bless us and bring us peace, love, and grace. Blessed are those who hear....and become what they hear.



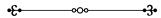
1/30/23 Gospel of the day: Mark 5:1-20

The story of the man with the unclean spirit who falls before Jesus is an unsettling one, for we come to find he is contending with multiple demons, not just a single unclean spirit. It is a stark reminder that sin and evil are not singular in nature, that one downward step leads to another and will spiral out of control until it consumes us. It can become comfortable for us, something we prefer to dwell in, but Christ offers healing and forgiveness to cast the darkness from our lives and free us. Freedom from such shackles can be an example of hope and mercy for others that we are called to share.



Complete abandonment leads to powerful healing and miraculous grace. The woman who bled for 12 years and Jairus who sought healing for his daughter. Both fall before Jesus in total abandonment and with pure faith, despite never meeting Him before. Both receive miraculous grace through a simple touch of the garment or whisper of a word, the Lord of all creation moved to compassion and forgiveness for them both. Imagine the tears of joy that welled in His eyes and the loving smile across His face at such devotion and recognition of who He is. In response, He blesses beyond their imagination or hope. Regardless of your circumstances, abandon yourself to Him, and be anointed with the grace of faith in your life.

February



It's not too often that we read that Jesus wasn't able to do something being the Son of God and all, but today we see how the lack of faith and unwillingness to come to know Him prevents Him from working any miracles. He loves us too much to force His way upon us, and He allows us to remain isolated from Him if that is what we truly want. Sadly, more and more people refuse to know and accept Him - pray for the conversion of their souls. Pray as well for your own sanctification through the work you do. Jesus was known by His townsfolk for the work He did as a carpenter. Think of the extra care and attention He put into His work, a model of excellence that we are called to emulate so as to give glory to God and offer Him our first fruits.

Gospel of the Day: Luke 2:22-40 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

The significance of this day, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, is one that we oftentimes fail to acknowledge. Pause to consider exactly what happened: the Temple was the place of highest worship for the Jewish people, where offerings were made for the expiation of sin and to honor God. The Blessed Mother, free of all sin, carries in her arms the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, the Son of God. Her spouse Joseph stands beside her as protector and guardian of the Child. Time should stand still for this moment, and we should fall to our knees. Everything now points to the sacrifice made on the Cross on Good Friday and the Resurrection of Easter. We are not worthy to receive Him, but He makes Himself available to each of us. Blessed are You, O Lord, King of the Universe.

2/3/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 6:14-29

We are called to pray for the virtue of fortitude, that grace which strengthens the soul against natural fear and supports us in the performance of our duty. It is a virtue of courage and perseverance despite the odds, the challenges, the risks, and the resistance. It flows from the truth that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow" (Heb 13:8). John the Baptist exemplified this truth to the point of martyrdom. While it is unlikely we will be called to shed blood for Him, we must pray for the fortitude to be faithful to Him, even to the point of death.



2/4/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 6:30-34

The Lord calls us to rest. He invites us every week to slow down and rest, live in the moment, and renew ourselves. Allow Him to fill us once again as He desires to. This past week during the ice storm, we were again forced to slow down and given the opportunity to rest. We pray for those who worked hard to keep us safe and were forced to brave the elements. For those blessed to be able to stay home, the invitation to rest was there and is always there. We were made to slow down each week and rest in Him. Did you?



2/5/23

Gospel of the Day: Mt 5:13-16 Memorial of St. Agatha, virgin and martyr Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." The call to serve and witness, the call to charity and loving our brothers and sisters could not be any clearer. Christ tells us today and every day exactly who we are and who we are to be for others. We are to be a light for others to see and encounter THE Light of the world, and we are blessed with such grace and such a gift. Each of us brings taste and light to those around us - do so in the hope and expectancy of sharing the love of God.



2/6/23

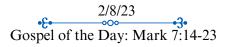
Gospel of the Day: Mark 6:53-56 Memorial of Saint Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs

The actions of those who recognized Jesus are something for us to reflect upon today. As soon as they recognized Him they "scurried about" to find the sick in need of healing. A heartfelt desire to bring others to Christ moved them and compelled them into action. It is a challenge for us to contemplate - do we actively seek out loved ones, family and friends, to bring them to Christ? The physical healing we read of today is symbolic of the deeper spiritual healing realized, and we are encouraged to follow their lead and scurry to bring others to Him.

2/7/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 7:1-13

We are called to be all in. Not partially in or occasionally in, but all in. The invitation to follow Him and be His disciple is not an invitation to accept half-heartedly or occasionally but rather a full-time, wholly - and HOLY - calling that we are required to respond to. Looking for legalistic loopholes to avoid commitment or respond with partial engagement is not becoming of us as children of God. Our "Yes" is a complete "yes" and not a "maybe" or "sometimes" - thank God that He does not partially invite us or gift us but rather is all in for us.





Our sanctification through work is not something we tend to think much about, especially in today's society with the focus on getting to the weekend and through the grind of the week, celebrating Wednesdays as "happy hump day" because we are on the downward slide of the work week or school week. Whatever happened to the realization that we are called to holiness in our work, invited to unite our labors to all creation, and specifically given the charge by God to care for and cultivate the garden, this world? Selfish hearts focused on success. acquisition, prestige, power, and personal gain are all distortions of the original call to protect and cultivate with love and respect, all that He has blessed us with. Pray then, that we may offer up our work, our efforts, our exhaustion and struggles in work, to our Father and Creator of all things.

2/9/23 Sospel of the Day: Mark 7:24-30

It is the effectiveness of perseverance and authentic humility in prayer that we are blessed with in today's Gospel reading. The initial decline of her request is an opportunity to deepen her resolve and more plainly acknowledge her complete dependence and faith upon Christ, Who is then moved by her petition and grants it to her in abundance. How often do we get angry or frustrated or "give up" when we don't get our way in relationships, especially with God? Our demand for immediate responsiveness to our prayer is the fault exposed in today's reading - we are encouraged to persevere and submit further to His Will in greater humility.



Gospel of the Day: Mark 7:31-37

Memorial of Saint Scholastica, Virgin

The miracle of the opening of the deaf man's ears and the removal of his speech impediment are meant to apply to all of us. Do we hear and actually listen to the Word of God in our lives, and do we allow these words to soak into our lives to guide us in all we do? Do we openly and courageously proclaim the Word of God to others, doing so through our actions more so than the words we speak? Are our actions congruent with what we hear and what we say so that others may see in us a life of faith and be inspired to know Him? It is our hearts that Jesus is truly speaking to when He says "Ephphatha" (Be opened).



2/11/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 8:1-10

How comforting it is to read that the heart of Jesus was moved to pity for all those who were listening to Him, giving them bread and fish after days of preaching to them. His pity is the epitome of mercy, feeling compassion for those around Him in need, desiring to relieve them of their suffering and giving them strength and hope. The suffering of humanity brought on by the first sin of our forefathers, Adam and Eve. will not be eliminated until His return. However, His mercy and compassion, and the call for us to extend the same to others is our participation in His saving work. Through His Grace, we are to bring mercy and compassion to those around us, feeding them through our works of mercy.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:17-37 Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

We can oftentimes get caught up in the technicalities of our faith life, of the little details that we believe are required of us and define faithfulness. Yet today we are reminded that we can always be stretched and pushed to greater heights and more complete understanding of our call to faithful witness. The deposit of faith is a guide for us in life and intended to keep us focused on what is true and what is good and from it we can apply faith to our daily struggles and challenges to help us understand how to be. We are always stretched to lean into our faith, to be willing to be uncomfortable and grow, and to consider whether our faith can more deeply permeate our lives. Daily growth is indicative of healthy faith, learning constantly and drawing ever closer to Him.

2/13/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 8:11-13

"You just don't get it." That's the gist of the readings today, from Jesus' response to the Pharisees as He sighs deeply and walks away to Cain's inability to understand what it means to give of his first fruits and to be his brother's keeper in Genesis. The blatant unwillingness to accept the love and mercy of God, to serve as we should, and to seek true understanding of Him - these are things to can cause Our Lord to sigh deeply for us. It's not enough for us to "not get it" - we have to work intentionally to know and serve Him.



2/14/23

Gospel of the Day: Mark 8:14-21 Memorial of Saints Cyril, Monk, and Methodius, Bishop

Back-to-back days, there is a sense of frustration in the words of Jesus, a sense of just righteousness in His words to His disciples and to us. He speaks with an expectation that we start to figure things out, a call to greater holiness that encourages us to be more than what we are, to realize who we are truly called to be. He expects us to be good leaven to raise those around us, to be an extension of His love and mercy, and not settle for the brokenness of life. We are to rise above all things, not get mired in the struggle, and stay focused on Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.



2/15/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 8:22-26

Partial healings are commonplace in my life. The Lord desires full healing for me, complete outpouring of grace and because of my lack of faith, or the presence of deep-rooted sin, the healing I am blessed with is only partial. What will it take for me to recognize the wonder and depth of His Love and to fully believe and give over my life to Him? A partial blessing is good, but the Lord made me, made you, for more than goodness. He made you for greatness as His beloved child and desires for us to see Him clearly through the eyes of faith and hope.



2/16/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 8:27-33

The question asked today of the disciples is the same question asked of us today and every day by Jesus - "but who do YOU say that I am?" Who is Jesus to you? What is your relationship to Him and with Him? Is He a nebulous figure that you see hazily in the distance at all times, or is He beside you in everything you do, guiding and leading you always? Is He a distant relative or mere acquaintance, or is He the lover of your soul and the source of joy and love in your life? My prayer for you before the Blessed Sacrament this morning and every morning is that you come to know Him as your closest friend and the inspiration for all you do.



2/17/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 8:34-9:1

We are called to humility. We know that - or so we say - but the Lord makes it all the more evident today with the call to give up our life for Him, to pick up our cross and unite it to Him, and to deny ourselves. Can you deny yourself, or are you more likely to pursue your own desires and needs over what the Lord is calling you to? Are you ashamed of being His beloved daughter and conducting yourself like you are the final judge of life? Or do you humbly lay down your life for Him, follow His lead and example, and willingly serve those who cannot care for themselves? Be strengthened empowered today to serve others in kindness and compassion and recognize His love for you.



2/18/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 9:2-13

"Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen." Today's first reading sets the tone for a day of prayer and reflection, fellowship and inspiration for us at our Vincentian retreat this morning. It is a perfectly timed reading that encourages us to trust in God and to be His hands and feet in this world, without need or worry for "proof" of His promise. His promise is enough and believing in it, in Him, sustains us and inspires us in all we do. We are called to step out in faith!



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:38-48 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Love thy neighbor" is something most of us are comfortable with doing, and we can go about it with a smile and light heart and feel good about spreading good cheer. Kudos to all who do. But "love your enemy"? Now that is a whole different story and instinctively leads to crossed arms, an indignant face, and an attitude of "I don't know about that." Yet that is the call to follow Christ and emulate His Love and forgiveness upon the Cross, for we know not what we do that led to His being nailed on the Cross for us. He wasn't just speaking about the Romans when He said that from the Cross - He was speaking of us, for our sins nailed Him to the Cross. Love thy enemies as Christ did and still does today, for our enemies are our brothers and sisters.

2/20/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 9:14-29

Many people claim to have faith and believe in the Good News. This may be particularly strong faith for those few hours around Sunday Mass each week, but what about the other 160+ hours of the week? How constant and intentional is our faith during the rest of the week? How often do we turn to Him and offer all we do to Him, with the belief that He is present, with the understanding that He desires to be part of EVERYTHING we do, with the deep trust that He has a plan for us? The trials and struggles of life are real and can be depleting, but they are also opportunities to strengthen our resolve, solidify our faith, and make us joyful and hopeful in knowing that He is above all things and has a purpose for us beyond all understanding. Help my unbelief, Lord, and strengthen my resolve to serve and love You always.

2/21/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 9:30-37

So many times, out of pride and ego, we ignore something or change topics because we don't understand and are afraid to ask questions to seek understanding. Our pride gets in the way and we assume we must know all things - we act like the very gods that the serpent told Eve we would become - and don't want others to know that we don't understand. The disciples display this pride with great clarity and Jesus must "break it down" for them in the simplest of terms to ensure their understanding. How many times must He do the same for us and yet we still insist on sinning, having our way, refusing to accept His Will in our lives? May we be blessed with childlike faith and wonder in Him

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 Ash Wednesday

What are you giving up for Lent? That's the question that seems to naturally come out as we begin Lent today on Ash Wednesday. Some scramble to come up with an answer, others recite a massive list of intentions planned, and others shrug their shoulders, unsure of what they should do. What matters is what you and the Lord discern and what you prayerfully determine He is calling to to give up and what new thing He is calling you to. This is a time of preparation and reflection, a time for prayer and penance, a time for fasting and almsgiving to help prepare you for the joy of Easter and to deepen your personal relationship with Christ. He knows that is in your heart, and He desires to know you and for you to know Him.

2/23/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 9:22-25

There is no way around it and no way to avoid it. Jesus tells us in black and white that to follow Him means to deny our own desires and take up our cross. We will suffer. We will struggle. We will agonize. We will cry. We will be shattered. We will be in angst. We will fall. We will sin. But we will not and cannot stay down. We must rise with the courage to continue and fall again. We must rise with the hope and knowledge that our suffering has meaning. We must begin again with the grace of faith in knowing we are beloved children of God. We must continue the fight because Christ Himself did the same for us on Calvary, falling and getting up to show us the Way. My prayer before the Blessed Sacrament today is for your every falling to lead to a new rising.

2/24/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:14-15

Fasting is an act of discipline and surrender, a tangible act of giving ourselves up to God and turning from the temptations of the present world. It is hard to give up things we enjoy, or in some cases even things we need, but truly the only thing we need is not a thing but a Person - Him. Fasting from food and other worldly things helps us turn only to Him and reminds us that we are nothing without Him, that we shall return to dust without Him, and that with His Grace and strength, we can overcome every need or desire in our lives.



2/25/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 5:27-32

Inner healing is a required part of every person's journey to and encounter with the Divine Physician, Jesus Christ. He brings healing and forgiveness to every person who comes to Him seeking His healing and mercy. No one is outside of His scope, and He specializes in every malady possible. Anger issues? No problem. Lust and sexual sin? He has the cure. Trust issues and gossip? He heals. Unresolved trauma and relationship issues? He is especially adept at that! He brings healing to all and for all. His office hours are 24x7 and no appointment is needed for The One who heals all.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 4:1-11 First Sunday of Lent

Modern man - "enlightened man" probably scoffs at today's Gospel as an example of ancient tales and myths as we read about Jesus and His encounter with the devil in the desert. "He's not real and is just a myth to keep ancient man in check" is the mantra of today, a lie and a temptation shared to keep us from seeing Truth. A lie to shroud the father of lies. Truth is that he exists and he does everything he can to trip us up and help us fail. Jesus knows that and allowed Himself to go through His own trials and temptations to show us the Way and to prove that we can overcome with His Grace. In all three temptations, He does nothing divine but responds with human perseverance so that we can relate to Him. He endured so that we might endure, He persevered so that we might persevere, and He overcame temptation so that we might overcome temptation and grow in holiness.

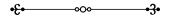
2/27/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 25:31-46

Caring for others and seeing Christ in those that we serve or minister to is the fundamental teaching of today's Gospel, as well as the separating of the sheep from the goats. We always need to look for and see Christ in others and those we encounter. Seeing Him in them should fill us with compassion and mercy. Be mindful and aware of every opportunity to encounter Him and embrace Him in those around us.



The term "one-way conversation" is meant to refer to a supposed discussion between two people that is actually one-sided and more of a lecture, where one person does all the talking and hardly any listening. Most of us are guilty of this in our prayer time with God and it's not Him who gets to do the talking but rather you. We learn today the simple but perfect prayer to Our Father, given to us by Christ. This prayer reminds us of our total dependence on Him and the need for us to forgive others and to recognize that He is our all. We should pray it daily and then quiet ourselves to listen to our Father's response in our hearts and our minds, silencing the noise around us and allowing the Holy Spirit to flow over us. He has so much He wants to tell us and so much to share, if only we would listen. Above all, He wants to tell us He loves us.

March



3/1/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:29-32

Most of us, when we think of Jonah, think of the three days in the belly of the whale that he endured, a foreshadowing of the Three days that Jesus spends in the tomb before the joy of the Easter Resurrection. Jonah also plays a key role in exhibiting for us the practice of repentance and call for contrition that we are in during Lent. His Evangelization of the Ninevites and their powerful and humble response is a call for us to repent and demonstrate to God our deep desire for forgiveness and healing. The call to repentance by Jonah is a mere shadow of the invitation to God's mercy offered by Christ - give thanks for His compassion!



The call to prayer is a fundamental call for each of us and something we must do daily and throughout the day. A relationship with God - as with other people - requires continuous conversation and engagement. Not one-sided lecturing but an actual conversation where we listen as well as speak. We read today that we are called to ask, seek, and knock in faith and should trust in His mercy and compassion. Notice too that at the conclusion of prayer, after asking our Father in faith, there is a call and expectation of action. We are to do. We are to live out the response to prayer that Our Lord speaks to us. My prayer this morning before the Blessed Sacrament is that you might pray in faith, seek in abandonment, and love with compassion and intentionality.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:20-26

The Grudge. Ironic that Hollywood should make a horror movie by this name in light of today's Gospel message about what we should do with grudges that we hold. We are directed clearly to let go of them and resolve them, cast them away to allow ourselves to come before God in humility and purity. Grudges keep us anchored in sin, resentment, bitterness, anger, ill will, and animosity. Nothing about them is life-giving and Jesus desires hope, compassion, forgiveness, and love for each of us.



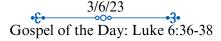
3/4/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:43-48

Talk about setting a standard! "Be perfect just as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Jesus makes the expectation that He has of us very clear. There is no settling for "just try" and letting people settle for minimal effort. No, the bar is set extremely high and there is a command, not a suggestion, for what we are to strive for, what we are to work towards, what we are to push for. We are called to holiness, to become saints. It happens through His Grace and our active participation in it. We must live it out in all we do. He believes in us, why don't we believe in Him?



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 17:1-9 Second Sunday of Lent

Silence can be difficult. It can be hard to be quiet and not respond to everything and everyone. Our ego likes to hear our voice, and we feel like we are always expected to say something. Today's society and social media encourage and enable it - we are told we have the right to freely share our every thought and opinion, often to the detriment of unity, harmony, peace, and fellowship. Not that it is bad to share our thoughts or feelings - on the contrary, it is necessary for healthy and authentic relationships. But there is a time and a place for everything. Sometimes, the greater restraint and good is in quietly contemplating and allowing ourselves to be absorbed in the moment, recognizing it is beyond us and that we are experiencing a privileged and blessed moment. Give yourself permission to rest in the moment.



Stop judging, stop condemning, and forgive more. Three clear directives given to us that define what being a good neighbor is all about. Jesus gives us these directives to help us grow in mercy and understand the measure of mercy that will be extended to us. Our own willingness to live these three directives will determine the degree to which these are extended to us. Be a good neighbor and bless those you come into contact with daily.



3/7/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 23:1-12

Memorial of Saints Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

"Practice what you preach" is the mantra and teaching of the day. The congruency between what we say and what we do, in how we think and how we are, in what is in our hearts, and how we are seen by others all comes down to this. The love of God must radiate in all we do and be visible to all if we are to live a life that reflects in our actions what we speak in our words. The joy of knowing we are because He willed us into being, and we are loved unconditionally by Him, should be the core of all we do. Be diligent and intentional about keeping out the infection of pride and ego.



The modern world encourages us to "make it all about you," but that is the exact opposite of what we read in the Gospel today. Jesus informs the apostles of His upcoming suffering, passion, and death to come. Instead of reading of their comforting and sorrowful reaction, we instead read of the argument that breaks about who will take up thrones of position and authority - very sensitive of the 12. How often does that happen to us? How often do we do that to others? Instead of thinking of how we can help or comfort, we instead make it about ourselves and our gain or need. We are called to be outward thinking, to always consider the needs of others, and to serve them in love and compassion. Emptying ourselves of ourselves gives Him the place and room to fill us with Himself and glorify Him in all things.

Many years ago, "Where's Waldo?" was all the rage as we looked for the thin man with glasses in busy scenes in books. The "I Spy" book series was similar - seeking specific items amidst a sea of chaos, activity, and life. Lazarus is our Waldo in today's story from Jesus. Can you find Lazarus today in your life? He is present all around you, but can you see him? We are invited to open our eyes and look beyond the luxury of our lives and our own needs to find Lazarus and offer him help. The homeless woman who sleeps in front of your office, the man who begs at the street corner, the child who wants some of your time, the relative whom you have stopped speaking to, the friend whom you ignore. They are all Lazarus in your life. The Lord calls you to see them and reach out to them in His Most Holy Name.

3/10/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Rejection is no fun. It can be debilitating, painful, crushing, and deflating. All of us experience it at some point in our lives. But there is One who never rejects and always accepts us for who we are and always will because we are His beloved. I would offer that recognizing and believing this wholeheartedly leads to the ability to accept rejection from the world and even encourage it. We are called to live in faith as His disciples and expect to be rejected for it. We are encouraged to be the cornerstone for others, a foundation of virtue, hope, and compassion. In accepting the One who never rejects, we can live a life that embraces rejection, for we have accepted the call to holiness.



3/11/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Whatever it takes. Sometimes it is the unexpected death of a friend or colleague. Sometimes it is the crush of financial debt. Sometimes it is waking up hungover or in a strange bed. Sometimes it is cleaning the pen of a pig. Regardless of the circumstance, our Father looks for us in hopeful anticipation of our turning to Him. He desires to free us, clothe us with honor, and restore us to our place as His beloved children. He does not care about the sin that led us away, only that we truly seek forgiveness and come back to Him. Whatever it takes

Gospel of the Day: John 4:5-42 Third Sunday of Lent

So many questions, so much doubt, so many "but why's?" The readings today are a litany of questions and doubt but God - ever faithful - is patient in answering and revealing His love and mercy. Whether through a mighty action or a quiet whispering of understanding, His love is living water and the source of all life. We may question and ask in our frailty and brokenness, but He is above all things and He desires to overflow us with His Grace and Love in abundance. The Living Waters of the Holy Spirit bring us life and understanding, faith and grace, compassion and love. We give thanks to God for loving us beyond our merit.



3/13/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 4:24-30

Docility is not a trait that we hear much about as a quality or characteristic that we should emulate. Yet today's story of Naaman the Syrian is a perfect example of the grace and outpouring of mercy that comes with authentic docility. We are too full of ourselves and our expectations of what we should receive as disciples of Christ, filled with illusions of grandeur and what's owed to us. Jesus never preaches about what is owed to us but instead encourages and exemplifies the need for humility. He is humility personified, the Son of God Who empties Himself for us. Who are we to expect special blessings and rights for being His followers?



Think of something that is difficult to do. For each one of us, it will be something different, but think of something you have to do from time to time that is a real chore to do. Now repeat it over and over again in your mind - 539 times to be exact. That's what Jesus tells Peter he must do when it comes to forgiving his neighbor. A seemingly endless cycle of forgiveness. After 539 times of forgiveness, are we done? Not if our hearts haven't been transformed and we haven't come to understand the lesson. God has wiped clean the slate for us through the sacrifice of His Son - our debt that we could never pay off has been canceled through His Love forgiveness. How can we still cling to our petty grievances with others when we have His example of complete mercy and forgiveness?

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:17-19

Attention to detail seems to be what Jesus is telling us today, calling us to fulfill the smallest part of a letter of the law. Sounds like a stickler for details. In fact, He is telling us that every tiniest part of the law is intended to help guide us ultimately to Him and the fulfillment of discipleship. Faith builds upon action, upon the things we do that orient us to Him. The building of habits and following Church teaching orients us to Him, helping to form virtue to draw us closer to Him. Through His Grace and faith in Him, we will find ourselves living out every detail of our life for Him.



Prayer is a conversation with God. While it requires us to learn how to be quiet and listen to Him and not do all the talking, it begins first and foremost with us speaking to Him. If we never speak to God, we can never enter into relationship with Him. That is the healing that we read of today - the mute man is healed by Christ and freed from the bond of evil to be able to speak with God. Freely speaking with Him allows the flowing grace of the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and minds to become one with Him. Every relationship requires genuine and authentic conversation, most especially our relationship with God. I pray before the Blessed Sacrament this morning that yours is a deep and genuine relationship with God.

3/17/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 12:28-34

Jesus answers the question about which commandment is first so clearly and concisely that no one asks Him another question. Love God and love our neighbor. Period. God is love, and it is in the inspiration of this love that we give back to Him and others that which we are called to live out. Nothing more, nothing less. Be love to the world.



3/18/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 18:9-14

Jesus is hinting at us today that we should all be publicans. No, not a political rant. Rather, we should have the humility of the publican, recognizing our sinfulness before God, our unworthiness to stand before Him, and our utter reliance on His mercy and compassion. Self-glorification, pride, and self-righteousness are all inward-focused on the self, whereas Jesus points to the publican as the one who acknowledges his fault, his brokenness, and his necessity for mercy and forgiveness. Grow in humility and find peace in Christ.



Gospel of the Day: John 9:1-41

Fourth Sunday of Lent

"You're not listening!" One can sense the frustration of the once-blind man who has been healed. How often do we question and second guess versus believing in faith and recognizing the presence of God in our lives? We fail to see the goodness in our lives far too often and wallow in self-misery. Yet He is present and speaks to us constantly if only we would listen. In today's gospel reading, the healing of the blind man leads to the realization that others have become deaf to the glory of God. The others do not listen to the man who can now see. May the Holy Spirit enable us to see and hear the goodness of the Lord and proclaim it to all. Listen....

3/20/23

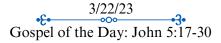
Gospel of the Day: Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24 Solemnity of Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

With no words spoken, Joseph models for us quiet strength. His faithfulness and obedience are rewarded with the greatest of blessings, to care for and protect the Blessed Mother and the Son of God. He is the humble and loving servant to them both and is revered for the masculine example he gave to Christ as his father. May we look to him as our humble protector, loving father and intercessor, and faithful example of obedience and fortitude.



3/21/23 Gospel of the Day: John 5:1-16

It seems like a rhetorical question when Jesus asks the lame man beside the pool "Do you want to be well?" The man had been there for 38 years waiting for healing - of course, he wanted to be healed. But Jesus asks this question - knowing the answer - so that the man could come to a moment of true faith and no longer cling to lies and excuses, but demonstrate his faith in Christ. Too often, we stay wallowed in our own sinfulness and pride, making excuses and refusing to let go of the past. Jesus invites us to declare through action - not just word that we believe in Him and what He has in store for us. So rise, pick up your mat, and walk in the way of the Lord.



Christ speaks today of the seamless union between He and The Father. They are One, and Their Love for each other binds them uniquely and completely in a way that is mysterious and inspiring. This unity that He speaks of today, which drives His action and mission of salvation with us, is one we should emulate. There should be unity between our words and our actions, our thoughts and our deeds, our prayer life and missionary life. We cannot - should not - separate our faith from our life, the two should be so integrated that they cannot be undone. The secular world demands we keep our faith in a jar, hidden from the world but we are called to bring it into every facet of who we are.



3/23/23 Gospel of the Day: John 5:31-47

The proof is in the pudding. To testify is to provide evidence or proof of something or someone. It is a solemn declaration of belief, a vow of personal belief that stands before others to see. Does your life serve as proof of your belief in the salvation that Christ offers? Does your life reflect the truth that God loves you unconditionally? Does your life make evident that you serve and adore God above all and that you surrender your life to Him? My prayer this morning before the Blessed Sacrament is that each of our lives may serve as evidence of this for a world that is seeking Truth, seeking Him.



3/24/23 Gospel of the Day: John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Do you know Jesus? I mean really know Him? Plenty of Christians profess belief in Christ but that may not translate into truly knowing Him and allowing themselves to be known by Him. Many non-Christians also claim to know Jesus, but do they really? They probably know the image and portrayal of Jesus according to their experience, but they don't know Him. He desires a personal relationship with each of us and invites us to know Him in a deep and profound way. To know Him is to love Him and to love Him is to be forever changed.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:26-38 Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

It is easy to reflect on all the good we do, to pat ourselves on the back for the things we do, and to remind ourselves that we are "a good person." And we are, as His children. But let us never get complacent in that or inflate ourselves to the point of believing we are what we are because of us. We are not. We are who we are because of His Grace, and we must always discern how to serve and love Him more deeply and be a channel of His Grace. Be humble in all things.



Gospel of the Day: John 11:1-45 Fifth Sunday of Lent

"And Jesus wept." It is the shortest verse in the entire Bible, yet it speaks volumes about who Jesus is and His love for us. The Son of God is fully man, fully divine, and in His humanity, He was moved to sorrow over the death of Lazarus. He cried tears not only for him but for every one of us because, in His divinity, He knows we will all die. The Son of Godbecause He loved us so - experienced and defeated death so that we might be with Him forever, and He gives us a foretaste of our own rising in the story of Lazarus. He weeps for you and me as well.



3/27/23 Gospel of the Day: John 8:1-11

Sin is sin. There is no denying it and no denying that we all sin. In today's Gospel with the woman accused of adultery, she does not deny it and is brought before Jesus in shame and condemnation. In a twisted way, the Pharisees actually help her because they bring her before Jesus. Rather than condemn her to death, He gives her life through the compassion and mercy of His forgiveness. No matter the manner by which it happens, when we before Christ in the sacrament of Reconciliation, we avail ourselves to the restoration of grace and love through His Mercy. Seek the humility and make the commitment to go before Him in Confession, joyfully hoping to hear the words "Go and sin no more."

3/28/23 Gospel of the Day: John 8:21-30

How many of us can repeat these words of Jesus – "I do nothing on my own but only what the Father taught me"? Stop and think about that – the Son of God Himself says He does only what the Father has taught Him. Yet we go off and do our own thing because we think we know best, we think we have all the answers, we don't need anyone else but ourselves. Jesus teaches us otherwise and calls us to look to Him for all we need, to look to Him on the Cross and see how much He loves us.



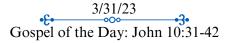
3/29/23 Gospel of the Day: Jn 8:31-42

Freedom. We often think of freedom as the ability to do what we want, but St. John Paul II said that freedom reminded us that it is the right to do what we ought. It is a call to exercise freedom as the fullest expression of living out of our faith in Christ, recognizing we are children of God. Our faith must be more than words and sentiments; it should be actions and decisions that reflect our understanding and gratitude for the Truth we have been blessed with by God. This Truth is a Person, and it is through Him that we have been set free.

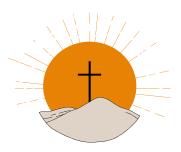


3/30/23 Gospel of the Day: John 8:51-59

Hotheads usually regret their emotional reactions to situations. A wise Sensei once told me that I should breathe in deeply and slowly to allow the Holy Spirit to take root and calm my heart to guide my words and actions. Reacting immediately and emotionally is rarely a smart combination, which we read about today. The crowds were emotionally charged and ready to stone Jesus. For what? Speaking the Truth and calling them out. No one paused to consider "He may be right"! How often have you done that, blown off the whispering of the Lord and gone your own way? Lent is coming to a close - not too late to put down the rock in your hand, lean into the discomfort of His call, and open your heart to Him. My prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is for your humility of heart and courage to look within at what the Lord desires for you to give to Him.



Did you know Jesus was the first spokesperson for Nike before they were even created? He tells us today to believe in Him because of His works and the good things that He does, not just what He tells us. He's saying that even if we don't agree with what He says and teaches, how can we argue with what He does? His works are His proof of who He is, and we are challenged to do the same. Take the Word that is in our mind and move it to our hearts to generate action and living examples of our faith. Listen to Him and.... Just Do It.



April

Control. We crave control over our lives whether we care to admit it or not. We are unwilling to surrender ourselves to the will of God, to give up control and allow Him to guide us. "Jesus take the wheel" as the song goes. We are no different than the Pharisees in today's Gospel reading who refuse to see the possibility that Christ is Who He says He is and instead try to figure out the right course of action to preserve THEIR control. We do the same ignore the possibility of following Him and the option He provides and instead insist on doing things our way. Change that starting today, as we prepare for Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. Jesus, I surrender myself to You.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 26:14-27:66 Palm Sunday

The beginning of the end gives rise to a new beginning. That is today - Palm Sunday. The triumphant entry of Jesus upon a royal mount, with pilgrims rejoicing and laying down their cloaks before Him will yield in four days to cries for His death, the stripping of His clothes, the agony of His Passion, and His mounting upon the Cross. This is a reflection of our own fickle faith - rejoicing and praising in one moment, resentful and broken in the next. We are called to grow and focus on the new life that awaits us because it is the glory of Easter, the life in Christ that is ours after the desolation and anguish of the Passion. Enter into this time, preparing for the Cross as the way to life in Him.

4/3/23 Gospel of the Day: John 12:1-11

Ugly truth - we can all be like Judas. Two-faced, self-righteous, thinking ourselves so holy when in fact we are so sinful, betraying our lack of faithfulness and trust in God. Unlike Judas, though, we have hope and it is hope that allows us to turn towards Christ and seek forgiveness. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, yet quickly came to realize his sin, wept in sorrow and remorse, and sought forgiveness to be restored. True contrition of heart leads to forgiveness and restores us to relationship with Him.



4/4/23 Gospel of the Day: John 13:21-33, 36-38

Ugly truth #2 - we are all Judas because we all betray Jesus. In today's Gospel, He is deeply troubled and tells the disciples that one of them will betray Him. We read this thinking immediately of Judas, but how quick we are to look at the faults of others and their weaknesses and not realize that He is speaking directly to us about us. Even after all this time, we fail to see our own brokenness and need for forgiveness. Simon Peter speaks for us and declares he would never leave Jesus - best of intentions but still lacking in the self-emptying needed to truly follow. Empty yourself before the Lord in preparation for the coming Triduum.



4/5/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 26:14-25

Ugly truth #3 - it's never our fault. How often do we go through life blaming others, looking to hold others accountable, not wanting to look ourselves in the mirror? It's always easier to look externally and see others as the root of our problems - surely it is not I, Lord? But it IS I who hold on to the past and doesn't let go of excuses and grievances and doesn't forgive and let go. We make compromises with the world for far less than 30 pieces of silver to avoid following Jesus and the suffering of the Cross in order to gain mercy, peace, and forgiveness. Easier to live in the shadow than in the Light. But Christ wants us beside Him, free of the burdens of the past and willing to embrace Him.



Gospel of the Day: John 13:1-15 Holy Thursday

"Do this in memory of me." Everything about this Holy Thursday that we read is a reminder and invitation to do as Jesus did and enter in the mystery of His Passion and Love. We are to prepare ourselves carefully and with reverence as the apostles did. We are to rest in the Lord as they did. We are to serve and care for others as Jesus did in washing the feet of the apostles. We are to reverently gaze upon Our Lord in the bread and wine that become His Body and Blood. We are to renew this commitment regularly. We are to love Him with all our hearts. We are to become one body in Him. Everything changes beginning tonight.



Gospel of the Day: John 18:1—19:42 Good Friday

Good Friday - how can we call it this when the day is all about the brutal execution of a man who was despised by the leaders of the day and most of their followers? He was made to carry the tool of his execution up to the hilltop in the blazing heat, weakened beyond all measure by the vicious beating and torture of the previous hours. He collapsed three times under the weight of the cross and through sheer determination continued on. He was stripped of his clothes, nailed to a cross to die a slow and agonizing death while people jeered and mocked him. What is so good about all of that? He did that for you. He loves you that much, extending His arms to embrace you in mercy and forgiveness. Your sins were the weight of the cross, your sins the cause for His falling, your sins the deep wounds all over His body, your sins the crown upon His head, your sins the nails that pierced Him and secured Him to the cross. None of this is good, but He is. He is Love. He is Truth. He is Life. It is He that is all Good, and today we are called to confront that face to face. Forgive me, Lord and thank You for dying for me.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 28:1-10 Holy Saturday

The silence of Holy Saturday is one filled with expectant hope, a time to quietly reflect upon the powerful events and liturgies of the past 48 hours and look ahead to the joyful celebration to come. Far different from the first Holy Saturday, when the apostles were confused, shocked, scared, and uncertain with all they had witnessed. What next for them? Tradition has it that they sought the comfort and protection of our Blessed Mother, gathering beside her in grief and sorrow only to be comforted and inspired by her serene countenance and encouragement to have hope. Their sorrow is transformed into hope and faith through her example, which will burst into joy tomorrow morning when the tomb is discovered empty. Spend time in quiet prayer today, and ask Holy Mother Mary to pray for your serenity and hope, for her Son is the One who has conquered death and given us Life

Gospel of the Day: John 20:1-9 Easter Sunday

Rejoice for He is Risen! The peace and joy of the Resurrection is ours and proclaimed throughout the world today. We have hope. We have purpose. We have peace. We have love. We have been renewed in our faith, empowered by His Grace, sanctified by His sacrifice, redeemed by His love. May today be a new beginning and your life be one overflowing with grace, for the generosity of our God can never be outdone.



The joy of living in Truth and being obedient to Truth is the call to us all. As Mary was overjoyed leaving the empty tomb and obediently going to proclaim the Good News to the apostles, we see in her the joy of obedience that enables us to be evangelists and missionaries through action and deed. We are invited to go forth and share the Good News through all we do, to spread the Light of Christ as we did at the Easter Vigil just two nights ago. Contrast her joy in obedience to the lies and deception of the guards who saw and knew the truth of what happened, but instead accepted the lies of the world, accepting the idol of greed and spreading this lie to others. They do not know the joy we know and give thanks for.

4/11/23 Gospel of the Day: Jn 20:11-18

Many times, it is in our sorrow and weeping, our distress and anguish, that we come to see and experience the mercy and love of Christ, changing our tears to tears of joy. Mary Magdalene wept in sorrow, perhaps remembering the despair of the life she had led before Christ and now uncertain of what to do. But He comes before her, renews her faith in abundance, directs her to share His Resurrection with others, and restores her joy and confidence in Him. He is present and beside us always, regardless if we see Him through our tears or not. Pray that your eyes will be opened to see Him and rediscover the joy He desires for you.



4/12/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 24:13-35

We are the travelers on the way to Emmaus, conversing about things that we have experienced and downcast that life hasn't gone the way we anticipated or hoped. Christ comes up alongside us, engages with us, starts to explain things, and helps us to see He is present - our hearts begin to flame with love and desire, but we can't quite put it all together until that single transformative encounter. When we discover Him at last and our eyes and hearts are opened, it changes everything - we rush out into the darkness to proclaim the Good News and profess our love of Him in the hopes of sharing with others to believe. Is your heart aflame with love of Him?



4/13/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 24:35-48

It was His appearance before the 12 in the upper room, as the two travelers to Emmaus recounted the story of what happened, that became the transformative moment for them when they realized He is risen. The gospel today recounts the appearance and their shift from disbelief and confusion to joy and conviction. Sitting here this morning before the Blessed Sacrament, I can appreciate their change of heart and serenity in truly seeing our Risen King. He is present here, wholly truly, and substantially, and the conviction of faith that fills my heart is unmistakably from Him. Come spend a moment with Him and be refreshed in faith and spirit.

4/14/23 Gospel of the Day: John 21:1-14

In the aftermath of the resurrection of Christ and His appearance to the Apostles in the Upper Room, Peter is still struggling with inner turmoil, the three denials weighing heavily in his heart and holding him back from complete surrender to Christ. He goes back to what is familiar, perhaps to forget or regain confidence or work things out. It is here that Christ appears again and reveals Himself again, at which point Peter surrenders entirely and literally jumps in, headfirst! Wherever you are, whatever it is that you have gone back to, may you jump headfirst in faith into relationship with our Risen Lord and be filled with joy, serenity, and perseverance.

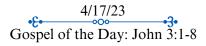


Remember this funny line from the movie Rush Hour when Chris Tucker meets Jackie Chan and yells to him - "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?" I think Jesus may have felt the same way in addressing the disciples today. After multiple appearances after His Resurrection, they still don't quite believe it's Him, so He has to be blunt with them and get them out of their fog to focus on their commissioning to go and "proclaim the Gospel to every creature." No more beating around the bush or sending them messages through others. They needed blunt directions, and so do we. We are called to discipleship, called to follow, called to abandon, and called to proclaim. Do you understand that this applies to YOU?

Gospel of the Day: John 20:19-31 Divine Mercy Sunday

Such beautiful, comforting, and inspiring words in today's gospel and on this Divine Mercy Sunday. "Peace be with you" as Christ greets the disciples. "Receive the Holy Spirit" as He breathes upon them. "My Lord and my God" as St. Thomas professes in complete faith and surrender, likely falling to his knees in homage and adoration. "Jesus, I trust in You" we recite in the Divine Mercy chaplet given to us this day. He is Risen indeed, and we continue to celebrate the joy of Easter, the gift of forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life.





"I don't get it." This can be one of the hardest things to admit because we live in a world that insists and demands that we gather all the information we need. Everything is supposedly available to us, and Alexa or Siri can tell us anything we need to know. To say "I don't get it" in today's environment is almost ridiculous. Yet we are invited to recognize and embrace the fact that we don't always get it, and we should accept this fact in all humility. The great Nicodemus models this for us today - he comes to Christ in humility seeking to understand, asking questions in a yearning and desire to know Truth, and we are blessed to receive he learned in today's gospel. Seek understanding. Seek Truth. Seek to know Him in all humility.

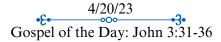
4/18/23 Gospel of the Day: John 3:7-15

I love the analogy used today by Christ of the Holy Spirit being like the wind. We cannot see the wind or feel it but can know it through its effects, be it a gentle cool breeze in the summer or a strong gust that knocks down our backyard fence. We can see leaves blowing across the lawn, trees swaying, and people clutching their coats around their necks to assess the strength or coolness of the wind. All of these are effects of the wind, not the wind itself. The Holy Spirit is very similar - what are the effects of the Spirit in your life that you can see today?



4/19/23 Gospel of the Day: John 3:16-21

The Easter Vigil Mass begins with the lighting of the Easter fire, the subsequent lighting of the Easter candle, and the procession into the church, where individual candles are lit and the church space becomes illuminated, symbolizing Christ as the Light of the world. It is a beautiful opening to an incredible liturgy and one that we reflect upon today as we read that the Light came into the world, calling us out of the darkness of sin and into His Light to be clearly seen by God the Father. Truth and Light always prevail, and we are inspired in hope and faith to bring the Light into our lives. Consider what darkness is - the absence of light. It does not exist of its own accord - it exists only as the absence of something else, light.



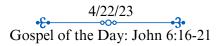
Powerful but overlooked words in today's Gospel: "[God] does not ration His gift of the Spirit."

Think about that. Put another way, His generosity can never be outdone. He wants to bless us in abundance if we allow Him to and are open to His free outpouring of grace. We block His grace. We decline His blessings. We close ourselves to Him. Choose differently. Allow yourself to be loved by the One Who loves you beyond all measure and understanding.



4/21/23 Gospel of the Day: John 6:1-15

The multiplication of loaves by Christ is a famous miracle. Not many people realize it is the only one to appear in all four gospels, so that's probably a good indication of its significance. Should we trust all things to God? Yes. Does He provide what we need? Yes. Does He provide in such great abundance that there are leftovers to share with others? Yes. The key lesson is to recognize that we have a part to play and a role to fulfill. We have to come forward with our efforts, our means, and our work and offer it to Him. We acknowledge we need Him and that our efforts are enough, trusting that He will take it and do wonders with it. Phillip stated the enormity of the situation, Andrew offered the meager supplies they had - Jesus took it from there. He expects the same of us.



Who knew? The rock classic by Kansas, "Carry on my Wayward Son," is a song of faith and hope with this iconic line drawn straight from today's Gospel:

On a stormy sea of moving emotion, Tossed about, I'm like a ship on the ocean.

We all encounter stormy weather in our lives, buffeted by sorrow, fear, challenges, failures, discouragement, and doubt, but when we see Jesus and invite Him into the ship that is our lives, the seas quiet and we find ourselves at our destination because HE is our destination. It is He that we move towards and that we seek. It is He who tells us "There'll be peace when you are done. Lay your weary head to rest." You know the rest....

Gospel of the Day: Luke 24:13-35 Third Sunday of Easter

Faith is a journey and encountering our Lord is a culminating milestone that hopefully happens again and again. The two walking to Emmaus probably had met and known Jesus previously, but it was their walk with Him and His breaking of the bread that truly opened their hearts to Him and transformed their life. They likely experienced His Presence again later on in the Eucharist as early Christians. Their lives were transformed through a journey of faith that we are all invited to. Jesus will seek us out wherever we are and come to us. Don't walk past Him with eyes, ears, and heart shut.



4/24/23 Gospel of the Day: John 6:22-29

Imagine being one of the 5,000 fed by Christ with the miracle of the multiplication of fish and loaves. You awaken the next morning and find Jesus and His disciples gone. Do you pat your tummy and head back home, chatting with others about how cool the day before was? Or do you start asking others if they know where Jesus went and seek to follow after Him because of how cool the day before was? If a miracle was the catalyst for your belief, that's fine - Christ doesn't care about the reason you follow Him and believe in Him, only that you do. He will strengthen and purify your belief, make it like steel - the more you believe, the stronger your convictions will become.

Gospel of the Day: Mark 16:15-20 Feast of Saint Mark, evangelist

Human failure can become the ideal circumstance for God to work in an individual's life and become a source of inspiration, an example of holiness and faith. Mark failed Paul in Acts, abandoning evangelization and returning home, seemingly a failure as a disciple and evangelist. Yet he would become a trusted friend of Peter, a comfort to Paul, bring the gospel message to Alexandria, and write one of the Four Gospels. A "failure" who gave up became an inspiration and a foundational stone of the early Church, whose impact continues to transform lives through the words he was inspired to write. St. Mark the Evangelist, please pray for us to be "failures" like you.

4/26/23 Gospel of the Day: John 6:35-40

What hope and assurance we receive in the Gospel message today - Jesus tells us that He will not lose us. We are forever in His gaze and His embrace so long as we accept and welcome it. Turn to Him in faith, come to Him in times of need and joy and He will always provide what we need, beginning with Himself in the Eucharist. He declares today He is the bread of life. He is with us always and will never lose us.



There are no two ways about it - Christ is wholly present in the Blessed Sacrament, and He invites us to be one with Him by consuming Him in the Eucharist. There is no symbolism. There is no analogy. There is no alternate meaning. The prophets had said we would be taught by God and that is exactly what happens in today's Gospel as Jesus declares He is the Bread of Life and we must eat of Him to gain eternal life. He is present before me in this chapel this morning - the King of kings and Lord of lords. I am not worthy to be here - none of us are - but He is here for our salvation.



4/28/23 Gospel of the Day: John 6:52-59

Faith is hard. Whoever said it was easy was someone who didn't have faith or didn't understand what true faith is. It requires abandonment, trust in the unknown and inexplicable, certain uncertainty, and a willingness to yield control. All of those are pretty simple, right? Jesus gives another invitation that on the surface appears untenable and causes so many to walk away. But faith in Him and the Truth of the Eucharist is the foundational Truth of our faith. Everything else is easy. This....this is worth it all.



4/29/23 Gospel of the Day: John 6:60-69

Memorial of Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

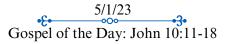
Commitment. Faith requires it. You can't understand everything, it doesn't all make sense, and plenty of things go above your head. That is to be expected. We're talking about understanding the One Who created all things, God Himself, our Father. We are His created ones, His children. How can we possibly expect - with our limited and broken capacity - to understand God Himself? We can't. But that's not what faith is about. It is about committing ourselves to Him and making the decision to believe without understanding, to stay committed despite the struggles and the world's temptation to take the easy path, and to remain in personal relationship with Christ even though we don't "feel" like it. Feelings are fleeting. Faith is like love - it's a decision and commitment.

Gospel of the Day: John 10:1-10 Fourth Sunday of Easter

"He knows my name!" That's always a big deal when you meet someone important or whom you admire, to find out that they know your name. You walk away feeling motivated and joyful that they know who you are. So how do you feel knowing that the Creator of all life, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Eternal Father knows YOU by name? The Good Shepherd calls His flock by name and we know His Voice and follow. Do more than follow. Live inspired, live joyful, and live motivated in knowing you are known by God Himself and known by name - He knows everything about you and still loves you completely and unconditionally.



May



Do you drag yourself out of bed to get to work or school? Do you count the minutes until Friday afternoon and "quitting time"? Do you live for work or see work as a necessary evil? That is not how things were intended, and it is not what God wants for you. Work was created as a blessing for us to participate in creation, to be side-by-side with God in experiencing the joy of labor, and to unleash the grace of creation. In doing so, opens us to be more selfless, invested in the world around us, and more attuned to the beauty of the world around us. On this feast day of St. Joseph the Worker, pray for his intercession that you might come to discover the true joy of work, the grace of participating in life, and the freedom that comes in uniting ourselves to Him and laying down our life for Him.



Gospel of the Day: John 10:22-30

Memorial of Saint Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

You can literally hear the exasperation in the voice of Jesus as He tells the people, "How many times do I need to tell you Who I Am?" He's done miracles, He's preached, He's cast out demons, but they still aren't sure Who He is and He cuts to the core of the matter by telling them it's because they choose not to believe. He doesn't force Himself on anyone - it's a decision for each person, and He loves us enough to respect that free will. It pains Him, no doubt, but He loves us enough to endure the pain of us ignoring Him and not choosing Him. How much more do YOU need to see and hear before you decide to follow Him as the Good Shepherd?



Gospel of the Day: John 14:6-14

Feast of Saints Philip and James, Apostles

The classic line, "Show me the money," from the movie *Jerry McGuire* is one used to challenge people to prove their words through results. "No more lip service, prove it" is the message conveyed. While not quite as flippant, Phillip is seemingly asking Jesus today for further evidence or clarification. His response is clear and direct - what further proof is needed after all I have done? You don't need to see to believe - you need to believe in order to see. Perhaps we should flip the script and ask ourselves, "Do people see the love of the Father in ME?"



I remember one of my first CRHP Masses, sitting in a circle as Father Angelo knelt before each of us and washed our feet. One man pulled back his feet, declaring how unworthy he was. Father Angelo gently pulled his foot forward and continued to wash his foot before leaning forward and kissing the man's wet foot. The man immediately broke down and wept, causing us all to begin weeping in recognition of our unworthiness. We are called to follow, to go do the same for others because we are sent by Christ. His example should be ours and we should be willing to do what He did for each of us. To expect a life of faith to be easy and not challenging is to not understand what living faith is all about.

5/5/23 Gospel of the Day: John 14:1-6

"This is the way" is the mantra of the popular STAR WARS series *The Mandalorian*, which is fitting since yesterday was May the 4th. Yet we know that the true way is the One given to us in today's Gospel. HE is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and we are reminded to always look to Him to find our way through life. We are not expected to go it alone, not left to ourselves to find our way. He is always present, along the journey and at the destination as well. His is the Way, and blessed are we to follow.



5/6/23 Gospel of the Day: John 14:7-14

How many friends do you have on social media platforms? Over 500? A thousand followers? 5000 close friends? How many of them are truly friends that know you and you them? Friends that have laughed and cried with you in person, held your hands in joy or struggle, helped you at an inconvenient time, or stood beside you during a difficult time? How many are friends that you can ask to pray for you, that you know their needs and pray for them, or whose call or visit is a welcome lift to your day? Those are true friends who know you and love you for who you are, nothing more and nothing less. Is Jesus one of those friends?



Gospel of the Day: John 14:1-12 Fifth Sunday of Easter

Each of us is homeless. I don't mean we are living on the streets, seeking shelter, facing food insecurity, and at risk of attack or theft. Through God's Grace, we have a place to sit comfortably, a place to rest our heads, a kitchen filled with food, and air conditioning that keeps us cool. Because of Him, we are in a position to help those facing all of the challenges and realities listed above; we are able to help in some way, no matter our own situation. But we are homeless. This world is not our home - it is the Father's House that we are making our way towards. That is our home for all eternity. It is our room in His Home that we seek.



5/8/23 Gospel of the Day: John 14:21-26

The saying "home is where the heart is" is a saying meant to convey that home is more than a place or structure - it has to do with the comfort, security, and tenderness of being surrounded by those who love you and give you stability and assurance in life. In short, home is love, and there is confidence in this love. Jesus tells us today that in loving Him, we allow ourselves to become a dwelling for Him and the Father; we become home for Him. In allowing ourselves to become His dwelling place, we are transformed, and His love becomes the home for us, filling us with hope, peace, confidence, strength, and love. Home is where the heart is when our heart is filled with Him.



5/9/23 Gospel of the Day: John 14:27-31a

Peace. Serenity. Tranquility. Let those words soak in for just a moment and permeate your very being. Take in a deep breath and exhale slowly while you repeat each word. Peace. Serenity. Tranquility. This is the desire of Christ for us, the explicit gift He gives to us and leaves with us to embrace and share. Do you share the peace of Christ with others? Do they experience His peace through their encounter with you? Share His peace daily and be filled once again with His peace, for His generosity can never be outdone.



5/10/23 Gospel of the Day: John 15:1-8

I have no green thumb. Period. Plants and flowers are guaranteed to wither and die if they come into my possession or are planted at my home. I won't go so far as to call the lawn barren, but the only way we win "Best Lawn in the Neighborhood" is if there can be no repeat winners and we are still here in 27 years. Not Jesus - He is the Vine and assures us that He knows what He is doing. To bear fruit, we must stay connected to Him and allow ourselves to be pruned, to be cleaned in Him. In doing so, we become an extension of Him, a branch to others and for others.



5/11/23 Gospel of the Day: John 15:9-11

Jesus tells us to remain in His Love, but as I sit before the Blessed Sacrament this morning, it dawns on me that it is *He* Who has remained with us in love. He is present here until the end of time when we will be before Him. He knows our weaknesses and our brokenness, our frailty and our doubt, our inconsistency and our selflessness. He knows we will fail, so He remains with us so that we can be with Him and our joy might be made complete. Thank You, Lord, for being with us always.



5/12/23 Gospel of the Day: John 15:12-17

"You have a friend in me" is the classic song from TOY STORY that was actually written 2000 years ago, as we read in today's Gospel. Jesus tells us He is our friend. What a gift for us to know and have the Son of God as our best friend! With a Friend like Him, what more do we need? Friends share the very best of themselves and introduce each other to other people. Friendships blossom when nurtured and shared, cared for and appreciated. Jesus wants to be your BFF and extends Himself to you.



5/13/23 Gospel of the Day: John 15:18-21

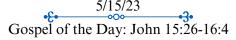
In today's Gospel, there are moments where Jesus just misses the mark when it comes to sales. Telling His peeps that people will hate them and persecute them because they follow Him is not the way to close a deal. Yet they still follow and still believe, and the world was transformed by Him through them. The Truth may seem to be hard to "sell," but when we recognize Truth is a Person, it is Christ Himself...the Truth doesn't need salesmanship. Truth stands on its own merit because it is the Way and the Life.



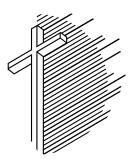
Gospel of the Day: John 14:15-21 Sixth Sunday of Easter

As if He hasn't given us enough already, we read today that God has even more in store for us. Jesus tells His disciples, "But wait - there's more!" and it is better than any TV commercial ad. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, is coming and will dwell within us to help us know and grow in the Lord, unseen but experienced. The fullness of grace is coming, to wash over us as He did with our Blessed Mother, whom we honor this month and whom we ask to intercede on our behalf. We ask for her prayers before God for all mothers and praise God for the gift and beauty of femininity in the world.





We are warned today not to fall away when we meet resistance and critics, people who do not agree with us or the faith we witness to. That is ok - Jesus tells us to expect this and to anticipate such resistance (at times extreme resistance) to His message and example of love, forgiveness, mercy, and compassion. We are told to expect it and to take heart and strength in knowing that it is coming. Remembering that He told us to expect this will give us strength and fortitude, preparing us for a life of faith and discipleship.



5/16/23 Gospel of the Day: John 16:5-11

Change is never easy, even when it is positive change. The promise of an Advocate to be sent that would guide and lead, strengthen and prepare sounds great, but perhaps not at the cost of losing Jesus and Him leaving. Jesus was known to them, they loved Him, knew Him, and trusted Him. This Advocate was "a new guy" that would take some time to get to know. Yet here we are 2000 years later still getting to know the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. He has been with us every step of the way since Jesus left - just as was promised - and through Him, we have come to know God more deeply and profoundly than ever, with much intimacy still to come if we surrender ourselves to Him. Come Holy Spirit, enkindle our lives and hearts....



5/17/23 Gospel of the Day: John 16:12-15

We like to pretend we are know-it-alls who understand anything about everything. Because we are educated, we falsely assume we have extensive knowledge and understanding. Likewise in faith, we mistakenly think we understand everything and have our heads around it all. How can we be so presumptuous to assume that our feeble, broken minds can fully grasp the omnipotence and infinite reality of God? Jesus sends us the Spirit to begin to understand the totality of Who He is. But do not, for a moment, believe you will understand Him fully. Faith must lead you to that surrender to Him.



5/18/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 28:16-20 Ascension Thursday

"I am with you always until the end of the age." Pure hope and pure authority spoken by Jesus on this day, His final words before ascending into Heaven and "leaving" us. And here He remains, quietly and humbly in the Blessed Sacrament before me. He is present all around us because He is in each of us. We are invited to see Him in all, and it is here, in the Blessed Sacrament, that He fulfills His Promise to be with us until the end of the ages. Heaven is opened for us, He wants us with Him and He sits on His Throne in the monstrance or tabernacle, waiting for each of us. Carry Him in your heart everywhere you go, bring Him to the ends of the earth.

5/19/23 Gospel of the Day: John 16:20-23

While I don't know the pain and discomfort of carrying a child and giving birth, as the father of a small herd I can relate to Jesus comparing the anguish of suffering leading to the rejoicing of salvation to motherhood. The joy of the resurrection and the glory of God cannot be realized without the suffering of the Cross. He willed it this way in His own Life so that we might come to understand and unite our own suffering to His. Our tears of sorrow will become tears of joy - believe it for He has ordained it to be true. He awaits our embrace with open arms.



5/20/23 Gospel of the Day: John 16:23-28

He's not done. As gracious and as generous as Abba Father is, He is still not done with you and His blessings for you. Can you believe that? Do you believe that? He is not done blessing you because His love and generosity can never be done, and the limits we project on Him are just that - our limits. But He is infinite and all-powerful, eternal and all-loving. His love for us has no bounds, and today Jesus tells us clearly to ask and receive....wait for it....so that our joy may be complete! He hasn't finished with us yet! Praise You and thank You God for loving us so!



Gospel of the Day: John 17:1-11 Seventh Sunday of Easter - Ascension

Unity. It is time to proclaim our desire - HIS desire for unity. Too much time and emphasis on what divides us and what we don't agree on has us spiraling toward chaos, but this is not what God desires for us. Jesus is One with the Father, the Father is One with Him, and the Holy Spirit emanates from both in One spiration of Love. We are invited into this unity and unity with others - we are fundamentally, at our core, the same children of God, and there is glory, joy, and peace in that reality. Focus on what we have in common and realize unity in Him.



"Take courage," says the Lord. What comfort and assurance He gives, as well as an honest forewarning that we will need courage in our lives. There is no life without struggle, no existence free of challenge or suffering - to believe otherwise is to submit to lies and falsehoods. There will be struggle, abandonment, loss, fear, and confusion. But Jesus tells us He is with us, will bless us with peace, and that we are to take courage and live boldly as His disciples.

5/23/23 Gospel of the Day: John 17:1-11

The Final Countdown. Go ahead - sing the lyrics from that classic 80s rock anthem. That's what today's reading is about - the final moments before leaving. Jesus is telling us He is leaving to be together with the Father, but He has prepared us and is uniting us to Him through His glory and the glory of God. His are triumphant words, grounded in Truth and declaring hope for us. He has done His Father's Will, and now it is time for us to do the same and claim our inheritance. Everything is from Him, an unmerited gift of love - blessed are we to receive this gift and be His disciples.



5/24/23 Gospel of the Day: John 17:11-19

You are holy. Did you know that? Let that sink in for a moment. Jesus tells the Father today that He has consecrated us to the truth, which is to Him. To be consecrated is to be set aside as holy, so you and I have been made holy by Him Who is all Truth. By virtue of your discipleship and through no merit of your own, you have been made holy. This gift should fill you with joy to share with the world as Jesus asks us to. A holy people should be a joy-filled people. Radiate that joy always.



5/25/23 Gospel of the Day: John 17:20-26

Many of us know that the official motto of the United States is "In God We Trust" but over 1700 years before our country was founded, Jesus put His trust in us! In today's Gospel, as He prays, He speaks of all those who will come to know Him through the disciples and through us, speaking with authority of what is to come. He trusts us, probably more than we trust ourselves, to be examples of faith, love, and mercy. In trust, He unites us to the Father, imparts His Spirit upon us, and calls us into communion with Him. As I look upon the Blessed Sacrament, I thank you Lord for trusting us to follow You, long before we realized we would and the blessing that it is for us and those around us.



Gospel of the Day: John 21:15-19 Memorial of Saint Philip Neri, Priest

It didn't matter. He denied Him, he fled from the suffering, he failed miserably to lead at the Crucifixion, and he went back to his old way of life. Yet Jesus still believed in Him and entrusted His Church to him. He gave him three opportunities to redeem himself and reverse his denials of Him. Then He showed him how much He loved him by giving him his place back in order to glorify God and invited him once again to follow. He does that with you, me, and all of us every day. We are always invited to return to Him and follow.



5/27/23 Gospel of the Day: John 21:20-25

John identifies himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, and up until today I always thought that was a little smug of him to self-identify that way. What about the others? Jesus loved them too, right? Yes, He did. He loves us all so much that He died for us. But John makes that love that Jesus has for him his whole identity! John isn't the young disciple, John isn't the younger brother of James, John isn't the gospel writer and evangelist. John is the one loved by Jesus. How beautiful and pure and complete an identity is that? Nothing else matters and everything else is secondary. YOU are the one whom Jesus loves!



Gospel of the Day: John 20:19-23 Pentecost Sunday

Pentecost Sunday. Images of the driving wind and tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit immediately come to mind followed by the bold proclamation of the disciples to those gathered together. But before this came the appearance of Jesus before them, huddled in fear behind locked doors. Twice, He blessed them with His Peace before breathing on them and giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit. We must unlock the doors of our own hearts to receive His Peace before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit comes upon us. Rest in His Peace, and become His presence in the world.

5/29/23

Gospel of the Day: John 19:25-34 Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

On this Marian feast day after Pentecost Sunday, we thank God for the blessing and gift of the Blessed Virgin Mary becoming our Blessed Mother through some of the final words of Christ upon the Cross. He gives her to us and us to her as more than an act of love and compassion - He speaks into reality the saving Grace that we receive by having her as our mother, to intercede on our behalf before her Son, and to help us grow closer to Him. Be wrapped in the gentle and tender mantle of Mary and humbly ask her to bring you before her Son, Our Lord and Savior.



5/30/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 10:28-31

What have you given up to follow Jesus? Peter tells Him they have given up everything, but what about you? Each of us needs to answer this question for ourselves in our own state of life, with a true assessment of what we choose to cling to and not let go of. Control? Finances? Children? Job? Sin? Selfishness? Ask the Holy Spirit to come upon you, help you to see what needs to be given up, and grant you the fortitude to let it go so that you might follow Him completely. He is calling and inviting you to do so....



5/31/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:39-56

Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Joy. It is the first response and reaction to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and we see it manifested in today's Gospel to commemorate the visitation of the Blessed Mother. Upon receiving the overcoming of the Holy Spirit upon her at the Annunciation, she is filled with joy and goes to her cousin Elizabeth to help her and share her joy with her. Elizabeth responds with joy upon hearing her voice, and our Blessed Mother responds with greater joy and humility at the miracle she has experienced. You have been filled with the Holy Spirit again at Pentecost and reminded of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within you. Is your life and manner of being one that reflects the joy and humility of our Blessed Mother and the realization that you are a daughter or son of God?

June

Gospel of the Day: Mark 10:46-52 Memorial of Saint Justin, Martyr

"Take courage and get up. Jesus is calling you." Wow. Can you imagine calling out in desperation for Christ to have pity on you and then to be told "Take courage. Get up. Jesus is calling you." Would you dare move forward or would you sit back down and say "Never mind"? We sometimes ask in our desperation, and the Lord can respond so clearly it frightens us. Don't let it - that is the enemy. He always responds - have the courage to act upon His response.



6/2/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 11:11-26

The withering of a barren fig tree and the driving out of dishonest merchants from the Temple area are stark images of Jesus and are meant to grab our attention. Failure to respond to the graces given to us and the call to discipleship have a price - we are blessed with responsibilities and need to respond accordingly. Yet through these scenes, Jesus gives us hope by telling us to pray with sure faith to our Father, as well as extend to others the mercy and compassion that we desire of Him. We are also called to live and reflect the righteousness of God.



6/3/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 11:27-33

"I don't know" can oftentimes mask a fear of confronting the truth or avoiding a difficult but necessary decision. There are times when we genuinely don't know things, and it is honorable and humbling to admit uncertainty or lack of understanding. That can be a moment of transformative grace. But "I don't know" can often be a "cop-out" to avoid clear truth or the need to change. We know but don't want to accept the knowledge, assume the responsibility, or make the necessary change. Our Heavenly Father knows you and knows what you need - where in your life have you answered "I don't know" when in fact you do but just don't want to admit it?



Gospel of the Day: John 3:16-18 Trinity Sunday

On the surface, the most cited Scriptural verse in sports - John 3:16 - is pretty powerful. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." But today is Trinity Sunday, and we are invited into the much deeper reality and meaning of the central mystery of our faith. God is a Trinitarian spiration of self-giving, an eternal and infinite cycle of love that is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God became more fully known to us through the Son, Who ascended into Heaven so that the Holy Spirit could become known to us. The Trinity is Love and dwells within us - He did more than give us His only Son. He made us His, in pure and complete love.



6/5/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 12:1-12

Memorial of St. Boniface, Bishop and Martyr

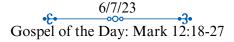
It is easy to see that Jesus is depicting the Pharisees as the vineyard tenants who continually rejected the vineyard owner's servants and eventually killed his own son. Even they recognized themselves in the parable, which only got them more upset. But do you see yourself as one of those who rejected the vineyard owner? How often do you refuse to let God into that corner of your life that you want to keep in the dark? Or you choose not to help a certain neighbor? Forgive someone who wrongs you? Do something that only draws you away from God? It's easy for us to see the Pharisees in this parable, but what about ourselves?



6/6/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 12:13-17

Think you can outsmart God? The Pharisees certainly did with their trick question about paying taxes. But once again, before we pass judgment on them, we need to ask ourselves how often we do the same with God. How often do we ask "If You do this, then I'll do this" or "I'll believe You if"? Or worse, how often do we approach things with robotic black-and-white answers and not allow ourselves to use our faith to guide us compassionately and justly through issues of the day? The Pharisees thought they were all that - let's not model ourselves after them.





Another foolish group with another line of questioning trying to trip up the Lord. We may do the same, applying different lines of thinking and opinions to find reasons to disagree or stand apart from Christ, but to what end? It ultimately becomes a choice to surrender our broken will, accept the healing grace of God, and choose to follow. We may not always or fully understand, but that is ok - it is impossible for us to fully and completely know the mind and will of God, the Creator of all. To assume we can is presumptuous, arrogant, and ill-advised. He is Lord of all, and we are blessed to be His beloved children.



6/8/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 12:28-34

Love of God and neighbor is today's Gospel message - the two go hand-in-hand and bring us into the life of God. How appropriate this morning as we celebrate individuals who are sparks of hope for others in the way they serve and love in our Vincentian programs. They are examples of servant leadership, compassion and caring, and love of God and neighbor. May our lives be living examples of discipleship and service to draw others to Him.



6/9/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 12:35-37

"Sit at my right hand." Imagine Jesus saying this warmly and softly to you as He pats an inviting seat next to Himself and looks at you with eyes of tender compassion. He wants you beside Him, and blessed are we to be loved by Him so much that He wants us with Him. Individually. One by one. Sitting right beside Him in love and joy, struggle and sorrow, courage and peace.



In today's Gospel, the two small coins given at the offering barely make a sound when dropped into the metal receptacle. Noiseless and voiceless, unseen and forgotten by the world. Yet her complete self-giving booms in the heart of our Lord and Savior, resonating with such love and tenderness that He calls His disciples together to teach them and help them understand the profundity and sincerity of authentic charity. Blessed is she for having given completely.



Gospel of the Day: John 6:51-58 Feast of Corpus Christi

Just because it is difficult to get our heads around, doesn't make it not true. We can study and seek to comprehend through the grace of wisdom and knowledge, but in the end, it is a matter of the heart and of the will. Christ tells us today - point blank - He is the Living Bread. There is no gray, no various ways of interpreting, no metaphors to come up with. He is Who He says He is, and the Eucharist is Him. Our hearts fill with joy and gratitude, faith and peace, humility and strength in knowing He is present in the Blessed Sacrament. Blessed are we to receive Him - Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.



6/12/23 Gospel of the Day: Mark 5:1-12

"Blessed are you." These are words I heard repeated so many times during the past few days as we hosted Bishop Quinn. He spoke these words to so many he met as a way of thanking them and recognizing their good works. The words were spoken with such peace and grace that it was as if Christ Himself was speaking them. I smiled each time and felt warmth and joy in my heart, no doubt the same way those listening to the Sermon on the Mount did. The Beatitudes are meant to guide us and encourage us in the overwhelming mercy of God - blessed are we to experience the gift of His mercy and to be sharers in this mercy.

6/13/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:13-16 Memorial of St. Anthony of Padua, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Use it or lose it. That's the crux of the Lord's message about being the salt and light of the world. Salt loses its purpose to season and preserve food if it is not used. A light under a bushel basket doesn't do anyone any good. We have been blessed with faith to be both salt and light. What are we waiting for? For someone else to shine their light? Be bold. Be courageous. Be faithful and faith-filled to witness to the love of Christ. Season your life with the richness of faith. Do not hide your faith but place it front and center for all to see so that it draws others to Him.

6/14/23Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:17-19

Have you ever seen the smallest part of a letter? Look at the words in this sentence and think about it - the dot above the "i " or the leg of the "k"....are those the smallest parts? Assuming they are, they carry the full weight of the sentence they are in, the full weight of the Law. Don't overlook the small things because doing so opens the door to skipping the larger meaning and intent. Taking a pass on small things like supposed white lies opens a crack in the window for greater sin to follow, for more disobedience, for more separation. There is unexpected great wisdom in the saying "Dot your 'i's and cross your 't's."



6/15/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:20-26

The power of words and the ability for them to cut people down more harshly than a sword is more evident today than ever. Everyone believes they are entitled to speak their mind and share their opinion, regardless of how painful or devastating it can be to another person, and probably not even caring because it is more important to speak your piece. But words have power; they have meaning and consequences. Jesus today speaks of saying to a brother, "Raga," which means "worthless" in Aramaic. Worthless. No one is worthless. Each of us is made in His image and likeness, each of us is a child of God. We are beautiful in the eyes of our loving Father.

6/16/23 Gospel of the Day: Mathew 11:25-30

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

! Universally known as the symbol of love. Today we celebrate authentic, true, sacred love. We celebrate the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Whose Heart burns with infinite love for us. He desires a personal relationship with each of us, yearns to envelop us in His outstretched arms, eager to pour out His Grace, Mercy, and Forgiveness upon every single one of us. Will you respond to His Love? Will you say "Yes" to His invitation and love Him back? Pray today for your own forgiveness and healing and for that of the whole world - His heart breaks over what we do to one another and to Him. Still, He stands with arms wide to love completely and us unconditionally, beyond any human comparison.

Gospel of the Day: Luke 2:41-51 Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Mothers have always been considered the heart of a home. The love of a mother permeates every aspect of home, uniting her with her children and her husband and being a source of comfort, peace, love, and compassion. We read today - for the second time in Luke - that Mary kept things in her heart. It is that heart of our Blessed Mother that we honor and celebrate today - the Immaculate Heart of Mary that loves us as her own children. It is through her love and intercession that Christ began His public ministry, and it is through her that we can ask to draw closer to her Son. The love of Mary is immaculate - blessed are we to be loved by her.



6/18/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:36-10:8 Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

Blessed are we to be called laborers of the harvest. Each of us is called to gather the harvest, to go out and proclaim the Good News of His Love, and to work in His Name. There is a world in desperate need of encountering the Risen Lord, coming to know Him and experiencing His Love and Mercy. That will happen through us, those whom He has called to be His instruments. We are not worthy and have not earned this gift, thus we are to freely give it - share it - with others. Blessed are we to be sent by Him.



6/19/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:38-42

No relationship is 50-50. Every relationship has to be 51-49 because somebody needs to be the one to take the first step or make the final decision. 50-50 guarantees inaction and indecision. Christ today is telling us the same - someone needs to be willing to step into the discomfort, the uneasiness, the hurt, and the suffering to be willing to offer change, forgiveness, charity, and love. He calls us to be that one, the same way that He is the One who goes beyond the unexpected and loves those who chastise Him. He invites us to follow Him and turn the other cheek in the face of hatred, oppression, ingratitude, and ridicule. Be the 51.



Love your enemy. Very tough challenge from Jesus today and one that we all struggle with. Surely Jesus doesn't mean to really love every enemy, does He? He doesn't know so-and-so and what they've done to me or this person has hurt me beyond all imagination, can't love them! News flash - He means everyone because HE loves everyone. Christ loves us all as brother and sister and expects us to do the same. "Well He is the Son of God, so it's easier for Him" is the next thought right? Did you see what His enemies did to Him and still He loved and forgave them? You are not hanging from a tree, are you? No. He calls us to love and reflect the love of God upon all. "Agape love" is the love that wills for the love of God upon another. Love your enemy - it opens you further to the love and mercy of God.

6/21/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 Memorial of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Religious

Three times we are told that our Father who sees in secret will repay us. Nothing that we do is hidden from Him. He sees and knows everything about us. Not because He is CIA or KGB on steroids and wants to "catch us" - that is an unmerciful god. No. He loves us so much that we are always in His sight and His presence because He delights in us and wants to celebrate and rejoice with us - and forgive us. He is always there so that we always have access to Him; we can turn to Him for comfort, strength, forgiveness, and love.



Words have meaning. They have power. The Gospel of John opens with the powerful revelation that "... the Word was God." His Holy Name has power before all things when spoken aloud - Jesus Christ and all are called to bend their knee at the proclamation of His Name, some are even knocked over when He declares "I AM". God spoke creation into existence - He declared it to be because He is Truth, and He is the Word. As His sons and daughters, we have access to this power. We are given the ability to declare truth, and it is in the spoken word that we can bring the love of Christ into the world, followed by our actions. But our words have power, and our prayers connect us to the source of all goodness in God. "Amen" declares "I believe." "Jesus, I love you" professes our devotion. "More, Lord" places us confidently at His disposal and trusting in His mercy. Simple prayers filled with such power, filled with Him.

6/23/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 6:19-23

Treasure map. Many of us grew up playing some form of treasure hunt game as kids or scavenger hunt as teens or young adults. There is excitement in a treasure hunt, focused attention to clues, taking a wrong turn and having to retrace our steps or find a different way to the next milestone. Joy in working with others, frustration at times, anticipation of getting closer, and then celebration at finding the treasure. The Lord invites us on the ultimate treasure hunt - to join Him and His Father in Heaven and uncover the heavenly gifts They have given us along the way in this life.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:57-66, 80 Nativity of John the Baptist

Words have power and so do names. A person's name gives them identity as a person, taking them out of the haze of obscurity and making them known. God the Father knows each of us by name, known before we were born, knitted in our mother's womb as a person. The Holy Name of Jesus is above all other names. Calling a person by name recognizes them as a person, as a brother or sister and fellow child of God. When he was given the name of John in today's Gospel reading, the heralding of the coming of the Lord was made manifest, the Baptizer's naming marked His coming and the beginning of His Kingdom. It marked a new beginning - his name truly mattered.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:26-33

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fear no one. Bold proclamation by Jesus - a directive by the King of kings that should inspire courage and confidence in us all. Nothing will remain in darkness, everything will be brought into the light. We cannot hide or be hidden because God knows each and every one of us, for He created each one of us. We will endure struggle and suffer as His Son did, but we are not to fear. Instead, we are called to have courage and confidence in who we are and Whose we are.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 7:1-5

Have you ever been able to take a splinter out of someone's finger or toe on the first attempt? It used to be more frustrating for me to get a splinter out of our child's finger than the splinter was painful to them. When done with patience and calmness, plenty of light, and the correct tool, it was always easier. Even more so when done with compassion and reassurance, love, and kindness. So too with sin. Rash actions, shouting and yelling, aggressive frustration, exasperation, and escalation of emotion do not make for successful fraternal correction - or removal of splinters.



The Golden Rule is generally accepted, even though many don't realize it comes from today's Gospel reading. What is harder is the preceding statement not to give what is holy to dogs. Strong challenge and admonishment to us to protect our faith and not be careless with it or with ourselves. We are made in His image and likeness, His children, and we need to behave like it. We cannot frivolously live our lives, be reckless in what we do, ignore our responsibilities, and expect to receive our eternal reward. No. Our faith and our lives are gifts from God despite our brokenness, and we must treasure them like the treasures they are, nurture them as is warranted, and protect them as the most precious of all things.

Memorial of Saint Irenaeus, Bishop and Martyr

Breathe hope into the world. The news is dominated and saturated with stories of division, hatred, violence, and intolerance. We are bombarded with information that is confusing, twists reality, and defies logic, yet is consumed as truth. Then we wonder why there is so much depression, anxiety, confusion, and surrender in the world. We need hope to be spoken and exhibited, poured into a world that is bleak because of the filters we have. God created a world of beauty for us to nurture and invites us to care for it and add to it. We must be a hope- and joy-filled people who bring light and beauty into the world. How can we not as His beloved children? We must live like it.

6/29/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 16:13-19 Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

Who is Jesus? Each of us - like Peter - will be asked to answer that question. Answers can go in a million directions, but ultimately you need to answer who He is. There is a rock upon which we can build our relationship; Jesus promised us He would build His Church upon Peter to guide us and give us definitive answers and gifts, which it has done for 2000 years. But ultimately the question remains - Who is Jesus? My prayer for you before the Blessed Sacrament is that you come to know Jesus more fully and completely than anyone else you could possibly know.

We are all lepers. This ancient disease that was the cause of so many to be outcast and shunned is alive today. It is symbolic of sin. It causes us to be turned away, to live in filth and the shadows, to be left to wander on our own for survival. The leper today asked for healing with the sure confidence that he could be healed if Jesus willed it. He does. He wills our healing and cleansing. He wants each of us to be cleansed; we are called to come to Him in all humility and all faith and ask it of Him. And He will.

July

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 8:5-17

Subject to authority. That statement probably creates a visceral reaction in some. The mere thought that one has to obey someone else is counter-cultural to our world today. Everyone thinks they have a right to do what they want and think what they want, but this is a lie of the world and a misunderstanding of true freedom. Being subject to the authority that we read of in today's gospel is recognizing in humility and loving obedience that there is One greater than us, and it is to Him that we bow. He Who created us and all living things. He Who desires us to be with Him. He Who loves us beyond all measure and willed us into existence. We subject ourselves to His loving care.



7/2/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:37-42 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Limitless. The love of God is limitless, and when we love Him above all else, we "gain access" to this love. The concept is not too difficult for a parent. We love our child unconditionally and think we cannot love more, but when we are blessed with another child, it's not like our love is now divided in two and the first sees a 50% reduction in love. Nothe capacity for love in our hearts doubles! Imagine that on an infinite level. Loving Him first enables us to love all beyond comprehension and purifies our love to make it an even better and stronger love. He IS Love.



Gospel of the Day: John 20:24-29 Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle

All of us have "doubting" Thomas within us, but what about Thomas the martyr? Thomas whose faith is so ignited and deepened in that one moment in the Upper Room that he declares the beautiful prayer "My Lord and my God" - do you have that faith of Thomas? In order to come to such life-changing faith, he needed to experience that emptiness without Him. Once renewed, he went further than any other disciple to bring the Good News of Christ. He lived in complete abandonment to our Lord and our God. Pray for the faith of Thomas.

The devotion of the Sleeping Joseph is growing in popularity and is a profound testimony to his obedience and docile faith in God. The image of a sleeping Jesus in today's Gospel is even more profound and inspiring, and it is not the first time we encounter the magnificence of the silence of Jesus. His silence speaks loudly and teaches us if we ponder and listen. Sometimes, He is inviting us to work through things without Him holding our hand throughout, as a parent does with a child. He is silent but never distant nor away from us, always there whether we see Him or not.



7/5/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 8:28-34

How often do we act like the Gadarenes, asking Jesus to leave us, content to stay in ignorance and sin? We fear the miraculous, the healing, the restoration that He offers. We see the "great cost" of what we have to give up, the material possessions we might need to forego, the "sacrifice" called for. We see all that and assume another chance will come when we are more ready and willing, or perhaps we don't even care. How sad to think that Jesus came and - like the innkeepers in Bethlehem - we have no place for Him.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:1-8

Courage. It is defined as the strength to overcome fear. Jesus lovingly tells the paralytic to have courage. What could the paralytic be fearing that would cause Jesus to first tell him to have courage? Fear of disappointment? Fear of rejection? Fear of failure? Fear of self? Fear of being beyond the love of God? What do you fear when you lay before Christ, unable to do for yourself, broken and helpless, yearning for something more? Fear not, for the Lord of lords loves you beyond all measure and blesses you with the courage to overcome, if only you believe.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:9-13

Invitational mandate. Interesting concept, but that is what we are presented with today. Jesus invites us - as He did with Matthew and each of the disciples - to follow Him, and blessed are we to respond decisively and promptly as Matthew did. But that is only the beginning. Jesus then issues the mandate for His disciples when speaking to the Pharisees - "I desire mercy." He invites us and then gives us the clear instruction to be disciples of mercy, disciples of His Mercy that is poured out upon the whole world. Blessed are we to be invited to His mission.



Are any two days in your life exactly the same? Each day is a new day with new challenges, new joys, and new opportunities. Each day is a day of change with opportunities to learn a little more, expand our understanding, and deepen our awareness of God's presence in our lives. Each day is either a step forward or a step backward in our faith life - there is no "holding pattern" in our journey towards God. Rejoice in the possibilities of the new day in drawing closer to The One Who loves you beyond all measure and desires to fill your heart with His love and grace.



7/9/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 11:25-30 Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Honestly, who grew up with meekness as a standard to aspire to? It is a quality that is not touted as aspirational and worthy of following by the world. Meek rhymes with weak and is thought to be a synonym for it. But Jesus tells us otherwise, and when we look at its meaning, we can understand why. To be meek is to graciously and humbly submit to the will of God, and we have Jesus as our role model. To be meek is to be quiet and ponder, calm and intentional, joyful and at peace. Meekness is the strength to withstand the fury and magnetic pull of the world, the selfishness within, and the distraction of everything around us. It is fortitude to stay anchored in Him, abandoned in faith and love. Oh that I may be made meek.

7/10/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:18-26

No one likes to be laughed at. For many of us, being laughed at, ridiculed, and made fun of is a source of pain and embarrassment from our past. We get conditioned to avoid actions or behaviors that will draw scorn or ridicule from others, are conscious of how we are perceived by others, and become focused on public perception of us. Today's Gospel presents us with bold actions driven by faith that publicly would draw negative attention, but profound faith compels them to act. There is no regard for "how things look" - they abandon themselves to reckless courage and faith, modeling for us how to live our lives in faith. Christ was ridiculed throughout His public ministry - who are we to think the same won't happen to us when we follow Him with abandon?

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:32-38 Memorial of Saint Benedict, Abbot

We can be such a pessimistic people. The old saying, "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth," underscores that - we don't even pause to recognize and give thanks for the blessings in our life and immediately move to discredit the blessing or question its significance. In many ways, we refuse to accept His blessings and love, almost as if saying we don't think we are worthy. We ARE worthy because He makes us so, and because we are His children. Every gift from Him is a pearl of great price.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:1-7

Jesus summoned the Twelve and sent them out on mission. The gospel reading gives us each of their names, including Judas who would ultimately betray Jesus. How often do we skim over these names and move on in our reading? Pause for a moment and consider that each of them is called by name - just as you and I are - and invited to extend the proclamation of the Kingdom. Did Jesus need them - or need us - to spread the Good News, to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom? Of course not. But He chose to do so and blesses us with this gift and this responsibility. Blessed are we.



In today's Gospel, you get the sense that the Twelve were packing things up and getting ready to go out as Jesus had instructed them, probably uncertain of exactly what they were doing and how they were to do it. They are anxious and unsure, making themselves busy to get started, perhaps looking at each other for reassurance and receiving shrugs in return. It is in this uncertainty that Jesus speaks boldly of what they are to do and the powerful movement of the Holy Spirit that is to come. They are to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom with bold works of the Spirit, to glorify Him, and to bring others to Him. As I pray before the Blessed Sacrament, I pray for peace upon you as you go forth, just as He proclaimed and prayed for the Twelve.

7/14/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:16-23 Memorial of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin

"Shrewd yet simple." How many of us can claim to be described like that by others? Two seemingly unrelated descriptions with imagery that is even more drastic in the Gospel - serpent and dove. Jesus teaches us today to be "both / and". How is that possible? The shrewdness we are called to is the acute ability to discern situations and make decisions on how to act/be/respond, while the simplicity we are invited to is to be grounded in the understanding of truth. "Let your yes be yes and your no be no." Combining the two enables us to understand the stark contrast between right and wrong and navigate our lives accordingly. While things may be black or white in theory, there is a lot of gray that must be navigated, shrewdly and simply.

7/15/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:24-33
Memorial of Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor
of the Church

Fear. It binds us. It limits us. It shackles us. It blocks us. It enslaves us. Why do we let it do that to us when we have Jesus tells us plainly, "Be not afraid"? Who should we listen to? The King of kings and Lord of all, our Savior and Friend...or a world determined to keep us in fear? He tells us in today's Gospel "Do not be afraid of them" and assures us of the love and caring of our Father in Heaven. Speak boldly, proclaim from the hilltop, act courageously, and live in freedom and knowledge that you are a beloved son or daughter of God.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:1-23 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Profundity is defined as great depth or intensity, and it is what Jesus is inviting us to today. The seeds of faith that He is planting, in order to bear the greatest bounty, require rich soil to grow deep roots. The fisherman who seeks the greatest catch must fish the deepest waters to bring in the greatest haul. Christ is planting seeds of faith in us - are we willing to yield and nurture these seeds with profound faith, obedience, and love so as to yield a thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or hundredfold bounty of grace? He desires such abundance for us. God the Father made us for this - are we willing to receive it and do our part with it? How profound is our faith in Him?



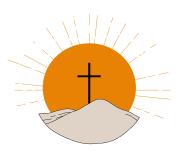
Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:34-11:1

"Get used to different" is a catchphrase from the show *The Chosen*. Jesus is telling His disciples that following and believing in Him will be unlike anything they have experienced, and it will not follow protocol. It is a radical shift in life that will require great sacrifice, new thinking, and new priorities to align with Him, the reality of Who He is, and all He has to offer. He shares this with them to set expectations and begin their transformation. Are you ready to be transformed into a new creation in Him?



7/18/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 11:20-24

When a cowboy says "whoa" he means for the horse to stop. When Jesus says "woe," it takes on a much deeper and more serious meaning. Hearing "woe" from Him is meant to stop us in our tracks and get our attention, a call for immediate change and serious readjustment in our lives. It is a wake-up call to the nth degree. But it is also an opportunity for mercy as only He can afford us - the fount of all mercy and compassion uses these opportunities to invite us to conversion. So perhaps His "woe" is an invitation to "go" to Him.



7/19/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 11:25-27

When we think of childlike we often think of innocence and the purity of a child. This is probably even more so today in light of the stark reality shown to us in the powerful movie *Sound of Freedom*. The innocence and purity that is stolen is gut-wrenching and sobering. To be childlike is also to have an expectant faith and hope, a deep-rooted conviction of the love and goodness of the Father. Despite the tribulations and struggles, childlike faith clasps firmly to hope and awareness of Whose we are, always, for Abba Father loves us.



No free passes. Jesus doesn't tell us He will remove all burdens, worries, and struggles from life. He doesn't say that everything will be peachy cream moving forward. No. In fact, He gives us more work and tells us to take on His voke and learn from Him on top of what we are already struggling with. Who wants more work to do? We should all want more because in desiring and embracing His work and His yolk, we find strength, grace, and purification. Through Him and the yoke He offers, we are blessed with peace and learn from the One who loves us most. As I pray before the Blessed Sacrament, I hope and pray that each of us embrace the yoke He offers and find ourselves united with Him, learning to rest in Him.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 12:1-8

Is Christ truly the Lord of the Sabbath for you? Blunt and honest assessment. Is your Sunday different from every other day of the week? Is it different on a spiritual and emotional level? It should be. It is the Lord's Day and He says point blank in the Gospel today that He is Lord of this day. Yes, He is Lord of every day but Sunday in particular. Your Sunday should reflect that, more than going to Mass for an hour and getting your receipt - the bulletin. No. Make the day a special one for Him. A day of rest, a day of reflection, a day of peace, a day of thanksgiving. He is worthy of it and desires it for you.



7/22/23

Gospel of the Day: John 20:1-2, 11-18 Feast of St. Mary Magdalene

Poor Mary Magdalene. Prostitute. Possessed. Broken. Misunderstood. Controversial. Poor Mary. Yet there she is, the first to recognize Jesus resurrected and to hear Him Who saved us all call her by name first. She is redeemed and now honored, revered as apostle to the apostles and an inspiration for so many. How? Because of Him. Because Christ desired it for her and He desires it for us. Her words in the show *The Chosen* are powerfully profound - "I was one way and now I am

completely different, and the thing that happened in between was HIM." Mary of Magdala, please pray

for us.

7/23/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:24-43 Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

I have a neighbor who is a meticulous gardener. Every week, he spends hours caring for his lawn, and it looks beautiful. Especially compared to me my lawn earns me an annual letter from the HOA about their ridiculous rules about lawn care. As beautiful as his lawn is, it still yields weeds that he has to tend to, just like me. But he set out to grow a garden and has done so; the occasional weed and browned-out area come with the territory. Jesus is telling us the same - grow a garden and make it strong and vibrant and full, casting seeds in abundance. Deal with the weeds as part of it, mindful they are there but don't let them choke out the good. The focus is on the harvest.



7/24/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 12:38-42

What an understatement: "There is something greater than Solomon here." Ya think? The King of kings and Lord of lords is being asked to perform a miracle to see if He is worthy of the Pharisee's respect. As if. As His disciples and followers, His brothers and sisters, we don't need anyone's approval except His. Orienting ourselves to obey Him, to follow Him, to model Him is all that matters. The world can keep its standards - we are made for greater things. We are made for Heaven with Him.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 20:20-28

Feast of St. James, Apostle

"It's not fair" are words that come out of every mouth. We think something is not fair because someone else got treated better, or we were there first, or we worked harder, or we were nicer, or just because our nose got put out of joint about something. Much as we like to think and act about equality and justice, we are broken and still find things unfair because of the injury to our pride. Yet, Jesus sets the record straight and tells us that those who truly serve others, who seek ways to humbly put others before themselves, are the ones who will be most like Him, an extension of His Love and Mercy. It's not fair that we are blessed with that opportunity, but He loves us more than we deserve, and we thank Him for not being fair.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:1-9 Memorial of Sts. Anne and Joachim

The sower in the parable of today's Gospel readings is uber-generous in His sowing, casting seeds all over. He sows on various terrains: rocky ground, dry ground, unprotected ground, and rich soil. Similar to Almighty God in the first reading, He provides what is needed and invites us to trust that what He provides is what we need, always more than what we need or ask for. His faithfulness is forever, and He invites us to mirror that faithfulness by serving as rich soil. Sts. Anne and Joachim, patron saints of grandparents, pray for us to see the harvest of our lives.



7/27/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:10-17

A mountain wreathed in clouds, with thunder roaring in the sky and lightning crackling, is a pretty magnificent sign from God in the Old Testament. Jesus performing miracles and preaching about the fulfillment of the covenant is also pretty magnificent. Yet still, we don't understand, we don't listen, we don't see. Gross indeed are our hearts when we drown ourselves in the news of the day. Break free of the lies and seek Him, and you will see, you will hear, and you will know.



7/28/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:18-23

What are the thorns in your life? We all have them, and the Gospel reading tells us that the thorns of the world will choke the seed that is sown. Every one of us is surrounded by thorns that need to be cleared; this allows the sown seed to grow into a bountiful harvest. What are your thorns? Anxiety and worry? Financial wealth? Lustful imagery? Power and influence? Jealousy and anger? Abandonment and isolation? Pray for the grace and perseverance to clear the thorns in your life. In doing so, rejoice in the abundant grace that He pours out upon you.



7/29/23 Gospel of the Day: John 11:19-27

Memorial of Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

We often think of only the first story of Mary and Martha in the Gospels when we hear their names. Usually, we think of Martha in a less than favorable light as she is corrected by Jesus. But what about today's Gospel and the incredible faith in Him that she displays? Her brother has died, and she professes complete faith in Christ that He would have saved him if He had been there. She further elaborates that He is the Christ, the Son of God. Such faith! Martha, Martha - please pray for us to have faith like yours, especially after times of correction.



7/30/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:44-52 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Latest and greatest" is the mantra of our society today. Always get the new and improved, the latest style or upgrade, the most cutting-edge technology, or the latest craze. But the Christian is called to balance the old and new, to understand how to apply the permanence of the old to the changes of the new and live accordingly. It is a cycle of relying upon the tradition of the past that has served for over 2000 years, navigating through a world of lies, deception, and temptations, as well as beauty, new life, and revitalization. Our faith is the pearl of great value, worth more than we can ever comprehend, the truth of the past that illuminates the path of the future.



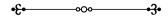
7/31/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:31-35 Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Priest

Start small. The mustard seed and leaven are small but yield tremendous impact - the mustard tree grows huge enough to house many birds, and the leaven gives rise to delicious, life-sustaining bread. Both items don't just happen though. They require an additional ingredient - work, as well as tending by an individual to yield what they do. The Lord plants the seed and provides the yeast for our lives - we must put forth our work and effort to bring forth His intended fruit. Blessed are we to be called to assist Him and be partakers in His work.



August



8/1/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:36-43 Memorial of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Faith and love require a first step forward. We cannot love from afar. We need to step forward towards God every day in faith and love. In approaching Him, we live out our faith and start to become the person He made us to be. In approaching Him, we embrace our need for Him and our dependence on His mercy and forgiveness. In approaching Him, we invite Him to dwell within us and heal our souls, despite our unworthiness.



8/2/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:44-46

"You look mah-velous!" Moses didn't realize he was radiant after conversing with and being in the presence of God. The children of Israel saw it immediately, though. We are called to radiate that same brilliance of faith, joy, and purpose. A few months ago, I had breakfast with my former teammates in the corporate world, and the first thing I was told when I walked in was that I was glowing. What a gift! Glowing with joy, with peace, with faith in Him. May you radiate His love for you, today and every day, so that when others look at you, they may see Him.



8/3/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:47-53

Emmanuel, God is with us. Since He first instructed Moses to build the dwelling tent in the desert so He could dwell with His children, God has desired to be among us. He directed Solomon to build the Temple where He dwelt again. He sent His Son to walk among us and become one of us in all things except sin. He dwells among us now in the most precious gift of the Blessed Sacrament, waiting for us in silence and delighting in us when we come before Him and receive Him in Holy Communion. The angels yearn for the gift we are blessed to receive in receiving Him, and we are profoundly united to Him every time we do. My prayer before Him this morning is for Him to be with you always.



8/4/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 13:54-58 Memorial of Saint John Vianney, Priest

In today's Gospel, we wonder how it is possible that the people in Jesus' hometown could not have realized He is Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, and actually hold Him in contempt. They only saw what they thought they knew and failed to open their eyes or hearts to the reality of Who He is. We shake our heads at their narrow-mindedness, but how many of us fail to see Christ in those closest to us among family and friends? How many of us fail to see the positive and good in our own families, how many of us fail to see Christ in them? He is present among us all, especially those closest to us - let us pray for eyes to see and hearts to love those in our own homes.



8/5/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 14:1-12

We always have choices. We can claim that we didn't have a choice in matters, but it is really not true. We can always choose how we respond to things, how we face challenges, how we embrace blessings, and how we deal with the consequences of choices. That's the other half of choices - dealing with the consequences. We live in a world that pretends there are no consequences to our decisions but there are, whether or not we acknowledge or believe them. Herod made choices about John the Baptist in today's Gospel reading that would lead to further ruin. We face similar decision points that have short-term and long-term impacts. Choose wisely and choose faithfully.



Silence is golden. So often we think we are obligated to respond to someone or something, that our voice needs to be heard and our opinion shared. Some might argue it is our right, others might say it is our duty, and others may claim they are free to express their opinion about anything. There may be truth to all of this, but the truth is that there is also great wisdom, strength, and truth in learning to be silent and ponder. Not everything requires an immediate response. Sometimes, it is the silence that yields the greatest gift and deepest truth because we ponder and let it sink in. In today's Transfiguration, pondering the magnitude of their experience is the better route - how to put in words the magnificence of witnessing Christ in His divinity and hearing God the Father. Time stood still and they beheld Heaven. No need to respond.

8/7/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 14:13-21

God will provide. We've heard the saying, but how many of us truly believe it and live it? Live it like those in the Gospel today - leaving their towns and following Jesus on foot when they heard He was nearby. They stayed listening, oblivious to the heat, their stomachs, their backs, clinging to His every word. While the disciples panicked, the others did not, and they would soon be fed abundantly through the miracle of the multiplication of the fish and loaves. To have faith like theirs, to trust in Him to provide beyond our means and what we can see...that is a gift worth having. May you be filled with the assurance of faith that comes through Him.



8/8/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 14:22-36 Memorial of Saint Dominic, Priest

He knew. He knew when He told them to get into the boat and go to the other side. He knew they would be afraid. He knew they would doubt. He knew Peter would call out in faith. He knew Peter would falter and cry out in desperation. He knew as He watched them from the mountaintop as He prayed, probably talking to His Father about them. He knew. Just like He knows the challenges we will face that will cause us to falter, fear, question, give up, cry out, and doubt. Yet as He did with Peter, He will extend His Hand and pull us up out of the water into the boat and calm the sea. He knows - do you?



8/9/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 15:21-28

Know your place so you can become who you are. We can be so full of ourselves that we actually believe we are who we think we are. But it takes authentic humility to recognize we are nothing without Him, mere dirt that has no life. In Him and through Him and because of Him, we discover who we are and can begin to live into that - live into being His beloved sons and daughters. The Canaanite woman today needed to submit to full humility to become who God made her to be, and she was blessed with seeing her daughter healed. Pray to have faith like hers, subject yourself to any and all trials, and empty yourself of pride.



8/10/23 •§• •3• Gospel of the Day: John 12:24-26

Feast of St. Lawrence the Martyr

If not you and I, then who? We are invited to give up our life for Him, to serve and follow Him with the assurance that He is there. It is a humbling invitation that not all are willing to accept and embrace. Many desire their own personal fulfillment or goals first and opt out of His invitation. They choose to preserve their own life versus the true life He offers. Are you willing to be like a grain of wheat and yield great fruit from the life you give to Him? My prayer before the Blessed Sacrament this morning is that you become a grain of wheat for Him, now and forever. St. Lawrence, please pray for us.

8/11/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 16:24-28 Memorial of Saint Clare, Virgin

We know we are invited to take up the cross in today's Gospel - that's not new news for us. Suffering is part of the Christian life - without it, we do not participate in His suffering and without it, we do not learn compassion and empathy, fortitude and gratitude. But how we go about carrying our cross - what about that? Do you make it clear to anyone and everyone that you are suffering and dealing with adversity? Is it advertised in every word you speak, every face you make, every interaction with another? Or do you share a smile with others, actively pray for strength, still seek to serve others, and humbly accept assistance? Reflect on the manner by which Jesus carried The Cross and emulate the way He carried it, not just the carrying.

Inspiring how many everyday sayings are actually rooted in Scripture. Just goes to show the historical impact of Christianity through the millennia. "Moved mountains" to get something done is considered a great compliment showing extraordinary effort to accomplish something. It should be. Because the root is found in today's Gospel reading. The great effort is the gift of faith given to us by the Holy Spirit, faith in Christ. Having faith in God the size of a mustard seed enables us to "move mountains," overcoming the challenges we face, internal and external, to live a life of discipleship. Be more than a mountain climber - move mountains.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 14:22-33 Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

There is rich meaning and beauty in the Gospel story of Jesus walking on water and calling Peter out of the boat, all after the feeding of the thousands. The fact that this happened during the fourth watch of the night is yet another. The fourth watch - 3 to 6 am - is a time of significant encounters with God in the Bible: Jacob wrestling, Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, and the angels announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, just to name a few examples. To be awake and pray at this time is a window of opportunity to encounter the Lord in prayer, to be awoken during this time is perhaps an invitation from God to enter into a profound time of prayer with Him. Rejoice in Him Who is ever pursuing us, ever desiring to be with us, always loving us.

8/14/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 17:22-27 Memorial of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Priest and Martyr

We can't avoid them, two things that Jesus talks about today - death and taxes. Uplifting topics that we all wish we could avoid, but none of us can. We are reminded today of the need for us to seek holiness in all things, even things we don't like or wish to deal with (like taxes and our roles as citizens). We have an obligation and responsibility to be exemplary in our duties as citizens as part of our faithful witness. In all things, we are called to holiness and joy.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:39-56 Feast of the Assumption

From beginning to end. From her conception to her assumption. Full of grace through a special gift of the Holy Spirit, our Blessed Mother is an example and model for us to emulate as disciples. She is His first, and she is His most perfect disciple, inviting us to do whatever He tells us and always interceding on our behalf. We give all glory and praise to God as He blesses Holy Mother Mary today through her assumption into Heaven. Holy Mary, please pray for us.



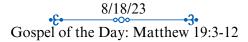
8/16/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 18:15-20

Public shaming is a modern form of entertainment, isn't it? The tabloids began it, and it has become more acceptable across the board - we seem to enjoy the public shaming of people, whether they're celebrities, politicians, athletes, or even common Joes. Sad. Especially when we look at today's Gospel, where Jesus lays out the structure for settling conflicts. Speak with your brother alone, then bring along another if that doesn't work, and then take it to the Church for correction and resolution. Discretion. Respecting the dignity of the other. We are called to be a people of mercy and righteousness, filled with compassion to emulate Him.

8/17/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 18:21-19:1

The number 7 is rich with meaning in the Bible. From Genesis and the Creation Story to its covenantal meaning to the divine/earthly makeup of 3+4. The number 7 is powerfully rich and a great standard for Peter to apply to forgiveness. Yet Jesus takes it to a whole new level when He tells him to forgive a brother not 7 times but 77 times. What we think is so great, the Lord takes to a whole new level, and He desires us to move the bar accordingly. Mercy and forgiveness know no bounds, and we are called to emulate the Father. My prayer for you before the Blessed Sacrament is that you might be filled with endless mercy and forgiveness for others.





The hardness of our hearts. Stone cold. That is the root of so many of our problems - an unwillingness to obey His Word and His Plan and insist on having our way. Some of us He made for the wonders and joys of marriage, others He made for the blessing of single life to serve Him through others. Regardless, He made us each for unique and blessed relationships with others and with Him. We do so if we open our hearts and allow Him to fill us with grace, peace, and strength, transforming our stony hearts.



8/19/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 19:13-15

He is so faithful. Running late this morning to go to a synodal listening session, I did not get to send out a reflection. That's because He wanted me to be inspired by the discussions at our table this morning about the critical need to teach and pass along the Faith to our children. The youth are on fire with desire for the Lord, and we need to fan those fires through teaching and our own faithful witness of discipleship. All of us are children, His children, and we must raise and form the next generation of saints.



8/20/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 15:21-28 Twentieth Sunday of Ordinary Time

He is so faithful. Running late this morning to go to a synodal listening session, I did not get to send out a reflection. That's because He wanted me to be inspired by the discussions at our table this morning about the critical need to teach and pass along the Faith to our children. The youth are on fire with desire for the Lord, and we need to fan those fires through teaching and our own faithful witness of discipleship. All of us are children, His children, and we must raise and form the next generation of saints

8/21/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 19:16-22 Memorial of Saint Pius X, Pope

Lots of nothing. That's what the rich young man in today's story had. Quite frankly, it probably holds true for us. Lots of nothing. Whether it is material possessions or distractions, righteous activity or time wasted on nothingness, we are blessed with abundance, but how well do we steward it all? Does it all orient us to Him and lead us to live and serve Him and our neighbor? Does it help us come to possess Him as the sole focus of our lives and bring us to joy and peace, or is it all just lots of nothing?



8/22/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 19:23-30 Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Prepare to be astonished. That's what faith in Christ will do and invites you to - prepare to be amazed and have your mindset and expectations blown away. God desires so much for us and loves us so much, so far beyond our capacity to understand. And that's an awesome thing. It's ok that we don't know how, that He goes beyond our imagination - He is God. We are not. Our feeble minds, wonderfully created though they are by Him, are still a mere sliver of His infinite capacity. He can do all things and invites us to be amazed.



8/23/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 20:1-16

"It's not fair!" We have all said it, all thought it, all felt it at some point in our lives - we were all kids! Some continue to say, think, and feel this way because life is hard, because others seem to get all the breaks, or because they think they deserve something. Abba Father looks lovingly upon us and smiles, reminding us that we are His through His unconditional love, His through unmerited grace, His because of Who He is. Praise God that we are called throughout our lives.



Gospel of the Day: John 1:45-51 Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle

Friendship. We all need friends and are all called to friendship. We probably have iconic movies or scenes from movies that capture the critical value of friendship. More importantly, in our own lives, we probably have significant milestone events that are marked by the love and engagement of a friend. Philip is that friend to Bartholomew, telling him about the Messiah and then extending to him the invitation to "come and see." Thank you for being such a friend to me and to others, enabling me to know Christ. May you always be and always have friends that draw you to Him as He draws us to Himself. "You've got a friend in me...."



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 22:34-40

Feast of St. Louis

How appropriate that on this feast day of St. Louis IX, the benevolent and kindhearted king of France, the Gospel reading is of the great teaching of Christ and His two commandments to love God and neighbor. St. Louis reigned for 44 years and witnessed to this foundational teaching of Christ. Our lives should reflect this dual love that emanates from the same source - two sides of the same coin, a richness of faith and grace beyond our merit but gifted to us nonetheless.



8/26/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 23:1-12

Monkey see, monkey do. We say that about children, how they see someone they look up to do something and replicate the behavior. It's always a great reminder for us as parents as well, that our children watch our behavior very intently. Jesus acknowledges this today and offers to the crowds that they are not to do what THESE monkeys do. But this doesn't excuse us from the responsibility of doing what we should and being consistent with what we say. Don't follow poor examples - strive to have our words reflect our actions and vice versa, all through the grace of His love in our hearts.



8/27/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 16:13-20 Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Memorial of St. Monica

No offense to Dwayne Johnson, but the title "The Rock" was claimed and given a LONG time ago to St. Peter and issued by the Son of God. End of discussion. We look in obedience and reverence to the office of the papacy to help guide us through our times, to defend and proclaim the faith, to teach and to witness to our call as disciples of Christ. It is upon this rock that His Church is built upon and despite every storm that batters it, the gates of hell shall never prevail. "Tu es Petrus" - sorry Dwayne!



8/28/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 23:13-22 Memorial of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

"I swear" was a common phrase on my lips when I was young, to further emphasize to my playmates that I was being totally honest. Years later, that phrase transformed into the business phrase "to be honest" or TBH in texting. Both phrases beg the question - was I not being honest without those phrases? The reality is that our words should be consistent with our actions, which should be consistent with our thoughts. The congruence of these three enables us to be honest and truthful in all things, which in turn draws us to Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And THAT is the honest-to-goodness truth.



Gospel of the Day: Mark 6:17-29 Martyrdom of John the Baptist

All in or not? The Lord invites us and calls us to be His disciples and witnesses in the world and to be all in. No partial or part-time disciples need apply - this is a full-time gig being offered. Poor King Herod had the stirring to get in and enjoyed listening to John the Baptist but in the end, his partial interest got him grounded in the world, and he has gone down in infamy for his blasphemous actions. He wasn't all in. Let go of this world, let go of what binds you, let go of temptation, and go all in with Christ - and don't ever look back.



8/30/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 23:27-32

Jesus was an architect, not just a carpenter. He built His Church upon Peter, the rock, and He tells us today that He does not like the use of façades. A facade is an outward appearance that is maintained to conceal a less pleasant or credible reality. We are to be who we are, who our Father made us to be. No pretenses, no illusions of grandeur, or hiding of deficiencies. Be authentic and be vulnerable, let go of ego and pride, and allow Him to build you up into the exquisite child He made you to be.

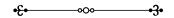


8/31/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 24:42-51

The call to be on guard, to stay awake, and to be prepared for the coming of the Lord is one we hear often. Rightly so. But reflect more deeply, and we see we are called to not just be awake but to be doing things like helping our neighbor, actively working to care for others, and fulfilling the charge given to us as stewards of grace and charity. Perhaps this day can be the start of a new beginning whereby you focus on helping others once a week, not just waiting for Him. My offering before the Blessed Sacrament is for you to be inspired into action and loving charity.



September



9/1/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 25:1-13

Good intentions aren't enough. The follow-through and execution are just as important, as is the true intention and true desire. Starting is great and necessary, but finishing is more important. We must see it all the way through and exert continuous effort, dedication, and consistency, regardless of the work. Yes, this applies to living out our faith and witnessing to Whose we are. It is a daily effort that demands the best of us each day and rewards us beyond our understanding. Don't be left in the dark without a lamp.



We all have talents, and we all have a mission. Each is given to us by God, each entrusted to us. The missing ingredients are our will and active participation. We can choose to go out and make full use of our talents to live out our mission, or we can choose to keep them to ourselves and stay locked away from God's invitation to become what He made us to be. He equips and prepares, and anoints us and loves us enough to then respect our will and decision. He wants us to share in His joy.

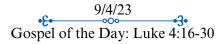


Gospel of the Day: Matthew 16:21-27

Twenty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time

I can't blame Peter. He was doing what most of us would do, which was to speak out against suffering and death for the One he loved. We don't want to see our loved ones suffer or struggle; oftentimes, we wish we could get rid of it for them, right? However, in our haste to do so, we may perhaps be removing the very means or opportunity for them to grow in holiness. Because we do not know the full plan of God's mercy and love, we cannot fully understand our suffering. But we can still offer and unite it to Him and trust that there is meaning and goodness to it all, goodness beyond our understanding.





We are just like the Nazarenes, aren't we? Nobody likes to be corrected and rebuked, put in their place when they think they are all that. It was pride and arrogance that caused the Nazarenes to react violently to Jesus - they thought they were special and so much better than others, and Christ put them in their place. We need that on a regular basis - we need to be reminded of that regularly so that we submit ourselves in humility and faith to our Lord and Savior. Heaven forbid that Jesus pass through our midst and go away. Stay with us, Lord.



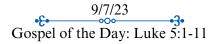
9/5/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 4:31-37

The Voice. Jesus is the Original Voice. He speaks unlike any other, with the authority of God Himself because He IS God Himself. Like the old EF Hutton commercial says, "When Jesus speaks, people listen." His Words speak things into reality and transform things around us. His Words in Scripture breathe life into today, penetrate our minds and hearts, and carry the fullness of His authority, love, compassion, and grace. Listen to Him, as we are instructed by His mother.



1:1. That's how Jesus rolled - 1:1. Yes He created a community, and yes, He directed us to love one another. But He also went about loving others and caring for them 1:1. Each person had a personal encounter with Christ, a direct engagement with Him that transformed them and opened them to new life. A healing, a deliverance, a freedom that could only come from Him, which changed them. They sought Him out in faith, and He acknowledged that for this reason He was sent. And so He sends us.





No buts. No excuses sounds better, I suppose, but the message is the same. Don't justify disobedience. Don't explain away why you failed to do something. Peter tried to explain why not but recognized the call to obey and did so... and his life was forever changed. When we stop with excuses and stop explaining why not and obey in faith, the door to new life is opened and His Graces pour out upon us. And then we leave everything and follow Him.



9/8/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23

The Nativity of the Blessed Mother

Happy birthday, Mom! We celebrate the birth of our Blessed Mother today and are rejoicing in God's abundant love for us, having blessed us with becoming sons and daughters of His Own Mother. Her birth, anointed through His Grace as a special gift, was free of all sin, making her the vessel of our salvation. We celebrate her birth today, the perfect creation of God through whom His Son would come into human history to save us. We give thanks today for the gift she is to all of us, given to us by Christ Himself - Happy birthday, Blessed Mother Mary! Please pray for us.



9/9/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 6:1-5

A box. Why are we so foolish to think that we can put God in a box? As broken people, we think with broken minds and broken hearts. So often, we fail to recognize that God is God and He Is. He is beyond all constructs and limitations that we can live within. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is our Father Who loves us. Believe beyond what you believe and have faith in the One Who loves you beyond all measure. His love knows no bounds.

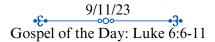


9/10/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 18:15-20 Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time

333. My beloved bride's favorite number, her Godwink that reminds her that God is present and with her always. It represents the Holy Trinity - 3 persons in 1 God - and is the number of the Divine. The threefold repetitions that occur in Scripture represent the "holiest of holy." How appropriate that today's Gospel gives it even more meaning, for today we read that where two or more are gathered, there will be the Holy Spirit...2 plus 1 is 333. Thank you, Lord!

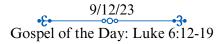




Stretch out your withered hand. We all have withered hands that need to be healed and restored. We all need to learn to stretch out our hand for the mercy of God and to extend that mercy and charity to others. We all need to stretch our hands in praise to God the Father. We all need to reach out in humility for assistance, to both give and receive. It is in His Good Hands that we will be guided and strengthened.







While we don't all need to go climb a mountain like He did, we do need to withdraw often to pray. Jesus did that for an entire night before coming down, selecting the Twelve, and then going forward to teach, heal, and dispel spirits. He invests this same authority to us, filling us with His Spirit to proclaim in His Name. It begins with prayer - engaging in conversation with God the Father and opening our hearts and wills to Him. There is indeed, as the song goes, power in the Name of Jesus.



9/13/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 6:20-26

When you read today's Gospel reading about the blessings and the woes, what do you reflect upon? What strikes you about that? Many of us are probably in the woe category - we don't go hungry, we have some level of financial stability, we laugh and we have people around us who affirm us. Whoa! Jesus says woe are we. What do we do and what does that mean? It means we are called to get uncomfortable and not rest on our laurels, to push into the suffering of others, to extend ourselves to help, to seek out ways to sacrifice and give more of ourselves. Get holy, or die trying.



Gospel of the Day: John 3:13-17 Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

The Cross. To look upon it without faith is to see a terrible instrument of torture, suffering, and death. But to look upon it with eyes of faith is to open our hearts to the profound majesty of the unfathomable love of Christ. With arms extended outwards, He invites us in and shows us just how much He loves each one of us. The Cross transforms, heals, inspires, and provides hope. Take the time today and every day to gaze lovingly and thankfully upon it and rediscover the love He has for you. He loves you that much.

Gospel of the Day: John 19:25-27 Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

On the surface, sorrow is awful. It hurts, it lingers, it takes us to our knees, and it can steal our peace. But we must learn to rejoice in it for what it reveals to us: love. The more we love, the more we experience sorrow and endure the pain of others. It unites us to our Savior, Who offers us the opportunity to suffer alongside Him and receive the outpouring of His Grace and consolation. Through it, we find peace, faith, serenity, strength, and the joy of unity in Him. Our Blessed Mother experienced the greatest of all sorrow, and yet she experiences the greatest of all gifts in being perfectly united to her Son. Our Lady of Sorrows, please pray for us.



9/16/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 6:43-49

Memorial of Saints Cornelius (Pope) and Cyprian (Bishop), Martyrs

It's not enough to simply listen. We need to act. Jesus is clear on this, comparing it to the home builder who builds on the rock versus the ground for a foundation. To listen and then act is to dig deeply and lay a strong foundation to weather the storms in life that will come to all of us. To simply listen and do nothing provides no protection or foundation to withstand the storm. Putting His Gospel into action in our lives, living out our faith through works and worship, prayer and purpose is the foundation for a life of discipleship.



9/17/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 18:21-35 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

77. That's a new favorite number. I reflected a few weeks ago on 333 and its significance and how it is a God-wink. 77 will be too, although maybe more of a code for me to remember. 77 - forgive without condition and unceasingly. It unlocks the grace of God and cleanses me of my own impurities, such as the anger, bitterness, animosity, frustration, envy, resentment, and ill will that infect my heart. 77 - forgive my brother and neighbor that many times and be filled with serenity, compassion, love, and peace. 77 can be the key to seeing 333 more and more in life.

9/18/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 7:1-10

None of us are worthy. The centurion today speaks for each of us - as do Wayne and Garth - that we are not worthy to have the Lord enter our homes and be with us. We believe in the power of His Name and His Word, His command that is enough to make all things new. He could have tried to demand Jesus to come and exert his supposed authority upon the Jewish rabbi from Nazareth, but he instead submitted in humility to Him, his eyes and heart opened by faith to the reality of Who Jesus is. Give us eyes to see and a heart to believe Lord - Thy Will be done.



9/19/23 Sospel of the Day: Luke 7:11-17

How blessed are we to be so loved by God that He should be moved to pity by our tears. He is not the aloof, distant Creator of the Universe that so many think of, waiting to "catch us" in sin and condemn us. No, He is moved by our tears and by our human experience because He walked among us and experienced sorrow and pain, suffering and death and He desires to comfort us. He loves us with compassion and tenderness and invites us to love others in the same way, with a heart that is open to and united to the hardships of others.



9/20/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 7:31-35

Memorial of Saints Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn (Priest), Paul Chŏng Ha-sang, and Companions, Martyrs

Joy is contagious. How many of us break out into a smile when we hear a toddler belly laugh over something, falling over in delirium? How many of us find our shoulders lightened when we see children playing and laughing? How many of us can't help but start laughing when others around us are crying, they are laughing so hard? Joy spreads joy. Faith does the same. The Spirit of God moves continuously in our lives, and when we look for it or are attuned to it, it transforms our lives and brings us joy. Others see it, sense it, desire it - we must be beacons of joy for a world seeking joy, true joy that comes only from Him.



9/21/23 •**£•** ••••••**3•**

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:9-13 Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle and evangelist

All are called. No exceptions. Simple as that. In the calling of St. Matthew, who was the traitor of the Jewish people and the scourge of society, we see clearly that Jesus invites us all into the intimacy of a relationship with Him. Be like Matthew; respond without hesitation to His invitation, and leave it all behind. Leave behind the sin of the past, the limits of the past, the lies of the past, the shackles of the past. Embrace the healing and opportunity of the life offered by the Savior of the world. Accept His mercy and forgiveness. Before the Blessed Sacrament this morning, I pray for your healing, your acceptance, and your faith in Him - He is calling you.

9/22/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 8:1-3

So appropriate that we read today of the benevolence and selflessness of the women who supported Jesus and the Twelve, giving of their resources to provide for them. Today's psalm speaks of the need to be free of the trappings of wealth and recognize the significance of sharing with others. It is with immense gratitude that we look back on the joy of North Texas Giving Day and give praise for the generosity and loving support of so many for the work we do. Giving of ourselves enables us to receive His grace, His love, and His compassion, and it is a source of joy.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 8:4-15 Memorial of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, Priest

Good ground. We are called to be good ground, but that means more than just lying around and saying we believe. It requires an open and generous heart, disposed to offer ourselves and our struggles to good, and working hard to live out our faith. It recognizes that there will be setbacks that need to be overcome, and steps backward that are necessary to move forward and be renewed and purified. We are called to be more than good ground, we are invited to work it and bear fruit beside our Lord and King.



9/24/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 20:1-16 Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

His ways are not our ways, and He flips traditional thinking to help us see the magnificence of Who He is and inspire us to follow Him. Whether we follow early in life or later in life and stumble along the way, it doesn't matter because He is all loving and all forgiving. He is beyond all comprehension and yet invites us to come to know Him. Blessed are when we respond when called, despite our brokenness.



The rising sun at dawn breaks through the darkness of night and illuminates the world around us. Shadows go away, and we see with clarity the beauty of things around us, the brilliance of colors and gentle lines of every object. We see more clearly and fully because of the light. As disciples of Christ, we are called to be this light to the world around us, serving as lamps to the world so that the light of Christ may shine forth in all things and in all ways.



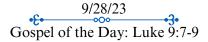
9/26/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 8:19-21 Feasts of Sts. Cosmas and Damian

Ponder. It means to think about something carefully before taking action or reaching a conclusion. We don't read much about our Blessed Mother, but what we do read is that she pondered things in her heart and did not speak much as recorded in Scripture. Because of her profound and unique relationship with Christ, freed of all sin and in union with Him, she understood things more deeply than others and pondered on these in her heart to drive her to action and being. We should spend more time doing exactly the same, slowing down to ponder on things to then drive our actions. We are too quick to act in this frenetic world of ours - slow down to allow Him to speak to us.

Gospel of the Day: Luke 9:1-6 Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul

"Take nothing" is the directive from Christ to His Disciples as they go out into the world. He invites them to trust completely in His Providence. We are invited to do the same, entrusting ourselves to Him. We are also reminded when we read "take nothing" that at the end of our lives, we take nothing with us but the legacy of the work we do and the impact we have on the lives of others. Our works of charity, of mercy, of compassion, and of love are the marks of a life lived in Christ. On this feast day of St. Vincent de Paul, may we place ourselves under his patronage and seek his intercession for our lives.





It's ok to not have the answers or know what to do or how to do something. We are not God, and our beloved Father doesn't expect us to know all things and do all things. That's what He does, and there is serenity, comfort, and assurance in that, regardless of the situation and our ability to clearly see it at this moment. He has it all in His Loving Hands and invites us to abandon ourselves to Him, trusting without knowing and hoping without understanding. He is our Abba Father and we are His children, not created for failure, but for life eternal with Him.



9/29/23 Gospel of the Day: John 1:47-51

Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, archangels

Each of us is created with a special intention and purpose. Through Baptism, we are infused with grace from the Holy Spirit to carry out the special work that our loving Father created us for, to build the kingdom and bring others to Him. Look no further than the three archangels that we honor and celebrate today - Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Their names give us insight into their mission - "who is like God," "Power of God," and "God heals." Our Father made YOU for a definitive purpose out of love, distinct from His billion other children. You are His beloved.

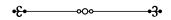


Gospel of the Day: Luke 9:43-45 Memorial of St. Jerome

We are so arrogant and such know-it-alls. As "enlightened humanity," we assume we must and do know everything. Nothing can be a mystery, and nothing can be unknown. How dumb is that? As if we are divine, gods in our own right. Today, we read how the disciples just didn't get it, even after Jesus told them to pay attention. How could they fully understand the glorious and infinite mind of God? Yet He is patient with us and understanding, loving us where we are and yet loving us too much to leave us there, always calling to us. Be thankful for your understanding and His patience



October



10/1/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 21:28-32 Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux

"You can't make me" is the mantra of today's world. I can do what I want and you can't tell me no. We don't like to be told what to do, we are not obedient and don't like listening to authority. Yet we miss the whole point of obedience when we fail to recognize what obedience is: an invitation from God to submit our will to His and trust in His plan for us. Surrendering to Him, willingly following Him, and trusting Him in all things enables us to let go of control, greed, and power and place ourselves in His loving embrace. Obedience is love and gives us freedom to be who He made us to be.



10/2/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 18:1-5, 10 Memorial of the Guardian Angels

At first glance, today's Gospel deals with opposites. The apostles ask for their faith to be increased. Jesus then talks to them about authentic servant leadership and placing others before our own needs and comforts. Perhaps Christ is answering the apostles' plea to increase their faith by teaching them how next to increase their faith through authentic servant leadership. Asking for faith not so much to believe but to put that faith into action, into having to fundamentally change who we are and HOW we are, is the higher calling of faith that the Lord is challenging us to. Increase my faith, Lord, that I might have the courage perseverance to serve as you have served us all.



10/3/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 9:51-56

"Resolutely determined" is the term in the Gospel today that describes Jesus and His intent to go to His death in Jerusalem for all of us. Never mind the intolerance of James and John towards the Samaritans and their desire to call down fire from Heaven. No, focus on the fact that Jesus was "hellbent" on going to Jerusalem for us so that He could destroy death for us, open the gates of Heaven, and call down true fire from Heaven, the Holy Spirit, upon us. May we be blessed with a similar resolute determination to live a life of witness and devotion to Him.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 9:57-62 Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi

Detachment in the modern world is difficult, but we are called to it more than ever. The materialism of today, the desire to have the latest and greatest, is a constant mantra that we are bombarded with. We are invited to free ourselves of such trappings and instead focus on our loving Father Who provides what we need. Radical transformation to love Him (not things), to serve Him (not our material goods), and to follow Him (not the latest craze), is true freedom. In freedom, we gain everything.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:1-12 Memorial of St. Faustina Kowalska

Most people can't stand working and look forward to retirement where they can stop working and start living. It's wonderful to see people enjoy their hard-earned retirement. Jesus calls us today to a different type of work, though, one that has no retirement and continues well after we die. We are called to harvest, to be a people of joy and faith, to bring the Good News to others. All of that must be done with joy. Why? Because we are doing it for Him, for love of Him, for love of our neighbor, for Love Himself. How can we not be a joyful people? May joy permeate every facet of your being and draw others to desire the joy of Christ in you.



10/6/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:13-16

Indifference. How often do we find ourselves indifferent to things of the world, to issues and concerns, to the worries of individuals? How often do we ignore the tugging at our hearts when we are doing something we know we shouldn't? How often do we look the other way or explain away our decisions to sin and do what we know we shouldn't? It is the indifference to truth, to mercy, to love, and to Him that destroys us. The anguish and sorrow that Christ expresses in today's Gospel, His woe is directed to us as well. Christ Jesus, have mercy.



10/7/23

Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:17-24 Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

Rejoice. He wants us to rejoice. He point-blank tells us to rejoice because our names are written in Heaven, created to be with our Heavenly Father for all eternity if we would just act upon that which we have heard and received. He doesn't tell us how to rejoice - that is for each of us to discern and allow the Holy Spirit to inspire us at a given moment. The same Holy Spirit will ebb and flow, but God is always there, and we are invited to respond to Him in a multitude of ways. But we are to respond. We are to rejoice. Our Lady of the Rosary, please pray for us and help us rejoice in Him.



10/8/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 21:33-43 Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fruit. In today's Gospel, it is easy to focus on the message of bearing good fruit for the Lord, as well as our responsibility and call as workers in the vineyard to yield good fruit. But look at the Scripture that Jesus calls us to remember - the cornerstone. The stone rejected by builders - by us has become the cornerstone. It's not about us and what we do but about Him and what He does THROUGH us. It all comes back to Him, it all flows through Him, it is all because of Him. And because of Him, it is all wonderful.



10/9/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:25-37

Without exception, each of us comes across neighbors alongside the road who are in desperate need of assistance. Each of us has the opportunity to be like the Samaritan traveler and respond to our neighbor with love and compassion. Each of us is invited to "go and do likewise" to love our neighbor as ourselves. Each of us will find ourselves as the traveler who is beaten by robbers. Wouldn't you want someone to "go and do" to help you out of love and compassion?



10/10/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:38-42

AND, not OR. We often read the Gospel reading of Martha and Mary and think that we need to choose what is best, the contemplative prayer life OR the active life of service. We think in terms of one OR the other, as if God is limited in what He can do and has to be placed in a box to be managed. He is a Father of abundance and glory and cannot be contained - and doesn't want us contained either. It is an AND teaching - we are to be contemplative AND people of service, active AND passive, bold AND meek, proactive AND restrained. He is our Creator AND our Father. AND He loves us beyond measure.

10/11/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:1-4

A person can have many names, each reflecting a different perspective about the person or insights into their relationships. I may be known by my first name to most, but other names reflect special bonds with other people. I delight in hearing Tio, Nercus, BDG, Lou, or any other names, but Papa, Poochie, and Pooch take the cake for me - they connect to the deepest meanings and aspects of who I am as a person. It is the same with God - calling Him Abba Father is the most profound connection we have with Him. We are sons and daughters of Abba Father, and that changes everything for us. What a blessing today and every day to be able - and be invited - to speak with Him in prayer always, beginning with Our Father.

10/12/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:5-13

Yesterday, we learned to call Him Abba Father. Today, we are invited to approach Abba Father with our needs and deepest desires, trusting in His unfathomable love for us as His children. He is abundant in His generosity, compassionate in all things and desires to provide us with all we need. He waits patiently and respectfully for us to ask in all humility and faith, as only a good Father can do. It is simple - ask, seek, and knock, for your Father awaits you.



10/13/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:15-26

The finger of God. Jesus cites it in today's Gospel as sufficient to clear out demons and mark the Kingdom of God at hand. He doesn't need a massive army, a major strategy, or anything of the sort - His "mere" Finger is enough! Power of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit at its optimal best. So why worry? Why fret? Why freak out about the current state of things? He's got this. He's got us. We need to believe, and we need to live reflecting that belief. No other way. Live and be with the full knowledge of Who He is and Whose you are.



10/14/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:27-28

To observe something is to perceive AND register something as significant. Jesus states in today's Gospel that we are blessed when we hear and observe the Word of God. So we need to recognize the Word for what it is - the Word of God. Significant. As in nothing-else-matters significant. We are invited to hear His Words and act upon them as our singular purpose, and it is the most important thing we can and will do. Everything else falls in place behind it. Look at our Blessed Mother - once she said "Yes," everything went into motion. Holy Mother Mary, please pray for us.



10/15/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 22:1-14 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Memorial of St. Teresa of Avila, virgin and doctor of the Church

Excuses, excuses, excuses. We are full of them for just about every circumstance. Blame someone else, wasn't feeling right, didn't realize, didn't know, thought someone else was doing it, etc., etc. Our Father is a loving father with immeasurable patience and compassion, yet we must realize we have a responsibility to respond and to act. No amount of excuses removes that responsibility from us, and today's Gospel makes that loud and clear. He desires us to be with Him for eternity, and we need to demonstrate through our actions that we desire the same.

10/16/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:29-32

Signs are everywhere for us to see - they were back then and they still are today. It's up to us whether we choose to ignore them or embrace them, but it doesn't change the reality that they are there. We will see with eyes of faith, hear with ears of faith if we choose to or not and likewise ignore them if our minds and hearts are not open to them. But He is speaking to us today, showing up to us today, manifesting Himself today, and waiting for us to respond. Will you respond in faith and hope? Or will you keep singing the song "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For"?



10/17/23

Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:37-41 Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr

There is no sugar-coating today's Gospel message. When placed in the context of where we are today, right now in the world, it takes on an even deeper meaning. Jesus calls out the Pharisee for being filled with evil and plunder, despite his exterior appearance. To plunder is to steal using force and violence. No way you can explain that away or justify it - steal with violence. Today, we unite with the world in prayer and fasting, for peace in the world, most especially in Israel. Pray for the purity of heart.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:1-9 Feast of St. Luke, evangelist

Lambs among wolves. Doesn't seem like a fair fight or an appealing proposal. It gets better, though. The disciples are told to go without a money bag, a sack, or sandals. No resources whatsoever. Totally defenseless and unprepared for anything. Yet, they go. And they go willingly because they believed and trusted, they obeyed and loved. They knew who they were and Whose they were. They relied upon Him and acted upon His word. Blessed are we to receive His Word, gloriously written in the Gospels. Today, as we honor St. Luke, one of the four Gospel writers and author of Acts, we ask for his intercession for us.

10/19/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 11:47-54

You matter. Every human being matters. Our loving Father created each one of us, and each one of us was created with a purpose, with a vocation, with an intent known to the Father for us to discern and discover in our lives. Our vocation is our individual and beautiful connection to Him and serves as the source and foundation of love, goodness, peace, and wisdom. It is who we are because of Whose we are. He calls each of us by name, every day.



10/20/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 12:1-7

Darkness only exists as an absence of light, not as its own quality. You can't "put" more darkness into something - you can only make it dark by removing light. It is powerless to light. The True Light shines upon us all and penetrates the darkness, bringing forth all that we might try to hide. He sees all because He wants all of us, every part of us down to the hairs on our heads - receding though they may be - because He loves us. He is bursting with so much love for us that our only fear should be that we are too stubborn, too foolish, too prideful to accept it as the gift that it is. We are worth more than that because He loves us so.



10/21/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 12:8-12

Unforgiven. Do you go through life allowing yourself to be unforgiven? Do you allow yourself to be fooled into thinking you are unforgivable? Do you allow yourself to hold on to resentment and not forgive others? Forgiveness is a gift given to all. A mercy poured out upon us by a loving Father Who sent His Son to redeem us and forgive us. No one is exempt. All are forgiven, especially if we allow ourselves to be freed. Only you can keep yourself from forgiveness. No one else.



10/22/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 22:15-21 Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Feast of St. John Paul II

We have many roles and responsibilities in life with varying expectations and impact. All are important, all demand our best effort, for in striving for excellence we strive for holiness. But there is one role above all others, one vocation more significant than anything else, one identity that is eternal: our identity as a beloved son or daughter of God. THAT is who we are, each one of us. That is who we are called to fully be and realize. Living our life as the son or daughter of God that we are is what enables us to render unto our Father what is His and gives us all we need.



Zero out. Everyone's account gets zeroed out at the end of life. When switching financial institutions, we are reminded of the need to zero out accounts to make sure funds transfer from one institution to another. Doesn't work that way with life and our "account" in Heaven. We zero out here and it all stays. How have you lived your faith to store up treasure in Heaven? How have you given to Him in this life through tending to the poor, the lame, the dying, the hopeless? Empty yourself in living your faith, and you will be blessed beyond measure in ways that matter most.



Gird. Not a word you hear in today's vernacular, as it pertained to putting on a belt or band back in the day when men wore long flowing garments, not trousers. But even then, the word "gird" referred to putting that band or belt on in preparation for something difficult or a challenge. Very much still relevant! Our faithfulness in life is not easy, our response to His call is not simple, and our readiness to live charitably and lovingly is questionable. But we are called to be prepared, to be vigilant for opportunities, and to ready ourselves always. Blessed are those who gird themselves in faith.



10/25/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 12:39-48

Everyone. He doesn't come out and say it point blank, but in answering Peter's question about whom the teaching applies to, our Lord didn't say "Just you guys." All of us are responsible for being prepared and ready for His coming. But being ready doesn't mean sitting around and waiting quietly, perhaps praying and meditating. That's part of it, sure, but He talks about being charged with distributing food allowance (spiritual nourishment) and actively being in charge. There are activities and duties to be fulfilled, an engaged participation in His work. It's clear that much is required of those of us blessed with much.



10/26/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 12:49-53

Not every ignition must be explosive. Sometimes, an ignition can come in the form of a simmering flame before becoming a blaze. Whether a simmering fire or an explosive blaze, the Lord is clear that we are to be engulfed in the Holy Fire of His Love and allow Him to radiate through us to all the world. A light, a warmth, a source of hope and inspiration, a purification of the heart, and a forge of strength and power. The tongues of fire of Pentecost are to be ours once again if we open our hearts to receive and proclaim, transforming the world around us.



10/27/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 12:54-59

"Signs, signs, everywhere there's signs" goes the song, which also reflects today's Gospel. We are quick to point out connections in sports, work trends, financial indicators, or movies. Yet we can't see the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives right in front of us. It's not a question of maybe or if - it is happening whether you believe or you don't. And He is making Himself more and more present to those desiring to see, whose hearts are opened, whose minds are filled with faith and humility. Read the signs, He is alive in our lives and calling out to each of us. Follow the signs.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 6:12-16

Feasts of Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles

New insight to ponder: St. Jude is known as the patron of impossible causes and St. Simon as a Zealot, the extremist group seeking Rome's overthrow. Why pair them together? Simon the Zealot - like all of us - had to change when he became a disciple, even more so than most because he was a man of violence, not peace. Perhaps the Lord saw him as a patron of potential, a patron saint to represent that all have the potential to be transformed into living disciples. Pray for the intercession of Sts. Simon and Jude for the conversion of all, no matter how insurmountable or impossible we may think someone is - because HE is our loving Father of all and of what is possible.

10/29/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 22:34-40 Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Love of neighbor is what inspires us at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Living the message of love that Christ embodies and calls us to share in today's Gospel is the call of every Vincentian, an invitation to grow in holiness by encountering Christ in our neighbor. Love brings healing, inspires hope, lifts the soul, and gives purpose to life. Love of God is expressed through our love of others.



10/30/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 13:10-17

Can't. It is not a word in the vocabulary of Jesus. It doesn't apply to Him, and He wants us to understand how restrictive it can be to us. He can do all things, and He does. But do we believe that He is still operating in our lives today? He can and He does. Just like with the woman in today's gospel, He desires to free us from the bondage of sin, and He wants us freed and standing erect, looking up to Heaven to praise and love Him, living examples of His mercy and grace. Don't say you can't because then you'd be saying He can't. And He can.



10/31/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 13:18-21

Bread. When I close my eyes, I can smell it baking, and I imagine eating it warm with a bit of butter. Mmmmm. Jesus got my attention right out of the gate, comparing the Kingdom of God to yeast in dough because of the end result. Getting to that end state is worth the wait and effort. Yeast or a tiny mustard seed may not start out looking like much, but what it becomes and the impact it has on others is everything. Live to be a part of that, the Kingdom of God, and all that it has to offer.



November



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 5:1-12 All Saints Day

Today is a day for us all - All Saints Day. We honor and remember those who came before us, who are enjoying their heavenly reward and spending eternity with Our Father who loves us. But it is our day as well because it is a reminder and a call to our aspiration. We were made to be saints, we were made to be in the presence of God forever. Being a saint isn't about being a miracle worker - it is about faithfully living out the vocation and intention of our life, glorifying God, and bringing others to come to know and love Him. It is about hearing the joyful words we desire to hear at the end of our life -"Well done, good and faithful servant!" All the saints in Heaven, please pray for us.



Gospel of the Day: John 6:37-40 All Souls Day

Today, we remember our loved ones who have passed away, gone from this life but always in our hearts and prayers. We remember them fondly with warm hearts, perhaps wishing we had more time with them or had made better use of the time we had with them. We cannot go back and change time, but their memories perhaps help us to evaluate our choices today and allow us to change moving forward. Let their memory inspire and encourage, give comfort and reassurance, and be the catalyst for something new. Take heart in knowing the will of the Father, that we should believe in Him, live out our faith, and return to Him to enjoy eternal life.

11/3/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 14:1-6

Silent but deadly. That's the mood in the home of the Pharisees as they silently watch Jesus and wait for an opportunity to "catch" Him again defying the Sabbath. Ironically, there are seven recorded instances of Jesus healing on the Sabbath. Seven is the covenant number of perfection. Perhaps there is a silent message that we are invited to reflect upon, not keeping God in a box, but recognizing that He can - and does - move in our lives constantly. Silent witness of love and mercy can oftentimes resonate more loudly and profoundly than any spoken word.



11/4/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 14:1, 7-11

Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop

Humility is not of the world, certainly not a credo or slogan that is promoted. I can't think of a single advertising campaign that encourages humility... except, of course, the one that matters most, the one we read about today. Humility is not about having an inferiority complex and thinking everyone is better than you. Honestly quite the opposite. It is the freedom of knowing EXACTLY who you are and Whose you are! Humility is being freed from the expectations of the world, living in the knowledge and freedom of knowing you are a beloved son or daughter of God.



11/5/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 23:1-12 Thirty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time

Those darned Pharisees! How dare they make life so difficult for those they are supposed to shepherd. They are such poor examples of servant leadership, so concerned with honor and how others view and respect them. They are awful. Good thing we are nothing like them, practicing all that we preach, exemplifying what it means to serve with humility and grace, humbling ourselves before others, and loving everyone unconditionally. Good thing we make life easier for all and don't add burdens to others. Good thing we are nothing like them. Right?



11/6/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 14:12-14

TJR. Immediately makes you think of the TV show "Dallas." Given his position in society, he would have been at all the banquets and social events on the show. But for me, I think of the homeless man who panhandled in front of my office downtown. Got to know him, exchanged Cowboys stories, and brought him food. He oriented my heart towards St. Vincent de Paul before I even knew it was in my future. He gave me my vocation and unlocked a vault of blessings beyond measure. JR wouldn't have been on anyone's invitation list - including my own - but blessed am I that I was on his.



11/7/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 14:15-24

Not good enough. Whatever the excuse for not responding to His invitation, not answering His call, not coming to His banquet....it's not good enough. The parable today helps us see that - the invitees had ample time and notice but came up with excuses. We all do. But the excuses are never good enough, and they will never be good enough. Abba Father is inviting us, wants us, loves us forever, and waits patiently for us. Nothing else that you do is as important as accepting His invitation and joining Him. Don't RSVP with regrets.



Carry your own cross. Pretty explicit message from our Lord. To think the Christian life is easy, without struggle, without sacrifice, without blood and pain, without tears and loneliness, without anguish and fear, is to not understand being a disciple. We may want to calculate the costs, think about what we have to give up, ponder on whether "it's worth it or not" and think we are being prudent, but what He is offering is beyond any Excel spreadsheet ChatGPT calculation. He is offering eternal life and love beyond all understanding, freedom from lies and the binds of this world, joy and serenity and purpose. Get all in. Lift your cross and extend it to Him and He will help you carry it.



Gospel of the Day: John 2:13-22

Feast of the Dedication of Lateran Basilica

Church. Yes, it is more than four walls of a building where people gather. Yes, each of us is called to be the living stones of a living Church. Yes, each of us is an in-dwelling of the Lord. Yes, we are all called to be one body in Him. But the physical Church is a place of worship, where our gaze is lifted upwards to Heaven and we step into His Presence. The Blessed Sacrament is present, meaning God Himself is physically and visibly present. We fall to our knees in adoration before Him. Our voices are lifted up in song in praise of our Heavenly Father. Church is the House of the Lord. Church is home.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 16:1-8

Memorial of St. Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church

Accountability. It is the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions and conduct towards others. The steward in the parable today was being called out, front and center, to account for himself. His "prudence" in reducing his debt was a sleight of hand that reveals his true nature. In the end, the master knows, and the steward is still being dismissed. Do we think our Heavenly Father doesn't already know and see all we do? Nothing remains hidden; the purity and intensity of His Light and His Love penetrates all. He holds us accountable and gives us the grace of true prudence to seek proper remediation and forgiveness, acknowledging our faults and working towards reparation with those whom we have hurt. Own up to what we have created so that He can fix, repair and reconstruct in His perfect grace.

Gospel of the Day: Luke 16:9-15 Memorial of St. Martin of Tours, Bishop

I will praise His Name forever. No matter the circumstance - joy or sorrow, success or failure, suffering or consolation - I will praise His Most Holy Name. We cannot serve two masters, cannot trust Him in some matters and not trust Him in others. In all things, we turn to Him, in all things we glorify and praise Him, no matter how difficult or easy, no matter what the world around us tells us. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for loving us as You do and blessing us with every joy and challenge. You never abandon us.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 25:1-13 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Whether we are wise or fools, we all get drowsy and fall asleep. It's how we wake up that matters - are we ready to start the day and prepared for the demands and challenges? Fools are not. The wise take the precautions and are ready, looking back on the preceding day to anticipate what might be needed. This parable today teaches the importance of the daily examination of conscience, looking back on the blessings of the day and the struggles, asking for forgiveness and setting a plan for the next day of how to avoid mistakes. Pray for the grace of wisdom and humility to reflect on the past to better orient for the future.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 17:1-6

Memorial of St. Frances Cabrini, Virgin

Who are the little ones? We all have little ones in our lives to whom we set an example for, whether we realize it or not. Not just children, but others who look to us. We have an obligation to be faithful witnesses that can and should strengthen and inspire others. We may be the only or last example of faith for an individual - they should see joy, encounter peace, experience comfort in our Heavenly Father through our witness and example. Allow Him to flow and shine through you, being a light unto others.



11/14/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 17:7-10

We are a society of entitlement, thinking and acting as if the whole world revolves around us and our needs. We show up, we expect accolades. We work a little harder, we expect extra compensation. We ask, we expect to be given. We are spoiled. Since when were we guaranteed anything and everything? What makes us so special in our own minds? The reality is that we are special because our Father made us so. He made us in His image and likeness. He made us in complete love, a love that is eternal and unconditional. We ARE special. But we are made in HIS likeness, which calls us to be humble, to serve, to love, to be charitable, to place others before ourselves, to be like Him.



11/15/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 17:11-19

Gratitude. One of my favorite new songs from Brandon Lake with such emotion and power. Reminds us that gratitude is just that - an active engagement with another, in this case Our Lord. He gives freely and unconditionally and delights when we respond in gratitude, as it means we open our hearts to Him so He can pour out more grace and love. Think about that - expressing gratitude, going back to Him to say thank You, invites Him to give more. And He does. More Lord, more Lord!



11/16/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 17:20-25

Chasing. Sometimes in our faith life, we will be in "chase mode," running from here to there in pursuit of a deeper faith. From Bible study to retreat to speaker to small group back to another book study. All good things to help us grow in faith, but sometimes the chase to deepen our faith is exhausting. We need to pause and reset, rest in the Spirit, and invite Him into our hearts in order to slow down. He commanded it from the beginning, giving us a day of rest every 7th day, to stop the chase and let Him in. Running and running will cause us to miss Him - He has very specific gifts for each of us to rest in.



Memorial of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Religious

The end is coming. Sounds doomsday to most and something we generally don't like to discuss, as if it is taboo. But the end is coming whether we like it or not, want it or not, accept it or not. Are you ready? Again, may seem to be a dark question but only because the world has made it so. Our faith tells us it is the passage from one life to the next, a change in residency. Does your life reflect a heart and faith that is given to Him and yearns to be with Him forever? Is it oriented towards Him? If not, change it now. Don't wait. Get yourself prepared and ask for His forgiveness and mercy. Don't wait until the end to wish you had done something different. Because the end IS coming.



11/18/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 18:1-8

I love my kids. With all my heart. Ashamedly, I admit that I have answered their repeated requests of me much like the faithless judge in the Gospel-just to get them to stop asking. How blessed are we to have a Father in Heaven who loves us beyond measure and doesn't do that. He instead responds to our prayers when we are ready, when He knows our hearts will accept and grow from it. His compassion and mercy are limitless, as is His love for us, His children.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 25:14-30 Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Some may read the parable of the talents and argue that the master was far too demanding, even cruel in his judgment towards the servant who buried the one talent given to him. But reflect upon the attitude of this servant and recognize it for what it is - it is an attitude of pride, ego, and disdain for the master, even though he was given a tremendous treasure in the one talent. An unwillingness to do anything with the talent, accusing the master of reaping what he didn't sow, and acting out of fear reflect an attitude of one who refuses to serve and acknowledge his eternal indebtedness to the master. We owe all we have to our Father. Be good stewards of your talents in all things in the hope of hearing the words "Well done, good and faithful servants" at the end of our life

11/20/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 18:35-43

We are all blind beggars on the side of the road. We all need to cry out to the Lord for pity and mercy, as well as for the ability to see. We all have areas in our lives where pride, ego, arrogance, and sin prevent us from seeing the truth about ourselves. We need the Lord to have pity on us to help us see what needs fixing, see what needs cleaning, see where we must grow in virtue. Have pity on me, Lord, for I am sinful and cannot see with eyes of faith, hope and love.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 19:1-10 Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Freedom. Amazing what happens when shackles are removed. Zacchaeus overcomes his short stature by unceremoniously climbing a tree to see Jesus, gets seen by Him - because He ALWAYS sees us - and is told He is headed to his place to stay. Freed of pride, ego, sinfulness and the binds of his life, Z drops to the ground and declares a complete conversion, vowing to give generously and correct sins of the past. He is seen, he has heard, he is freed and he is made anew. Are you?



11/22/23

Gospel of the Day: Luke 19:11-28 Memorial of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr

The parable of the ten talents and ten coins is well known, but today's gospel has an aspect that is often overlooked. The master tells the servant to "engage in trade until I return" - they are to actively work with what has been given to them, and they are to work to be profitable. No, it's not a lesson in financial management or capitalism. It's a call to discipleship to make clear that we are blessed with gifts that need to be put to use for the glory of God and His Kingdom. Everyone has been given a gold coin to work with - what's in your wallet?



Gospel of the Day: Luke 19:41-44 Thanksgiving Day

What makes for your peace? On this Thanksgiving Day, it is a question we should be asking ourselves because in today's Gospel, Jesus weeps for us. Why? Because we don't realize what makes for our peace. Time is running out, and we need to discover what makes for peace - Him - and thus prepare ourselves and those we love. We need to surround ourselves with His Presence and allow Him to penetrate our hearts so we can see and know peace. He weeps for us - ask Him to help us so that He might rejoice with us instead.

11/24/23

Gospel of the Day: Luke 19:45-48 Memorial of St. Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions, Martyrs

This house is a house of prayer. This family is a dwelling place of the Lord. Powerful words to read in light of the beautiful experience of Thanksgiving when family is together, adult children are home and truth and love are spoken. As the liturgical year draws to a close this weekend, cleanse your home and your family, and prepare your hearts for renewal and revival. Declare boldly that yours is a place of devotion, prayer, and worship of our Heavenly Father, and welcome Him home.



11/25/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 20:27-40

Why do we put God to the test? I mean really - who's kidding who? We are talking the Creator of the universe, the Alpha and the Omega, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are talking about our Father. But we challenge Him and ask Him to prove things or think we can outsmart Him time and time again, like the foolish Sadducees in today's Gospel. He loves us and doesn't want to play games. He simply wants our hearts, open and abandoned to Him, rising without hinderance to Him in joy, love, and peace.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 25:31-46

Solemnity of Christ the King

The liturgical year comes to a close today as we celebrate Christ the King. Perfect time to take stock of the year that has passed, especially after the possible gluttony of Thanksgiving and the feverish purchasing of Black Friday, as well as Cyber Monday coming tomorrow. Not to mention hours upon hours of football. How have you served this past year? How have you lived? To which side will you be placed - to the right with the sheep or the left with the goats? Is that where you want to remain?



11/27/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 21:1-4

Have you ever considered the magnitude of offering your entire livelihood to God? Going all in and abandoning yourself completely to Him, with no safety net and no guaranteed signing bonus? It is remarkable and inspiring to witness a leap of faith like that, and it is something we are invited to do on varying levels and at various stages of life, each according to our call. Pray for the courage and fortitude to respond as the old widow did, with the two coins she offered. Regardless of the size of the offering, it pales in comparison to the rich abundance of God's blessings for us.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 21:5-11 St. Catherine Laboure

Distractions and noise. Jesus teaches today about the chaos that comes in the world and all the noise, distraction, events, and clamoring that scatters the mind. The enemy is the master of chaos, knowing that our attention span is limited and decreasing in this Information Age, which inhibits our ability to listen to our Father. All the noise drowns out the loving and serene voice of God; we become deaf to His Voice. Listen for Him so as to follow Him.



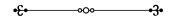
Wouldn't it be awesome to have Jesus be your speechwriter? Give you the words that need to be spoken in an interview, during a conversation, or while making a presentation? It would take the pressure and worry off, and it would let you focus on just being and entrusting everything to Him. That's the actual promise He made us - He tells us to speak out boldly and proclaim the Truth, recognizing the risk and knowing there will be persecution. But we are to do so in complete faith, trusting Him to speak through us, broken vessels that we are. He doesn't pick holy saints to do His work - He turns broken people like you and me into holy saints when we empty ourselves.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 4:18-22 Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle

I admit that sometimes I receive a call, but I am in the middle of doing something and let it go to voicemail. What is before me is more important, regardless of the caller. Andrew - whose feast we celebrate today - and his brother Simon are in the middle of work, busily attending their nets when they get a call. Thankfully, the caller is right there in front of them, and they drop everything at His invitation and follow Him, the first of His apostles. We are invited and encouraged to answer His call, which will always come in the middle of us doing life. He invites us and calls us - will you answer?



December



12/1/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 21:29-33

Signs and wonders. We read of the signs and wonders in the book of Daniel today. It can be a little alarming and catastrophic, with great beasts emerging from the water like the new Godzilla movies. But Jesus gives a more powerful and nuanced teaching, that we should be looking for signs of His love, compassion, and forgiveness all around us in day-to-day living. He is showing us that if we look with eyes of faith, we will see and know more clearly and completely. As we begin Advent, what a wonderful time to take stock of our lives, encounter His Presence in it, and seek more of it.

"Dissipation" is not a word that I have used in conversations with others, and it's not a word you hear too often. To hear Jesus use it made me look up its meaning: the act of breaking up or scattering wildly. He is speaking of the cares of this world when He warns us not to have our hearts weighed down in dissipation. He is telling us to not get wrapped up in the hustle and bustle of the world, not to get distracted from what is most important -Him. Tomorrow, we begin the great season of Advent, the time of preparation of the manger of our heart to receive Him on Christmas morning and always. Cleanse your heart and mind and be restored in Him

12/3/23

Gospel of the Day: Mark 13:33-37 Feast of St. Francis Xavier First Sunday of Advent

Watch. As we begin Advent and the holidays draw near, so many of us are blessed to be watching, waiting, and preparing in excited hope for the arrival of family members or trips to see family. There is hurried excitement and joyful anticipation; preparations are in motion as we watch and wait for those precious moments. We are invited to do the same in preparing for Christmas, preparing the manger of our heart for the birth of Christ. Not just Christmas but every day - we should watch for Him each day as we do for the holidays. Watch with joyful expectancy, for He is coming.



Gospel of the Day: Matthew 8:5-11

Not too often that we read that Jesus is marveled. The declaration of faith and humility by the centurion, speaking the words that we now recite right before Holy Communion, amazed Jesus, the Son of God. Or did it? Perhaps the recorded words are for us, to describe the amazement we should feel before receiving our Lord in the Eucharist. Perhaps we are called to marvel at His humble act of leaving Himself in the Eucharist for us, even though we are not worthy for Him to enter under our roof. Jesus marvels in love at our humility and devotion.



12/5/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 10:21-24

Rejoiced and revealed. Powerful one-two punch today. Can you close your eyes and picture Jesus rejoicing? See Him laughing and crying tears of joy, probably spinning around and hunched over to catch His breath. He places His hand on your shoulder and looks lovingly at you while smiling and gives you a look of absolute assurance and peace, beaming with the joy of the Spirit with whom He is One, knowing the Father's plan for you. He rejoices and invites you to do the same because He has revealed this love and joy to you. Blessed are we!

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 15:29-37

Memorial of St. Nicholas

7 loaves became 7 baskets of leftovers. In a place where there was no food to be had, Jesus performs one of His greatest miracles in feeding thousands so much food there were leftovers. His abundance cannot be outdone! During Advent, we read this Gospel reading to be reminded that He provides for us always, and we must believe that in our hearts. Appropriate reading on this feast of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of those in financial and material need. St. Nicholas, please pray for our belief and our relief - 7 baskets full of abundance beyond our needs. Thank you, Lord!



12/7/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 7:21, 24-27 Memorial of St. Ambrose, bishop and doctor of the Church

Built upon rock. Today's Gospel speaks of the wise man who builds his house upon rock as the foundation, to weather the storms that are to come and withstand it all. He is foretelling what He will soon do, build His House - Holy Mother Church - upon rock, rock in the person of Kepha, Simon who becomes Peter. The Church is our home of refuge, a place of restoration and healing through the sacraments and her ministries. It is where we rest, we rejoice, we feed and are nourished, grow stronger and wiser, find firm ground against the travails of the world. Blessed are we to be called home.



12/8/23

Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:26-38
Solemnity of the
Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Three times in today's Gospel reading for the Immaculate Conception we are told "behold." It means more than "listen" or "check this out" - it is a call to pay attention and observe carefully. It's like a flare to call attention to everyone, and should tell us how important it is to know, embrace and ponder upon these moments and the reality of our Blessed Mother's complete purity. She is without comparison, God the Father's most perfect creation and the Mother of us all. Blessed are you among women - please pray for us, Holy Mother Mary.



12/9/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5, 6-8 Memorial of St. Juan Diego

Christ was referred to as a drunkard and glutton, His cousin John the Baptist said to be possessed by demons. Public opinions or judgments that are just a little off base, wouldn't you say? It's a lesson from Our Lord about judging others that we should take to heart and should reflect upon in our own lives. How often do we judge others based on our own standards, without giving the benefit of the doubt? How often do we make our own assumptions, or even worse, make a determination based on our own broken lens or clogged filters? See with eyes of mercy, live with a heart of compassion and caring, be a disciple of faithfulness.



Gospel of the Day: Mark 1:1-8 Second Sunday of Advent

We are all messengers. Every one of us is called to be like John the Baptist. Not advocating for a locust and honey diet and camel hair as our fashion statement, but we should emulate him as messengers of the coming of the Lord. Like Him, we were created for this purpose. We were born as children of God to help draw others to Him, as well as to leap for joy in the knowledge that Jesus is our Lord and King. We are not worthy of such an honor, but our Heavenly Father delights in us and made us for this, made us for worship and love. Be like John the Baptist and help prepare the way of the Lord.



12/11/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 5:17-26

The paralytic's friends are role models of faith and our call to bring others to Christ. Jesus affirms this as He sees their faith in the life and care for their friend - He heals him and forgives him because of their own faith in Him. It teaches us that while we are to love those around us, we also have an obligation to not let them sit in the muck of their sins, paralyzed beyond movement towards Christ. Our love of neighbor should be one that manifests itself through what we do and how we do it, towards our neighbor so that we can rejoice with them in the healing they receive from the One Who is Love.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:26-38

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

"May it be done to me according to your word." How many of us can genuinely declare these words? The boldness and complete faith of our Blessed Mother is an example for us all. This defining moment led to the greatest event in human history as the Son of God became man. It is beyond comprehension, and it all began with the courageous faith of a young peasant girl joyfully accepting the honor bestowed upon her. May we look to Mary as our Mother and our hope - Our Lady of Guadalupe, please pray for us.



12/13/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 11:28-30 Memorial of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr

There is much written about the meaning of a yoke in today's Gospel, as well as Jesus's invitation to take the yoke that He offers to ease our burdens. In this invitation, however, is an overlooked second message, which is to learn from Him to be meek and humble of heart. He invites us to learn what it means to sacrifice our desires and needs and to think instead of others. Emptying ourselves of the shackles of pride, ego, selfishness, and disordered desires frees us to serve others and find rest in the Lord and in His Spirit. Come to Him - we are all called.

12/14/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 11:11-15 Memorial of St. John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Mystical prophecy. St. John of the Cross and St. John the Baptist. Today, they intersect. The Gospel proclaims John the Baptist as the greatest born among men, and we see him as the end of the Old Testament prophets. Today is the feast of the doctor of mystical theology in the Church, St. John of the Cross. Together, we are given a message of boldness and preparation, a call to preach their word and action, a prophetic foreshadowing of our call to deeper discipleship. Are you willing to accept it?



12/15/23 Gospel of the Day: Matthew 11:16-19

You get the sense today that Jesus is a little fed up with all the judgment of others. References to drunkards, gluttons, and demon possessions is not a good thing, and being vindicated by wisdom makes it clear that there is a reckoning coming. Do not be fooled by appearances - including your own. Look deeper beyond the surface at your own life, your own faith, and be sure that you are grounded in fervent faith, compassion and grace, humility and perseverance. Make sure your actions and way of being are aligned to your heart, grounded in Him.



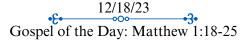
Gospel of the Day: Matthew 17:9, 10-13

Like a fire and a flaming furnace, a prophetic word is spoken in the readings that even the disciples understood. The clarity by which the Lord spoke to them, veiled though it might have been, was still easily understood by them. So too it should be for us as we draw nearer to the birth of Our Lord and come to realize the message of hope, love, forgiveness, mercy, and joy that the Lord is bringing us all. Allow yourself the freedom to be engulfed in the fire of His Spirit and know the love of God



Gospel of the Day: John 1:6-8. 19-28 Third Sunday of Advent

You are sent, just like John the Baptist. Do you know who you are? In the Gospel of this third Sunday of Advent, two powerful themes are presented to us. The first is the realization that every one of us is sent by God with a unique mission and purpose in this world. We are intentionally and lovingly created by our Father with a mission to fulfill and serve. It is that knowledge that we are made by Him, created in His image and likeness that is the second theme of today. We must know who we are and WHOSE we are. We are His beloved sons and daughters, lovingly made by Him. Equally important is to know who we are not, as John the Baptist knew. We are not gods and goddesses who are to live for our own selfish desires. We are sent, His children, to transform the world and bring others home.



The quiet, powerful witness of St. Joseph has always inspired me. His complete trust in and obedience to the Will of God and his acceptance of the promptings of the Spirit are a model for us to follow. His charitable approach to the challenges he faced unlocked greater opportunities for grace and following the Lord. It is this confident and expectant faith and unwavering obedience that is a model for us all, men in particular. St. Joseph, please pray for us!



12/19/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:5-25

Why is it that we so often live by the axiom, "I can't believe my eyes," unwilling or unable to see that God wants to move powerfully and convincingly in our lives? We take the approach, like Zechariah in the Gospel, that God is distant from us and does not move in our lives, aloof and ignorant of us and our needs or challenges. The reality is that He seeks to be admitted into our lives, wants us to know desires Him. intimacy and an comprehension. But He respects our free will; He does not force Himself. Instead, He gives us glimpses of His unconditional love and waits for our response. Open your eyes wide, your heart wider to Him.

12/20/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:26-38

"Yes." That was and is her response. Presented with the most incredible encounter ever, an archangel coming before her and addressing her as royalty, telling her she is to become the Mother of the Son of God, she doesn't pass out or panic or run away. She says, "Yes," and then takes it a step further because she was already gifted with such unique grace at her birth. She refers to herself as the handmaiden, the personal servant, of the Lord. Such faith, such purity, such grace. Holy Mother Mary, as we draw closer to the joy of Christmas, help us to model your "Yes" in our lives and serve as hand servants to others. Hail Mary....



12/21/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:39-45

It is the giving heart of our Blessed Mother that we reflect upon today, her missionary zeal to serve and bring Christ to others. Immediately leaving to assist her older cousin Elizabeth, Mary was not instructed to go help. Rather, she decided to go and did so quickly. Already exhibiting a mother's heart filled with compassion and service, she is the world's first missionary, bringing Christ to others and filling their hearts with the joy and love of knowing Christ! May we find joy, strength, and faithfulness in bringing Christ to the world through our own actions.

Humility and charity. What images come to mind when you think of someone who is humble and charitable? We may often think of someone quietly working in the shadows, not calling much attention to themselves, but today's Gospel of the Magnificat should show us otherwise. Our Blessed Mother is gifted with the most incredible gift as the Mother of our Lord, despite her lowly status, and she proclaims His greatness magnified through her. She declares that greatness is now here because of Him. her elevation not because of anything she did but because of Him, and it inspires from her one of the greatest of prayers for us through the generations. We are called to do the same - proclaim His greatness made manifest through us so that all might come to know He is Who He says He is blessed are we.

12/23/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:57-66

As parents, we have a unique responsibility and gift in raising our children into adults, imparting the Word of God and the Light of Christ upon them as best we can and through God's Grace. We often fail and make mistakes and try our best to love as He would love. We do so with the best of intentions, out of desire and love for our child(ren). We often have to make tough choices, go against the grain, and choose Truth over convenience, compassion over "being right." May we be as obedient as Elizabeth and Zechariah, obeying the Lord and doing what they needed to for their child, a future saint of the Church as our own children are.



12/24/23

Gospel of the Day: Luke 1:26-38 Fourth Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve

The birth of Christ is upon us, when God enters into human history in a transformative way. He becomes accessible to us in a profound and remarkable way, and today we give thanks in preparation for His Coming. We pause the frenzy of life to find peace and assurance in Him, recognizing the moment, and understanding how profound it is to be in loving dialogue with our Father. We are invited into prayer with Him every moment of every day, our hearts open to Him. Is the manger of your heart ready to receive Christ, not just tomorrow but every day?



Gospel of the Day: John 1:1-18 Nativity of Our Lord

May the joy and peace of Christ and the celebration of His coming fill your heart and mind this Christmas and always. He humbled Himself to come among us, defenseless and vulnerable, placing Himself in complete trust into the loving arms of our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. In the same way, He humbles Himself before you and invites you to accept Him in your heart. Praise God for this most perfect gift of love and grace, Christ Himself. Have a blessed Christmas.



2/26/23

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 10:17-22 Feast of St. Stephen, first martyr

Many of us enjoyed a day of joy and happiness as we celebrated Christmas Day, the birth of Our Savior. The day is quietly behind us, and while the Christmas season continues for another week, many return to a daily struggle filled with multiple challenges, seemingly without respite. The Church today seems to reflect and acknowledge this struggle and stark contrast to the joy of Christmas by presenting us with the martyrdom of St. Stephen in the Gospel, the first martyr of the Church. There is a recognition that life is challenging, there is suffering, and there is sorrow, but through it all, there is the joy and strength of knowing Him Who came to walk among us, being united to Christ, and loving Him above all else. He came for you and me.



12/27/23 Gospel of the Day: John 20:1-8

Feast of St. John, Apostle and evangelist

Each of us is John. In the Gospels, he is written of as the disciple whom Jesus loved, as the only one at Calvary, as the one to whom Mother Mary is given to care for, and the one she is to love and care for as her own. He is the one who runs in excitement in faith to the empty tomb, the one who recognizes Jesus on the shore after the Resurrection, and the one who defers to the faith and authority of Peter. He is the one who writes lovingly of personal moments with Jesus unlike any of the other Gospels. the one who shares the Bread of Life discourse, and the one who first followed Jesus. We are invited and encouraged to be more like John, the one whom Jesus loved, because He loves each of us.

Gospel of the Day: Matthew 2:13-18 Feast of the Holy Innocents

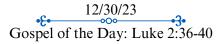
In the aftermath of Our Lord's Birth, mere days after His joyful arrival and the adoration of the shepherds, comes the horror and pain of the Holy Innocents, the slaughter of the young infant boys by Herod. Rage, hatred, violence, and jealousy seemingly take center stage, and our world today may look surprisingly like that...if we allow it. Instead, we are offered the opportunity to die of self, to sacrifice our own desires for the life He offers, and to be united with Him in faith and love. Is your life an example of holy innocence and if not, what must you change to make it so?



12/29/23 Gospel of the Day: Luke 2: 22-35

I have never read the story of The Presentation at the Temple the way that I have this morning, with such obvious and powerful presentations of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such a beautiful story illuminated by the Holy Spirit, Who clearly moved in the life of Simeon and inspired him three times before the Presentation, as well as afterward in his words to Mary. How our Blessed Mother must also have been filled with the Spirit at that moment as well as beloved St. Joseph. Today is a good day - as is every day - to invite the Holy Spirit to come upon you, dwell within you, and lead you.





Quiet but constant faith. Perseverance. Faithful obedience without fanfare. Anna demonstrates this for us in today's Gospel, faithfully awaiting our Lord in the temple as a widow. Christ also reflects this in his quiet obedience to Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, growing strong into a man. Our quiet obedience with a clean and upright heart yields tremendous bounty and results, requiring a patience that is countercultural. Go against the grain.



Gospel of the Day: Luke 2:22-40 Feast of the Holy Family

Resolutions for and towards our family. That should be the focus today. Today is the double celebration of New Year's Eve and the Holy Family of Nazareth. NYE is the time for us to take stock of the past year, consider our blessings and triumphs and struggles and make resolutions for 2024. The feast of the Holy Family is the time to celebrate the enormous blessing of family, the gift and hardship that comes with family. This year, perhaps, is the year to resolve to bring healing and forgiveness, patience and understanding, more intentionality and effort, towards one's family. No coincidence the two dates coincide. Make this a year of blessing and strengthening for your family, step out in faith, and declare goodness for each member in His Holy Name