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BREAD FOR EVERY TABLE



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Daily Spiritual Reflections

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MAY 2026

PRAYER INTENTION

THAT EVERYONE MIGHT HAVE FOOD

Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.

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Bread for Every Table

In wedding halls, perfectly wrapped meals return untouched, destined for waste-bins. In city-store refrigerators, and store rooms, edibles quietly rot because there is too much for those who visit, to choose from. Meanwhile, on the other side of the city, in urban slums and rural villages, children measure time by their last full stomach, their eyes hollow with a hunger that desires more than food. Across the globe, one third of all food produced, which is enough to feed billions, goes wasted while roughly 800 million souls go chronically hungry. This is the paradox of waste and want, and in May, the Holy Father asks us to pray in this Marian month, that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, commit to ending food waste and ensuring all have access to quality food.

At the heart of this intention lies Eucharistic theology, binding altar and empty plate. Jesus declares, “I am the living bread come down from heaven... whoever eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:51). The multiplication miracles reveal His method: Christ does not conjure food *ex nihilo* but blesses, breaks, and shares what fishermen and boys already offer. When we pray “Give us this day our daily bread,” we invoke not only manna from heaven but mutual responsibility: earthly loaves for earthly mouths before sacramental Bread for souls. As One Bread makes us One Body, hunger anywhere wounds Christ’s very flesh, the Church! Waste anywhere profanes the sacrament we receive. You cannot worthily approach Communion while your brother/sister begs crumbs unworthily.

Food is covenant gift, not commodity. From Eden’s garden to the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey, Scripture portrays creation’s abundance as divine generosity. This generosity demands stewardship. “The earth has yielded its fruit,” the psalmist sings (Ps 67:7), echoing Adam’s task to till and keep the garden that prefigures today’s farms, fisheries, and forests. *Laudato Si* warns us that we have forgotten our grandmother’s wisdom: nothing edible is ever truly waste. In a world of plastic seas and poisoned soils, ending food waste participates in salvation history, mending creation’s wounds through human repentance.

This intention is not intended to one singular dimension of the food-supply link, but the entire chain! Large producers must plan harvests wisely, donate surpluses, and adopt sustainable methods that honour soil and seasons. Distributors and retailers should sell items at fair prices, and redesign wasteful packing. Households are called to begin with meal planning, to seek creative use of leftovers, and composting organics. Cultural feasts should shift from gluttonous excess to grateful abundance. Ruth gleaned Boaz's fields models exactly this, when hospitality to the poor is woven into every harvest, every heart.

May, Mary's month, offers perfect spiritual accompaniment to this thought. At Cana, the Mother of God noticed before words were spoken: "They have no wine." She notices empty plates today. In the Visitation, Mary hastened to serve the hungry Elizabeth. Marian shrines like Lourdes and Fatima witness simple pilgrims sharing bread in Gospel simplicity. Contemplate the Fifth Joyful Mystery, as seeking the lost includes seeking the hungry lost in our midst. In May let us learn to crown Our Lady with loaves of bread, by offering a meal to the needy, symbolizing her care for all who hunger.

This intention which the Pope gives us in May, unveils the Kingdom's banquet, where God "will wipe every tear" and hunger ends forever (Rev 21:4). The marriage feast of the Lamb awaits, but its foretaste begins now, at our tables, in our waste bins, through our choices. The Eucharist we receive compels us outward: no Christian stomach full while a child's is empty. Mary, who pondered God's works in silence, now contemplates the abundance and lack in our plates. She who magnified the Lord who "fills the hungry with good things" urges: waste less, share more, love without measure.

This May, make one concrete change: rescue one imperfect tomato from the trash, share one meal with someone who really needs it, pray one Hail Mary for the hungry before eating. Let parishes host "Zero Waste Sundays" with moderate meals after Mass, especially for the needy in the region. Producers to consumers, all of us form one chain linking earth's bounty to human dignity. From field to faithful hands, may God's original generosity find human hearts ready to complete the miracle: bread multiplied, hunger banished, all fed at the table of divine mercy.

- Jesvin Tom Benoy, OCD



The Dignity of Daily Faithfulness

Easter Weekday/ Joseph the Worker

Acts 13: 26-33/ Ps 2: 6-7, 8-9, 10-11ab/ Jn 14: 1-6 (Mt 13: 54-58)

Today the Church honours Saint Joseph the Worker. He was the silent craftsman of Nazareth, the humble provider chosen by God to care for Jesus and Mary. Pope Pius XII instituted this feast in 1955 to sanctify human labour and to remind us that work, when done with love and faith, becomes the best possible participation in God's own creative plan for humanity and its future! In the day's first reading from Acts, Saint Paul proclaims, "what God promised to our ancestors, He has brought to fulfilment by raising Jesus from the dead." The Resurrection of the Lord completes the work of salvation that begun through Christ's obedience. Joseph's quiet labour prefigures this divine pattern: through his daily work, he helped prepare the human life-scenario in which the Holy Redeemer grew. His workshop in Nazareth became a place of grace: a silent witness, that God's promises often unfold in hidden, ordinary ways.

The Gospel account today portrays Jesus returning to His hometown, where people ask in disbelief: "Is He not the carpenter's son?" For them, he a mere carpenter, following the trade his father practised. They are unable see beyond His humble origins. Yet in that very humility lies the mystery of God's wisdom. Jesus' hidden years under Joseph's guidance were not wasted time; they were years of formation. In those silent years, he learnt the rhythms of work, patience, and fidelity. The hands that would later heal the sick once shaped wood under Joseph's care. The carpenter's bench became the first altar of silent offering.

Saint Joseph teaches us that holiness is not confined to extraordinary deeds but is found in the sanctification of ordinary life. Every honest task whether in the home, the field, the office, or the workshop, can actually become a prayer when done with faith and integrity. Work, united with love, becomes service to God and neighbour. As we commemorate Joseph the Worker, let us ask for his intercession that we may imitate his humility, diligence, and silent trust. May our labour, like his, build God's kingdom and reflect the dignity of those created in His image.

Response: You are my son. It is I who have begotten you this day.

2
SAT
Revelation That Moves Us to Mission
Bishop Athanasius

Acts 13: 44-52/ Ps 98: 1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4/ Jn 14: 7-14

When we truly meet Christ, our lives cannot remain the same. Faith is not something we store safely within ourselves; it is a fire meant to be shared. The liturgy reminds us that encountering Jesus always sends us to speak, to witness, and sometimes even to suffer for the sake of love. In the Gospel, Philip makes a very human request to see the Father. How often we echo that same desire; to see God clearly, to be reassured, to feel secure. Jesus' response is gentle yet profound: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." He says: God is not far away. He is not hidden behind clouds or locked in mystery. God has a face, a voice, a heart and that face is Jesus. This is the heart of Christian faith. God does not reveal Himself as an idea but as a relationship. In Jesus' compassion, forgiveness, obedience, and love, we come to know what the Father is like. But a personal encounter with the Lord does not end in comfort. In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas boldly proclaim Christ, and the result is mixed. Some listen with joy; others respond with jealousy and hostility. This scene feels very real. Even today, the Gospel can inspire or disturb, heal or challenge. When truth is spoken, not everyone welcomes it. The apostles, however are not discouraged, they do not retreat. They recognise that this struggle is part of God's larger plan. Turning to the Gentiles is not a defeat but a new opening of grace. Their courage and inner freedom show that they trust God more than human approval. Their joy, even in suffering, reveals the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Church, in *Ad Gentes* reminds us, "the Church is missionary by her very nature, born from the mission of the Son and the Spirit." Mission is not a task for a few; it is the vocation of every faithful who has encountered Christ. The Lord today asks us, 'Have I truly encountered Christ?' And if I have, 'where is He sending me?', to my family, my workplace, my parish, my wounded neighbours?

Response: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

**3
SUN****Do not Let Your Hearts be Troubled****FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Acts 6: 1-7/ Ps 33: 1-2, 4-5, 18-19 (22)/ 1 Pt 2: 4-9/ Jn 14: 1-12

The Word of God today draws us into a profound mystery: in the midst of confusion, growth, and even crisis, God is building something eternal. The readings from Acts, 1 Peter, and John reveal a single, powerful truth: Christ is the cornerstone, and we are being built into Him.

Acts presents the early Church growing rapidly. Yet growth brings tension. Greek-speaking widows are being overlooked in the daily distribution. There is murmuring. Division threatens communion. The apostles respond not with denial, nor with control, but with discernment. They gather the community and appoint seven men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, to oversee this ministry so that no one is neglected at table! This is not a dismissal of service. It is a deep affirmation of vocation. The Church is one body with many charisms. The ministry of the Word and the ministry of charity are not rivals; they are inseparable dimensions of Christ's mission. The result is that the word of God continued to spread.

Peter, in his letter, offers the deeper theology behind this structure. He speaks of Christ as the cornerstone; rejected, crucified, yet glorified, and adds the exhortation: "Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house." The Church is not primarily an institution. It is a temple made of people. Each of us, joined to Christ, becomes part of God's dwelling. Notice the paradox: stones are normally cold and lifeless. But in Christ, we are "living stones." Baptism has given us divine life. Peter goes further: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." These titles once belonged to Israel alone. Now, in Christ, they belong to the Church. This is our baptismal dignity. We are priests; not in the ministerial sense of the apostles, but in the sense that our lives are meant to be offered. Every act of love, every suffering united to Christ, every hidden sacrifice becomes spiritual worship.

The tender words of Jesus in the Gospel of John reveals a context that is intimate and heavy. It is the Last Supper. The shadow of

the cross looms. He says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." This is not sentimental reassurance. It is a command grounded in revelation. Jesus speaks of heaven as home. Salvation is not merely rescuing from sin; it is communion with the Father. Thomas speaks for all of us: "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" And Jesus responds with one of the most profound declarations in Scripture: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." He does not say He shows the way, but that He is the way. To follow Christ is to walk in Him. To know truth is to know Him. To have life is to share in His own divine life. Philip then asks, "Show us the Father;" Jesus answers, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Here is the heart of Christian theology: Jesus is the perfect revelation of God. The invisible becomes visible. The transcendent becomes tangible. The Father's face shines in the Son.

Practically, this transforms everything. If we want to know what God is like, we look at Jesus forgiving sinners, touching lepers, washing feet, and stretching out His arms on the cross. God is not distant. God is self-giving love. Jesus' promise, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and greater ones than these," is not exaggeration. Through the Holy Spirit, the mission of Christ expands through the Church. In Acts, we see this fulfilled. The Word spreads. The number of disciples increases. Even priests become obedient to the faith.

Beloved, these readings converge into a single invitation: Build your life on Christ the cornerstone. Abide in Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Offer yourself as a living stone in God's spiritual house. When the Church organizes wisely, when believers embrace their baptismal priesthood, when hearts trust in Christ's promise, then fear gives way to mission. Our world today is not unlike the early Church; marked by tension, growth, confusion, longing. The answer is not retreat or despair. It is deeper communion. Prayer before action. Identity before activity. Christ before everything. Let us come to Him, living stones, to be built into His dwelling, until the day we enter fully into the Father's house!

Response: May your merciful love be upon us, as we hope in you, O Lord.



Love Goes Beyond

Easter Weekday

Acts 14: 5-18/ Ps 115: 1-2, 3-4, 15-16/ Jn 14: 21-26

Love always presupposes pleasing the one who is loved. If one is not able to please someone, he will not be able to prove that he is loved. And there are many external signs to express love or to make the other person understand one's love. For example, husband giving a kiss to his wife, a wife gives a cup of coffee to her husband who returns from the job, a boyfriend giving a gift to his girlfriend. That is what we see around us in our ordinary lives. The Season of Easter is to experience the love of God our Father towards each one of us through His beloved Son who died and rose for our sake. By sending His beloved Son God expressed His love towards us and His, Son by His death on the cross proves His love for us. Today Jesus tells us in the Gospel, "Those who keep my commandments are the ones who love me". This means that by obeying the commandments of Jesus, we testify to loving Jesus. His commandment is to love God and our neighbours. We cannot love God unless we love our neighbours. My neighbour is not the one immediately next to me, but the one who is in need of my help. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we clearly understand this reality. Am I able to be a Good Samaritan always so that I can prove my love for Jesus?

There is another aspect that needs reflection, that is the outcome of this love. Jesus further clearly tells us that such a person will be loved by His Father. Which means keeping the commandments as a result of loving Jesus will be so much pleasing to God that He in return begins to love us. So keeping the commandments is very important. In the first reading we hear how Paul and Barnabas try to convince people, who the real God of heaven and earth is! Let us go beyond everything that is this-worldly and begin to keep the commandments to prove our love and commitment to Him, that we may reign with Him in the world-to-come.

Response: Not to us, O Lord, but to your name give the glory.

5
TUE

The Peace of Christ

Easter Weekday

Acts 14: 19-28/ Ps 145: 10-11, 12-13ab, 21/ Jn 14: 27-31a

“Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” What does this peace look like? Have a glance at Paul. Here is a man who was stoned to the point of death, and dragged out of the city to be left with the dead. What an unimaginably traumatic experience! Miraculously, he survives. It would have been perfectly understandable if he fled the place and went into hiding, taking time out to recover, not just physically but mentally and emotionally as well. But Paul was no ordinary man; or, to put it more suitably, he was made extraordinary by Christ, Who had filled him with His peace. Just as he let no trouble deter him in the preaching of the Gospel before this incident, so did he refuse to let fear deter him now. He not only returns to the same city that ‘killed’ him, but continues with his mission, preaching zealously in the cities where he knew persecution awaited him, and even justifies his traumatic experience as necessary.

From where do trouble and fear arise? From every attachment that is not eternal – status, financial security, reputation, etc. Even life itself. The peace that Christ offers increases in our hearts as we gradually let go of these attachments one by one, and strive for the one attachment alone – our love for Him. This journey of letting go, of detachment, of self-denial, is a cross in itself. But is not that what Paul means when he says, “It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”? In fact, the Lord Himself declares it: “If you wish to be my disciple, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.” For, “what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” Choose therefore, this way of detachment, this path to peace, and ‘nothing will disturb you, nothing will frighten you. All things are passing; God alone suffices.’

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

**Cling to God in love***Easter Weekday*

Acts 15: 7-21/ Ps 96: 1-2a, 2b-3, 10/ Jn 15: 9-11

The Fifth Week of Easter places before us a striking contrast. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas find themselves debating with those who insist that circumcision is necessary for salvation. The early Church trembles on the edge of division. Is faith in Christ enough, or must external observances seal the covenant? Into this tension, the Gospel resounds with serene clarity: “I am the true vine, and you are the branches.” Jesus redirects our gaze towards the inner essence of faith. The life of the branch does not depend on what is cut into it, but on whether it remains attached to the vine. Severed, it withers. United, it bears fruit. For Carmelites, this image speaks deeply of contemplative union. The true circumcision is not of the flesh but of the heart. It is an interior pruning where all that is not of God is gently removed. External practices have their place, yet they are lifeless without communion. Paul and Barnabas defend this truth with apostolic courage: salvation flows from grace, from abiding in Christ. The sap that nourishes the branch is invisible, yet utterly real. So too, a hidden life of prayer sustains the soul far more than visible religious marks.

In the spirit of St. John of the Cross, we are reminded that “nothing else matters” but clinging to God in love. For him, the journey to divine union required the stripping away of attachments, even spiritual consolations, so that the soul might rest in God alone. To remain in the Vine is to surrender self-will, pride, and every false security and to allow Christ’s life to pulse through our poverty.

Easter season invites us to examine our own hearts. Do we rely on external identity, traditions, and appearances? Or do we truly abide in Him? The Father prunes every branch that bears fruit so it may bear more. In the end, fruitfulness is simple: remain. Remain in His Word. Remain in His love. Remain in silent prayer. When the heart is anchored in Christ, the soul becomes a living branch, heavy with the quiet fruit of holiness.

Response: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.



Abide in the One within

Easter Weekday

Acts 15: 7-21/ Ps 96: 1-2a, 2b-3, 10/ Jn 15: 9-11

In the first reading in the debate whether observance of the Jewish law is necessary for salvation, each one expresses his opinion very forcefully convinced that his own stand is the right one which will save the Church's future. Peter, whom Jesus Himself appointed as the head of the church puts an end to the debate and takes his stand with Paul and Barnabus: The Church is for all, the door of the church is wide open, even to the gentiles. All are children of God whether they be Jews or Gentiles, God makes no distinction. FAITH and GRACE alone saves.

In the Gospel we see a deep relationship between Jesus and His Father. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love." The love with which Jesus loves us is the very love with which He is loved by the Father. Jesus' mission is to reveal his Father to the world by drawing all people to himself. He tells us that the love which He has for us has its origin in the love which his Father has for him. It is the human expression of the intimate communion which is the very being of God. Jesus invites us to abide in Him, to make it our permanent home. "Just as I have kept my Father's commandment...." Once again Jesus insists on the necessary link between love and obedience which leads to complete overflowing joy in us and experience His fullness. Saint John of the Cross says "Do not go in pursuit of Him outside yourself. You will only become distracted and wearied, and you will not find Him, nor enjoy Him more securely nor sooner, nor more intimately than by seeking Him within you". Jesus said "Abide in ME as I abide in YOU". Let us then desire GOD with all our heart and search for Him with the energy of our entire being and we shall find Him as we make an adventurous journey within. For we cannot find GOD by engaging in a multitude of external activities unless we have first found HIM within ourselves.

Response: Tell among all the peoples the wonders of the Lord.

8
TUE

The Essential in Life

Easter Weekday

Acts 15: 22-31/ Ps 57: 8-9, 10 and 12/ Jn 15: 12-17

Today's readings focus on the essential aspect of life: love. In the first reading love prompts the consent of the whole church not to impose legal burden on the believers of the gentile origin. Three things make the authentic Christian in the theology of St. Paul: the Spirit, freedom and love. The commandment to love is handed down to us by God through the personal gift of His Spirit. It is written in our hearts by the indwelling Spirit. Fraternal life makes Christ present among us in His Mystical Body. All of us are called to love as Christ has loved us. Before giving the new commandment, Jesus had given His disciples a proof of His love in the form of humble service. His love did not stop there, He gave them the gift of Self in the Eucharistic: "Take, eat this is My Body." He also gave them the greatest proof of love by sacrificing His life for them and for all humanity. The disciples learnt that Christian love means humble disinterested service; Christian love is the unreserved gift of oneself to others. One who really walks in love does not require many rules .

There must be among Christians a form of love that is typically Christian: a love that has been fully revealed in the person and the mystery of Christ, a love infused by the Spirit of Christ, a love that truly resembles the love that Christ has for men. Mature Christian love is based on conviction and truth, not on fear or softness of character. It can prevent or correct many abuses; it can also conquer many people for God. The law of charity promulgated by Jesus is universal, it covers every human act, every situation in life, and there is no exception to this law. Not even in the extreme circumstances is one dispensed from it. We can set no limits to the practice of charity, since the actual measure of our charity is the unlimited paradoxical love, which God has for us. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" is the calling we have received!

Response: I will praise you, Lord, among the peoples.



Opposition Inevitable, but Victory is Promised

Easter Weekday

Acts 16: 1-10/ Ps 100: 1b-2, 3, 5/ Jn 15: 18-21

In the gospel passage Jesus reminds the disciples that they will be hated by the world for His name's sake. The word "world" is used in different ways. At times, it means the created world, the earth and everything in it (John 1:10). It also means all people, the human race that God loves (John 3:16). But often it means something else: the system of life that is built without God, shaped by human sin, and often standing against Him. This "world-system" is not a place but a way of living, a set of values and desires that leave God out. Just as we talk about "the world of sports" to describe everything connected to sports, similarly in the gospel Jesus talks about "the world" as everything connected to a life apart from God.

Jesus teaches us that this 'world-system' is dangerous because it looks attractive and even good, but is rooted in human pride and sin. It promotes people's selfish whims instead of God's will. That is why the Bible warns us not to love the world (1 John 2:15-17) or to be shaped by it (Romans 12:1-2). If we give our hearts to the world, we risk losing sight of God's eternal treasures. Jesus was very clear with His disciples: the world would not welcome them. He told them they would face hatred (John 15:18-19), persecution (John 15:20), rejection, and even death (John 16:2). The book of Acts shows this happening step by step as the early church grew. The reason is simple, that Christians are identified with Jesus. If the world hated Him, it will hate those who belong to Him. He is the Master, and we are His servants. If He, in His perfection, suffered rejection, we should not expect to escape it.

We are in the world but not shaped by it. The world resists God's truth, but we are called to stay faithful. Opposition will come, but Christ is with us. He suffered before us, and He walks with us now. To share in His suffering is also to share in His victory.

Response: Cry out with joy to the Lord all the earth.

**10
SUN****Obeying Love, Abiding Spirit, Witnessing Hope****SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17/ Ps 66: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20/ 1 Pt 3: 15-18/ Jn 14: 15-21

The readings of this Sunday gently draw us into the mystery of a faith that is believed, lived, witnessed, and sustained by the quiet yet powerful presence of the Spirit. At its heart lies a simple yet demanding truth: love for Christ is inseparable from fidelity to Him, and such fidelity inevitably becomes a testimony before the world.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks with a tender urgency: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Love, in the Christian sense, is not reduced to sentiment or fleeting devotion; it is expressed in obedience. But this obedience is not burdensome, because it is sustained by Jesus' own promise, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate." Jesus knows the frailty of the human heart. He knows that left to ourselves, our love would falter, our fidelity would weaken. And so, He promises the Spirit, the Advocate, the abiding presence of God within us. This promise reshapes our understanding of discipleship. We are not called to follow Christ by sheer human effort alone. The Christian life is not a heroic self-project; it is a participation in divine life. The Spirit dwells within us, not as a distant force, but as a living presence that teaches, strengthens, and reminds us of all that Christ has spoken. In a world that often feels indifferent or even hostile to faith, this assurance becomes a source of deep consolation: we are never alone in our struggle to live the Gospel.

This interior presence of the Spirit finds a visible expression in the first reading where Philip proclaims Christ in Samaria, a place marked by division and suspicion. What follows is remarkable: the crowds listen, healings take place, and "there was great joy in that city." The Gospel breaks barriers. It enters wounded spaces and brings restoration. Yet the passage also highlights the significant aspect of the coming of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter and John. This moment is not merely historical; it reveals the communal and sacramental nature of the Church. The Spirit is not given in isolation but within the communion of believers. Faith is personal, but never

private. The joy that fills Samaria is not the result of individual enlightenment alone, but of a shared encounter with the living Christ mediated through the Church. It reminds us that our own faith journey is deeply ecclesial: we receive, we are strengthened, and we are sent forth within a community.

The second reading from the letter of St Peter brings a further dimension to this lived faith. “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” Here, faith becomes witness. The believer is not only one who receives the Spirit but also one who bears testimony. In a world where religious conversations can quickly become defensive or confrontational, this counsel is deeply relevant. Christian witness is not about winning arguments; it is about revealing Christ through the integrity of one’s life. The credibility of our words depends on the authenticity of our lives. A gentle, respectful witness often speaks more powerfully than forceful persuasion. It reflects the very character of Christ, who suffered not in retaliation, but in love. Peter grounds this call to witness in the example of Christ Himself: “For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God.” The cross stands at the center of our faith; not merely as an event to be remembered, but as a pattern to be lived. To follow Christ is to embrace a love that is willing to endure misunderstanding, rejection, and even suffering, trusting that God brings life out of death.

When we hold these readings together, a profound harmony emerges. The love of Christ leads to obedience; obedience is sustained by the Spirit; the Spirit forms us into a community of joy and mission; and this mission expresses itself in a gentle yet courageous witness to hope.

The invitation of this Sunday is both simple and profound. It is to remain in Christ through love, to trust in the abiding presence of the Spirit, and to allow our lives to become a quiet yet compelling witness to the hope we carry within us. In doing so, we become, like the early Christians, instruments through which “great joy” can enter the world.

Response: Cry out with joy to God, all the earth.

11
MON
Partners & Partakers
Easter Weekday

Acts 16: 11-15/ Ps 149: 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6a and 9b/ Jn 15: 26 - 16: 4a

The Church places before us today Lydia who teaches us the following lessons.

1. Openness to grace, makes us a channel of grace in return: Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as 'the Spirit of Truth.' St. James in turn describes this truth emphatically in his letter as "the wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17). We see these qualities manifested in the conversion of Lydia. Paul does not use philosophical arguments, but simple words which stir up a hidden longing in Lydia's heart. She is captivated by the truth and accepts Paul's message as the Truth, and in doing so accepts Jesus, whole-heartedly. We know this because this lone woman is now extraordinarily able to transmit the gift of faith to her entire family. We see a fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy of witnessing: Paul bears witness, the Holy Spirit bears witness in convincing Lydia and Lydia in turns becomes a witness to her family. What seemed like a simple conversation has ignited a fire of faith in the hearts of so many.

2. Spiritual friendships foster holiness: Anybody who brings us closer to God is worthy of our love. Therefore, Lydia offers hospitality to Paul and his companions. St. Teresa of Avila teaches that "a good means to loving God is to speak to his friends, for one always gains very much from this." "When virtue is placed before our eyes, the one who desires it grows fond of it and seeks to gain it." This spiritual friendship has its source in a common quest for God as the ultimate goal of our life. Aware that such friendships could greatly profit a person in progressing in the spiritual life, she encouraged even her nuns (who live an enclosed life, separated from the world) to foster such friendships.

May we be granted a continual openness to the Holy Spirit like Lydia and her love for Gods' friends so that in turn we too may become 'partners in the gospel' and 'partakers of grace.' (Phil 1:5,7)

Response: The Lord takes delight in his people.

12
TUE

Jesus Accomplished the Mission

Easter Weekday

Acts 16: 22-34/ Ps 138: 1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8/ Jn 16: 5-11

Jesus' presence in human history was for a specific purpose. It was to reconcile the estranged humanity with God. God spoke to humanity in variety of ways, to bring us to himself!. But his attempts were thwarted by human arrogance who kept on seeking happiness in immediate comforts, pleasures and entertainment. Therefore in the fullness of time God loved us so much that he himself chose to become Man in Jesus. Jesus accomplished his mission becoming like us in everything to show us the true path to happiness here and holiness beyond, and strengthened us in our purpose. The Gospel today speaks of that farewell discourse of Jesus. He declares that he has completed his mission. He also assures the apostles with comfort at the news of his imminent departure. Hence Jesus assured that his Holy spirit will be with them for all times to guide them. He will indict the adamant world of its reticence to acknowledge Jesus. It is active rejection of Jesus as the true presence of God's mercy; it is also rejection of Jesus as the true righteousness evidenced by his victorious return to His father; and of Judgement because Jesus has conquered the world by greater love and inaugurated the defeat the ubiquitous enslaving selfishness.

Church therefore, is the historical extension of Jesus power of healing the world, and naturally undergoes the same fate of Jesus. The nascent church initiated by St Paul and Silas was persecuted and subjected to terrible violence. But like Jesus, they stayed strong; they did not run away. They even prayed in the prison and their prayer shook the walls of the prison and they were even free to escape. However, they as righteous Christians, remained still and witnessed to Jesus' presence in their life. That unique and free behaviour so different from the usual, surprised the jailer and the first small community of believers began among the very people who hated it. Today Christ wins in similar fashion in and through me, when I choose to abide by his commandments, and be another Christ to my brothers and sisters in need!

Response: With your right hand you save me, O Lord.

13
WED

Finding God in the Silence

Easter Weekday/ Our Lady of Fatima

Acts 17: 15, 22 - 18: 1/ Ps 148: 1-2, 11-12, 13, 14/ Jn 16: 12-15

Paul stood in the busy marketplace of Athens and noticed an altar “to the unknown God.” The people were searching, even if they did not know for whom. That small detail feels close to home. Many of us move through crowded days with a quiet altar inside our hearts. We sense that someone is there, but we are not sure how to name Him. Paul began with a positive longing. “In Him we live and move and have our being!” He was not pessimistic or argumentative. God is not far away, hidden in stone temples. He is nearer than our very own breathing. This is where the Carmelite way gently leads us: not outward first, but inward. Like Elijah hearing the tiny whisper on the mountain, we learn that God often speaks softly. We must grow quiet to notice.

Think of Elijah on the mountain, waiting for God. The wind roared, the earth shook, the fire blazed — but the Lord came in the gentle whisper. Our lives are full of noise and shaking. Yet beneath it all, there is a quiet place where the Spirit of truth speaks. Jesus tells us that the Spirit will guide us into all truth, slowly, patiently, as we are able to bear it. The spiritual life is neither rushed, nor forced. It unfolds like dawn, in its own time. **“Mental prayer is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.”** says Teresa of Ávila. Some in Athens mocked Paul when he spoke of resurrection. Others leaned closer and believed. Every day we also choose. Will we dismiss the quiet stirring within, or will we pause and listen?

Seeking Jesus in everyday life is simple, though not always easy. Try and make small spaces of silence. Turn your heart toward Him in the middle of ordinary tasks. Trust that the Spirit is already at work. The unknown God is not unknown anymore. He is near, speaking gently, waiting to be welcomed. **In the words of John of the Cross, “Silence is God’s first language.”**

Response: Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

14
THUR

Empowered by Abundance

Saint Matthias

Acts 1: 15-17, 20-26/ Ps 113: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8/ Jn 15: 9-17

The call that Jesus gives us to be disciples – to follow him, comes with the call to love one another. He says “Love one another as I have loved you”. We follow him in loving like Him, sharing an authentic love as closely as he himself did! We are able to love like Him only if we abide in His love, and keep his commandments. The call is not to generate love within us, but to abide in Christ’s love and to love out of the overflowing love of Christ, that dwells in our life. As much as this is a call to follow Christ, this is a promise of abundance. This abundance is seen in 3 ways: Abundance in relationship with Jesus, abundance of love from him and abundance of fruit that you bear. “No longer do I call your servants ... but I have called you friends” shows Jesus’ promise of abundance in relationship with us. We are his friends. We have a unique access to him and through him to His Father who whom taught us to address as our Father.

Abundance of love is seen in how much Christ loved us. He revealed his love for us in choosing to lay down his life for us, freely and in love, obeying the Fathers’ will. Christ now asks us to abide in Him so that we can receive this abundant love which he desires to pour into our hearts. From our hearts, he expects that it may be transformed into love of neighbor. Jesus also says “I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” He gives us not just an anointing but says that the fruit we bear shall never run out. If we look at ‘abundance’ as the theme of this passage, then this call leads us to walk along an amazing journey with Jesus who give us grace upon grace. Jesus does not just give us the commandment to love one another, but he empowers us with His abundance and makes is partners in sharing His love.

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

15
FRI**Challenges are Opportunities for God's Grace***Easter Weekday/ Isidore the Farmer*

Acts 18: 9-18/ Ps 47: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7/ Jn 16: 20-23

In Acts we see how the risen Lord continues to guide Paul and strengthens him in moments of uncertainty. In Ex 3:12 God assured Moses that he will be with him. In Jos 1:9 God tells Joshua to be “strong and courageous...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Paul too receives the promise of divine presence. These words remind us that God’s servants never walk alone. How many times in the day am I aware of God’s presence with me? Paul’s ministry in Corinth bore much fruit. During his stay at Corinth, he wrote letters to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and nurtured these young churches with encouragement and guidance. Opposition and unpleasant circumstances are never absent in a Christian’s life. How do we respond to God in the diverse situations of our life: Are we happy, able to praise and thank God? Paul teaches us that we must place our efforts in the working of the Holy Spirit. Like Paul, we are invited to trust God’s grace that sustains and guides us, and also our trials into testimonies of faith.

Psalm 47 invites us to lift our hearts in praise. The psalm reminds us that God reigns. Even when Paul stood before those who opposed him, it was God’s sovereignty that protected the mission. The psalm invites us to rejoice, sing praises to God who is faithful and victorious.

In the Gospel, Jesus prepares His disciples for sorrow that will turn into joy. In the present situation, it may appear that Jesus refers to the faith-experience of communion with him which they will have in the Spirit. We see how this promise sustains Paul, the early Church, and us today, when we place our trust in Jesus and rely on the Holy Spirit. The risen Lord transforms suffering into witness, and sorrow into lasting joy. We are invited to trust, speak boldly, and to live with confidence that Christ is with us. Our mission may face resistance, but the Spirit turns every challenge into an opportunity for grace. Which areas in my life do I need to ask for God’s grace?

Response: God is king of all the earth.

16
SAT
Docility in Faith
Easter Weekday

Acts 18: 23-28/ Ps 47: 2-3, 8-9, 10/ Jn 16: 23b-28

We live in an age of instant answers. With a few clicks, we believe we can know almost everything. Yet when it comes to faith, our knowledge is never complete, and certainty that is presumed, easily turns into subtle pride, ruining any growth an individual might have made. In today's first reading, we encounter Apollos, a Jew, a learned and eloquent preacher, well-versed in the Scriptures. He was fervent and sincere, already proclaiming Jesus. Yet his understanding was incomplete. When Priscilla and Aquila gently explained the Way of God more fully to him, he did not react defensively. He did not say, "Who are you to teach me?" Instead, he listened. He embraced docility. He allowed himself to grow. Apollos teaches us that spiritual maturity begins with humility. In a world where everyone holds on to their own opinions and debates quickly become battles, submission is rare. Yet faith is not a trophy we possess; it is a relationship we continually deepen and nourish. Even the greatest saints spent their lives exploring the inexhaustible mystery of God.

The Gospel brings this reflection further. Jesus promises that whatever we ask the Father in His name will be given to us. Often, our prayers revolve around health, success, or security. But do we ask for deeper faith? Do we pray for clearer understanding, for a heart more open to truth? Growth in faith does not happen in isolation. It unfolds through prayer, study, and sincere conversation. Many Catholics hesitate to speak about their faith, fearing they may appear overly religious. Yet when we dare to share what Christ means to us, we grow, and nourish others as well! Dialogue refines understanding. Prayer enlightens the mind. Community strengthens conviction.

We will never fully comprehend the mysteries of God in this life. But like Apollos, we are invited to remain teachable. In an age of information, may we seek transformation. In a culture of noise, may we listen. And in every prayer, may we ask not only for blessings, but for a deeper love of the One who is the source of all truth.

Response: God is king of all the earth.

17
SUN**Ascending with the Lord****ASCENSION OF THE LORD**

Acts 1: 1-11/ Ps 47: 2-3, 6-7, 8-9 (6)/ Eph 1: 17-23/ Mt 28: 16-20

We celebrate today the ascension of the Lord. The long spiritual journey of forty days with the Risen Lord has brought us to this great and final event where Christ ascends to heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father. The presence and the appearance of the Risen Lord have helped us to believe in His Resurrection and our own participation in the resurrection of the Lord. The ascension marks the importance to the Church to prepare herself to receive the Holy Spirit and allow herself to be led by His sanctifying mission. The feast we celebrate today invites us to look up to the heavens where the Lord has ascended and to ascend with Him in faith.

Taken up into Heaven: Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles that the 'Lord was taken up'. Jesus after the death on the Cross was raised to life on the third day. After the resurrection, He appeared to many people; He taught them many things about the Kingdom of heaven; He proved Himself in many ways for forty days. Death of Jesus was certain for He was crucified. Similarly, His resurrection was certain for He appeared to many people. He commanded His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come upon them. All His promises came true as He had promised. The disciples were still not convinced of many things. They asked about the restoration of the Kingdom. Jesus answered that it belongs to the Father to decide about restoration. Then He promised them the Holy Spirit and that they would become His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. It was then the Lord was taken up to the heavens as the disciples looked on. He was lifted up; a cloud took Him out of their sight. Then, two angels appeared and confirmed that the Lord was taken up into heaven and that He will come again in glory.

Look to Him: St Paul writing to the Ephesians confirms the ascension of the Lord and tells us that God the Father gives

His wisdom and reveals Himself to His children. The eyes of our hearts are to be enlightened by Him so that we may realize the hope to which we are called by Him. He will also help us understand the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints. He will give the knowledge of the immeasurable greatness of God's power in those who believe in Him. He has worked His mighty deeds through Christ by raising Him from the dead. He has made Him to sit at His right hand in heaven. The Lord who is seated at His right hand has received all authority above every other rule, power and authority. His name is above every other name for all eternity. All things are put under His feet; He is the head of all things. He is the head of the Church which is His body. The ascension of the Lord invites us to look to Him so that we are filled with divine wisdom.

Go and Baptize: At the end of Mathew's Gospel from which we have read today, is an account of the Lord commissioning his disciples for a new mission. The disciples were told by the Lord after His resurrection to go to a mountain at Galilee. When the disciples were there, the Lord appeared to them and they started to worship Him. Some of the disciples doubted. Then the Lord came to them and revealed how all authority is given to Him on earth and in heaven. He commanded them to go to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He commanded them to teach people what He had taught them. He promised His presence with them all the time, to the close of the age.

The ascension of the Lord invites us to look up to the one who was taken up into heaven. When we are down with something, when we go through tough times of suffering, humiliation and pain, the ascended Lord invites us to look up to Him and ascend with Him. Thus, the ascended Lord inspires us to experience the power of the Good News which will help us to proclaim Him.

Response: God goes up with shouts of joy. The Lord goes up with trumpet blast.

18
MON**Living in the Strength of the Spirit***Easter Weekday/ John I*

Acts 19: 1-8/ Ps 68: 2-3ab, 4-5acd, 6-7ab/ Jn 16: 29-33

Many people believe in God yet live without inner strength or peace. Today's Word reminds us that faith becomes complete when we open our hearts to the Spirit and place our trust fully in Christ, especially when life is difficult. A heart that trusts and surrenders is more appealing to God. God desires more than partial belief; He invites us into a living relationship that renews and empowers us, and nourishes our Christian living. When hearts are opened to the Spirit, fear slowly gives way to courage, and uncertainty turns into conviction. This inner transformation gives believers the freedom to speak with confidence and live with purpose, even when the world resists the truth (Acts 19:6-8).

The psalm sings of a God who journeys with His people, bringing strength to the weak and joy to the lonely: "God gives power and strength to his people" (Psalm 68:35). Our God is not distant. He walks ahead of us, lifting burdens and filling weary hearts with hope. The psalm offers us comfort knowing that we have a God who sympathizes with us, journeys with us in our needs.

The Gospel presents to us a Jesus who speaks tenderly to His disciples, knowing that fear and scattering will upon them soon. Even in the face of such a challenging time, He offers a deep assurance: "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage; I have conquered the world" (John 16:33). Peace does not mean the absence of struggle; it means His presence within it. When we remain in Him, our hearts find rest even in the midst of trials. The saints lived this truth. Saint Paul faced rejection and suffering, yet the Spirit gave him boldness and joy. Mother Saint Teresa of Calcutta carried heavy darkness within, but her trust in Christ became light for countless souls. Therefore, dear brethren, let us open our heart daily to the Holy Spirit to hold on to Christ's peace when troubles arise. Also let's live our faith with quiet courage, trusting that God is already victorious.

Response: You kingdoms of the earth, sing to God.

19
TUE

Earthly Life, Heavenly Heart

Easter Weekday

Acts 20: 17-27/ Ps 68: 10-11, 20-21/ Jn 17: 1-11a

As we approach the great Solemnity of Pentecost, the readings present a foretaste of the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul boldly taught publicly and declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have their trust in Lord Jesus and not on their own strength, knowledge and nobility. The foundation and pre-requisite to receive the Holy Spirit is that we surrender to Jesus and receive what he has to offer without relying on our merits or worthiness.

Paul teaches what he practiced after Christ touched him. He adds that he served the Lord with great humility, tears and amidst opposition from every side. The sole aim of his life now is to proclaim Christ crucified. He did not invent a vocabulary to impress his listeners, but proclaimed the truth that would become a stumbling block to his own fellow Jews. His message irritated the intellectual gentiles who processed the preaching of Paul and concluded that his message about someone rising from the dead was absurd to human reasoning. However, the Holy Spirit revealed to him about the hardships and impending imprisonment. Paul cooperates with the grace of Christ, claiming that his only aim was to “to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given.” Considering the futility of his life before encountering Christ, and the immense joy of knowing him, he declares that all external praise and personal accolades are nothing but garbage and a loss. The only goal in life for Paul, henceforth is to possess the one who touched him.

Christian spirituality can be summed in simple terms: to be in the world but not of it. We do not despise the world but we remain detached from worldly favours, rewards, possessions and power by being attached to Jesus. Paul gives us this example, to live in the world, but to be detached from it as to belong solely to Christ and to belong to him in mind, heart and soul! May we abide in Christ, as Paul did, and prove to be true ‘salt and light of the world.’

Response: You kingdoms of the earth, sing to God.

20
WED**Consecrated in Love, Sent in Truth***Easter Weekday/ Bernardine of Siena*

Acts 20: 28-38/ Ps 68: 29-30, 33-35a, 35bc-36ab/ Jn 17: 11b-19

In his farewell discourse St. Paul reminds the elders that their responsibility originates not in personal ambition, but in the Holy Spirit. The community they serve is precious, redeemed at a great price. Paul speaks as a shepherd who understands both the beauty and the cost of caring for Christ's flock. His warning about coming trials does not arise from anxiety, but from vigilance. Genuine love does not ignore danger; it safeguards what has been entrusted to it. Paul's tears, his years of tireless service, and his refusal to seek personal gain reveal that authority in the Church is never about domination but a self-gift. This same spirit is reflected and brought to perfection in the prayer of Jesus Christ. The Lord entrusts His disciples to the Father. He does not ask that they be taken out of the world, but that they be protected within it. The Christian vocation is not an escape, but consecration. We remain in the world as witnesses, yet we do not belong to its falsehoods. Jesus prays that His followers may be one and that they may be sanctified in truth. Unity and holiness are the natural fruits of abiding in the Father's love. In his farewell, Paul lives out what Christ first prayed. He entrusts the community to God. He kneels and prays with them. A beautiful echo resounds across these passages: the Son prays for His disciples; the apostle prays for his flock. The Church is sustained through the generations by this unbroken chain of intercession and fidelity.

Today we are invited to ask ourselves: whom has God entrusted to my care? How am I embodying Christ's prayer for unity and truth? The world is not looking for Christians who merely fit in; it longs for disciples set apart for God, set apart by love, yet fully present in the midst of daily life. May we allow ourselves to be guarded by the Father, formed by the truth, and sent into the world as courageous witnesses. And like Paul, may we entrust everything to God with peaceful hearts, confident that grace is always stronger than any trial.

Response: You kingdoms of the earth, sing to God.

21
THUR

Carrying the Light

Easter Weekday/ Christopher Magallanes

Acts 22: 30; 23: 6-11/ Ps 16: 1-2a and 5, 7-8, 9-10. 11/ Jn 17: 20-26

On the threshold of his Passion, Jesus does not pray for escape, but for us. His gaze stretches across time, and he prays for his flock which is a single, burning desire: "That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us." This oneness Jesus prays for is the very life of God shared with us. It is the love that flows eternally between Father and Son now offered as the dwelling place for our souls. But how do we enter into this profound unity? Our own hearts can feel scattered, divided by worries, sins, and the sheer noise of the world. We yearn for this divine union but often find ourselves in what the great mystic, Saint John of the Cross, called the "dark night."

St John of the Cross teaches that the soul seeking perfect union with God must often journey through a purification of faith. In the Ascent of Mount Carmel, he writes that to reach the divine union, "the soul must pass through the dark night of the senses and the spirit." This "night" is not a punishment, but a profound mercy. It is God gently detaching our hearts from all that is not Him: our limited ideas, our clinging to spiritual comforts, our self-reliance, so that we might be attached solely to Him. In the darkness, our senses and intellect are stripped, and we are led by pure faith, the very faith Jesus mentions: "that the world may believe that you sent me."

This is where Jesus' prayer and John's teaching converge. The unity Jesus desires is forged in this purifying love. It happens when, in our own "nights" of doubt, suffering, or dryness, we persevere in faith, trusting only in His indwelling presence. As we are purified, the ego that divides us from God and from each other is diminished, and the life of Christ increases in us. This is the Christian calling: that Christ-Light may shine in us, who are handed the light of God's Spirit in our baptism!

Response: Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

22
FRI**Faithful Love in the Face of Trial***Easter Weekday/ Rita of Cascia*

Acts 25: 13b-21/ Ps 103: 1-2, 11-12, 19-20ab/ Jn 21: 15-19

The experience of Paul in the first reading, reminds us that faithfulness often leads to misunderstanding. His message is perceived as a dispute about religious ideas, yet in reality, it concerns the living truth of Christ. This tension continues even today. The Christian message is frequently reduced to a set of moral teachings or cultural traditions, while its core is the living presence of Christ which is often overlooked. Paul challenges us to remain centered on what truly matters: the risen Lord who transforms life.

This same foundation is laid in the Gospel from the Gospel of John, where the risen Jesus asks Simon Peter a deeply personal question, Do you love me? The question is repeated three times, not to test Peter's memory, but to heal his past and to strengthen his future. Each affirmation of love is immediately linked to responsibility, "Feed my sheep." Love, therefore, is not reduced to sentiment rather it becomes mission.

Every Christian, in his or her own context, is invited to live this same fidelity. There are moments when faith is tested, need not be in dramatic trials like Paul's, but in daily situations. When truth must be spoken, when values must be upheld, or when silence would be easier than witness. In such moments, the question of Jesus echoes once more; "Do you love me?" The answer to this question is not given merely in words, but in the choices we make. To love Christ is to remain faithful even when it is uncomfortable. It is to serve others with generosity, as Peter was called to do. It is to stand firm in truth, as Paul did before rulers. Such love is not without cost, but it is precisely in this cost that its authenticity is revealed.

In the end, the question remains personal and direct: Do we truly love Christ? If we do, then like Peter and Paul, we are called to live that love courageously, through service, through witness, and through unwavering faith, even in the face of trial.

Response: The Lord has fixed his throne in heaven.

23
SAT

Unfettered Mission of Grace

Easter Weekday

Acts 28: 16-20, 30-31/ Ps 11: 4, 5 and 7/ Jn 21: 20-25

God often works in ways that quietly overturn our expectations, turning what seems like limitation into a space of grace. In the first reading, we encounter Paul arriving in Rome not as a triumphant missionary, but as a prisoner. Yet even in chains, his spirit remains free. Within just a few days, he reaches out to the Jewish leaders, speaking to them with clarity and hope. He explains that he is bound “for the hope of Israel,” showing that his suffering is not defeat but mission. For two full years, he welcomes all who come, teaching about Jesus with courage and openness. In him, we see a man who refuses to let circumstances dictate his calling. God uses even his confinement to spread the Gospel at the very heart of the world. We too experience moments where we feel restricted by fear, or uncertainty. Yet this reading reminds us that no situation is beyond God’s reach. He sends grace even into our limitations and calls us to remain faithful. Like Paul, we are invited to trust, to stay open, and to become instruments of hope for others.

The Gospel deepens this truth by shifting our focus to personal discipleship. When Peter turns to ask about another disciple, Jesus responds firmly: “What concern is it of yours? You follow me.” Here, Jesus reveals a simple but profound truth, each journey with Him is unique. Just as Paul was called to witness in chains, Peter is called to follow without comparison. God does not lead all in the same way, yet His purpose is always rooted in love. The Psalm reminds us that the Lord sees all, discerning hearts with justice and truth. Together, these readings form a gentle harmony: the Father who sees and calls, the Son who invites us personally to follow, and the Spirit who leads us step by step. Like Paul, we may face limits; like Peter, we may struggle with comparison. But the invitation remains to trust rather than doubt, to follow rather than question, to remain open rather than resistant. When we embrace this path, our lives, however ordinary, become witnesses of God’s quiet and powerful work in the world.

Response: The upright shall behold your face, O Lord.



Breath, Fire, and Unity

Pentecost

Acts 2: 1-11/ Ps 104: 1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34/ 1 Cor 12: 3b-7, 12 - 13/

Sequence: Veni Sancte Spiritus/ Jn 20: 19-23

The readings proclaim one central truth: without the Holy Spirit, there is no Church, no courage, no communion, and no mission. The Spirit is not an optional aspect of Christian life; the Spirit is its very breath. In the first reading, the disciples are gathered together, waiting in uncertainty. They have seen the risen Lord, but they are not yet ready to step into the world. Memory alone cannot sustain mission. Then comes wind and fire, ancient signs of divine presence. Wind suggests power that cannot be contained; fire suggests purification and light. The transformation is immediate. Fear dissolves into bold proclamation. Silence turns into speech. What is most striking is that people from many nations hear the same message in their own languages. The Spirit does not erase differences; the Spirit makes communication possible. Division, which began at Babel, is reversed at Pentecost. Unity is not forced; it is inspired.

The Spirit is not limited to one dramatic event in history. The Spirit sustains creation itself. Breath is the simplest sign of life. Without breath, there is no existence. In biblical language, breath and spirit are deeply connected. This means the Spirit is not merely active in extraordinary moments; the Spirit is present in every act of life, growth, and renewal. When vitality fades, whether personally or communally, it is often because the Spirit has been forgotten or ignored. In the gospel, the risen Christ enters a room locked by fear. His first word is peace. Then he breathes on the disciples. This deliberate act echoes the beginning of creation, when life was breathed into humanity. A new creation is taking place. The Spirit is given not simply for comfort but for continuation of Christ's mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." The authority to forgive sins flows from this gift. The Spirit empowers reconciliation, making the Church a place where broken relationships can be healed. Peace is no longer just a greeting; it becomes a calling.

The second reading adds another essential dimension. The Spirit distributes different gifts: wisdom, knowledge, healing, teaching, service, but all for the common good. The image of the body is powerful. A body cannot function if each part competes for

attention. The eye cannot dismiss the hand; the head cannot ignore the feet. The Spirit ensures that every member matters. Without the Spirit, diversity leads to rivalry. With the Spirit, diversity becomes harmony. Unity is not uniformity; it is shared life.

The importance of the Holy Spirit can be seen in several profound ways: First, the Spirit gives identity. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” Faith is not only a conclusion reached by reasoning; it is a gift awakened from within. The Spirit opens the heart to recognize Christ not as a distant figure of history but as Lord of life. Second, the Spirit gives courage. The disciples who once hid in fear stand publicly and proclaim after Pentecost. Throughout history, believers have found strength not in their own abilities but in divine indwelling. The Spirit sustains perseverance in trials, clarity in confusion, and hope in suffering. Third, the Spirit creates communion. In a fractured world marked by suspicion and division, Pentecost offers a different vision. The Spirit forms a community where cultural, social, and linguistic boundaries do not disappear but are embraced within a deeper unity. This communion becomes a witness in itself. Fourth, the Spirit renews continuously. Renewal is not a single moment but an ongoing process. Hearts grow tired. Communities become routine. Mission can lose focus. The Spirit rekindles passion, restores joy, and inspires creativity. True reform in the Church has always begun with a renewed openness to the Spirit’s guidance.

The Spirit also continues Christ’s presence. After the ascension, it is through the Spirit that Christ remains active. Every sacrament, every sincere prayer, every authentic act of charity is animated by this invisible presence. The Spirit is gentle but powerful, like a whisper that changes direction or a flame that quietly spreads warmth. Yet the Spirit does not force entry. Closed hearts resemble locked rooms. Openness invites transformation. Humility allows guidance. Prayer creates space.

Across today’s readings, one message resounds: the Holy Spirit is the living presence of God who gives life, courage, unity, forgiveness, and mission. When the Spirit is welcomed, faith becomes vibrant and the Church becomes alive. When the Spirit is neglected, fear and division take root.

Response: Lord, send forth your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

25
MON**Mary the Model of Life's Commitments*****The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church***

Gen 3: 9-15, 20 or Acts 1: 12-14 Ps: 87: 1-2, 3 and 5, 6-7/ Jn 19: 25-34

There is a vast difference between the ideal and the real, the 'ought-to-be' and the actual; essentially what we are supposed to be and existentially what we realistically are. God's direct question to Adam, "Where are you?" is a question to the conscience of each one of us, asking where we actually stand in life. The answer would either be: 'God I am far from where I am supposed to be' or 'Lord, here I am, I am ready and willing.' Our disposition to life depends on our response to this question. The moment we know that we stand nowhere in life, the blame game begins. We turn the blame of our failures upon anything we set our eyes on. But when we are committed and walk with God we also come to realize that the entire world is actually cooperating with us for our success.

The feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, is the recognition of Mary as the model of our life's commitment. At the moment of Annunciation, Mary received her invitation to join hands with God for the salvation of the world. Mary whole heartedly cooperates and stands by God facing every odds of life that came on her way. At the foot of the Cross, Jesus reminds Mary that her mission is not ended but continues in the Church as its mother. The words, "Behold your Son," tells Mary that the New Israel, created by her Son through the shedding of His own blood on the Cross, has now become her family. Understanding this mission and committing herself wholeheartedly we see Mary not only goes to live in the house of apostle John, but also gathers all the apostles on the upper room in prayer for the reception of the Holy Spirit and moves on to Ephesus with John to nurture the infant Church there.

We face the question: can my life be modelled on Mary, my mother and can I commit myself to my family and my Church for its growth and holiness? With this commitment can I bridge the gap between my ideal and real?

Response: Worship God, all you angels.

26
TUE

Living the Privilege of Grace

Philip Neri

1 Pt 1: 10-16/ Ps 98: 1. 2-3ab, 3cd-4/ Mk 10: 28-31

Peter places believers within the sweeping story of salvation. The prophets of old perceived glimpses of God's redemptive plan but did not see its fulfilment. What they longed to understand has now been revealed in Jesus Christ. This realization is meant to awaken both gratitude and responsibility. We are not accidental beneficiaries of grace; we stand at a privileged moment in salvation history. Peter's command to "gird up the loins of your mind" calls for alertness and intentionality. Hope in Christ is not passive optimism but disciplined trust. Holiness, therefore, is not rigid moralism; it is relational likeness. To "be holy" is to reflect God's character. It means that we live in love, obedience, and reverent awe as children shaped by their Father's nature. The psalm extends this response from inward transformation to outward celebration. The psalmist proclaims that God's saving acts are public and global: His righteousness is revealed before the nations. Salvation is not hidden spirituality but visible deliverance. The only fitting response is exuberant praise not excluding singing, shouting, and communal rejoicing. Holiness here is not sombre withdrawal but joyful participation in God's victory. Gratitude becomes music; reverence becomes celebration.

In the Gospel reading, Peter gives voice to the sacrifices each disciple of Christ makes: "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus affirms that surrender for His sake is never wasted. Though losses may be real, they open into deeper communion. This includes new relationships, spiritual family, and eternal life. Yet Jesus introduces a kingdom paradox: "The first will be last, and the last first." God's economy overturns human measures of success. What appears loss becomes gain; what seems sacrifice becomes participation in divine abundance. Together, these passages confront our attachments and reshape our hopes. The prophets longed for what we now know. The disciples relinquished security for the sake of Christ. We are invited into the same courageous trust. When we loosen our grip on lesser securities, we discover that God Himself is our inheritance. In Him, hope is fulfilled, praise overflows, and nothing surrendered in love is ever truly lost.

Response: My heart exults in the Lord, my Saviour

27
WED**Greatness Through Love and Service**
Ordinary Weekday/ Augustine of Canterbury

1 Pt 1: 18-25/ Ps 147: 12-13, 14-15, 19-20/ Mk 10: 32-45

In our life we experience many people who desire to be great. They want respect, power, or an important place. The world often says that a great person is someone who is above others. Sometimes we may also hold on to the same idea. But God shows us another way to understand greatness, The early Christians were learning how to live their new faith. Many of them had left their old life and started following Christ. It was not easy for them. In that situation, they were reminded of an important truth, that their new life did not come from money or riches. They were saved through the precious blood of Christ. This meant that their life now belonged to God. Because of this, they are asked to live in a new way. They must love one another sincerely. God speaks to them through this message and invites them to live a life filled with true love. The psalmist of the day praises God with joy. He sees how God takes care of His people. God blesses them, gives them peace, and protects them. He also gives them His word to guide their lives. The psalmist feels thankful because God is close to His people and cares for them with love.

As Jesus walks with His disciples toward Jerusalem, He speaks about the suffering that will soon come to Him. But the disciples are worried about something else. They think about who will be the greatest among them. They want an important place. Jesus gently teaches them that greatness in God's kingdom is different. It is not about power. It is about service. A great person is someone who serves others. Jesus embodies this teaching by His own life. He says that He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life for many. Sometimes in our lives, we desire others to notice us or praise us. But Jesus invites us to choose another path. When we help others, when we serve people with love, and when we live with humility, we walk in the way of Christ.

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

28
THUR

Living Stones in God's Gentle Hands

Ordinary Weekday

1 Pt 2: 2-5, 9-12/ Ps 100: 2, 3, 4, 5/ Mk 10: 46-52

In the first reading, a tender image of growth, belonging and becoming is presented to us, as a symbol of what God achieves in us! We are invited to be like newborn children who long for pure milk. A newborn does not pretend to be strong. A child knows its need: it cries, it stretches its hands, it trusts that someone will come. The Word reminds us that spiritual life begins not with pride, but with hunger. If our prayer has become dry, if our faith feels routine, know that God desires a deeper longing for Him. Then comes another beautiful image: living stones. Stones are usually cold and lifeless. But God calls us living stones. He chooses ordinary, imperfect people and slowly builds them into a spiritual home. Each of us is placed by His hands. Some are visible. Some are hidden. Yet every stone matters. Even the stone unseen by the world supports the whole structure.

Many of us feel small, unnoticed, or replaceable. But in God's house, there are no extra stones. There are only chosen ones. The reading reminds us that we are a people set apart, not to feel superior, but to belong deeply. We belong to God, and because we belong, our lives are meant to speak. We are called out of darkness into light. Darkness here is not only sin; it is also meaninglessness, discouragement, and the feeling of not being enough. God does not only forgive us; He redefines us. We are no longer "just someone trying to survive." We are a people with a purpose: to reflect His goodness through the way we live.

The reading gently shifts our attention to daily conduct. Faith is not only something we hold in our hearts; it is something others quietly read through our actions. Kindness, patience, honesty, mercy, these become our living proclamation, for often, the most powerful testimony is not a sermon, but a faithful life. Today, let us place ourselves again into God's hands. Let us ask for the grace to desire Him like a child, to trust His building process, and to accept our place in His house.

Response: Redeem us, O Lord, with your merciful love!

29
FRI**Faith in Action**
Ordinary Weekday

1 Pt 4: 7-13/ Ps 96: 10, 11-12, 13/ Mk 11: 11-26

Let us say, one person prays for rain while another asks for a bright, sunny day, how would God respond to such conflicting prayers? Spiritual writer, Basil Pennington, in his book *Challenges in Prayer*, offers a helpful insight. He says that God grants what we truly desire in the depth of our hearts, not merely what we say with our lips or even what we think we know we want. God listens to the heart rather than the spoken words. Because our understanding is limited, we often do not know what is best for us. God, however, sees our deepest desires and knows how they can be fulfilled in the best possible way, and that is what He grants.

In today's Gospel account of Jesus cursing the fig tree, which withers after a while, becomes an occasion for Jesus to instruct his disciples on the power of faith, and its co-relation in receiving the favours we ask of God in faith! He instructs his disciples in praying with faith! The Gospel presents another striking episode where Jesus enters the temple area, and at the sight of the merchants and money changers, gets angry and chases them away. Jesus expected the temple to be a place where people would be devoted to God and engaged in prayer. Instead, He found people busy with worldly matters, even dishonest and unjust activities. With his actions, he teaches that God desires fruitfulness in our prayer and in our lives.

Even today, we sometimes fail to respect the sanctity of the church. Many people come to pray but find it difficult because of noise, unnecessary movement, or lack of reverence. In such ways we unintentionally take away others' opportunity to pray. The Lord expects certain fruits from us when we come into His presence. First, we must respect the holiness of the church, remembering that it is God's house and a place for prayer. Second, when we pray, we must forgive those who have hurt us. By forgiving others, we open our hearts to God's forgiveness, and with a purified heart we can truly bear fruit in our prayer.

Response: Never forget the deeds of God!

30
SAT

Authority from Above

Ordinary Weekday

Jude 17. 20b-25/ Ps 63: 2, 3-4, 5-6/ Mk 11: 27-33

In the first reading, we see St Jude reminds his readers that the presence of false teachers in the church was expected because the apostles actually said they would come. He warns that they must contend for the faith and encourages Christians that they must be built up in the faith. He invites them to pray in the Holy Spirit and devote themselves to the love of God. Christians are called to help each other stay faithful to Jesus and God's protection will accompany them in life. At the end of the letter, he reminds us that, although we have a role to play, our hope is not in our ability to hold on to God, but in God's ability to hold on to us and reminds us that although we have every reason to doubt ourselves, we have no reason to doubt the one in whose love we dwell.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus is confronted by a group of Jewish leaders, chief priests, scribes & elders. The questions they pose are cunning and misleading. Jesus turns the table on them through counter-question (which was common in rabbinical debate), leaving them speechless. The underlying purpose of their questioning was to get Jesus to admit that he had no authority to do what he did. They did not venture on a fact-finding mission. They were the ones with the authority over the temple. Jesus was not one of them, so he needed to be shown his place. If only they knew the kind of authority they were dealing with, they would not have dared to come with such accusatory questions.

Jesus opens a window of understanding for us about where his authority came from. St Mark wants his readers to know that Jesus' authority, though doubted and questioned by many, is from God and that he can therefore be trusted. He wants us to know that the authority of Jesus is in fact the authority of God, and asks us to introspect: How does Jesus' authority affect my everyday lives?

Response: I will sing forever of your mercies, O Lord.



The Triune God: Light Beyond Our Understanding

THE HOLY TRINITY

Ex 34: 4b-6. 8-9/ Dn 3: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56/ 2 Cor 13: 11-13/ Jn 3: 16-18

Karl Rahner SJ (1904–1984), one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, once made a striking observation in his book, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1970): “Christians are, in their practical lives, almost mere ‘monotheists’... We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.” Rahner was suggesting that even if the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was dropped today, nearly 95% of Christian practice would still remain unchanged. This may sound provocative, but it reveals an uncomfortable truth about the limited impact the Trinity has had on everyday Christian life even after 2,000 years of Church history. The Trinity is Christianity’s most central and yet most misunderstood doctrine. It is therefore especially fitting on Trinity Sunday to reflect deeply on this mystery, beginning with Genesis. In Genesis 1:26 we read, “Let us make humankind in our image.” This verse should have been foundational for understanding the Trinity. Yet instead of dwelling on this profound revelation of a relational God, our attention has largely shifted to Adam, Eve, the serpent, the apple, and sin. Rather than beginning with a Triune God, much of Christian reflection has focused on transgression and punishment.

Adding to the confusion, the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible. What we do find is the language of Jesus, especially in the Synoptic Gospels and more fully in John, where he speaks of the Father as distinct from himself, calling God *Abba*, and refers to the Holy Spirit as another advocate, helper, and guide. It took nearly three centuries for the Church to grasp the depth of Jesus’ language and experience. This theological understanding was shaped primarily by the great Eastern Fathers of the third century. Western Christianity, however, has often emphasized Jesus in isolation, sometimes at the expense of the Trinity as a whole.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that human beings are created in the image of a Trinitarian God. This means that relationship is not optional or secondary to human life, but that it is essential. To be human is to

be oriented toward communion: with God, with others, and with creation itself. Many of us have formed in our minds a spiritual image of God as a distant, solitary, and authoritarian Being. This understanding has profoundly shaped Western Christianity, reinforcing structures of control, hierarchy, and fear. The doctrine of the Trinity offers a radically different vision: God as an eternal exchange of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's very being is relational, dynamic, and self-giving. This has far-reaching implications for how we understand ourselves and our world. If reality itself is relational at its core, then separation, exclusion, and violence are distortions of truth, not expressions of it. From a Trinitarian perspective, sin is less about breaking rules and more about breaking relationships.

Has Christianity not given the due prominence to the concept of the Trinity? Christ without any doubt is the mediator who have united humanity with the Father. Trinity could be understood as below :- The Father represents the source of all being, the Son reveals God within history and matter, and the Spirit animates and sustains life everywhere. Together, they affirm that God is present in all things, not just within religious boundaries. Together, they affirm that God is present in all things and is not confined to religious spaces or boundaries. The Holy Spirit, often the most neglected Person of the Trinity, is the great connector of all life. The Spirit is not limited to churches or doctrines but moves freely through cultures, religions, and creation itself. This invites humility, openness, and attentiveness rather than certainty and exclusion. Truth, in this sense, is not something we possess but something we participate in.

The Trinity is not merely a doctrine to explain God; it is a pathway to transformation and a pattern for spiritual growth. The mystery of the Trinity is not something unintelligible but something endlessly intelligible and always drawing us deeper. To be transformed is to participate in this divine relationship, marked by self-emptying love (kenosis) and ever-deepening communion with God and one another. The invitation of the Trinity is to let go of the false image of a distant, judgmental God and to enter instead into a living, loving relationship. The Holy Trinity always stands ready, arms open, welcoming us into this triune relationship.

Response: You are to be praised and highly exalted forever!

Liturgical Aberrations and Ecclesial Communion

Part II

In the previous article (Part – I) we discussed on the first two major aspects of Liturgical Aberrations, viz., articulating the theological foundations of the sacred liturgy and examining the authority that regulates liturgical practice. In this article we shall name and discuss in concrete some of these aberrations which need to be strictly curbed since such liturgical abuses distort the faith because the law of worship reflects the law of belief (*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*).

III. Typology of Liturgical Aberrations

A. Alterations of Eucharistic Prayers

Improvisation within the Eucharistic Prayer directly affects sacramental theology. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* condemns the practice of composing unauthorized Eucharistic prayers. In this regard the instruction (no. 51) clearly warns: Only those Eucharistic Prayers are to be used which are found in the Roman Missal or are legitimately approved by the Apostolic See, and according to the manner and the terms set forth by it. “It is not to be tolerated that some Priests take upon themselves the right to compose their own Eucharistic Prayers” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Vicesimus quintus annus*, n. 13, AAS 81 (1989)) or to change the same texts approved by the Church, or to introduce others composed by private individuals. Such actions not only severely undermine ecclesial unity but also introduce doctrinal ambiguity and risk invalidity in extreme cases. Pope St. John Paul II in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (April 17, 2003) warned that abuses obscure Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist (no 10).

B. Confusion of Ministerial Roles

The ordained priest acts in *persona Christi Capitis*. The Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (1997) clarifies that certain liturgical roles - especially the homily at Mass - are reserved to ordained ministers (Article 3, nos. 1 -5).

Article 3, no 1 states: The homily, being an eminent form of preaching, forms the integral part of the liturgy. The homily,

therefore, during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, must be reserved to the sacred minister, Priest or Deacon (cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 Oct. 1979; the Instruction *Liturgicae instaurationes*, 15 Sept. 1970) to the exclusion of the non-ordained faithful, even if these should have responsibilities as “pastoral assistants” or catechists in whatever type of community or group. This exclusion is not based on the preaching ability of sacred ministers nor their theological preparation, but on that function which is reserved to them in virtue of having received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. For the same reason the diocesan Bishop cannot validly dispense from the canonical norm since this is not merely a disciplinary law but one which touches upon the closely connected functions of teaching and sanctifying. For the same reason, the practice, on some occasions, of entrusting the preaching of the homily to seminarians or theology students who are not clerics (cf. Code of Canon Law, can. 266, § 1) is not permitted. Indeed, the homily should not be regarded as training for some future ministry.

Furthermore, the Instructions clarifies that as an expository aide and providing it does not delegate the duty of preaching to others, the celebrant minister may make prudent use of “dialogue” in the homily, in accord with the liturgical norms (cf. Dicastery for Divine Worship, *Directory for Masses with children Pueros Baptizatos*, 01 Nov. 1973, n. 48). Homilies in non-eucharistic liturgies may be preached by the non-ordained faithful only when expressly permitted by law and when its prescriptions for doing so are observed. Finally, in no instance may the homily be entrusted to priests or deacons who have lost the clerical state or who have abandoned the sacred ministry.

C. Anthropocentric Liturgical Tendencies

Pope Benedict XVI in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2000) argues that liturgy is received from tradition, and it is not a creative production. Here he speaks of how temple worship evolved to synagogue worship, which eventually evolved into Christian churches and their physical layout.

The Pope mentions that it is true that the primary purpose of a church building is functional, unlike other religions or Israel’s Temple worship, which focused on a temple exclusive to a few

priests, where sacrifices must be made to seal a covenant. The switch to a functional purpose is because Christ himself is the one who offers worship to the Father. But this must not be seen as a “false opposition” or “a break in the inner continuity of mankind’s religious history” (pg. 63). As synagogue worship points largely symbolically to the lost Temple worship, so the Christian liturgy points toward worship, toward the covenant. When community self-expression replaces God-centered worship the focus on Transcendence diminishes, eschatological orientation weakens and worship all the more, becomes horizontal rather than vertical.

In every age, the Church must guard the sacredness of her worship. One subtle but serious danger today is anthropocentrism in the liturgy - placing the human person at the center instead of God. While the liturgy certainly involves the faithful, it must be fundamentally God-centered (theocentric). When this balance shifts, the very nature of worship is weakened. Drawing from the teaching of the Church, especially the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of Second Vatican Council, we can reflect on the dangers involved. Here are a few probable dangers or deflections in our liturgical animation:

1. **Loss of the Primacy of God:** The liturgy is first and foremost the worship of God. As *Sacrosanctum Concilium* teaches, Christ is present in the liturgy, and it is His action in which we participate. However, when celebrations become overly focused on human creativity, personality of the celebrant, entertainment value or emotional satisfaction of the assembly, then the focus subtly moves from God’s glory to human performance. The Holy Eucharist then becomes something we “create” rather than something we receive.

2. **Reduction of the Sacred to the Ordinary:** Anthropocentrism risks reducing the liturgy to a community gathering rather than a sacred mystery. In the Eucharist, we participate in the sacrifice of Christ - made present sacramentally. When human expression dominates like gestures become casual, language becomes trivial, silence totally disappears, reverence diminishes, the sense of the transcendent starts fading and mystery gives way to familiarity.

3. **Clerical or Performative Tendencies:** When the liturgy revolves

around personality, the celebrant can become a performer rather than a servant of the sacred mysteries. The priest acts in persona Christi - in the person of Christ. When performative tendencies tend to prevail or dominate, the danger is that charisma overshadows Christ, improvisation overshadows the liturgical texts and applause replaces adoration. The focus moves from Christ being present and acting in the Church to the talents of individuals.

4. Fragmentation of Unity: The liturgy belongs to the universal Church. When it becomes excessively personalized or localized, unity with the wider Church weakens, liturgical norms are neglected and subjective preferences dominate. The Church's liturgy is not private property; it is a gift entrusted to us.

5. Distortion of Participation: True participation (*actuosa participatio*) does not mean constant activity. It means interior union with Christ's sacrifice. Anthropocentric tendencies equate participation with speaking roles, visible functions, and emotional involvement but authentic participation includes silence, contemplation, reverence, interior offering, and humble receptivity.

6. Theological Consequences: At its deepest level, anthropocentric liturgy can subtly reshape theology - Worship can become totally horizontal rather than vertical, community becomes the source rather than the fruit of worship and the Eucharist is viewed as a meal alone rather than sacrifice and sacrament. When this happens, the faithful may gradually lose a sense of sin and redemption, sacrifice and grace and transcendence and eternity.

Today we need a balanced perspective. This does not mean that the liturgy ignores or should ignore human needs. The liturgy rather sanctifies the faithful, builds community, and nourishes our faith. However, these are fruits, and not the primary focus. The proper order is - God's glory and Sanctification of humanity. When this order is reversed, confusion certainly enters.

For priests, religious, and lay faithful, especially those involved in liturgical planning, the call is clear:

- Fidelity to liturgical norms
- Reverence and sacred silence

- Humble obedience to the Church and
- Deep interior personal preparation

We need to be clear that the liturgy is not about us; it is about God drawing us into His saving mystery. When worship is truly God-centered, the human person is not diminished, but elevated. The Church rightly reminds us that the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and the font from which all her power flows” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10).

D. Desacralization and Ritual Casualness

Modern secular culture has very much influenced the liturgical attitudes. Informality, applause, theatrical dramatizations, and trivialization of sacred space contribute to desacralization. Pope Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission, given on 22 February 2007), emphasized *ars celebrandi* - the art of reverent celebration - as antidote to such tendencies.

No. 38 of this Apostolic Exhortation clearly explains that in the course of the Synod, there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*. The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf. 1 Pet 2:4-5, 9).

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93. REJOICE

The spiritual word “rejoice” in a biblical context is a command to experience deep-seated, abiding joy in the Lord that transcends temporary circumstances, such as trials, sadness, or adversity. It is frequently linked with the Greek word *chairō* (to be glad, thrive, or delight) and *chara* (joy). It is not connected with happiness which ensued through worldly materialistic outcomes. Rejoice is an attitude which voluntary, basing its roots in the Lord’s goodness and hope filled assurance.

Rejoicing is often a conscious, willful choice to trust in God’s goodness and faithfulness rather than a temporary emotional state of happiness. St Paul in his letter to the Philippians 4:4 emphatically commands “Rejoice in the Lord always” indicating that joy is rooted in one’s connection with Jesus, who is steadfast and unchanging, rather than fluctuating, fickle life situations.

The prefix “re” suggests a “return to” or a “calling back” of joy, acknowledging that we may lose it and need to intentionally regain it.

In the book of Nehemiah 8:10 it is stated that “the joy of the Lord is your strength”. This affirmation suggests that this spiritual state provides the inner endurance needed during challenging times of trials and hardship. Here there is no emphasis on the external assurances of wealth, power, security, etc. Rather it is the inner strength that comes to anyone who trusts in the Lord.

Paul encourages rejoicing even while in prison or suffering (Philippians 1:12-18), showing that true spiritual joy is compatible with, and even refined by, hardship. Paul suffered intensely which is quite evident in II Corinthians chapter 11, where he highlights on how many accounts he suffered; and he boasts about his suffering and pain connecting all that he endured with the intention of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel.

The Greek root *chairō* is directly connected to *charis* (grace). Therefore, to rejoice is to experience and be glad in God’s grace and unmerited favor.

“Rejoice” is a command to be joyful (1 Thess 5:16), making it a spiritual duty rather than a mere suggestion. It proclaims that power of rejoicing in the phase of trials because in rejoicing

there is the grace ensues and the Lord accompanies the one who willfully rejoices in the spirit of the Resurrection.

When spirits are heavy, a conscious choice to praise and rejoice is used as a tool to shift focus from self to God. St. Paul's invitation "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice." (Phil 4.4) and "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances..." (I Thess 5.16-18), is in consonance with what St. John of the Cross would recommend to those who pursue a spiritual path towards union with God. According to St. John of the Cross, to "rejoice" is to possess an unconditional, deep inner joy in God alone, transcending external circumstances and earthly pleasures. This profound gladness arises from pure love and union with the Beloved, often found during the "dark night" of self-detachment, when the soul is freed from selfish desires and rests securely in divine love. Throughout his writings, St. John of the Cross puts an emphasis on joy that is directed only to God, who always feeds the soul with immeasurable joy that fills it with the fire of love.; he explains it as:

Joy in Nothingness: True joy comes when the soul detaches from created things and desires, finding all fulfilment in God.

The Dark Night: The process of stripping away comforts (the dark night of the senses/spirit) is a "happy chance" or journey towards liberating joy.

Spousal Union: Rejoicing is linked to the spiritual marriage between the soul and God, a state of profound peace, gratitude, and exhilaration.

Gratitude: A hallmark of this spiritual state is a constant, quiet song of praise and thanksgiving, regardless of suffering.

John taught that this joy is not a temporary emotion, but a deep spiritual state (a "state of Grace") that persists even in the hardest times, as the heart is secured by the love of God Reason for our Rejoicing should be to get an inner assurance that in the end there will be a decisive victory despite the present danger, suffering, uncertainty, insecurity etc. Believers rejoice knowing they are forgiven and children of God.

In Jesus' time, many religious leaders preferred to live under the heavy burden of manmade rules and regulations that missed the heart of God's Law. They wanted to find salvation on their own.

Jesus flipped that on its head by giving the Gospel that provides rest. When we don't feel like rejoicing, it can be because it seems too strenuous to do so. But Jesus promises that when we come to Him, He will give us rest. He will relieve us of the need to rely on ourselves to find rest and peace. When we rejoice in Him, we can remind ourselves that the pressure is off of us to have it all figured out.

By rejoicing when we don't feel like it, we recognize that God is still good and continues to assure that there is going to be a perennial state of joy which is expected in hope. Christ is where we find true hope, peace, and rest. God is still working, even when we don't feel like He is. Everyday we should be able to radiate this joy in our life as the Psalmist affirms: "This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Ps 118.24)

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Feast of Pentecost

Pentecost Sunday, marks one of the most important feasts in the Church's liturgical year. Occurring fifty days after Easter Sunday, Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Often called the "birthday of the Church," this wondrous day reminds us of how Jesus fully equips his Church to carry out her Great Commission to "make disciples all nations" (Matt. 28:18-20; see Isa. 49:6, 22).

Pentecost - Significance: Pentecost is a Christian celebration that commemorates the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the followers of Jesus Christ. The apostles began speaking in various languages, proclaiming the gospel to Jews of every nation, who gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. Additionally, this miraculous event marked the beginning of the apostles' public ministry, and thus the beginning of the Church's mission.

Importance of Pentecost Sunday in the Catholic Faith?:

For Catholics, Pentecost Sunday is not merely a historical commemoration. It's a great liturgical celebration, memorializing the day on which Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to inaugurate and ignite the Church's public mission. Furthermore, Pentecost marks the day the Holy Spirit empowers the Church to act boldly in Jesus' name.

Liturgically, it also concludes the Easter season. During Pentecost Mass, the Church celebrates with rich substance and symbolism. For example, when the sacrament of confirmation is conferred, it strengthens today's disciples in the present day to bear faithful witness. Additionally, priests wear red vestments to recall the tongues of fire that rested on the apostles. Moreover, the Church prays for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be poured out once again.

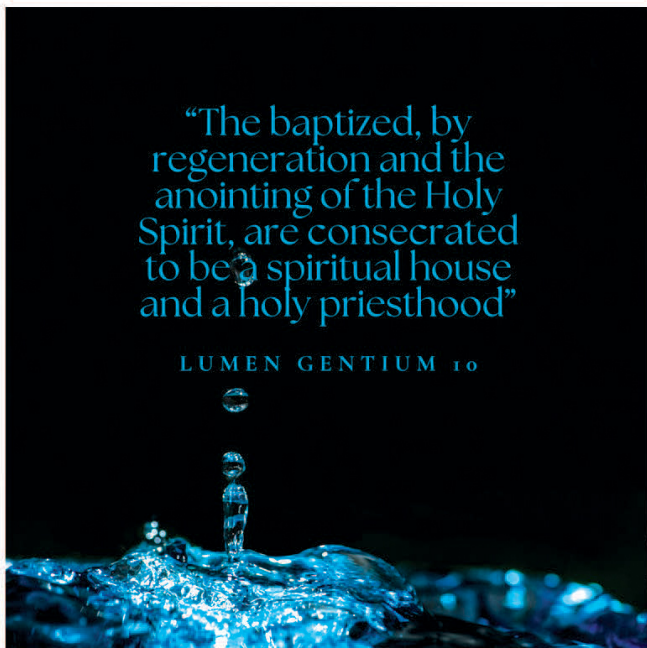
The Holy Spirit and Pentecost: On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit transforms the frightened apostles into bold evangelists. Through his presence, the Spirit brings unity, guidance, and sanctification. Catholics first receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and later in fullness at confirmation, continuing the Pentecost tradition in every believer's life. Furthermore, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord—remain central to our life in Christ Jesus.

To prepare your heart for this feast, consider praying the Pentecost Novena in 2026. This powerful devotion begins nine days before Pentecost Sunday and mirrors the apostles, the Blessed Mother, and other disciples who prayerfully waited for the Holy Spirit after the Ascension.

Come, Holy Spirit: Pentecost is more than a past event; it is a present reality. The same Holy Spirit who descended in fire now dwells in the hearts of the faithful, guiding the Church until Christ returns at his Second Coming. May we, like the apostles, receive and nourish the Spirit with courage and joy, proclaiming Jesus to the ends of the earth.

Article from Catholic Answers, "Pentecost 2025 | Catholic Answers Guide," Catholic Answers, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://www.catholic.com/tract/pentecost-2025-catholic-answers-guide>

Echoes of Magisterium



This sentence from *Lumen Gentium* expresses the deep transformation that takes place in Baptism: through regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, a person is not only cleansed but truly consecrated, i.e., set apart for God. To be called a "spiritual house" means that each believer becomes a living dwelling place of God, and together with others forms the living temple of the Church where God continues to abide. At the same time, being a "holy priesthood" signifies that all the baptized share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, not in the ministerial sense, but by offering spiritual sacrifices, prayers, daily duties, sufferings, and acts of love to God. Thus, this teaching reminds us that every Christian life is meant to be both a place of God's presence and a continual act of worship, actively participating in Christ's mission of sanctifying the world.

PENTECOST

*Behind locked doors, they gathered
For fear of raging Jews,
The men who would proclaim Him –
The men Jesus did choose.*

*Locked doors did not impede Him
When from the tomb He rose;
From meeting his disciples,
Dispelling all their woes.*

*“Peace be with you!” He told them,
“My Spirit makes you live
And I give you the power
Transgressions to forgive.”*

*Peace that has brought to millions,
Whose sins are washed away
Because of their Redeemer,
Whose life they share today.*



- Rev. Fr Paul D'Souza, OCD
(for daily liturgical poems visit
<http://lyrics.carmelmedia.in>*)*

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