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**SAINT THERESE
+
A MODEL FOR HOLINESS**

We are grateful to the CONTRIBUTORS of the reflections:

OCD Frs Alphonse Britto, George Santhumayor, Jason Coutinho, Jeevan Tauro, Jesvin Benoy, Joe Tauro, John Sequeira, Joseph D'Souza, Pranay Pereira, Prithesh Crasta. Nikesh D'Souza, Noel D'Cunha, Oswald Crasta, Rakesh Parmar and Raymond Santhanaz.

OCD Srs from Bengaluru, Chicalim and Pune Carmels.

OCD Brs Aldric Xavier, Alwin D'Souza, Elston Monteiro, Glawin D'Souza, Hillary Rodrigues, Rickson Moras, Stin George and Wilson Rodrigues.

OCDs Mrs Diana Wilson, Josephine Menezes and Jubilee Cardozo.

Brs Adrian Menezes SW.

Mr Aroon Fernandes and Maxim D'Cruz.

Mrs Fay Mckinley, Venora Lobo and Wilma Rose.

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You can send your comments or suggestions to:

livingwatereditor@gmail.com

For Subscriptions, Renewals or other correspondence,

write to the following address:

The Manager, Springs cf Living Water

Dhayanavana Publications,

C/o Carmel Niketan 1/7. Behind Carmel Complex, Geddalahalli,

Kothanur Post, Bengaluru – 560 077

Email: dpublications7@gmail.com, dpublications1999@gmail.com

Phone 080 - 2844 3229 Mob: 76193 92358

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Living Water

Daily Spiritual Reflections

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PRAYER INTENTION

**FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

*Let us pray that believers in different religious traditions might
work together to defend and promote peace,
justice and human fraternity.*

Nihil Obstat : Fr Silvestre D'Souza OCD
Provincial, Karnataka Goa Province

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Perfecting Holiness in Consecrated Life

As the Church celebrates the month of October, we have a beautiful occasion to reflect on the beauty and challenge of lives wholly dedicated to God. This year holds particular significance with the upcoming Jubilee of Consecrated Life, designated for October 8-9, 2025, by the Holy See. This year offers a special impetus in the Jubilee of Consecrated Life (Oct 8-9), as the Church and equally the Carmelites, celebrate the feast of St Therese of Lisieux this month – the Centenary of her Canonization (1925-2025). She was a simple soul, who offered a profound example in living holiness in the ordinariness consecrated life.

Consecrated life is a permanent state where an individual deepens their baptismal consecration through the profession of the three evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience. Forms of consecrated life include religious life, eremitical life, secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, and consecrated virgins and widows. Consecrated men and women 'have left everything behind' in order to 'be with Christ' and to place themselves at the service of God and their brothers and sisters.

St Therese stepped into consecrated life at the Carmelite convent of Lisieux at the tender age of 15, driven by a deep desire to give herself fully to Jesus. So strong was her desire that she even pleaded with Pope Leo XIII during her visit to Rome, to allow her to enter the religious life in the cloister. Consecrated life in the cloistered convent offered a life of austerity, marked by long hours of prayer, silence, work, and communal living with diverse personalities much like the lot Jesus himself chose. It was not a life of grandeur but one of hiddenness and humble service, a challenge she embraced with courage.

During her short life in the cloister, she intertwined the Carmelite spirituality into what the world today knows as the 'Little Way.' Her revolutionary approach to holiness teaches that sanctity is achieved not through extraordinary deeds, but through small, faithful acts performed with immense love. For her, this meant patiently enduring annoyances, performing humble sacristy or refectory duties, and caring for elderly sisters with a smile and a forgiving heart. Her motto, 'Love is repaid by love alone,' encapsulates her devotion, reminding us that what matters in life is not great

deeds, but great love. This message redefines holiness as an ideal accessible to all in their daily lives.

A significant dimension of Therese's spirituality was her total surrender and joyful acceptance of life's hardships, rooted in a deep trust in God's merciful love. Despite spiritual and physical suffering, including her battle with tuberculosis, her soul remained anchored in God's providence. Pope Francis frequently expressed his devotion to St Therese, even publishing an Apostolic Exhortation on her: *C'est la Confiance* (It is The Confidence). He also quoted her words, "It is confidence and nothing but confidence, that must lead us to Love," exalting the genius of her spirituality.

Consecrated life, which Therese lived in the convent was not without its tensions and personal differences, yet the Little Flower exemplified holiness in community through silent forgiveness and patient love. She demonstrated that loving others despite their faults is vital to living the Gospel. Though cloistered, her life was equally and profoundly apostolic. She considered herself an 'apostle to apostles,' dedicating her intense prayer life and sacrifices to the salvation of souls, especially priests and missionaries. The love she bore towards the missions, earned her the title: Patroness of Missions.

St Therese, a Doctor of the Church, who we celebrate this month, challenges contemporary consecrated persons and the laity to find holiness in the daily reality of faithful love, humility, and joy. The influence of her spirituality did contribute to Vatican II's emphasis on the universal call to holiness. Her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, continues to move millions with its simplicity, teaching that God's love is most accessible to the humble. As the world grows faster, more complex and often more wounded, her message of simplicity, trust, confidence and gentleness becomes even more vital. She offers a bridge to those seeking healing and continues to inspire a new generation of saints—ordinary people, and the consecrated ones, who discover, like her, that love is what matters most.

May her example inspire all consecrated persons and the wider Church to embrace their vocations with deep trust and generous hearts, knowing that in the ordinary and hidden, God's extraordinary grace is always at work. Let us strive to be 'little flowers' who bloom in love and faithfulness wherever God has placed us.

Fr Jesvin Tom Benoy Ocd

01
WED

Spiritual Childhood

Feast cf Saint Therese of Lisieux

Is 66: 10-14; Ps 131: 1-3; Mt 18: 1-5

We celebrate today the feast of the 'Little Flower' - St Therese of Lisieux. Born on January 02, 1873 in France she lost her mother at a young age and later entered the Cloistered Carmel at the age of fifteen. She lived a life of holiness and died at twenty-four offering her life as a 'victim of love'. She was canonized on May 17, 1927 by Pope Pius XI. The year 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of her canonization. In this jubilee year, St Therese inspires us to relook on our faith journey with hope as the children of a loving Father.

St Therese is known for her treatise on 'spiritual childhood'. Her spirituality is inspired by the Word of God. In the Bible, God is revealed as a loving Father. God spoke to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah that He will nurse them, carry them in His arms and comfort them like a mother. God as the Father loves His children, He knows them, He takes care of them. St Therese was captivated by this truth. So, she consciously opted to be a child who fully confides in its father. St Therese's 'spiritual childhood' is based on today's Gospel. The Jesus' disciples wanted to know who is the greatest in the Kingdom of God. The question of who is great and who would be at the right and left of the Lord are human desires and questions. They crop up from one's self or ego that wants to dominate over others. Jesus tells the disciples that they have to become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. One who becomes like a child is the greatest in the eyes of God.

St Therese preferred to become God's little child. She offered herself to God's merciful love praying and offering sacrifices for the mission, for the conversion of sinners, for the good of the priests and the Church. Thus, she became a saint, Patroness of the missions and Doctor of the Church. Let us imitate her confidence, and cherish the freedom of the children of God!

Response: Keep my soul in peace at your side, O Lord.

02
THU

Channel of God's Caring Love

Memorial of *The Guardian Angels*

Ex 23: 20-23; Ps 91: 1-6,10-11; Mt 18: 1-5,10

Belief in angels is unique to Christianity. Bible refers to the angels more than 300 times! God's angels care for us and they constantly intervene in our lives! Today the Church honours Guardian angels. God has assigned each of us a guardian angel. The Catechism teaches us, *'from infancy to death human life is surrounded by angels' watchful care and intercession. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life. ... Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God'* (CCC, n. 336).

Some of the saints have left us convincing experiences they had with their guardian angels. St Gemma Galgani, a young Italian mystic of has given remarkable testimonies of how her guardian angel helped her in her prayer life. *"Seeing the great charity her angel lavished upon her, Gemma loved her angel immensely, and his name was always on her tongue as well as in her heart,"* writes her spiritual director.

Saint Carlo Acutis, the newly canonized Italian teenager, spoke about guardian angels with devotion and practical advice. He says, "Continuously ask your guardian angel for help. Your guardian angel has to become your best friend." He encouraged people, especially the children he taught catechism, to rely on their guardian angel for protection and guidance in daily life and in overcoming personal shortcomings. Acutis had a special devotion to angels, naming his own guardian angel Gabriel.

Pope Benedict XVI once said, "My family taught me a prayer when I was a boy that has remained with me over the years, 'Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.' This prayer reminds us of the constant presence of our Guardian Angel assigned to us by God." Learning then, from these saints, let us too make a habit of trying and connecting with our divine guardians in whose care the Lord has left us during our earthly exile!

***Response: For you has he commanded his angels,
to keep you in all your ways.***

03
FRI

The God Who Seeks!

Twenty Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Bar 1: 15-22; Ps 79: 1-5, 8-9; Lk 10: 13-16

In the Old Testament, sin is most often presented as disobedience — a refusal to submit to God’s sovereign authority. This disobedience is not simply a single act but, as in today’s first reading, a history of continual rebellion. The Israelites repeatedly resisted bringing themselves under God’s loving rule. Obedience, however, is not slavery; it is the path to enjoying a relationship with Him, living according to the purpose for which we were created.

Sin, at its core, is missing life’s ultimate goal which is communion with God. Today, we see sin in self-reliance, the pursuit of sensuality, greed for possessions, and the desire to dominate others. Such attitudes reduce God to a tool for fulfilling our wants. The Tower of Babel remains a powerful image of this modern idolatry where humanity seeks greatness apart from God.

In this state, people often fail to recognize their need for liberation. Yet God created us to know, love, and serve Him, and it is in His nature to forgive, restore, and draw us back to our original purpose. This is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian faith: not humanity reaching for God, but God actively seeking us. In Christianity, justice is more than “giving each their due;” it rather is desiring and pursuing the true good of others. Yet sin leaves us unable to will what is truly good without divine help.

Even when we are lost, broken, and spiritually dead, God continues to love and call us. His mercy, however, respects our freedom. But our freedom, weakened by sin, must itself be liberated. True freedom (Gal 5:1) is not doing as we please, but living as we ought. It begins by acknowledging we are sinners who cannot save ourselves, and culminates in surrendering to Jesus, relying wholly on His love rather than our own abilities or merits.

Today’s readings remind us of God’s persistent invitation: turn back, repent, and embrace the life for which we were made: a life of freedom, justice, and love in Christ.

Resp.: For the sake of the glory of your name, free us O Lord.

04
SAT**Relentless Compassion Amidst Suffering***Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi*

Bar 4: 5-12, 27-29; Ps 69: 33-37; Lk 10: 17-24

Love and Discipline go together. If love has to grow it has to pass through intense personal discipline. That is how the parents bring up their children in order to be the virtuous citizens of a healthy society. They love their children intensely but their love is manifested in the making of a great people of the future. Hence, they correct us, discipline us even though that discipline apparently feels painful, but in the longer run it paves way for transforming the young generation into a great people.

The first reading of today speaks of God's ways of disciplining His people. When the people of Israel abandoned their God and went after other Gods, He had to discipline them in order to bring them back unto Himself. He is a jealous God! This passage could sound like Divine punishment for the sins of the people. But we know that God does not punish. Hence the passage should be taken as a natural outcome of the evil deeds of the people. We know that if we pour water on our head, it automatically flows to our feet. Similarly, if we go against the eternal laws enshrined by God in our nature, the outcome would be disastrous for our life.

However, the passage does not speak merely about divine retribution but rather about divine mercy and compassion. God calls his people as His memorial, the ones who are closest to His heart. He longs for them; calls them back unto Himself. The expression "return with tenfold zeal to seek Him" speaks volumes of the loving and compassionate heart of God. If they transform their hearts and return to the Lord with ever renewed zeal, he will fill their hearts with everlasting joy. Joy is the result of being at home with God in love. Can that everlasting joy, which is the result of His gratuitous gift of grace be the ultimate reward of His relentless compassion to us all?

Response: The Lord listens to the needy.

**Faith, Perseverance and Humble Service***Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Hb 1:2-3; 2:2-4; Ps 95; 2 Tm 1:6-8,13-14; Lk 17:5-10

The liturgy of the Word on the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time invites us into a meditation on faith, perseverance, and humble service in the face of confusion, suffering, and the mystery of God's ways. In the first reading from the prophet Habakkuk, we hear the anguished cry of the prophet: "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save?" Habakkuk's world is full of injustice, violence, and unanswered prayers. He is troubled not only by the evil around him but by God's apparent silence and the perplexing reality that God will use an even more wicked nation, Babylon, as an instrument of judgment. Habakkuk's honest questioning is met not with a clear explanation but with a call to faithful waiting: "The righteous person will live by their faith." God assures him that justice will come, though it may seem delayed, and that His purposes are unfolding even when they are not immediately visible. This message is most relevant in our own times, when we, too, are tempted to despair at the injustice and suffering in the world and wonder where God is in the midst of it all.

St. Paul's words to Timothy in his second letter, echo this call to faithfulness. Timothy is urged to "fan into flame the gift of God which is not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control." Paul exhorts him not to be ashamed of testifying about the Lord, nor of himself, who is suffering for the gospel. Instead, he is to join in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. Paul reminds Timothy to "hold to the standard of sound teaching" and to "guard the good treasure entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit." Here, faith is not passive resignation but active perseverance; it is a courageous holding fast to truth and love, even when the cost is high. Paul's exhortation is a reminder that the Christian

life often involves hardship, but we are sustained by the Spirit and by the example of those who have gone before us.

In the passage from the Gospel of Luke, the apostles, recognizing the challenge of following Jesus, plead before Him, "Increase our faith!" Jesus responds that even faith as small as a mustard seed can accomplish great things. He then tells a parable about a servant who, after doing all that is required, should not expect special praise but simply say, "We have done only what we ought to have done." Here, Jesus reframes faith not as a matter of quantity but of trustful obedience and humble service. True faith is not about performing miraculous feats or earning God's favour; it is about faithfully fulfilling our calling, trusting that God is at work even in the ordinary and the difficult.

Today, we are invited to earnestly strive towards cultivating a mature, robust faith; that is, a faith that wrestles honestly with God in times of confusion and suffering, that perseveres in love and truth, and that serves humbly without seeking recognition. Habakkuk teaches us to bring our honest questions to God and to wait with hope, trusting that God's justice and mercy will ultimately prevail. Paul encourages us to guard the faith entrusted to us and to rely on the Spirit's power in times of trial. Jesus reminds us that faith is not about spiritual heroics but about daily, humble obedience. The world of today often rewards pride, encourages self-promotion, and offers quick fixes to the problems of life. Today's readings however, exhort us to a different path: to live by faith, to persevere in hope, and to serve with humility. When we are overwhelmed by the world's brokenness or our own limitations, we remember that God's purposes are unfolding in ways we may not see, and that even the smallest acts of faithfulness matter in His kingdom. May we, like Habakkuk, Paul, and the apostles, continue to seek God, trust His timing, and serve Him with steadfast hearts.

***Response: O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your hearts.***

06
MON
Beyond Boundaries: A Call to Compassion
Twenty Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Jon 1: 1 2: 1-2, 11; Jon 2: 3-5, 8; Lk 10: 25-37

We live in a world not unlike the deck of the Titanic: music playing, people dancing, laughing, while just below the surface, the ship sinks. And it is not just the secular world; even many Christians are living unaware, caught up in busyness while souls slip into eternity.

That is the tragedy behind the indifference of the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man lies bleeding by the road, and these religious figures, walk past without a second glance. Maybe they were late for temple duties or feared defilement. Or maybe, like Jonah, they did not care enough. The priest and the Levite are like people straightening deck chairs on the Titanic—attending to lesser things while ignoring the suffering at their feet.

Jonah, was worse than being indifferent; he was resistant. When God called him to preach repentance to Nineveh, Jonah ran. Not because he feared failure, but because he feared success. He sought not mercy but judgement for his enemies. His reluctance was rooted in hatred, delighting in the downfall of those he despised. He would have played the violin while Nineveh sank. God, who loved the Assyrians, despite their violence challenged Jonah's prejudice. He desired to save even those whom Jonah deemed unworthy. That is the scandal of grace!

Do we resemble Jonah or the Good Samaritan? Are we indifferent to the spiritual plight of others, especially those we do not naturally love or understand? Our world is hurting, lost, and sinking. God is still asking reluctant prophets to go and proclaim hope.

As we approach the close of the Jubilee Year, the call is clear: to go beyond boundaries, cultures, and prejudices to proclaim the hope of the Gospel. Like Jonah, we may resist, but God's mercy is always wider than our comfort. The Jubilee invites us to see others not as enemies, but as beloved children of God. We are called to be Good Samaritans. May we not play music while the world sinks, but rise and bring healing to a wounded world!

Resp.: You brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.

07
TUE

The Generous Flow of Love

Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

Jon 3: 1-10; Ps 130: 1-4, 7-8; Lk 10: 38-42

The Jewish history is very intriguing, right from the Exodus under Moses as a nation to a superpower as the united monarchy under Kings Saul, David and Solomon. Israel occupied the major portion of the land of Canaan under united monarchy, then there was division of land - later exile to Babylon in 586 BC and Jews were dispersed all over the world. The Jewish race had lost their King, Temple and Land. They came out of exile in 1948 after the killing of 6 million Jews by Hitler. The world had mercy on them and they were granted a small piece of land in the present west bank. It is a fact that Judaism introduced the world to a Monotheism. The other 2 main monotheist religions – Christianity and Islam, stem from Judaism. Their belief in one God, which is in their nature, is deeply rooted in their history, culture, and covenantal relationship with Yahweh, shaping every aspect of their worship, laws, and daily life

Today's First reading is a dramatic story which is very familiar to Christians. But the underlying principle here is that God is universal and just as he loves the Jews, his love is the same for all the people of this Earth. This is what it meant when the book of Genesis spoke thus, "God Created Man in his own image and likeness". Jews and Jonah the chosen people of God are the vehicles to transmit this image of love and forgiveness of God. Jonah's message in the text is taken very seriously by the Ninevites and as a result they experience the loving mercy of God.

This raises a question for us to reflect today: We Christians are called the people of the new covenant. The history of Christian nations tell otherwise; but can we as individuals, partake in radiating this love and forgiveness first in our families, to our friends, our enemies and in our neighbourhoods? Let us not be an obstruction like Jonah, to the generous flow of love and forgiveness which God desires to transmit through us.

***Response: If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?***

08
WED

Compassionate and Forgiving God

Twenty Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Jon 4: 1-11; Ps 86: 3-6, 9-10; Lk 11: 1-4

Prophet Jonah is angry that God has forgiven Nineveh. Jonah felt that the people deserved to suffer for their sins, yet, there had been none. A sulking Jonah walks away to the east of the city and makes a little shelter for himself. God ordains a castor oil plant to grow over Jonah, to give him shade for his head, and to soothe him. Jonah is delighted with the shade the plant provides, but then as quickly as it came, the tree withers away in the scorching sun. Now Jonah is really upset and God asks as to why he should be upset over the fate of the plant? Then comes the lesson that - Everything is God's doing. He is the ultimate Lord; He gives and takes from whomever/whatever he wishes at His will. Jonah is upset over a tree that he had not even planted, how then could God not be patient with the 1,20,000 people whom He had created? Jonah sees willfully wicked people, but Yahweh sees a people who have erred and turned back.

Jonah is shocked; he declares that he is fully justified in his anger. God's patience is a strong contrast to Jonah's quick anger. The message is clear that God's compassion reaches out to all, Jews and Gentiles. Jonah represents those Israelites, who considered God's mercy & salvation as their birthright; it was unimaginable that God would show mercy to others. God rebukes such hardness and reveals his graciousness.

In the Gospel, Jesus' teaches his disciples to pray. Prayer is an important element of Luke's Gospel where we often find Jesus praying. Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer to the disciples. The prayer is beautiful, yet it is challenging; it needs to be prayed slowly, consciously entering into each petition. It is a universal prayer of brotherhood under one father, turning entire humanity into one family. Today, the liturgy invites us to look at humanity as God's people, whom he loves and cares for. Let us not therefore, make classifications, like the Jews, but be human, kind and considerate to all!

Resp.: You are slow to anger, O Lord, and abundant in mercy.

09
THU**Prayer of Faith is Answered!***Twenty Seventh Week in Ordinary Time*

Mal 3: 13-20; Ps 1: 1-4, 6; Lk 11: 5-13

In the book of Malachi, we hear the people of Israel speaking against the Lord in a harsh and sinful way, yet they were ignorant of their offense. They looked at the prosperity of the proud and the success of those who did evil and felt discouraged. They began to think that walking humbly with God and keeping His ordinances came at a cost that was not worth the reward. But for those who feared the Lord, something different happened: the Lord 'listened and heard.' Our God is not deaf to His people; He knows our thoughts, sees our struggles, and values the faithfulness of those who cling to Him.

This is where perseverance in prayer becomes vital. It is not a one-time cry to God, but a steady communion with Him, even when answers seem delayed. Scripture is full of living examples: the Canaanite woman who refused to leave without Jesus' blessing for her daughter; the woman suffering from haemorrhage, who grabbed the hem of His garment; Zacchaeus, who overcame ridicule and climbed a tree just to catch a glimpse of Jesus. All of them demonstrate that Jesus delights in those who refuse to give up.

Even our Lord Himself modelled this. Before major decisions, such as choosing the Twelve Apostles, He spent entire nights in prayer. His own example teaches us that persistent prayer is not only about obtaining what we ask, but about deepening our relationship of trust and confidence with our Father.

The Gospel parable of the friend at midnight confirms this truth: persistent knocking, seeking, and asking moved the reluctant friend to provide bread for his guest. Likewise, God answers prayer; it may not always be in the manner we expect, but in the way that promotes our good and the good of others.

Today we need to ask ourselves: What excuses keep us from praying? Is it lack of time, sheer laziness, or being 'too busy' with other priorities? The truth is, if prayer matters to us, we will make time for it, for perseverance in prayer is an act of faith!

Response: Blessed the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.

10
FRI

Divine Intervention

Twenty Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Jl 1: 13-15; 2: 1-2; Ps 9: 2-3, 6, 16, 8-9; Lk 11: 15-26

The day's readings help us understand the need of repentance for our sins, deliverance from the power of evil and restoration of life through divine intervention. In the first reading taken from prophet Joel, the priests are told to put on sackcloth, fast, pray and make deep repentance before the impending judgement of famine. God who is merciful will never send judgement before sending divine intervention for restoration and healing. Through the prophet God warns of the impending punishment.

In the gospel of Luke too we see that only Jesus could drive out demons. The evil spirit was at work during the time of Jesus and is relevant even in our times. We go through a spiritual warfare almost every day of our lives, having to battle between good and evil. God our loving father who sees our struggles intervenes in our lives through his son and the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 41:10 reminds us of God's promise 'Do not be afraid, I am with you'

Luke tells us how the people accused Jesus that his power came from Beelzebul. But Jesus knew his mission and continued his good works of healing and restoration. We cannot under-estimate the power of the evil spirit whose work is to torment our souls with anxiety, guilt, darkness, dryness, selfishness, anger and evil. The greatest power comes from Jesus to set our souls in silence and in peace. We look to Jesus in all our cares. We seek his guidance to drive out the evil. We look to him who is the light of the world to help us in our daily spiritual warfare. Many a times when we are steeped down in our sinful nature God warns us of an impending judgement. He often speaks to us in many ways to change our lives. What must we do then?

Venerable Nicholas of Narbonne says, 'Make prayer your business!' Psalm 9 speaks of God's protection of the oppressed. In good times and in bad the psalmist gives all praise and glory to God. When we embrace the same lifestyle, our warfare with the evil, shall have God's hand to guide and protect!

Response: The Lord will judge the world with justice.

11
SAT

Hearing and Doing the Word

Twenty Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Jl 4: 12-21; Ps 97: 1-2, 5-6, 11-12 ; Lk 11: 27-28

The prophet Joel paints a vivid picture of the “valley of decision,” where God gathers the nations for judgment. The images of harvest and winepress reveal a sobering truth: God does not overlook human sin and injustice. Yet, this same passage shifts from judgment to hope. For those who belong to Him, the Lord is a refuge and a stronghold. Out of Zion will flow living waters, and His people will dwell in safety. Joel reminds us that God’s word is never empty; it both convicts and consoles, demanding a response from the human person to whom it is addressed.

In the day’s Gospel, hearing the words of Jesus, a woman cries out in admiration of Mary: “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you!” While affirming Mary’s dignity, Jesus gently redirects the focus: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” True blessedness comes not from mere proximity to holiness be it in the physical or the spiritual sense of the word. But blessedness arises from fidelity to God’s word. Even Mary herself was blessed not only for being the Mother of Jesus, but because she listened, believed, and obeyed. She can rightly be called the first disciple of the Lord

Together the two readings invite us to move from passive listening to active obedience. God’s word is not meant to be admired from afar or confined to liturgical proclamations; it is a living word, calling for a lived response. To hear without doing is to remain in the valley of indecision; to hear and obey is to find shelter in God’s refuge.

In a noisy world, filled with competing voices and shifting values, the challenge is to cultivate ears that truly listen and hearts that joyfully obey. To live God’s word means forgiving when wronged, seeking justice without bitterness, being generous without counting the cost, and trusting God even in uncertainty.

Blessed indeed are those who hear God’s word and keep it. For to such as these, the day of the Lord is not terror, but hope; not destruction, but life in abundance.

Response: Rejoice in the Lord, you just.

12
SUN**Gratitude that Heals the Heart!***Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

2 Kgs 5:14-17; Ps 98:1-4; 2 Tm 2:8-13; Lk 17:11-19

The readings of today invite us into a deep meditation on the transforming power of God's mercy and the essential response of gratitude. In the first reading, we hear of Naaman, a Syrian army commander afflicted with leprosy. Despite his initial resistance and pride, he humbles himself to follow prophet Elisha's simple instruction: to wash seven times in the river Jordan. Through this act of obedience and faith, Naaman is healed, not only physically but also spiritually, as he comes to recognize the God of Israel as the true and living God. In the Gospel Jesus heals ten lepers who cry out for mercy. Yet, out of the ten, only one, a Samaritan returns to give thanks and praise to God. Jesus acknowledges his faith and gratitude, declaring that he is truly saved.

Both accounts center on healing, but they point to something beyond the mere cure of the body. They highlight the deeper healing of the heart, which comes when we recognize God's mercy and respond with humility and thanksgiving.

Naaman's journey is especially powerful. He was a man of high status and military might, but leprosy reduced him to a place of helplessness. At first, he resisted the idea that such an ordinary act of bathing in the Jordan could restore him. It seemed too simple, even insulting to his dignity. Yet, once he laid aside his pride and trusted in God's way, he experienced true healing. This mirrors our own struggles. How often do we complicate God's call, expecting dramatic signs or extraordinary interventions, when in truth He asks of us simple acts of faith, obedience, and surrender? Sometimes it is in the very ordinary that God's extraordinary grace is revealed.

The Gospel extends this message further. Ten lepers are healed, but only one returns to thank Jesus. The others receive physical healing, but the Samaritan receives something more: the fullness of salvation. Gratitude opens him not only to restoration of his body but also to a deeper relationship with God. This shows us that gratitude is not just a polite response; it is an act of faith. It acknowledges God as the source of all blessings and keeps our hearts open to His continuing work in our lives.

The connection between these readings is profound. Naaman, a foreigner, experiences healing and comes to faith in the God of Israel. The Samaritan, also a foreigner, experiences healing and returns in thanksgiving. His faith leads him to salvation. Both stories remind us that God's grace is not limited by boundaries of race, status, or nation. His mercy flows freely to all who open their hearts in faith and gratitude.

We may also notice that both Naaman and the Samaritan leper are outsiders—one a Syrian, the other a Samaritan—yet they are the ones who truly recognize God's hand. This is a gentle but powerful challenge to us as believers. Sometimes those considered 'outsiders' can teach us the deepest lessons of faith. They remind us not to take God's gifts for granted.

St. Augustine once wrote, "God gives where He finds empty hands." Both Naaman and the Samaritan approached God with empty hands; one washed away his pride in the Jordan, the other lifted up his voice in thanksgiving. In their humility, God's healing became complete.

Today, this reflection calls us to examine our own hearts. How often do we remember to render thanks to God after our prayers are answered? Do we only seek God in times of need, forgetting Him in times of abundance? Gratitude is not an optional virtue it is at the very heart and essence of Christian discipleship. In fact, the very word 'Eucharist' means thanksgiving. Each time we gather for Mass, we come to give thanks for the saving work of Christ, who heals us from the deepest leprosy of sin and restores us to new life.

Furthermore, gratitude changes us. Modern psychology even confirms this truth: practicing gratitude increases our well-being, resilience, and peace. But Scripture reveals the deeper reason because gratitude aligns our hearts with God's truth. It moves us from entitlement to humility, from complaint to praise, from isolation to communion.

As we reflect on today's readings, let us remember that healing is not only about the body, but about the soul. God's mercy reaches us in ways we cannot always see, but our response of faith and gratitude completes the healing. May we learn from Naaman to humble ourselves, and from the Samaritan to give thanks always.

Resp.: The Lord has shown his deliverance to the nations.

13
MON

Discovering the Greatest Miracle

Twenty Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 1: 1-7; Ps 98: 1-4; Lk 11: 29-32

People are naturally drawn to miracles, and seeks healing, blessings, or an extraordinary experience. In today's Gospel, people ask Jesus for a miracle to prove He is the Messiah. But instead of performing one, Jesus points to the sign of Jonah. Jonah was swallowed by the whale, remained in its belly for three days, he was later left on the shore. He later, preached in Nineveh, and people repented. Jesus implicitly tells them that His own death and the glorious resurrection, after being buried in the belly of the earth for three days, is the greatest sign; His resurrection will bring salvation to the world. That is the true sign—the miracle that matters most.

But the crowd was not seeking truth; they wanted something spectacular. Their curiosity outweighed their faith. Jesus also recalls the Queen of Sheba, who travelled far to hear Solomon's wisdom; her search was genuine and not fuelled out of her curiosity. Yet, though Jesus, who is far superior than Solomon, stood before them, the people ignored Him. So, what lesson does this hold for us?

1. The Resurrection is the Greatest Miracle.

Jesus' rising from the dead is the central proof of who He is. His triumph over sin and death changed history forever. The Resurrection is God's ultimate sign of love, assuring us that life conquers death and hope overcomes despair.

2. Faith Requires Action.

Often, we ask God for signs. But God, too, looks for signs from us—signs of living faith. Do we practice what we profess? Do we show love, forgiveness, and mercy in daily life? Jesus did not remain in holy places; He brought God's word into streets, homes, and hearts. He asks us to do the same.

The miracle we easily forget is that Jesus saves; he saves us from sin, fear, and hopelessness. The greatest sign has already been given: the Cross and the Resurrection. Instead of praying, "Lord, show me a sign," let our prayer be, "Lord, make my life a sign of Your love!"

Response: The Lord has made known his salvation.

**14
TUE****Swimming Against The Tide***Twenty Eighth Week in Ordinary Time*

Rom 1: 16-25; Ps 19: 2-5; Lk 11: 37-41

We live in an age filled with noise, distraction, and shifting values. Many today, like in Paul's time, choose to suppress the truth of God, not because they have not heard, but because they turn away from the voice of conscience and the evidence of God all around them. Paul writes that the invisible qualities of God: His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world. Nature itself, in its beauty and order, is a silent testimony to the Creator. Yet often, instead of thanking and glorifying Him, people turn toward created things and make idols of them.

It is not golden calves anymore, but the pursuit of wealth at the cost of integrity, the glorification of self over service, the worship of comfort over commitment. When the human heart replaces God with lesser things, it loses its light. Paul describes the tragic effects: minds grow confused, hearts darken, and people begin to call good what is evil and evil what is good. The reality becomes relative and flexible. How familiar that sounds! We live in a time when truth is often distorted, and when standing for Gospel values can feel lonely or unpopular.

Yet Paul's opening words give us hope: the Gospel is for everyone who believes. No matter how far someone has strayed, no matter how lost our culture may feel, the Gospel still wields power. It still saves. It still calls hearts back to the Father. Paul's fearless voice becomes a challenge for us: are we willing to live this Gospel with the same courage? Can we speak of our faith, not with pride or arrogance, but with deep joy and quiet conviction? Can we be living witnesses? Not just by our words, but by our mercy, humility, and faithfulness?

In a world that often forgets God, may we remember Him with gratitude. May we honour Him in our homes, our decisions, and our relationships. And may we, like Paul, live unashamed of the Gospel, looking at the good news not as a burden to carry, but as the greatest gift humanity has ever received!

Response: The heavens declare the glory of God.

15
WED

Witnesses of Love

Memorial of Saint Teresa of Avila

Rom 2: 1-11; Ps 62: 2-3, 6-7, 9; Lk 11: 42-46

Today we celebrate the feast of *St Teresa of Avila*, mystic, and Doctor of the Church. She loved God deeply and taught others to come closer to Him through prayer. Real holiness, she believed, existed in a heart full of love!

In today's Gospel, Jesus uses strong words: "*Woe to you.*" He is speaking to the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They were very good at following rules and traditions, but they forgot the most important part of religion that is love. Jesus says, "*You tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God*" (Lk 11:42). They made religion difficult for the people by creating many meticulous laws and rules. These rules became heavy burdens, and the people were led away from God, instead of being drawn towards Him. True religion should bring people closer to God, not push them away. Jesus teaches us that the heart of God's law is love: love for God and love for our neighbour. St Teresa of Avila lived this truth. She once said, "*It is love alone that gives value to all things.*" She taught her sisters that prayer is not just saying words but speaking to God as a friend.

Teresa of Avila worked to reform the Carmelite order and bring back a life of prayer, simplicity and love. Even in her struggles, she remained firm because of her trust in God. Like the Pharisees in the Gospel, we too could be proud, judgmental, or focused only on external things. When we act with anger, jealousy, hatred, or impurity, we move away from true religion. Jesus reminds us today to return to love, mercy, and justice.

Pope Paul VI once said, "*What the world needs now are witnesses.*" St Teresa was a witness. She showed through her life what it means to follow Jesus. Let us pray today that we may follow the example of St Teresa of Avila to live with love, to pray with trust, and to guide others gently towards God. May our faith be real, joyful, and full of love.

Resp.: O Lord, you repay each man according to his deeds.

16
THU

Woe to You and to Me?

Memorial of Blessed Augustine Thevaraparambil

Rom 3: 21-30; Ps 130: 1-6; Lk 11: 47-54

What happens when religion becomes a mask rather than a mirror?

In today's Gospel, Jesus confronts the scribes and Pharisees, not for breaking the Law, but for hiding behind it. Their hypocrisy was not just in what they did, but in what they failed to be: authentic witnesses of God. They looked like guardians of holiness, but their hearts were far from the Divine. Jesus accuses them of building tombs for the prophets their ancestors killed. What an irony – honouring the very voices they once rejected! It is a reminder that it is easier to admire holiness in retrospect than to accept its demands in the present. Prophets make us uncomfortable; they challenge our norms and call us to radical conversion. So, instead of listening, we resist them or worse, silence them.

The Greek word *hypokrites* means actor - someone who wears a mask to play a part. Even our spiritual lives can easily become performances. We know how to 'act' holy: say the right prayers, attend the right devotions. But do our hearts burn with the love of God? Or have we settled for 'looking good' rather than 'being true'?

In the day's first reading St Paul, draws us away from external righteousness toward the grace that justifies all. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* We are not saved by performance or perfection, but by faith in Jesus Christ. We are justified by surrendering to mercy. God is not impressed by how well we play the role of a saint; He desires our truth, our vulnerability, our authenticity. This is not just a message for the Pharisees of the past; it is a call to us today. As religious leaders, catechists, parents, and youngsters, are we guiding others to God, or subtly blocking the path through pride or hypocrisy? Do we proclaim Christ with clarity, or hide Him behind rules and rituals?

Jesus does not expose hypocrisy to condemn us, but to awaken us. He calls us to tear down facades and live the Gospel from within. Not to act holy, but to be humble. Not to impress, but to inspire.

***Response: For with the Lord there is mercy,
in him is plentiful redemption.***

17
FRI**Worth More Than Many Sparrows***Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch*

Rom 4: 1-8; Ps 32: 1-2, 5, 11; Lk 12: 1-7

In the day's Gospel account, Jesus speaks first to His disciples, warning them against the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." For us, this is a call to authentic faith. To stand for the truth, to deliver justice, and to be transparent in our daily living before God and our neighbours. Hypocrisy is a hidden sin, a mask we wear to appear righteous before others while concealing our true selves. It is but a projection of a false identity, often sketching a benevolent image. But Jesus reminds us that nothing of this sort is hidden from God; all will be revealed.

This truth is not meant to frighten us but rather it ought to free us. Free us from slavery of deceptions. Free us from continuing to exist in the same rut of falsehood. We are called to live in the light, with integrity and sincerity, because we are completely known and infinitely loved by our Father. Jesus confirms this by shifting from warning to consolation. We are not to fear those who can harm the body, but to revere God who holds our eternal soul. We have a great number of Christians who have offered their life as a sacrifice for the spreading of the Kingdom of God.

The beautiful culmination of such a life is God's tender, personal care. We are worth more than many sparrows, and even the hairs on our heads are counted. This is an image of a Father's intimate love and attentive providence. Most of the time, we think or blindly believe that we are the authors of our own selves. Thus, we rely on our intelligence and reasoning, ignoring the will of God. Our response ought to be one of trusting faith. Knowing we are so profoundly known and loved by God should give us the courage to cast aside hypocrisy, live authentically as His children, and witness to His truth without fear.

***Response: You are a hiding place for me;
you surround me with cries of deliverance.***

18
SAT

Lessons from Luke

Feast of Saint Luke, the Evangelist

2 Tm 4: 10-17b; Ps 145: 10-13, 17-18; Lk 10: 1-9

Today, the Church celebrates this feast of St Luke the Evangelist. On this day, we honour not just a Gospel writer, an Evangelist, but a model of faithful discipleship. In the first reading, Paul, writing to Timothy, bares his soul – he is abandoned by most companions in his final imprisonment; yet, he confesses that Luke alone has remained with him, and in this he finds solace and consolation. This moment captures Luke's defining virtue – steadfast loyalty to the Gospel mission, even when it proves costly. Paul's exhortation to *proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable* finds its fulfilment in Luke's person and his life. Both as a meticulous historian (Luke 1:3) and a traveling missionary (Acts 16:10-17), he embodied the balance of carefully recording the truth and bold evangelization. The Gospel passage of today mirrors this dual call: the seventy-two disciples are sent, not with unlimited grand resources but in radical dependence, clothed only with Christ's grace, peace and power to heal.

We could draw three lessons for ourselves from Luke's witness:

1. Faithfulness over fame: While others deserted Paul, Luke stayed. True evangelization is not merely about proclamation of the Word, but it equally requires perseverance in human relationships.
2. Compassion in truth: Luke's Gospel highlights Christ's mercy for outcasts which is evident in the pericopes on Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son and the clearest account of Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Like the seventy-two, we too are sent to 'cure the sick, the outcasts, the lost and the needy,' addressing both spiritual and physical hungers.
3. Dependence on God: The simple life that the seventy-two were to adopt on their missionary journey mirrors Luke's quiet fidelity. Fruitful ministry flows from prayerful trust, not self-sufficiency. The more we are dependent on God, the more chances of not straying.

St Luke reminds us that evangelists are not just writers or preachers but souls in love with Christ, willing to stand with the marginalized like Paul, and go to the peripheries like the seventy-two. Like Luke, may we too remain faithful in obscurity and bold in mission, for "the harvest is plentiful!"

***Response: Your saints, O Lord, make known
the glory of your reign.***

19
SUN

Persistence Brings Victory

Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ex 17: 8-13; Ps 12 1: 1-8; 2 Tm 3: 14 4: 2; Lk 18: 1-8

Prayer is the breath of the Christian life, the quiet force that unites our hearts to God and sustains us in every circumstance. This Sunday's readings invite us to reflect deeply on the importance of persistence in our spiritual journey. They remind us that prayer is not meant to be occasional or fleeting—it is meant to be steadfast, continuous, and unwavering, even in the face of challenges and apparent delays. Just as our bodies cannot survive without air, our souls cannot flourish without the nourishment of persistent prayer.

In the first reading, we witness the Israelites at war with Amalek. Moses takes a pivotal role as intercessor, raising his hands to God in prayer for his people. As long as his hands are raised, Israel prevails; but when his hands grow tired and fall, Amalek gains the upper hand. Here, we see vividly that prayer is not passive; that it requires effort, commitment, and support. Aaron and Hur hold Moses' hands, allowing them to remain steady. Through this persistence in prayer, Israel triumphs. Moses' unceasing intercession becomes the source of victory, teaching us that our prayers, too, can be instruments of transformation, and of deliverance when offered consistently and wholeheartedly.

St. Paul, in the second reading, extends this reflection by encouraging Timothy to remain faithful to the teachings he received from childhood, rooted in the Scriptures inspired by God. These teachings are meant to guide not only our actions but our hearts and our prayer life. Paul emphasizes the need to persist in sharing this knowledge with others, regardless of obstacles or opposition. The message is clear: steadfastness in our faith and in our prayers is not optional; it is essential. Our prayers, rooted in God's Word, must be continuous, trusting that their impact, though unseen at times, is profound and far-reaching.

The Gospel passage beautifully illustrates this principle through the example of the persistent widow. She approaches a judge repeatedly, seeking justice. Initially, the judge ignores her, yet she continues her pleas without losing heart. Eventually, he grants her request, not out of justice, but because of her persistence, because

she refuses to give up. Jesus concludes by contrasting this human judge with our God, who is infinitely just, loving, and ready to listen. If even a flawed, indifferent judge can respond to persistent requests, how much more will our compassionate God, who knows what is best for us, respond to our prayers? This parable invites us to embrace patience, trust, and perseverance, even when God's answers seem delayed.

Persistence in prayer is not about forcing God to act according to our will. It is about aligning ourselves with God's timing and surrendering to His plan. Sometimes, what feels like delay is not neglect but a test of faith, an opportunity to deepen our trust and reliance on Him. Prayer, then, becomes an act of surrender as well as an act of persistence. It is a continuous reaching out to God, trusting that He listens and cares, even when we cannot see immediate results.

Today's readings call us to be like Moses and the persistent widow: steadfast, patient, and faithful in prayer. They remind us that the power of prayer lies not in its immediate outcome but in the faith it nurtures within us. God is never distant or inattentive; He is always present, always ready to answer, and infinitely more generous than we can imagine. Our role is to persist, to pray without losing heart, and to trust that God's timing is perfect.

As we reflect on these readings, let us consider our own prayer life. Are we persistent in seeking God's presence, guidance, and justice? Do we approach Him with the same steadfastness as Moses or the widow, refusing to give up despite challenges and delays? Prayer is the foundation of our Christian life. It sustains us, strengthens us, and transforms us. God never grows weary of listening; neither should we grow weary of praying.

Let us carry this message into our daily lives, embracing perseverance in prayer as a pathway to intimacy with God and a source of enduring strength. Like the widow, let us approach God repeatedly, trusting that He hears, He cares, and He acts according to His perfect love. Let us be encouraged today to make prayer the heartbeat of our lives, persistent, faithful, and unwavering, confident that God will respond in His time, in His way.

***Response: Our help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.***

**Live by Faith; Not by Fear!***Twenty Ninth Week in Ordinary Time*

Rom 4: 20-25; Lk 1: 69-75; Lk 12: 13-21

In the first reading Paul points to Abraham's faith as the standard of righteousness. Though his body was *as good as dead* and Sarah barren, he did not doubt, but was convinced that God would do what He had promised. Abraham's deep, unwavering trust teaches that righteousness comes not by performance, but by faith in the One who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not yet exist.

In today's Gospel, Jesus warns His disciples to beware of hypocrisy and greed. He challenges the crowd not to fear those who can only kill the body, but to fear God who sees the heart. The parable of the rich fool shows a man who hoarded earthly wealth but was bankrupt toward God. He lived in fear of scarcity, driven by possessions, and failed to invest in eternity.

At the heart of both passages is a single question: Where is your trust? Is it in God's promises, or in your plans? Abraham lived by promise; the rich fool lived by presumption. One looked beyond the visible; the other was consumed by it.

In our daily lives, we often face circumstances similar to Abraham's where hope seems irrational: a medical diagnosis, financial collapse, broken relationships. The temptation is to build *bigger barns* of control, more insurance, more effort. But God calls us to surrender these illusions and trust Him deeply, like Abraham.

Faith is choosing to believe that God's character is good and His promises are sure, even when reality looks otherwise. Hypocrisy, like greed, is rooted in fear: fear of being exposed, fear of not having enough. Jesus calls us out of that fear into a life of transparency, trust, and truth.

To be "rich toward God" means to invest in the eternal: faith, love, integrity, and generosity. It means we stop pretending and start trusting. Like Abraham, we believe, not because everything is perfect, but because God is.

Let us live by faith, not by fear. Let us be a people who trust the unseen promises more than the seen securities. For in the end, only one kind of wealth will matter: faith credited as righteousness.

***Response: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited his people.***

21
TUE

Let us Be Prepared!

Twenty Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 5: 12, 15, 17-21; Ps 40: 7-10, 17; Lk 12: 35-38

"The Lord is great" - how beautiful are these words of the psalmist - and indeed this greatness of our Lord is reflected in the readings of today's liturgy. This greatness of our Lord is so beautifully intoxicating that it automatically makes us wait for him with bated breath. It makes us fall madly in love with him and we are always ready for action.

In today's gospel, our Lord blesses all those who are prepared to encounter him. As St Teresa of Avila, says, it is not we, but it is our Lord who is more eager to meet us. He is awaiting our preparedness so that he can welcome us with his arms open wide. Like Nathaniel under the fig tree, our Lord sees us first, much before we see him. He already knows us and sets us apart from the days in our mother's womb.

The first reading too speaks of our Lord's greatness. It was nothing but the greatness of our Lord to have given His grace to sinful humanity. On that first Christmas morning, it was nothing but the greatness of our Lord that lay in the manger in those swaddling clothes. It was nothing but our Lord's greatness that was obedient to the will of his Father on that Friday afternoon. This greatness is what even the psalmist sings about. How can our hearts not be transformed by this knowledge of our Lord's greatness?

There have been instances when we have failed to recognize the greatness of our Lord. Many miracles have been overlooked by us. But today's readings remind us that if our hearts are vigilant in prayer, then everything is possible. Our persistent prayers will surely enable us to be ready to welcome our Lord. We do not know the hour and the day when our Lord will call us to him. But surely we can be prepared - the grace that we have received during our baptism - and the grace that we receive through the sacraments, help us to always be ready to encounter our Lord and recognize his greatness!

Response: See, I have come, Lord, to do your will.

22
WED**From Self-Will to Selfless Service***Twenty Ninth Week in Ordinary Time*

Rom 6: 12-18; Ps 124: 1-8; Lk 12: 39-48

In today's first reading, we see Paul using an illustration of a master and his slave to show how the believers do not depend on their own efforts for victory but on the Grace of God. Paul reminds us not to allow the members of our body to yield to worldly passions and pleasure, that is, not to permit our eyes to lust, our ears to listen to gossip or our tongues to give out falsehood; rather as free moral agents to be responsible for the use to which we put our members. That is to use our organs to live a righteous life based on the values of Christ and to serve Him alone who is our master.

The Gospel invites us to be faithful to the service to which God calls us. Peter asked Jesus whether his teaching about dedicated service was intended for the twelve disciples only, or for all his followers. Jesus' answer was general enough to allow both possibilities; no one is excluded from the call to serve Christ with complete attention and watchfulness. The followers of Jesus must always be ready for whatever circumstances they encounter, for e.g. in our parishes, in our relations at work, in our families, in our communities. God wants us to contribute our time, energy and knowledge in a selfless manner. He calls us to serve without complaint or reservation lovingly, looking beyond our own comfort to the needs of others and the concerns of the Church.

Jesus says, "Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required." He has given everything to us so that we might share with others what we have received. He graciously showers us with knowledge of his love and salvation as we give of ourselves. He does not insist that we work to exhaustion, but that we consecrate our lives, just as he did, to fulfill his Father will. When we renounce our self-directed ways and shoulder the yoke of his service, we will experience a fullness of life and peace which we could never achieve on our own. Today let this be our prayer too!

Response: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

23
THU

New Life in Christ

Twenty Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
 Rom 6: 19-23; Ps 1: 1-4, 6; Lk 12: 49-53

Those who by the death and resurrection of Christ, have been dead and buried, and risen with him, are justified and are dead to sin, are freed from sin; and therefore, ought not and cannot live in it. They are alive with Christ and live a life of communion with Him which is inconsistent with living in sin. Those who profess to be Christ's, are justified by his righteousness; they are baptized into his death and risen with him and therefore should account themselves dead unto sin, and so not live in it. Those who are justified and sanctified, are not under the law but under the covenant of grace and can trust in the grace and promise of God.

Being now delivered from the slavery and dominion of sin, we are under a better master, are servants to God; and the fruit of our service is holiness, and everlasting life. Grace and holiness are the gifts of God; Christ gave these to us, and it leads us to eternal life.

In the gospel, Luke focuses our attention on that for which our hearts most long. John the Baptist promised that a more powerful one who was coming after him would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and fire. This is the fire of God's judgement, a judgement of love that purifies us so that we can enjoy that communion with God for which we are made and for which we long.

Jesus' words about division in the family come from the prophet Micah 7:6. Jesus came to bring peace. Has He not told His disciples to offer peace to those to whom their mission takes them? His peace, however comes with a two-edged sword that issues from the mouth of God; the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Even family values are not absolute. Each of us is created by love and for love and our soul is a sacred space that we and others must respect. Even if our families stand against obedience to the call of God, experienced in the sacred depth of our soul, we must say yes to God's call.

Resp.: Blessed the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.

24
FRI

Sin, Struggle and Freedom

Twenty Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 7: 18-25; Ps 119; Lk 12: 54-59

Paul's helplessness becomes our own, when we really enter deep into ourselves. Due to the fallen nature, a person is often unable to do good. There is a constant struggle between what one ought to do and what one actually does. The force of sin causes to misuse the freewill in sinful and selfish ways. Sin manifests itself as an unremitting desire for pleasure, power and possessions.

Christ came to this world to redeem us from the slavery of sin. It is Christ alone, who can save us. Paul shares his own experience, that the sin, which lives inside the body, makes him a prisoner. This means that believers will continue to struggle with sin throughout their lives and thus there is an ongoing need for confession and forgiveness. A saint of our own recent times, Carlo Acutis, went to confession every week. According to him when you make a sincere confession, like a balloon flying in the air, the soul too rises up to heaven freed from the burden of sin.

The first reading is connected to the gospel of today. Jesus praises the people for knowing how to interpret the weather but criticizes them for not knowing themselves. It may be the same case with us today. We go around being very careful about the exterior matters like studies, duties, responsibilities or careers. These exteriors must be taken care of without neglecting the interior life of the spirit. When we see in ourselves little disputes arising against others, we need to settle it immediately before it becomes a mountain and we know not how to level it. It is better to be reconciled with others in this life rather than to expiate them later in purgatory. St Catherine of Genoa says, "He who purifies himself of his faults in this present life satisfies with a penny a debt of thousand ducats; and he who waits until the other life to discharge his debts, consents to pay a thousand ducats for that which he might before have paid with a penny." Let us thus empower ourselves to root out evil, one thing at a time.

Response: Teach me your statutes, O Lord.

25
SAT

Innocent Sufferer

Twenty Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 8: 1-11; Ps 24: 1-6; Lk 13: 1-9

In today's Gospel, Jesus is told about a group of Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices. The reading also refers to another tragedy, the collapse of the tower of Siloam which killed eighteen people. The people believed these victims must have been great sinners to suffer such horrible deaths. Jesus firmly challenges that way of thinking. He makes it clear that those who suffered were not worse than others. Their deaths were not a punishment from God. In doing so, Jesus dismisses the common belief that all suffering is the direct result of sin. Then why would God allow suffering, especially in the good people?

The Catechism teaches us that only faith can truly make sense of the mystery of suffering. It reminds us that even when God seems silent or absent, His power is still at work especially in and through suffering. The ultimate example is Jesus Himself. Through His suffering and death, salvation came to the world.

Jesus does not explain the cause of every tragedy, but He turns our attention to what is most important – the conversion of heart. “Unless you repent, you will perish in the same way,” says the Master. The call is not to explain suffering, but to respond with faith, trust and repentance. Pope St John Paul II wrote that real loss is not physical suffering, but the loss of eternal life. Temporal suffering, however painful, is temporary. What is truly to be feared is the loss of one's soul. St Paul reminds us that no present sorrow can compare to the glory that awaits those who remain faithful (Rom 8:18). Even painful events can bring about a greater good, in ways we may not fully understand now (Rom 8:28).

So, when bad things happen to good people, we must not rush to blame or explain. Instead, we ought to turn to Christ crucified, who suffers with us, redeems suffering, and assures us of eternal life with Him, where every tear will be wiped away (Rev 21:4). It is our faith in Him that helps us to draw meaning in suffering.

Response: These are the people who seek your face, O Lord.

26
SUN**Prayer That Touches Heaven***Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Sir 35: 12-18; Ps 34; 2 Tm 4: 6-8, 16-18; Lk 18: 9-14

Let us think we are standing before God right now. We can speak only one sentence. So what that sentence would be? Would it be a list of our achievements like, "I went to church, I fasted, I gave alms" or would it be something humbler, like, "Lord, have mercy on me"? This is the question that today's Word of God places before us. The readings of the day remind us that not all prayers are equal. Some touch heaven; others bounce back at our lips. The difference? Humility.

In the book of Sirach we see hear about the prayer that rises. The author writes, The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds. God bends His ear to the cry of the oppressed, the broken-hearted, the sinner who knows his need for mercy. In other words we could say, 'Heaven has a password and that password is humility.' A proud heart says, "I deserve to be heard." A humble heart whispers, "Lord, without You, I am nothing." And God cannot resist the latter one.

In the second reading of today we hear about St. Paul's humble example. Writing to Timothy at the end of his life, he does not boast of his brilliance or eloquence. Instead, he simply says, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. His crown was not earned but, it was a gift from the Lord. He shows us that perseverance in prayer and faith does not come from muscles of steel, but from a heart that leans completely on Christ. As Pope John Paul II said, Paul's perseverance was a proof, not of human strength, but of the efficacy of Christ's grace.

The day's Gospel projects the spotlight on the message: the Pharisee prays, but it's more of a speech. He talks about himself, his fasting, his tithing, his goodness. His words rise no higher than the ceiling. The tax collector, however, stands at the back, beats his breast, and pleads, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" And Jesus delivers a teaching when he says, The latter went home justified, not the former. God's heart is moved not

by pride, but by truth - the truth that we are needy, broken, dependent on His mercy.

Saint Augustine once said, Man is a beggar before God. That is not an insult, it is a reality. Prayer is not about impressing God; it is about opening our empty hands to receive. Saint Teresa of Avila understood this well. She insisted, The whole foundation of prayer must be laid in humility. The more a soul humbles itself, the more God lifts it up. She even called humility and detachment two sisters... sovereign virtues, empresses of the world. Pope Francis echoes the same. He says, A humble heart has the courage to become a beggar. In fact, he says, the truly poor person is the humble one. Because humility generates trust that God will never abandon us.

So what does this mean to us? It means when we pray, we should check the posture of our hearts. Are we presenting a spiritual résumé? Or are we whispering, "Lord, I need You"? Humility in prayer is not about putting ourselves down but, it is about standing in truth, recognizing that all we are, and all we have, comes from God. That is why St. James reminds us, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

We live in a world where people boast: on social media, in workplaces, even in relationships. The message is, "Show off. Prove yourself. Exalt yourself." But today's Gospel flips the script. It says, Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. (Lk 18:14). The way up is actually down. The path to heaven begins on our knees.

So dear friends, let us remember that the prayer that touches heaven is not long, loud, or decorated, but, it is humble. When we kneel before God, we do not need fancy words. We only need the words of the tax collector, Lord, have mercy on me. Those five words can pierce the clouds, shake the heavens, and open the gates of God's mercy. Let us ask Our Lady, Queen of All Saints, to give us this gift of humility, so that our prayers may always rise to God's heart and never fall empty.

Response: The lowly one called, and the Lord heard him.

27
MON**Going Beyond the Surface***Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time*

Rom 8: 12-17; Ps 68: 2, 4, 6-7, 20-21; Lk 13: 10-17

There are two sides to every reality: the apparent, the external, the impression and the core. They are two ends to one reality. This holds true for minute particles as well as great galaxies, for small ants and mighty blue whales. It is also true for human beings. We possess a superficial or corporal life and, at our core, our thinking, mature choices, and secret feelings. For human beings, it is essential that we make the effort to center our lives away from peripheral superficiality.

Today's readings invite us to embark on a journey toward the interior, from being slaves to our senses and indulging in inordinate passions and desires that ensnare us. We get stuck and halt that journey. We become debtors and slaves, unable to look beyond bodily comforts. On the contrary, when we deliberately choose and faithfully follow the way of Jesus, the way of love, the way of Calvary, the way of rising above immediate gratification and striving toward better times and sane thinking, we experience an inner freedom from the struggle of conscience. This freedom allows us to breathe the fresh air of being God's children, delighting in doing what God desires.

Even religion, when reduced to excessive vertical religiosity, can degenerate into a mere social institution, suffocating, exploiting, and enslaving. This was the case with Judaism during Jesus' time. Jesus encountered and challenged this reality. The great sign of divine healing manifested through Jesus, healing a woman who had been ailing for many years was seen by the religious officials as a crime deserving punishment. Jesus clarified that life-affirming actions in favor of the suffering are more pleasing to God and take priority over rigid cultic practices and restrictive rules that had been misused to control simple people.

Therefore, we too are invited to prioritize our lives activities wisely and strike a prudent balance between fulfilling our cultic obligations and responding compassionately to human emergencies. May we draw inspiration from the day's readings and be more authentic in our actions, and focus not merely on the externals of human life!

Response: This God of ours is a God who saves.

28
TUE
Chosen in Weakness; Perfected in Love
Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles

Eph 2: 19-22; Ps 19: 2-5; Lk 6: 12-16

Today's readings offer a profound insight into the nature of Christian life – to be grounded in intimacy with God and expressed through our calling to serve. Paul speaks of us no longer as strangers, but “fellow citizens with the saints,” built into a holy dwelling for God. Luke reminds us that before calling His apostles, even Jesus, withdrew to spend a night in prayer.

There is a quiet but powerful movement in both texts: from communion to mission and from belonging to building. As Christians, we often desire to serve, to do something meaningful and yet we may feel unworthy, uncertain, or simply exhausted. The call to be “built together” can feel overwhelming in a fragmented world where we are more used to independence than interdependence.

Jesus' night of prayer before choosing the apostles is a gentle reminder that discernment begins in silence. In the Carmelite tradition, silence and solitude are not an escape routes but the spaces where clarity is born. We are invited to return to the ‘mountain’ whatever form that may take, in our daily lives and to remember that mission without prayer risks becoming noise without depth.

The apostles Jesus chose were not perfect; one would betray Him, others would doubt and scatter. Yet they were chosen, loved, and entrusted with the stabilizing of the foundation of the Church and also building that edifice. This is deeply reassuring. God does not wait for perfection but only openness. Still, responding to the call to serve can be a challenge. We may be held back by fear of failure, competing priorities, or a feeling that we are not ‘spiritual enough.’ But Paul reminds us that we are already part of God's household. We belong. In that belonging, we are shaped slowly and patiently into a dwelling place for God. Our service is not about grand gestures, but faithfulness in the small: being present, listening deeply, loving generously.

Today, let us ask for the grace to root our service in prayer, and to trust that God builds with the humble materials of our daily lives. We are not called to serve alone, but together built into something holy.

Response: Their sound goes forth through all the earth.

29
WED**Ditching the Excess Baggage***Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time*

Rom 8: 26-30; Ps 13: 4-6; Lk 13: 22-30

“Will only a few be saved?” It is a legitimate question. Maybe you know that you will be saved, but where do we get this assurance of our salvation?

The letter to the Ephesians 1:13-14 writes, “We who have heard the truth, the gospel of salvation and have believed were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance. Here is the assurance of our salvation – hearing, believing and being sealed with the Holy Spirit.” But it does not end there. Jesus says, “Strive to enter through the narrow door.” Firstly, a narrow door implies, that I cannot bring a lot with me. Some skinny kids would always try to get through a fence by squeezing themselves through the bars. Experience tells us that one cannot carry a lot of things with himself/herself through that narrow space. That is why Jesus invites us to come to him as a child. As we grow older, we accumulate more things, and they become attached to us and we become attached to them. To enter through the narrow door, we are going to have to strip ourselves of many things – worldly things, some sinful but even some good things that stop us from getting through because they have become our idols or our baggage.

Let us not carry such extra baggage with us, because those burdens hold us down and keep us from encountering Jesus. May Jesus not end up saying to us, “I do not know where you come from.” Let us imitate Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet. Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.” The good portion that draws us to the Lord and allows us to enter through the narrow door might make us look like fools to the world and often last in the world’s eyes. This is when we need to remind ourselves of Jesus’ words “Some who are last will be first and some are first who will be last” (Lk 13:30).

Response: I trust in your merciful love, O Lord.

30
THU
Never Separated from God!
Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 8: 31-39; Ps 109; Lk 13: 31-35

In the Letter to the Romans, St Paul writes, "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." God can make injustice, hostility, manipulation done by others, criticism or other negatives to work for our good. He again affirms saying, "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." In this pericope, Paul focuses entirely on God and His love for us, to the extent that he gave up his own Son for us. Let us pray for grace that we may truly understand this divine initiative that comes to us from God.

Paul mentions the forces that may try to separate us from the love of Christ. He also speaks of the communion in love which we experience with Him through the gift of his Holy Spirit. When we place our trust in God, his Spirit strengthens us to remain faithful to God even in times of tribulation and suffering. In the difficult moments of our lives whom do we turn to?

Can powerful cosmic and angelic forces separate us from God's love in Christ? In the Letter to the Corinthians, Paul affirms that "Death has been swallowed up in victory." In reality, even death cannot separate us from God's love. Nothing can! We belong to Christ. How much of our time do we spend worrying about the future? The future is real only when it is present to us. The psalmist describes himself as wretched, poor and pierced in heart. In distress, he praises God publicly and places his trust in God. Divine love is present in the midst of our afflictions.

In the Gospel, Jesus laments over Jerusalem. Jesus weeps over that city, which is faithless. Jesus' concluding remarks carry an intense compassion and hope mixed with sadness. He attempted to reach out to them like a mother reaches out to her child. In my love for God, do I desire to be warm like Paul or cold like Jerusalem. The choice is mine and yours.

Response: Save me, Lord, with your merciful love.

31
FRI

Love or Law?

Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Rom 9: 1-5; Ps 147: 12-15, 19-20; Lk 14: 1-6

“The law is made for man, not man for the law.” We live in the 21st century, a world that prides itself on its progress. Yet, how often do we find ourselves clinging to outdated rituals, rigid regulations, and legalistic attitudes that suppress the spirit of love and mercy? Jesus, our Master, gave us one eternal commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

The third commandment in the Decalogue calls us to keep the Sabbath holy. “Sabbath” is the Hebrew word *Shabbat* (שַׁבָּת), which means to rest or to cease. For the Jews, the Sabbath was a day of rest, deeply revered and protected by strict observance, so much so that working on the Sabbath could mean death. Over time, the Pharisees and Sadducees worsened it with a complex web of rules, losing sight of the commandment’s original intent: communion with God and compassion for others.

It is here that Jesus challenges these traditions. In today’s Gospel, Jesus heals a man suffering from dropsy, even though it is the Sabbath. He asks the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” When they remain silent, Jesus acts with compassion. He teaches us a profound truth: love is never out of season. The Sabbath, for Jesus, is not merely a day of rest, it is a day of restoration. It is not about refraining from work as an end in itself, but about making space for goodness, mercy, and human connection.

As Christians, our Sunday, the Lord’s Day, is not just for attending Mass and retreating into personal rest. The Church teaches us that Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm, and the elderly (CCC 2186). So, the question before us is not merely whether we observe the law, but how we live love. Will we be people of cold rules or warm hearts? The choice is ours: Love or Law? Let us choose the way of Christ: the way of love.

Response: O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord!



THE SACRAMENTS

The Eucharist and Recent Papal Teaching

(continued from previous issue)

e) *Mane Nobiscum Domine* - Stay with us Lord

This Apostolic Letter dated on October 07, 2004 was written as a guide for the Year of the Eucharist (October 2004 - October 2005), The Pope refers to the modern situation to that of the disciples who were on the way to Emmaus and hopes that the Eucharist can illumine the life of believers. The Letter reaffirms the importance of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Church with its spiritual significance.

The first chapter invites the believers to look towards Christ, who stands at the centre of the humanity, so that he may draw all to him in order to find redemption and fulfilment. Since Mary is the woman of the Eucharist, her life and example is a great model to know the mystery of the Eucharist.

The second chapter deals with the Eucharist as the mystery of light since in the breaking of the word and the Bread, it enlightens our hearts and minds. It is, therefore, in the Eucharist we need to discover the Lord and live his sacrifice in concrete gestures. The pastors to enlighten the people on the Eucharist, encouraging them to adore the continual presence of the Lord in the tabernacle. The Third Chapter presents the Eucharist as the source and manifestation of Communion since the Lord makes us all of one heart and mind in the sharing of the bread broken.

The Fourth chapter points out the Eucharist as the principle and plan of mission, an area that is ignored. As the Emmaus disciples lost no time in sharing with others what they experienced, the Pope invites the believers to do the same in our society - by our solidarity with the least in the humanity, and especially by our service and commitment.

Pope Benedict XVI and the Eucharist

a) *Deus Caritas est* - God is Love

This Encyclical of Benedict XVI is on the love of God which speaks of the Eucharist in reference to the love of God (n. 13-14). He considers the Eucharist as an act of oblation manifested by Jesus sacramentally at the Last supper and in reality on the cross. The Pope says that the Eucharist draws us to Jesus' act of self-oblation, self-gift, so that we are able to offer ourselves to others in love. Communion draws us to Jesus, and Jesus draws us to him in order to unite all into one family. He puts well the mystery of love in the Eucharist as a sacrament "of being loved and to love others." This Encyclical letter has two broad chapters: The Unity of Love in Creation and in Salvation History and The Practice of Love by the Church as a Community of Love

b) *Sacramentum Caritatis* - Sacrament of Charity

This is the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI given on February 22, 2007 in 97 numbers having three parts with an introduction and conclusion. Pope John Paul II had announced 2004-5 as the year of the Eucharist and the synod of the Bishops was held in 2005 on the theme "The Eucharist: in the life and mission of the church." Though Pope John Paul II did not live to see this Synod, it was held by his successor Pope Benedict XVI. In the Apostolic Exhortation Benedict XVI wishes to call the Eucharist, a sacrament of charity basing on the ideas and theological thinking of St Thomas Aquinas, to the Church. The title appears to have a link to his earlier Encyclical, *Deus caritas est*. since both these works, speak at several places, of God's love in the Eucharist.

In the first part the Pope deals with the Eucharist as a mystery to be believed since it comes from the Trinity as a new and eternal covenant. He gives an important place for the Holy Spirit, the power behind presenting Jesus in the Eucharist, and considers the Eucharist the principle behind the ecclesial communion. Exploring the relation of the Eucharist to other sacraments, he speaks about priesthood and their shortage

and appeals to vocation to priesthood. He also refers to eschatology with a reference to Mary, the communion of saints and the eternal banquet.

In the Second part, the Pope presents the Eucharist as a mystery to be celebrated in a proper way. He appeals to bishops and priests to respect the liturgical books, liturgical signs and hymns, to pay attention to the liturgy of the word (preaching), promote active participation having a consideration for the telecast of the Eucharist for the sick, prisoners, migrants and public celebration. He also has a special place for Latin language and inculturation. The Pope also promotes Eucharistic devotions like adoration and processions.

In the Third part, the Pope wishes that the mystery is lived in daily life keeping the sacredness of Sunday with rest and work. He speaks of a spirituality of the Eucharist and Eucharistic culture leading to moral transformation and evangelization by witness, having social implications in the area of peace, justice and protection of creation.

Pope Francis and the Eucharist

We get ideas of Pope Francis through his:

- a) Homilies for Corpus Christi (2019)
- b) Homilies on Maundy Thursday
- c) Catechesis on the Mass from November 2017 to April 2018
- d) Messages for Eucharistic Congress

- “The Eucharist is such a great gift. That’s why going to Mass is so important. Going to Mass not just to pray, but to receive Communion, the Bread and Body of Christ.”

- “The Church of the perfect and pure is a room where there isn’t a place for anyone; the church with open doors that celebrates around Christ is, on the other hand, a large hall where everyone - the righteous and sinners - can enter.... The Eucharist is meant to nourish those who are tired and hungry along the journey, let’s not forget this!... The Eucharist shows the strength to love those who make mistakes; because Jesus gave the world the bread of life on the night he was

betrayed... Eucharist is not the reward of saints, but the bread of sinners" (June 06, 2021, Solemnity of Corpus Christi).

- "Jesus does not distribute an abundance of bread to feed the crowds, but he breaks himself at the Passover supper with the disciples and He shows us that the aim of life lies in self-giving... In the Eucharist, fragility is strength" (Angelus, June 06, 2021)

- "To enter into communion with God, before observing the laws or satisfying religious precepts, it is necessary to live out a real and concrete relationship with Him" (August 22, 2021).

- "In the Eucharist, we are guaranteed the possibility of encountering the Lord Jesus and of having the power of his Paschal Mystery reach us... But this is done not as individuals but as a community: The liturgy does not say 'I' but 'we.'" (July 06, 2022).

- "Let us return to the taste of bread because while we are hungry for love and hope, or we are broken by the travails and sufferings of life, Jesus becomes food that feeds us and heals us... It saves us, forgives us and it makes us one with the Father. How beautiful!" (at Sunday Mass in Matera, September 2022).

- Apostolic Letter – *Desiderio Desideravi* – On the Liturgical Formation of the People of God (June 29, 2022 – Solemnity of Apostles Peter and Paul). In this Apostolic Letter Pope Francis discusses themes like:

- The Liturgy – Place of Encounter with Christ
- The Church – Sacrament of the Body of Christ
- The Theological Sense of the Liturgy
- Rediscovering daily the beauty of the truth of the Christian celebration
- Amazement before the Paschal Mystery: Essential part of the liturgical act
- The Need of serious and vital Liturgical Formation

-- Rev. (Dr) Rathan Almeida OCD
Dhyanavana, International Institute of Spirituality,
email: meetrathan22@gmail.com

CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S LOVE: THE SPIRIT OF SAINT THERESE

*"It is confidence and nothing but confidence
that must lead us to Love"*

Saint Therese is one of the best known and most beloved saints in our world. She is loved by non-Christians and nonbelievers as well. In addition, she has been recognized by UNESCO as one of the most significant figures for contemporary humanity. We would do well to delve more deeply into her message as we commemorate the centenary of the canonisation of this wonderful Carmelite saint. She was canonised on May 17, 1925, and Pope Pius X called her the saint of modern times.

St. Therese of Lisieux is also known as the Little Flower of Jesus. This "Little Flower" of Jesus was born at Alençon, France, on January 02, 1873 to devout parents Louis and Zélie Martin, and a very religious family. She died at Lisieux (France) on September 30, 1897 as a Carmelite Nun. She was born Marie Françoise-Thérèse Martin but took the religious name of Sister Therese of the Child Jesus. She is popularly known as the Little Flower.

The Church quickly recognised her great significance and the distinctiveness of her evangelical spirituality. Therese met Pope Leo XIII during a pilgrimage to Rome in 1887 and asked his permission to enter the Carmel at the age of fifteen. Not long after her death, Saint Pius X, sensing her spiritual grandeur, stated that she would become the greatest saint of modern times. Therese was declared Venerable in 1921 by Pope Benedict XV, who, in praising her virtues, saw them embodied in her "little way" of spiritual childhood. In 1927, Pope Pius X, declared her the Patroness of the Missions. On June 02, 1980, during his first Apostolic Journey to France, Saint John Paul II visited the Basilica dedicated to her, and in 1997 declared her a Doctor of the Church. He also referred to Therese as "an expert in the *scientia amoris*" ("science of love").

The earthly life of Saint Therese was brief, a mere twenty-four years, and completely ordinary, first in her family and then in the Carmel of Lisieux. The extraordinary burst of light and love that she radiated came to be known soon after her death, with the publication of her writings and thanks to the countless graces bestowed on the faithful who invoked her intercession. *The Story of a Soul* is her autobiography which conveys her "Little Way" of spiritual childhood.

In *The Story of a Soul*, Therese tells how she discovered the little way: "I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness. It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with myself such as I am, with all my imperfections. But I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new". To describe that way, she uses the image of an elevator: "the elevator which must raise me to heaven is your arms, O Jesus! And for this, I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain little and become this more and more". Little, incapable of being confident in herself, and yet firmly secure in the loving power of the Lord's arms. This is the "sweet way of love" that Jesus sets before the little and the poor, before everyone. It is the way of true happiness.

Therese always stresses the primacy of God's work, his gift of grace. As a result, she could say: "I always feel, however, the same bold confidence of becoming a great saint, because I don't count on my merits, since I have none, but I trust in him who is Virtue and Holiness. God alone, content with my weak efforts, will raise me to himself and make me a saint, clothing me in his infinite merits".

The Story of a Soul is a testimonial to love, in which Therese offers us a commentary on Jesus' new commandment: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). Jesus thirsts for this response to his love. Indeed, he "did not fear to beg for a little water from the Samaritan woman. He was thirsty. But when he said 'Give me to drink', it was the love of his poor creature that the Creator of the universe was seeking. He was

thirsty for love". Therese wished to respond to the love of Jesus, to offer him love in return for love.

Therese possessed complete certainty that Jesus loved her and knew her personally at the time of his Passion: "He loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). As she contemplated Jesus in his agony, she told him: "You saw me". In the same way, she said to the Child Jesus in the arms of his Mother: "With your little hand that caressed Mary, you upheld the world and gave it life, and you thought of me". So too, at the beginning of the Story of a Soul, she contemplated the love of Jesus for all humanity and for each individual, as if he or she were the only one in the world.

The act of love – repeating the words, "Jesus, I love you" – which became as natural to Therese as breathing, is the key to her understanding of the Gospel. With that love, she immersed herself in all the mysteries of the life of Christ, making herself his contemporary and placing herself within the Gospel together with Mary and Joseph, Mary Magdalene and the apostles. Together with them, she penetrated to the depths of the love of the Heart of Jesus. Let us take one example: "When I see Magdalene walking up before the many guests, washing with her tears the feet of her adored Master, whom she is touching for the first time, I feel that her heart has understood the abysses of love and mercy of the Heart of Jesus, and, sinner though she is, this Heart of love was not only disposed to pardon her, but to lavish on her the blessings of divine intimacy, to lift her to the highest summits of contemplation".

Therese practised love in littleness, in the simplest things of daily life, and she did so in the company of the Virgin Mary, from whom she learned that "to love is to give everything. It's to give oneself". Therese showed, starting with the Gospel, that Mary is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven because she is the least (cf. Mt 18:4), the one closest to Jesus in his abasement. Jesus himself wanted Mary to be the example of a soul that seeks him with a simple faith. Mary was the first to experience the "little way" in pure faith and humility.

From heaven to earth, the timely witness of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face endures in all the grandeur of her little way.

- In an age that urges us to focus on ourselves and our own interests, Therese shows us the beauty of making our lives a gift.
- At a time when the most superficial needs and desires are glorified, she testifies to the radicalism of the Gospel.
- In an age of individualism, she makes us discover the value of a love that becomes intercession for others.
- At a time when human beings are obsessed with grandeur and new forms of power, she points out to us the little way.
- In an age that casts aside so many of our brothers and sisters, she teaches us the beauty of concern and responsibility for one another.
- At a time of great complexity, she can help us rediscover the importance of simplicity, the absolute primacy of love, trust and abandonment, and thus move beyond a legalistic or moralistic mindset that would fill the Christian life with rules and regulations, and cause the joy of the Gospel to grow cold.
- In an age of indifference and self-absorption, Therese inspires us to be missionary disciples, captivated by the attractiveness of Jesus and the Gospel.

Dear Saint Therese, the Church needs to radiate the brightness, the fragrance and the joy of the Gospel. Send us your roses! Help us to be, like yourself, ever confident in God's immense love for us, so that we may imitate each day your "little way" of holiness. Amen.

(Article is a blend of an article by Jubilee Cardozo, and Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *C'est La Confiance*)

GOD'S INFLUENCER CARLO ACUTIS

On September 07, 2025, Carlo Acutis made history as the Church's first millennial saint. He lies in a tomb wearing a sweatshirt, jeans and sneakers, a contrast to the clothing of the saints that preceded him. The fifteen-year-old Carlo Acutis member of the Millennial generation who died on October 12, 2006 from M3 fulminant leukemia, is considered a "computer geek" on account of his passion and skill with computers and the internet. Acutis applied himself to creating a website dedicated to cataloguing each reported Eucharistic miracle in the world.

Carlo's mother, Antonia Salzano Acutis, revealed ahead of the ceremony that her son comes from a line of saints, after two nuns in the family were canonized back in the 19th and 20th century. Pope Leo said at the canonization ceremony, "By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ ... and our own, after matured liberation and with divine assistance frequently implored, and with the council of many of our Brothers, we declare and define blessed Pierre Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis to be Saints... And we enroll them in the catalogue of the Saints, decreeing that they are to be venerated with pious devotion in the whole church." His feast day is 12 October.

Below are 9 facts about the saint:

1. Carlo Acutis was an Italian born in England

Although we all know Carlo Acutis as an Italian saint, he was actually born in London, England, on May 3, 1991, to Italian parents Andrea Acutis and Antonia Salzano Acutis. Because of this, he could speak English, although he did not do so often. Interestingly, he also has English in his heritage because one of his grandmothers was half English. Carlo was baptized on May 18 in the Church of Our Lady of Dolours in London and given the full name Carlo Maria Antonio.

2. He cared for the vulnerable

At school, Carlo was known for standing up for school children who were being bullied. Carlo strived to help refugees and

elderly and disabled persons in his community and put his money toward those in need. He once purchased a sleeping bag for a homeless man he met while traveling to Mass. His family was well-off, but anything he received, he sought to pass on to the homeless in Milan. In an Angelus address in October 2020, Pope Francis spoke of Carlo's heart for others. "He did not ease into comfortable immobilism, but understood the needs of his time, because he saw the face of Christ in the weakest," Pope Francis said. "His witness indicates to today's young people that true happiness is found by putting God in first place and serving Him in our brothers and sisters, especially the least."

3. He evangelized to his parents

Though they were Catholic, Carlo's parents did not regularly go to Mass. But Carlo, as a young boy, grew in devotion to the Eucharist and wanted to go to daily Mass, bringing his parents along. Now, his mother often speaks about how her son brought her back to the faith. "Through Carlo, I too was converted." Antonia told, "His example drew me to live the faith seriously. I am not a saint, but I try to follow the path he showed me. Through his witness, many have returned to faith, and miracles continue to be reported in his name. My mission now is to keep his memory alive as he truly was, without distortion, and to help others meet Jesus through his example."

4. He asked to receive his First Communion at an early age

Carlo received his First Holy Communion in June 1998, when he was 7 years old. However, he first requested to receive the Eucharist at age 6.

5. He taught himself how to code and designed a website dedicated to the Eucharist

Carlo was technologically talented as well, reportedly teaching himself how to code. He sought to use technology for evangelization, so when he was 11 years old, he used his skills to build a website showcasing Eucharistic miracles around the world. Though the website is no longer live and accessible, his efforts offer a witness to virtuous use of technology.

6. He enjoyed playing video games, but put a weekly time limit on himself

Carlo's mother said that Carlo bought a PlayStation when he was 8 years old but he had concerns about video games' addictive properties. He therefore limited himself to playing one hour per week. Acutis is "the first ever saint, that we know of, to have played video games."

7. His Confirmation saint is Saint Francis of Assisi

Carlo received the sacrament of Confirmation in May 2003. He chose Saint Francis of Assisi as his Confirmation saint, and was later buried in the same Italian town as his patron. Saint Francis' love of Jesus in the Eucharist inspired Carlo, and both saints had a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Carlo described the Rosary as "the shortest ladder to Heaven" and said that he never misses the opportunity to pray it, in what he called "the most gracious appointment of the day."

8. He offered his sufferings from leukemia up for several special intentions

In October 2006, when he was 15, Carlo suddenly fell ill. He was diagnosed with fulminant leukemia; Carlo faced the suffering with a spiritual focus, saying: "I offer all the suffering I will have to suffer for the Lord, for the Pope, and the Church." He died Oct. 12, 2006. His funeral was held two days later. The cause for his canonization opened in 2012.

9. He converted the family caretaker

Rajesh Mohur was a young man who worked for the Acutis family as Carlo's caretaker, and he became fast friends with the boy. Rajesh was Hindu, and his father was a Brahman priest. Yet Carlo's deep Catholic Faith made an impact on Rajesh: Carlo taught him to pray the Rosary, and they would watch cartoon Bible and saint shows together. Carlo would ask Rajesh to bring him to Church for Mass and prayers on his way to and from school, and Rajesh graciously did. In 1999, when Carlo was eight, Rajesh was baptized.

LITTLE THERESE

*Teach us your way Saint Therese
The way of little things
How much we dream of greatness
Of being queens and kings.*

*God's Spirit taught you early
To know yourself so well;
You knew in-born ambitions
Would lead us all to hell.*

*Even to mystic secrets
You would not aspire
To be lost in your Lover,
Was your heart's one desire.*

*Hidden was your holocaust
Screened off from earthly eyes
But at harvesting season
Your glory stormed the skies.*

*All life is made of small things
It's love that makes them great.
Charging them with energy
To nuclear power innate.*



- Rev. Fr Paul D'Souza, OCD
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