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**LIGHT IN THE
INTERIOR NIGHT**

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Living Water

Daily Spiritual Reflections

Volume No. 13, Issue No. 11

OCTOBER 2026

PRAYER INTENTION

FOR MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY.

*Let us pray that the mental health ministry be
established throughout the Church, helping to
overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons
with mental illnesses.*

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Light in the Interior Night

Every Sunday, few pews of churches are filled with silent battles that leave no visible scars. People exchange the sign of peace while wrestling at times with clinical depression. Youngsters kneel in prayer, desperately trying to quiet the panic attacks – struggling for survival and to cope up with anxieties and rejections. Some of our friends sit in quiet isolation, weighed down by brain fog and deep grief. All these people smile, exchange pleasantries, and receive the Eucharist, yet carry a profound, hidden burden alone. The Holy Father directs the Church's prayer for October to this interior night: that mental health ministry be established across dioceses and parishes, dismantling the stigma and discrimination that isolate our suffering brothers and sisters.

Escalating digital isolation, economic volatility, societal fragmentation, and relentless pressure to perform have fractured the human psyche. Over a billion people worldwide now live with diagnosable mental health conditions, yet helpful resources remain scarce and cultural attitudes remain cold. More tragically, religious communities too have compounded this suffering. Clinical depression is dismissed as a lack of faith, or needing a spiritual healing, crippling anxiety is often treated as spiritual failure, psychiatric illness is met with suspicion, wounded souls are at times driven away from the very community that should have given them refuge.

The Gospel presents an entirely different vision. Jesus never flinched before human frailty. In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord entered the depths of human psychological torment, sweating drops of blood as He confessed: "My soul is sorrowful even to death" (Matthew 26:38). On the Cross, He cried out the opening line of Psalm 22, sanctifying every experience of abandonment, darkness, and grief. Christ's healing ministry crossed social barriers to restore dignity to the marginalized, unclean or unstable. Psychological suffering does not diminish the indelible image of God stamped upon the human person. A broken mind is no more a sign of sin than a fractured bone; both are parts of our fallen human condition awaiting compassion and care. The Church's tradition has long recognized that the dark night of the soul can walk hand in hand with holiness. Great saints experienced profound interior desolation: St. Thérèse of Lisieux whom we celebrate this month, faced suffocating spiritual

darkness in her final days, St. Jane Frances de Chantal endured decades of agonizing doubts, and St. John of God was hospitalized in a psychiatric asylum before founding a religious order dedicated to compassionate care. Their lives demonstrate that holiness does not require unbroken emotional equilibrium. God works His grace not in spite of our vulnerabilities, but precisely within them. During our painful moments, He carries us through.

Establishing mental health ministries in the Church is therefore a moral and pastoral need in the present scenario. Such ministry does not seek to replace medical science; rather, it complements it. Just as a person with diabetes requires insulin alongside prayer, someone living with bipolar disorder or clinical anxiety needs medical care alongside spiritual accompaniment. Seeking professional psychiatric therapy or counselling is not a sign of weak faith, but an act of Christian wisdom and prudence.

Pastoral mental health ministry provides what clinics and pharmacies cannot: a community to belong, spiritual accompaniment, and unconditional and unbiased Christian love. When a parish establishes a mental health team, it creates a sanctuary where stories can be shared without fear of judgment. It equips priests and other members of the Church to listen without offering superficial remarks. It provides solidarity to caregivers of the family who bear the silent, exhausting weight of supporting a loved one through illness. In a world that discards those who cannot remain constantly productive, the Church is to take her stand affirming that every human life is infinitely precious.

The Church is summoned to active renewal this October. This month marks World Mental Health Day on 10 October and the feast of St. Luke the physician on 18 October. In our communities we can include prayers for those living with mental illnesses or host support circles, wherein licensed therapists could be invited to offer workshops in our parishes communities or close social groups. No member of the Body of Christ should ever have to suffer in the shadows. By establishing intentional mental health ministries, our Churches and communities can become authentic reflections of Christ's tenderness. In such communities, tears are welcomed, wounded minds find comfort, no one is left to walk through the dark valley alone, but encounters compassion, accompaniment, and hope.

Fr Jesvin Tom Benoy OCD

1

THU

The Greatness of Spiritual Childhood**ST THERÈSE OF LISIEUX**

Is 66:10-14/ Ps 131:1,2,3/ Mt 18:1-5

The readings chosen for the feast of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus beautifully express the essence of her “little way.” The prophet Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem as a mother who consoles her children, feeding them with tenderness and peace. This maternal image of God as nurturing, gentle, and abundant in love resonates deeply with Thérèse’s spirituality. For her, God was not a distant judge but a loving Father whose mercy was more powerful than weakness or sin.

The Gospel passage from Matthew presents Jesus setting a child in the midst of His disciples as the model of true greatness in the Kingdom. In a world that values achievement, status, and self-assertion, Jesus points to simplicity, trust, and humility as the real signs of spiritual maturity. The child is not perfect, but receptive; not powerful, but dependent; not proud, but open.

St. Thérèse took these words with radical seriousness. She discovered that sanctity does not lie in extraordinary deeds but in extraordinary love within ordinary life. She called it her “little way of spiritual childhood.” For Thérèse, to be small was not immaturity—it was spiritual realism. She recognized that human strength cannot reach God, but love can. The more she acknowledged her littleness, the more she trusted in the infinite tenderness of the Father. Her life in the Carmel of Lisieux was hidden, monotonous, and marked by suffering, yet through that hiddenness she became a luminous witness to divine love. She lived Isaiah’s vision: comforted by God like a child on a mother’s lap, and radiating that same gentleness toward others. Thérèse embodies a theology of trust which is a spirituality where divine grace is not earned but received. Her insight restores balance to Christian spirituality: it reminds us that growth in holiness is not climbing higher, but descending deeper into humility and confidence in God’s mercy. To become like a child, as Jesus says, is not regression but transformation which offers the freedom to live without fear, to love without calculation, and to rest in God’s arms with joy.

***Response: I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord
in the land of the living.***

2

FRI

God's Unseen Companions***The Holy Guardian Angels***

Ex 23: 20-23/ Ps: 91: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 10-11 / Mt 18: 1-5, 10

The Memorial of Guardian Angels reminds us that God's providence is never distant. Throughout salvation history, He lovingly accompanies His people through the ministry of the angels. In the first reading, God assures Israel, "Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and bring you to the place I have prepared." This promise extends beyond Israel; it reveals God's fatherly care for every believer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "From infancy to death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession." A Guardian Angel is therefore not a symbol but a real presence of God's loving presence.

In the Gospel, Jesus places a child in the midst of His disciples and teaches that greatness in the Kingdom is found in humility and childlike trust. He then adds, "Their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father." This profound statement reveals the dignity of every human person. Each one is precious before God and entrusted to the care of an angel who continually intercedes before the Father. Respect for every person, especially the little, the vulnerable, and the forgotten, is therefore not merely a moral obligation but a response to God's own love. St. Bernard of Clairvaux beautifully exhorts us: "Let us be devoted and grateful for such great guardians; let us love them in return and honour them as much as we can." Guardian angels constantly inspire, protect, and guide us toward God's will, yet they never replace our freedom. They gently lead us to choose the path of holiness.

Vatican document *Lumen Gentium* teaches us that God's plan of salvation embraces both the visible and invisible creation, united in worship before His throne. From a Carmelite perspective, the ministry of the Guardian Angels invites us to cultivate an interior life attentive to God's gentle movements. St. Teresa of Avila encouraged her daughters to live continually in God's presence, knowing that heaven is never far from the soul united to Him. Silence, prayer, and recollection make us more receptive to the quiet inspirations through which God often speaks.

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

3

SAT

From Emotional Overshot, To Humble Repentance***Ordinary Weekday***

Jb 42: 1-3, 5-6, 12-17/ Ps 119: 66. 71. 75. 91. 125. 130/ Lk 10: 17-24

The readings today have a remarkable consonance. In the first reading, Job comes before God after having poured out his anguish in the midst of terrible suffering. Earlier, in the intensity of his pain, he had spoken harshly, even wishing that God would simply take his life. He had also assumed that God was punishing him, although he knew himself to be innocent. Now, however, Job has passed through the darkness and gained a deeper understanding. He realizes that his suffering cannot be explained by the rigid logic of retributive justice that his friends had imposed upon him. God is not a merciless judge waiting to punish him for every failure. Rather, Job encounters a God whose wisdom is greater than human understanding and whose mercy embraces even our anguished questions and outbursts. Though Job spoke with harsh words, God recognizes the sincerity of his heart. Job is eventually restored, while his friends are corrected for presenting a distorted image of God.

Something similar happens in today's Gospel. The disciples return from their mission filled with enthusiasm because they have witnessed remarkable things in Jesus' name. They are excited about their success, but Jesus gently redirects their attention. The true reason for their joy is not the power they have exercised or the wonders they have accomplished, but the fact that their names are written in heaven. Jesus teaches them to move from the excitement of achievement to the deeper joy of belonging to God. Their mission is not about personal glory but about growing in love and communion with the Father.

Both readings, therefore, invite us to look beyond our immediate experiences and discover the heart of God. God is not a distant, mechanical dispenser of rewards and punishments. He is a loving Father who understands our weakness, receives our questions, and patiently leads us towards maturity in love.

Let us, then, learn to recognize those around us who are angry, wounded or struggling with God. Instead of judging them, let us accompany them patiently and help them rediscover the merciful Father who understands the cries of the human heart.

Response: Lord, let your face shine on me.

4
SUN

NEED TO BE RESPONSIBLE STEWARD

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Is 5: 1-7/ Ps 80: 9. 12. 13-14. 15-16. 19-20/ Phil 4: 6-9/ Mt 21: 33-43

God speaks to us in different forms and different ways. Only if we are responsible and watchful, shall we receive his real message and eventually be able to respond to it. Otherwise we will be failures because we have lost something very important and precious, and we may not even realise that we have lost this great pearl. As we celebrate Twenty Seventh Sunday of the Ordinary Time, today's readings invite us to reflect and find out how each of us have lived our lives as responsible stewards of what is entrusted to us!

The first reading and the Gospel passage speak about the Vineyard. As we know very well whoever plants the vineyard always expects good harvest because of the hard work and the care which accompany the efforts. In the first reading God is the owner of the vineyard. The vineyard which He planted was the nation of Israel, the people whom He chose as his own. He sent prophets time and again to teach them to live in the right way and to show them the true and saving paths. From reading the history of the Israel, we are well aware that the people of Israel, they did not listen to the prophets instead they rejected them and lived as they wanted and even persecuted the prophets, not even refraining from killing some. In other words, they failed to produce good fruits. The first reading ends saying: "...and He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!"

In the Gospel, we see almost the same story. Jesus tells the parable to inspire us how in the Old Testament people of Israel who represented the vineyard, failed to listen to the prophets and how they rejected them even to the extent of persecuting them. On the other hand we also notice the scrupulous care taken by God who is the owner of that vineyard and His patience and mercy. He repeatedly gives opportunities for repentance. The tenants who represented the religious leaders knew what Jesus claims to be but choose to reject and stay neutral as well as indifferent for the sake of own power and authority. Though they knew it, they chose not to stand by that just to hold on to

their high position in the society. In other words, they produced sour grapes. In the parable, Jesus wanted to make us realize that after the prophets God sent His own Beloved Son that is Christ Himself who was nailed to the Cross. We could very much understand that the life which we enjoy at present is the vineyard which God has planted and which He has entrusted to each one of us that we may take care of it and produce good fruits. Do we make him proud through our actions? Jesus is the Living Word that we hear always, to which we need to respond! Do we do that in life? He comes to us through our parents, through our teachers, through our elders, through all those in authority, and even through our good friends, how generously so we listen to them? What is our response? Do we produce good fruits or bad fruits? How is our behavior and attitudes? So how could we qualify ourselves if we consider us as the tenants of our own lives? We are not the owners of our lives but only the tenants who have to give an account to the owner! We need to be consciously aware of this truth and try to produce good fruits and surely not sour ones. Besides we need to be consciously aware of God's blessings and gifts which He bestows on us every day and every moment and respond to it more creatively and effectively.

It does not mean that God abandons His promises rather, Jesus is saying that those who reject Him will lose their privileged role in God's kingdom. The kingdom will be entrusted to the people who are responsible stewards who bear fruit. This includes all faithful Jews and gentiles together, the community of believers. The vineyard was planted to produce grapes. Likewise, God expects lives marked by faith, justice, love, obedience and righteousness, not just religious activity only. The tenants reject both the servants and the Son, symbolizing Israel's history of rejecting God's messengers and ultimately, the Messiah. Jesus warns that rejecting Him leads to judgment, while those who receive Him and bear spiritual fruit will share in God's kingdom.

Response: The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

5

MON

The True Gospel Comes from Above*St Faustina Kowalska*

Gal 1: 6-12/ Ps 111: 1b-2, 7-8, 9 and 10c/ Lk 10: 25-37

The Galatians are being seduced by a “different gospel.” This different gospel is a message that sounds Christian but is actually “a perversion of the gospel of Christ.” Paul’s fierce response reveals something essential: there is a true Gospel and there are counterfeits. What makes the Gospel authentic? “The gospel preached by me is not of human origin... but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” The true Gospel cannot be manufactured by human wisdom, packaged by human strategy, or modified to suit human preferences. It comes from God alone, and it often contradicts our natural inclinations.

Both, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross warned their readers against the subtle danger of substituting human effort for divine grace, of trying to construct a spiritual life based on our own ideas rather than surrendering to God’s self-revelation. Teresa constantly fought against those who wanted to reduce prayer to techniques and formulas; that is, to human effort. She insisted that authentic prayer is receptivity to God’s action, not mastery of methods. We cannot engineer our way to holiness. We can only open ourselves to receive what God freely gives. John, in his writings, warns against spiritual seekers who cling to visions, consolations, and extraordinary experiences, creating their own “gospel” of spiritual sensation rather than accepting the naked faith God asks of us. We must be willing to let go of everything we think we know about God, every consolation we have received, every spiritual achievement we are proud of, in order to receive the truth that comes only through divine revelation.

False gospels – whether the gospel of works, the gospel of spiritual achievement, the gospel of consolation-seeking – ultimately lead to bondage, not freedom. Paul challenges us to examine what we believe, reminding us that the true Gospel always moves us to become nothing so that Christ can become everything. May we strive for the grace to recognize the true Gospel of Christ, and to resist the temptation to remake it according to our liking.

Response: The Lord will remember his covenant for ever.

6

TUE

Be Mary!**Ordinary Weekday**

Gal 1: 13-24/ Ps 139: 1b-3. 13-14ab. 14c-15/ Lk 10: 38-42

Today's readings are extraordinarily beautiful. The contrast between Martha and Mary represents the two extremes of life that each of us encounter every day. While we long to sit at the feet of our Lord and listen to every word He speaks, the demands, struggles, and responsibilities of daily life often leave us with little opportunity to do so. We desire to be transformed by the words of Jesus, yet the cares and anxieties of the world constantly pull us away. Mary's life, however, stands as a profound inspiration. Though many of us identify more with Martha, our true aspiration should be, to become like Mary: setting aside time to be in the Lord's presence and attentively listening to Him. Even if we cannot spend long hours in prayer, we should faithfully dedicate some time for the Lord.

At the same time, St. Teresa of Avila reminds us that "the Lord walks among pots and pans." In other words, even while carrying out the ordinary duties of life, we can remain united with God. Martha's work was not the problem; it was her anxiety and distraction. When our daily tasks are done with love and with our hearts fixed on the Lord, even the busiest moments become opportunities for prayer. This is precisely what St. Paul reminds the Galatians that he experienced a complete transformation through his encounter with Christ. Likewise, the psalmist recognizes that the Lord has formed him, and by faithfully embracing God's word, he allows himself to be continually transformed. Mary, too, was transformed simply by listening to Jesus.

Today's readings invite us not merely to get caught up in the busyness of life, but to allow ourselves to be transformed by the Word of God. It is never too late. Every day is a new beginning, a fresh opportunity to let the Lord shape our hearts through His word. We simply need to recognize His gentle, life-giving voice and distinguish it from the countless noisy voices of the world. When we listen to Him, whether at His feet or among the pots and pans, He transforms both our hearts and our lives.

Response: Guide me, Lord, along the everlasting way.

7

WED

The Chain of Salvation***Our Lady of the Rosary***

Acts 1: 12-14/ Ps: Lk 1: 46-47, 48-49, 50-51, 52-53, 54-55/ Lk 1: 26-38

Today's reading highlights the role of Mary in salvation history. Who is this valiant 'WOMAN' to whom so much is entrusted and of whom so much is asked? Indeed, she is the very Mother of God and our mother too. So being our mother, we ought to love her and have devotion to her. For us Catholics, devotion to Mary is absolutely necessary for our salvation.

We must never fear to love her too much for as a saint puts it: we could never love her more than Jesus loved her or think that by loving her too much, God may be offended or think that we give her more importance even than God. Such erroneous thinking would not find favour with God as St. Grignon de Montfort states: 'let them not seek mercy from God, those who offend his Holy Mother. Devotion to Mary therefore is the safest and surest way to Jesus Christ and thus to salvation as the saints affirm and testify. The prayer most pleasing to Mary is the Holy Rosary. So, the best way to express our devotion is through the rosary. Yet the rosary is not a magic formula or a superstitious repetition or a devotion meant for the lowly and uneducated. Pope St. Paul VI calls it a 'compendium of the Gospel.' Pope St. John Paul II states that the rosary is an exquisitely contemplative prayer.

The rosary is a prayer especially relevant to our times as Sr. Lucia of Fatima states, that it is given a new efficacy in these last times so much so that there is no problem however difficult whether temporal or spiritual that cannot be resolved by praying the rosary. Finally, let us not forget that the evil one who is the 'Father of lies' hates Mary and seeks to obscure her in the life of her children and in the church as the book of Revelation states, but in faith in scripture, we believe that she is the one who will crush the head of the serpent through the fragile chain of the holy rosary.

Response: Go out to all the world, and tell the Good News.

8

THU

Perseverance in prayer***Ordinary Weekday***

Gal 3: 1-5/ Lk 1: 69-70. 71-72. 73-75/ Lk 11: 5-13

In the first Reading St. Paul speaks about justification by faith. He reminds the Galatians that when they had become Christians, they had received the Holy Spirit and some of them had worked miracles through the Spirit; and he asks them why were they turning to the law now.

All of us need to persevere in faith and prayer. And Jesus speaks to us in today's parable about a friend who knocks at a friend's door at midnight. The late traveller confronted the householder with an embarrassing situation. Most probably to avoid the heat of the day he travelled at night and reached his friend's house at midnight. He set out to ask for bread from his friend. At his friends' persistence the latter was forced to get up and give what was asked of him.

Jesus speaks of the importance of intercessory prayer for ourselves and for others. 'Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.' It is of vital importance that we pray for others. St. Teresa of Avila says in the *Way of Perfection* that we should live in such a way that our prayers will be answered. Prayer and life are inter-connected. *Gaudium et spes* teaches us: 'The Joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of the followers of Christ. We must be concerned for all our brothers and sisters.'

At the end of the parable Jesus says: 'How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those ask Him.' We do not know how to pray but the Holy Spirit prays in us. When we surrender ourselves in God's hands, He takes care of our needs and wants. He knows better than we, what is best for us. What He wants from us is our childlike confidence in Him and total surrender. The greatest gift we can ask of God is His Holy Spirit.

***Response: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people.***

9

FRI

The Heart: A Dwelling Place of the Holy Spirit*Ordinary Weekday/ St Denis*

Gal 3: 7-14/ Ps 111: 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6/ Lk 11: 15-26

The image of the house in Luke 11:24-26 provides a profound biblical reflection on the mystery of the human heart and its relationship with God. Jesus speaks of an unclean spirit leaving a person and wandering through waterless regions in search of rest. When it cannot find a place, it returns to the same person and finds the empty house “swept and put in order.” The spirit then brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and the final condition of that person becomes worse than the first. The striking element here is that, although the person has been set free from the evil spirit, he has not filled his life with divine grace. His heart remains empty. This emptiness allows the evil spirit to return and take possession of him again.

This image of the “house” has a rich biblical resonance. Scripture repeatedly presents the human person and the people of God in terms of dwelling and habitation. From the beginning, God desires to dwell among his people. In Exodus, God commands Israel to build a sanctuary so that he may dwell in their midst: “Let them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). The movement of biblical revelation is therefore not simply from impurity to purity, but from alienation to communion, from emptiness to divine indwelling. The purpose of cleansing is ultimately that God himself may inhabit what has been cleansed.

This theme becomes even more significant in the context of Luke 11. Jesus has just cast out a demon, and the people witness the manifestation of God’s power. Jesus declares, “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Luke 11:20). The casting out of the demon is therefore not merely an isolated miracle. It is a sign that the kingdom of God has come near. The ‘stronger one’ has entered the human situation and conquered the power that held the person captive. The “house” has been liberated because the kingdom of God has drawn near in the person of Jesus.

Response: The Lord will remember his covenant for ever.

10
SAT**Our Identity is in Christ*****Ordinary Weekday***

Gal 3: 22-29/ Ps 105: 2-3. 4-5. 6-7/ Lk 11: 27-28

St. Paul's words to the Galatians says that our true identity is found in Jesus Christ. He tells us that through Baptism we have become children of God. Whether one is Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, all are one in Christ Jesus. This does not mean that our differences disappear. Rather, it means that before God every person possesses the same dignity and is equally loved. As members of the Church, we are united as one family because the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. This truth has great significance for our daily lives. In today's world, people often find their identity in wealth, education, social status, nationality or achievements. These things may have their place, but they cannot define who we truly are. Our deepest identity comes from being sons and daughters of God. Through Baptism, we are clothed with Christ and called to live as His disciples. This identity should shape the way we think, speak and treat others. When we recognize Christ in one another, we become more patient, more forgiving and more willing to serve.

In the Gospel when a woman praises Jesus by honouring His mother, Jesus points to the source of Mary's greatness: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it." The Church has always understood that Mary is blessed not only because she gave birth to Jesus but because she welcomed God's word with faith and lived it wholeheartedly. Her whole life was a faithful response to God's will. Mary, therefore, becomes the perfect example of what St. Paul teaches. She belonged completely to Christ and allowed God's word to shape every part of her life. As members of Christ's Body, we too are called to follow her example by listening to God's word and putting it into practice.

Today, let us thank God for the gift of our Baptism, through which we have become God's children. May we never forget that our greatest identity is to belong to Christ, and may our lives reflect that identity through our faith hope and charity.

Response: The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

11
SUN
Poor in spirit, answer God's invitation!
TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Is 25: 6-10a/ Ps 23: 1-3a. 3b-4. 5. 6/ Phil 4: 12-14, 19-20/ Mt 22: 1-14

God who is all powerful in his kindness always finds means and ways to lavish his love on all of his children. The love of God for humanity is unfathomable story but the way humanity responds to God's love is another story altogether. Prophet Isaiah's words in today's first reading are centered around the eschatological feast. God will prepare a banquet for all the peoples of the earth and destroy death forever. The symbolic sacrifice of fat which the Israelites used to offer to God, now God will share with his people that is, a feast of rich food, of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow. This means that the fat which was normally reserved for God, God will share with the human beings. Thus, humanity sharing in the food which belong to God, once reserved for Him, death will be vanquished.

On the mountain of the Lord, God's people find refuge and salvation from their enemies. While this was historically fulfilled in Israel's deliverance from its earthly enemies, the passage points beyond particular cities or historical events to a deeper mystery of salvation. God now seeks to deliver His people from the tyrant within: the pride that takes root in the human heart. Thus, the poor who place their hope in God find true salvation when He frees them from pride and leads them into the spiritual poverty of complete dependence on Him.

We see the secret of this spiritual poverty in Paul. He had learned how to be satisfied in all circumstances and was always grateful for the help he received from others. He knew how to live in poverty and in abundance, he possessed the virtue of sufficiency. For Paul, this "sufficiency" was founded on the help of the Lord who gave him strength.

The poor of the Lord participate in the feast prepared by the Lord himself. But each human being has to make a choice to respond to God's feast of love. In the parable of the wedding banquet, Jesus tells us that many do not respond to his invitation. When he sent his prophets, his own people did not listen to them but rather rejected their message. They even went to the extent of insulting and killing them. When we compare today's parable

to the history of the people of Israel, we see that God is the king who sent the invitation of wedding banquet to his people. But Jerusalem, who rejected the invitation and mistreated the prophets, was burned down by Nebuchadnezzar who was God's instrument of chastisement.

But the celebration does not end, God who is mercy itself now extends his invitation not only to the lost sheep of Israel but to all the peoples of the earth, through his servants the prophets, apostles and evangelists. Even here we see that not all respond with the sincerity of faith. The one who is invited must prove himself/ herself to participate in the heavenly banquet. What does one need to do to be worthy? One must have a sincere desire to change and be committed to live according to the ways of God in his/her sphere of life. Wedding garment is nothing else but the willingness to change. God provides grace to everyone who makes effort to answer His invitation. Those who are poor in spirit, realize their need for God and respond to his invitation. Those who do not respond worthily to God's invitation receive a harsh judgment in the parable of today, which is applied to all who are faithless. But let us not forget what Jesus told St. Faustina. Jesus told her that before he comes as a just judge, He opens the door of mercy to every human being.

Today, St. Paul is an example for us. He was the one, who though ignorant in his pride and zeal, persecuted the church of Christ. But when he realized his mistake after his encounter with the risen Lord, he was a different person transformed through grace. He learnt to face every situation that life afforded him, all because he was dependent on God. The people of Israel saw themselves as God's chosen; Jesus reminds us that those who faithfully respond to God's call are the truly "chosen of God."

Response: In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for length of days unending.

12
MON**Mystery of Jesus Transcends The Human*****Ordinary Weekday***

Gal 4: 22-24, 26-27. 31 - 5: 1/ Ps 113: 1b-2. 3-4. 5a and 6-7/ Lk 11: 29-32

God as a mystery is beyond human comprehension. Down the centuries many were fascinated by Jesus Christ for good reason or bad. There are millions who cannot accept Jesus Christ. It is a question of mindset and human thought categories. We need to realize that as creatures we lack a platform outside our realm to be able to look at God and man from another perspective. We cannot claim to know God objectively!

St. Paul starts to reflect with the Israelite historical narratives. He cites the example of the birth of Ishmael to Hagar and of Isaac from Sarah. Sarah however ensures the birth right to her son. Though both boys are sons of Abraham, they have different natures and roles; which in a metaphorical manner reveal the distinction between the spiritual and the material. Here St. Paul very reasonably invites us to make the leap of faith to accept the difference between the Old Testament vision of life and experience of salvation here and beyond the boundaries of the earth that is embodied in the New Testament, namely that all Christians are by the greater reason of faith are the children of Abraham than the Jewish people.

In the Gospel too Jesus confronts his people refusing to accept his identity as the Messiah, by criticizing their matrix of evaluating the wisdom of Solomon and conversion of pagan people of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah. He declares univocally that he is the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Old Testament.

Today as we admire the person of St. Carlo Acutis who had no qualms to make the leap of faith in Jesus self-revelation as embodiment of love, revealed in God who is love itself, we are invited to rise beyond asking God to do what we want in our pious devotions, but go beyond and leap joyfully in God's hands and accept what he has planned for us. We do not look at Jesus from the measure of mere social or political or financial greatness, but as the merciful face of God to the humanity revealed in his sacrifice on the cross embodied in the Eucharist.

Response: Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.

13
TUE**Clean Inside Out**
Ordinary Weekday

Gal 5: 1-6/ Ps 119: 41. 43. 44. 45. 47. 48/ Lk 11: 37-41

A man came home after a long day and noticed that his young daughter was sitting rather silently at the table. "What's wrong?" he asked. She looked at him and said, "Dad, you always tell me to be kind, but sometimes I hear you speak harshly to people." He was caught off guard. He wanted to explain himself, but he couldn't. She wasn't accusing him. However, she noticed the difference between what he taught and what she saw. That evening, he kept thinking about her words. He realised something uncomfortable: it is possible to say all the right things and still live differently. Jesus invites us to make that same honest check, when he speaks about cleaning the outside of the cup while leaving the inside untouched.

St. Paul reminds us that what matters is "faith that is catalysed by charity." In other words, our faith cannot remain in our words, prayers or outward practices. It has to reach the heart and eventually show itself in the way we live. We often pray for patience, yet become irritated when things don't go our way. We pray for forgiveness while holding on to resentment. We pray for humility but feel hurt when nobody notices us. We pray for peace while carrying anger into our relationships.

We cannot live wrong and pray right.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves: *Does the way I treat people match the love I speak about? Or Does my private life match the person I present publicly? If someone close to me described my character, would it sound like the person I claim to be in prayer?* God is not asking us to polish the outside while hiding what is happening within. He invites us to let Him clean the inside, where our motives, attitudes, wounds and choices begin. When the inside changes, the outside eventually follows. So perhaps today's prayer is simple: "Lord, make me clean from the inside out. Let my faith become love, my prayer become action, and my words become the way I live."

Response: Let your mercy come to me, O Lord.

14
WED

The Spirit alone bears fruit in us

Ordinary Weekday

Gal 5: 18-25/ Ps 1: 1-2. 3. 4 and 6/ Lk 11: 42-46

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproofs him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights (Prov 3:11-12). Sometimes Jesus gives his disciples or the Pharisees a hard word, a word of correction, a word of discipline, but this is all because the Father loves them. Today's Gospel is a set of 'Woe to you' passages which would be very challenging for anyone to accept. But we need to remember that this is the Lord gently disciplining his children.

Jesus points out how the Pharisees and Lawyers neglect justice and love, place unnecessary burdens on the people and seek attention and praise from men for their position in society. All of us fall into these temptations and so we can apply this disciplining action of Jesus to ourselves. Foundationally these are desires and works of the flesh and opposed to the Spirit of God. As Prov 3 tells us, let us receive the Lord's love completely by not rejecting His discipline. The hard words of Jesus, therefore, are not meant to condemn us but to awaken us. They invite us to examine our hearts honestly and allow God to transform whatever in us has become self-centred, burdensome or merely outward. True discipleship begins when we allow the Lord to correct us and lead us into greater freedom.

The 1st reading from Gal 5 emphasizes this as seen from the fruit of the Spirit. We who belong to Christ are called to crucify the desires of the flesh. St. Paul also recognizes that we need the grace of the Lord to accomplish both of these things – to put to death the desires of the flesh and to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, who alone brings forth fruit in us. Hence even though this Gospel is a difficult word from Jesus, it is meant for us to see the desperate nature of Jesus' plea, that we turn away from selfish desires and back to His way of love, relying upon His Spirit of grace.

Response: Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life.

15
THU**Living and Responding to the Call of Grace***St Teresa of Avila*

Eph 1: 1-10/ Ps 98: 1. 2-3ab. 3cd-4. 5-6/ Lk 11: 47-54

In the very first verse we see that St. Paul is commissioned by Christ and not self-appointed. He is an apostle “by the will of God.” He belongs to Christ. His identity and mission come from being in communion with Christ. Paul assures the community that his writing and prayer is rooted in Christ, and obedience to God’s will. Like Paul, do I realise that my calling comes from Christ. The ministry I like to work in, is Christ’s calling and not my right. It is not my personal or private project. Who inspires me and gives me the strength in ministry? Am I rooted in prayer and listening to God’s will?

Paul describes those to whom he is writing as saints, as faithful, and as being in Christ Jesus. As saints we are sanctified, and set apart by the Holy Spirit. We are all called to Holiness. Holiness is about belonging to God and being in His presence. As Christ’s faithful we are invited to trust in God’s goodness and are invited to participate in Christ’s life and love. St. Paul’s opening word, ‘Blessed,’ invites us to join him in a prayer of praise. Being rooted in Christ at Baptism, we are invited to pray to the Father as Jesus did. Our praise to God in prayer must be the exuberance that flows from experiencing God’s deep love. The daily Eucharist is the community shared worship in which we can experience God. Do I open myself to experience God’s transforming love?

Today’s responsorial Psalm, is a hymn of joy telling us of God’s marvellous deeds. This invites universal praise i.e., voices, instruments, and creation itself. In the Gospel, Jesus rebukes the scribes and Pharisees for honouring prophets outwardly with lip service. Inwardly they have rejected the prophet’s message. Are our lives also one of hypocrisy and hardness of heart? Are we actually serving God’s saving plan and will? God has a plan of salvation in Christ, for each one of us. We are invited to respond in joyful praise, and live our lives attaining Christian maturity in faithfulness to God.

Response: The Lord has made known his salvation.

16
FRI**Laudem Glorïae****Margaret Mary Alacoque**

Eph 1: 11-14/ Ps 33: 1-2. 4-5. 12-13/ Lk 12: 1-7

Laudem Glorïae, “to the praise of His glory.” This striking phrase echoes twice in today’s first reading, where St. Paul reminds us that we are chosen, redeemed, and sealed with the Holy Spirit so that our very lives may become a hymn of praise to God. We exist not to glorify ourselves but to reflect His glory.

This expression held a special place in the heart of a French Carmelite mystic, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. She longed to become *Laudem Glorïae*, a living praise of God’s glory. For her, it was not achieved through extraordinary works or public recognition, but through silent fidelity, loving surrender, and allowing Christ to dwell so deeply within her that every thought, word, and deed became a song of praise. Reflecting on this mystery, she exclaimed, “To be a praise of glory one must be dead to all that is not Him, so as to be moved only by His touch.”

Our world is increasingly driven by visibility. Social media counts followers, workplaces celebrate achievements, and even charity can become an opportunity for self-promotion. Yet Christians are called to a different measure of greatness. Our worth is determined not by how many people notice us, but by how faithfully we reflect Christ. In the Gospel, Jesus warns us against the “leaven of the Pharisees,” which is hypocrisy, pretending to be good to gain people’s praise.

But how do we become *Laudem Glorïae* today? We become God’s praise when we forgive instead of retaliating, serve without seeking applause, pray when no one notices, and remain faithful even when our efforts go unseen. Holiness is often hidden. The most beautiful hymn to God is not always sung from a stage; sometimes it is whispered in the ordinary faithfulness of everyday life. When we rest in the truth that God holds us close, we stop seeking others’ approval. We no longer feel the need to prove ourselves. Knowing we are deeply loved by God sets us free, and that is where true praise begins.

May our lives, hidden or celebrated, joyful or burdened, become a quiet but unmistakable hymn, *Laudem Glorïae*.

Response: Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

17
SAT**Witnesses of the Lord*****St Ignatius of Antioch***

Eph 1: 15-23/ Ps 8: 2-3ab. 4-5. 6-7/ Lk 12: 8-12

The liturgy of the day invites us to become true and fearless witnesses of the Lord. Jesus witnessed fearlessly to the Father and to His Kingdom. St Paul through his life and teachings gave testimony to the Lord. St Ignatius of Antioch offered his life for the Gospel as a powerful witness. We too are called to bear witness to the Lord, to His Gospel and to the Kingdom of God, in and through our lives. A disciple of Jesus who has to give testimony to the Lord should have two important things: conviction and courage. Our conviction comes from knowledge and experience. A disciple is called to know the Lord. This knowledge is not mere intellectual or theoretical knowledge about Christ, it is an experiential knowledge. It involves true experience of Jesus. When a disciple knows and experiences Christ, he will be convinced of his faith. Thus, he will be convinced to give witness to the Lord. A disciple also should have courage. When we want to speak about Christ, proclaim Him through our life and deeds, we are faced with fear. We anticipate challenges and problems. This fear has to be overcome by faith in Christ. So, a disciple needs courage to give witness to Christ.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls His disciples to acknowledge Him before others. When we live a life of the Gospel values, we tell the world that we belong to Christ, we are His followers. This becomes the proclamation of the Gospel. Those who acknowledge Christ before people are promised that Christ will acknowledge them before God. He will speak for us with the Father. The Holy Spirit gives the knowledge of the love of the Father, the salvation brought about by Christ, and the forgiveness of our sins. He freely offers the gift of salvation. We are to learn to accept it with gratefulness. While giving witness to Christ, we will have to face hardships and challenges. But, the Lord promises us the gift of the Holy Spirit, His wisdom and His power. Taking the example St Paul and St Ignatius of Antioch, let us wholeheartedly give testimony to Jesus.

Response: You have given your Son rule over the works of your hands.

18
SUN**Belonging to God*****TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME***

Is 45: 1. 4-6/ Ps 96: 1. 3. 4-5. 7-8. 9-10/ 1 Thes 1: 1-5b/ Mt 22: 15-21

There is a story about a little child who was given a beautiful coin by his grandfather. The child kept looking at it and asked, "Grandpa, why is your name written on this?" The grandfather smiled and said, "Because it belongs to me." The child immediately replied, "Then if God has made me, whose name is written on me?" That simple question brings us to the heart of today's readings: If we belong to God, how should we live in this world? The three readings lead us towards one profound truth: God is the Lord of history, but He calls us to live faithfully giving to the world what belongs to the world and giving to God what belongs to God: our very selves.

In the first reading, God speaks about Cyrus, the king of Persia. Cyrus is not an Israelite, he is not of the chosen people. Yet God says, "I have called you by your name." Cyrus becomes an instrument in God's hands for the liberation of Israel, for God works through all of his creation. This reminds us that God is not limited by our expectations. We often think that God can work only through people who are religious, holy, or belong to our group. But Isaiah tells us something deeper: God is Lord of history. He can use people and situations we would never expect. The Bible gives us many examples. God used Pharaoh's daughter to protect Moses. He used the pagan king Cyrus to help His people. He used a Roman centurion as an example of faith. He even used the cross, to bring salvation to the world. Therefore, we should never say, "God cannot work through that person," or "Nothing good can come from this situation."

The second reading takes us from God's action in history to our response as believers. Paul thanks God for the Christians at Thessalonica because of their "work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Notice the three words: faith, love and hope. Faith is not simply something we profess with our lips. Faith becomes a "work." Love is not merely a feeling. Love becomes a "labour." Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope becomes "steadfastness," the strength to remain faithful even when life becomes difficult.

This is where the Gospel becomes very practical. The Pharisees and the Herodians come to Jesus with a question intended to trap Him: “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” It appears to be a simple question, but it is actually a political and religious trap. If Jesus says “yes,” they can accuse Him of compromising the faith. If He says “no,” they can accuse Him of rebellion against Caesar. Jesus does not allow Himself to be trapped by their false choice. He asks for a coin and says, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” The coin bears Caesar’s image. Therefore, Jesus says, “Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and to God what belongs to God.” But Jesus is saying something far deeper than simply paying taxes.

The coin carries Caesar’s image. But we carry God’s image. Genesis tells us, “God created humankind in his image” (Genesis 1:27). The coin belongs to Caesar because his image is upon it. But our life belongs to God because God’s image is upon us.

Therefore, the real question is not merely, “What belongs to Caesar?” The deeper question is: What belongs to God? Our time belongs to God. Our talents belong to God. Our relationships belong to God. Our work belongs to God. Our successes, failures and ultimately, we belong to God.

Jesus does not tell us to escape from the world. He teaches us to live faithfully in the world without allowing the world to possess our hearts. This is also what we see in the Christians of Thessalonica. They lived in a pagan society, yet their faith, love and hope transformed the way they lived. They did not withdraw from the world; they became a witness within it.

Perhaps this is the challenge for us today. We may carry many identities: citizen, employee, parent, religious, teacher, businessman, student, priest, consecrated person. But beneath all these identities is one fundamental identity: I am created in the image of God, and I belong to Him. When people encounter us, may they not merely see our face, but recognize in us the face of Christ!

Response: Give the Lord glory and power.

19
MON**Christ Our Treasure*****Ordinary Weekday***

Eph 2: 1-10/ Ps 100: 1b-2. 3. 4ab. 4c-5/ Lk 12: 13-21

When Jesus began His public ministry, He proclaimed the coming of a new era—the Kingdom of God, in which God would overcome the dominion of Satan and establish His reign among His people. Jesus presented this Kingdom as a hidden treasure and a precious pearl because it possesses a value far greater than anything the world can offer (Mt 13:44). To possess the Kingdom is to allow God to become the true treasure, security and meaning of our existence.

The Kingdom, however, is not an earthly empire or a visible reality established by human power. Jesus tells us that it is already present in our midst and within us (Lk 17:21). It begins when we turn to Christ and awaken to the truth of who we are before God: creatures who are weak, sinful and entirely dependent upon His mercy. This realization is not the fruit of our intelligence or achievement but of grace. When Christ becomes our treasure, our hearts gradually experience the freedom, peace and joy that the world cannot give.

Today's Gospel exposes the foolishness of the rich man who seeks security and permanence in earthly possessions. His tragedy is not simply that he is rich, but that he mistakes temporary wealth for lasting security. Jesus reminds us that everything we accumulate belongs to this passing world, whereas He alone offers eternal life. Salvation, therefore, is not a reward for our achievements or human righteousness but a free gift received through Christ (Eph 2:8–9).

Yet grace is never sterile. As St Paul teaches, those who are made alive in Christ begin to live differently. The desires of the flesh are gradually crucified, while the Spirit produces in us a new way of living (Gal 5:19–22). Thus, the Christian life is a journey from spiritual death to new life. It is a life no longer centred on possession, status or self, but on Christ and loving service of others. The real question, then, is not what we possess, but what possesses our hearts. When Christ becomes our treasure, we discover the only wealth that leads to eternal life.

Response: The Lord made us, we belong to him.

20
TUE**Living as Members of God's Household*****Ordinary Weekday***

Eph 2: 12-22/ Ps 85: 9ab-10. 11-12. 13-14/ Lk 12: 35-38

As Christians, it is easy to forget the great gift we have received through Christ. We may become accustomed to our faith and overlook the profound change that God has worked in our lives. Today's readings remind us that through Christ we have been brought near to God and called to live with watchful hearts, aware of His presence and ready for His coming. St. Paul speaks to believers who were once far from God, separated from the covenant and without hope. Yet through Christ, those who were distant have been brought near and reconciled. The barriers that once divided people have been broken down and a new unity has been created. Now believers are no longer strangers but members of God's household, built together into a spiritual dwelling where God's Spirit lives.

This beautiful image of being part of God's household helps us understand the message of the Gospel. If we truly belong to God's family, we must live with the awareness that the Lord is present and may come at any moment. Jesus calls His disciples to remain watchful and ready, like servants waiting for their master. The readiness He asks for is not fear but faithful attentiveness, living each day in a way worthy of those who belong to God. Since Christ has brought us into God's household, we are called to live responsibly as members of that household. Our lives should reflect the unity, faithfulness, and hope that come from being part of God's people.

Today the Church also remembers Paul of the Cross, who constantly reminded Christians to keep their hearts focused on Christ, especially on His saving love revealed in the Passion. He once said that the remembrance of Christ's suffering keeps the soul attentive and faithful to God. Such remembrance helps believers remain spiritually awake. We are no longer distant from God; we belong to Him. When we remember that we are part of God's household, our actions, choices, and attitudes naturally become more attentive to His presence. Living with this awareness helps us remain ready whenever the Lord comes to meet us.

Response: The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

21
WED**Being Ready**
Ordinary Weekday

Eph 3: 2-12/ Is 12: 2-3. 4bcd. 5-6/ Lk 12: 39-48

"Be ready," Jesus tells us today. He compares human life to servants waiting for their master to return. They do not know the hour, but they remain faithful because they love and trust their master. A little boy once asked his mother, "When is Grandpa coming home?" She replied, "I don't know the exact time, but let us keep the house clean and supper ready." The boy happily helped prepare everything. When Grandpa finally arrived, he was welcomed with joy. They were ready not because they knew the hour, but because they loved the one who was coming. This is exactly what Jesus asks of us. Christian life is not about living in fear of the end. It is about living every day with love, faithfulness, and hope. Every moment is an opportunity to welcome Christ: in prayer, in the Eucharist, in our families, and especially in those who are poor, lonely, and suffering.

Jesus also reminds us that "much will be required of the person entrusted with much." God has entrusted each of us with precious gifts: our faith, our family, our talents, our time, and our resources. These are not possessions to keep for ourselves but blessings to be shared. The question at the end of life will not be, "How much did you own?" but "How faithfully did you love and serve?" Many people wait for a great opportunity to do something for God. But holiness is built through ordinary faithfulness: a kind word, an honest day's work, forgiveness offered, a prayer said with sincerity, a helping hand to a neighbour. These simple acts prepare us for the Lord's coming.

Today, let us ask ourselves: If Christ came today, would He find me living with faith, compassion, and integrity? Would He find me awake to the needs of others?

Let us not postpone our conversion. Every sunrise is God's invitation to begin again. Every Eucharist strengthens us to be faithful servants. And every act of love prepares us to hear the master say: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Response: You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

22
THU**When Love Sets the Heart on Fire*****Pope St John Paul II***

Eph 3: 14-21/ Ps 33: 1-2, 4-5, 11-12, 18-19/ Lk 12: 49-53

St. Paul tells us to be rooted and grounded in love, while Jesus declares, "I have come to bring fire upon the earth." One speaks of love; the other speaks of fire. Yet these are not two different messages. The love of Christ is itself a fire. A tree does not become strong because its branches are beautiful, but because its roots run deep. In the same way, our Christian life cannot depend only on pleasant circumstances or the appreciation of others. We need deeper roots.

St. Paul prays that Christ may dwell in our hearts and that we may be rooted and grounded in love. What a beautiful image! We are not merely asked to know Christ, speak about Christ, or occasionally remember Christ. We are invited to make our hearts His dwelling place. But love, when it is genuine, does not leave us unchanged. A small flame placed in a cold room changes the atmosphere. A fire does not merely illuminate; it gives warmth, consumes what is useless, and transforms what it touches. This is the fire Jesus speaks about: "I have come to bring fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled"

Perhaps this is the fire we sometimes resist. We want Jesus to comfort us, but not necessarily to challenge us. We want His peace, but not always His truth. We want Him to bless our choices, but we may hesitate when He asks us to change them. The fire of Christ burns away our pride, selfishness, resentment, jealousy and indifference. It warms the heart that has grown cold. It gives courage to the person who is afraid. It gives light when the path ahead is uncertain. A Christian is not called to be a troublemaker, but neither are we called to be people-pleasers. The deeper question is not, Will everyone approve of me? but, Will Christ find a home in me?

Response: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

23
FRI**Why Wait, When we know what is Right?*****Ordinary Weekday***

Eph 4: 1-6/ Ps 24: 1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6/ Lk 12: 54-59

The readings of today invite us to look at the way we live with one another and the way we respond to God's call. The Gospel invites us to recognize what God is asking from us.

Paul reminds us to live in a way that shows our faith and the calling we have received from God. He asks the Christians to be humble, gentle, patient, and ready to bear with one another in love. Paul reminds us that our faith must be seen in the way we treat people. He also speaks about unity. There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith and one baptism. We may have different personalities, opinions and responsibilities, but we belong to the same Lord. Unity does not mean that everyone has to think in the same way. It means that we learn to respect one another and work together without allowing small differences to divide us.

We may know what is right, but knowing is not enough. The Gospel challenges us to act before the opportunity passes. God gives us moments of grace, and we should not ignore them because of pride, fear, or delay. The Gospel reminds us to recognize the signs of God's presence and His call in our lives. We are often quick to notice what is happening around us, but we may fail to see what is happening in our own hearts. We may know when a relationship is hurting, when someone needs our forgiveness, or when God is asking us to change, yet we sometimes delay responding to His grace.

Today the Lord asks us to take one simple step, that is, to forgive someone, to speak gently, to make peace, or to correct something in our own life. We do not need to wait for a perfect moment. When God gives us the light to see, we should also have the courage to respond. Let us ask the Lord for humble hearts so that we may listen to His voice. May our faith be seen not only in our prayers, but in the way we forgive and love each day.

Response: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

24
SAT**God Gives Us Time to Bear Fruit***St Anthony Mary Claret*

Eph 4: 7-16/ Ps 122: 1-2. 3-4ab. 4cd-5/ Lk 13: 1-9

Today's readings invite us to reflect on God's patience, our gifts, and the fruitfulness of our lives. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us the parable of the barren fig tree. The owner comes looking for fruit but finds none. He wants to cut the tree down. But the gardener pleads with him to till and manure it another year!

This is a beautiful picture of God's mercy. The tree has not produced fruit, yet God does not immediately abandon it. He gives it another opportunity. In the same way, there are moments when we may feel that our lives are not bearing enough fruit; our faith may be weak, our prayer may be dry, or we may keep falling into the same mistakes. Yet God patiently says, "Give it another chance."

But the Gospel also gives us a challenge. God's patience is not an invitation to remain unchanged. The extra time is given so that the tree may finally bear fruit. St. Paul reminds us that Christ has given different gifts to each member of the Church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These gifts are given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ." Therefore, whatever gift we have our intelligence, creativity, compassion, leadership, communication, or simply our ability to encourage someone, is not meant only for ourselves. God's gifts become meaningful when they become gifts to others.

The Psalm expresses the joy of journeying together toward God: "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" We do not grow alone. We need God and we need one another. So today, let us ask ourselves: What fruit is my life producing? Am I becoming more loving, patient, forgiving and generous? And am I using the gifts God has given me for the good of others?

This is the wonderful message of today: God has not given up on us. The Gardener is still working on us. May we allow His grace to cultivate our hearts so that our lives may truly bear fruit.

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

25
SUN

**Tell Me Whom You Love,
and I'll Tell You Who You Are**
THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ex 22: 21-27/ Ps 18: 2-3, 3-4, 47, 51 (2)/ 1 Thes 1: 5c-10/ Mt 22: 34-40

It is often said that if we really want to know who a person is, we should look at what or whom that person loves. Our loves reveal our priorities. They influence our decisions, shape our relationships, and gradually form the kind of people we become. A person may speak about many things, but ultimately, what we love tells the deeper story of our lives. In this sense, the readings today invite us to ask a simple yet profound question: Whom do I really love? And what does my love reveal about me?

In the Gospel, a Pharisee asks Jesus which commandment is the greatest. Jesus does not hesitate. He says that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind. But Jesus does something equally important: He immediately connects this love with another commandment: to love our neighbour as ourselves. For Jesus, these two loves cannot be separated. Love of God is not something that exists independently from the way we treat the people around us. The person who truly loves God will gradually learn to see, respect and love others with the heart of God.

The first reading gives us a very practical picture of what this love looks like. God speaks about the stranger, the widow, the orphan and the poor. These were people who could easily be ignored because they had little power or protection. Yet God warns His people not to take advantage of them. He even says that when they cry out, He will hear their cry. This reveals that God is especially attentive to those whom society can overlook. Therefore, loving our neighbour is not merely about being kind to people we like. It means becoming sensitive to those who are vulnerable, inconvenient, forgotten or unable to repay us. Sometimes it is someone who has hurt us or a lonely elderly person whom everyone else seems to avoid.

The second reading presents us with a beautiful example of this kind of Christian life. St Paul praises the Thessalonians because they had received the Gospel and allowed it to transform their lives. Their faith did not remain something they professed with

their lips; it became something that could be seen in their lives. They themselves became a model for other believers. Their love for God became visible through the way they lived. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for Christians today. We can have beautiful churches, devotional practices, prayers, medals, rosaries and religious traditions which are all precious. But the world ultimately wants to know whether our faith has made us more loving. Can people see something of Christ in the way we relate with them?

A new version of ‘Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are,’ can be created today: ‘Tell me whom you love, and I will tell you who you are.’ If our hearts are filled with love for God, that love cannot remain hidden. It will eventually spill over into our relationships. We will become more compassionate, more patient, more forgiving and more attentive to the needs of others.

Perhaps, then, today’s Gospel is not simply asking us whether we love God. It is asking us to examine what our love for God is producing in us. Does it make us kinder? Does it make us less judgmental? Does it make us more generous? Does it make us notice the person whom others ignore? Does it make our presence a source of peace and consolation?

At the end of our lives, people may forget many things about us: our achievements, possessions, positions and even our words. But they are unlikely to forget how we made them feel. They will remember whether our presence made them feel loved, welcomed, valued and cared for. That is the kind of faith the Thessalonians had: a faith that could be seen. And that is the kind of love Jesus asks of us: a love of God that becomes love of neighbour. So, as we reflect on these readings today, we are to carry one question with us: “If someone watched the way I love, what would they discover about the God I believe in?” May our answer be found not merely in our words, but in our lives. For ultimately, ‘tell me whom you love, and I will tell you who you are.’

Response: I love you, Lord, my strength.

26
MON

Living as Children of Light Through Mercy and Freedom

Ordinary Weekday

Eph 4: 32 - 5: 8/ Ps 1: 1-2. 3. 4 and 6/ Lk 13: 10-17

Today's readings invite us to reflect on what it means to live as God's beloved children. Through Christ's saving sacrifice we have been reconciled with God, and He has taught us to call God as Father. The readings today call us to imitate God's love, choose the path of righteousness, and allow Christ to free us from whatever keeps us bound. St. Paul gives practical guidance for Christian living. He begins with a simple but demanding command: *"Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ."* Christian forgiveness is not based on whether others deserve it, but on the forgiveness we ourselves have received from God. When we forgive, show kindness, and act with compassion, we reflect God's own heart.

For some people love is easy while for others it is difficult, but to "live in love," following Christ is neither easy nor difficult because according to the gospel love is not merely a feeling; it is self-giving, sacrificial, and holy. Christians are called to be different because they have moved from darkness into light.

In the Gospel (Luke 13:10-17), Jesus heals a woman who was bent over for eighteen years. She could not straighten herself, but Jesus saw her, called her forward, and set her free. His compassion broke through all barriers of healing on the Sabbath. For Jesus, the dignity and freedom of a suffering person was more necessary than following rigid rules. For those of us bound by bondages of various kinds such as physical illness, emotional wounds, guilt, fear, resentment, addiction, or discouragement, there is hope. Jesus is the perfect friend, sensitive to our needs. All he desires of us is to build a personal relationship with him and he will prove without fail that he has the power to restore and heal so that we experience the love of our Heavenly Father. Let us, like the Psalmist, pray that we may be deeply rooted in The Word of God so that our life may bear fruit and reflect God's love to everyone we meet.

Response: Behave like God as his very dear children.

27
TUE**Small Beginnings, Great Growth in God's Kingdom***Ordinary Weekday*

Eph 5: 21-33/ Ps 128: 1-2. 3. 4-5/ Lk 13: 18-21

In today's Gospel, the Kingdom of God is compared to a mustard seed and to yeast. Both are very small. They seem almost unimportant. Yet they bring about amazing growth. The tiny seed becomes a large tree. A little yeast makes the whole dough rise. Jesus teaches us that God often works through small and hidden beginnings. Many people dream of doing great things for God. They wait for the perfect opportunity. But Jesus invites us to begin with the little things: a kind word, a smile, a sincere prayer, a helping hand. These simple acts may look small, but God can use them to touch many lives.

The first reading from Ephesians reminds us that love grows through mutual respect and self-giving. St. Paul speaks about relationships built on love, sacrifice, and care. Such love is not created in one day. It grows through daily acts of patience, understanding, and forgiveness. Like the mustard seed, faithful love becomes strong over time. We often become discouraged because we do not see immediate results. We pray, but nothing seems to change. We try to do good, but our efforts appear unnoticed. Today's Gospel encourages us not to lose heart. God is at work even when we cannot see it.

Many saints began with simple acts of faith. *St. Therese of Lisieux* believed that small acts of love, done with great love, please God. She did ordinary things with an extraordinary heart. Her hidden life became a light for the whole Church. Today, Jesus asks us to trust the power of small beginnings. We may not change the whole world in one day. But we can make a difference in one person's life. Every act of love, every prayer, and every sacrifice offered to God becomes a seed that He will make grow.

Let us ask the Lord for the grace to be faithful in the little things. May we never underestimate small acts of love. With trust and patience, may we allow God to work through us so that His Kingdom may continue to grow in our hearts, our families, and our world.

Response: Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

28
WED**We Belong to God's Household***Sts SIMON AND JUDE,*

Eph 2: 19-22/ Ps 19: 2-3. 4-5/ Lk 6: 12-16

There are times when we feel like strangers; strangers in a place, strangers among people, or even strangers in our own lives and families. We may quietly carry the feeling that we do not belong. Today's first reading gives us a beautiful message: in Christ, we are no longer strangers. We are members of God's household. This is a simple truth, but it can change the way we live. God does not look at us as outsiders. He welcomes us as His own. He knows our story, our wounds, our failures, and our hopes, yet He still calls us His children. Nothing in our past is too broken for His love.

The reading also reminds us that we are being built together into a dwelling place for God. A house is made of many stones, and every stone has its place. In the same way, every person has a place in God's family. No one is useless. No one is forgotten. Sometimes we may think that our small acts of love do not matter, but God uses them to build something beautiful. The saints Simon and Jude remind us that God can use ordinary people to become strong witnesses of His love. They were not called because they were perfect, but because they were willing to follow Jesus. Their lives became part of God's living house. Perhaps today someone near us feels like an outsider. A kind word, a patient heart, a visit, or simply listening may help that person feel that they belong. We may never know how deeply a small act of love can touch another heart.

Let us also remember that we belong to God. When life becomes difficult and we feel alone, let us return to this truth: we have a home in Him. His love does not abandon us. Lord, thank You for making us part of Your family. Help us to welcome others as You have welcomed us. Make our hearts a place where others can experience Your kindness, peace, and love.

Response: Their message goes out through all the earth.

29
THU**Steps of Spiritual Warfare*****Ordinary Weekday***

Eph 6: 10-20/ Ps 144: 1b. 2. 9-10/ Lk 13: 31-35

Today's Gospel presents a challenging message about the dangers to our spiritual life. When some Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod wants to kill Him, Jesus is not overcome by fear. He calls Herod a "fox" and continues faithfully on His mission, showing that He is guided not by fear but by the will of His Father. The Gospel invites us to examine our own lives. We often worry about our health, money, reputation and what others think of us, while forgetting the greatest danger: losing our relationship with God. Spiritual decline rarely happens suddenly; it begins quietly through laziness, pride, fear, anger, jealousy, unforgiveness, or the desire to please others.

Therefore, the first step is to recognize our enemies: the attitudes, habits and temptations that slowly draw us away from God. Satan seeks to weaken our faith and separate us from Christ, so Jesus tells us to watch and pray. Second, remain in God's love. Knowing that we are loved by God frees us from fear. Difficulties and temptations may come, but Christ gives us the strength to persevere. Third, be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us wisdom to recognize our faults, humility to accept correction, courage to change, and strength to choose what is right. Fourth, live an active Christian life. Faith must become action. We are called to serve, forgive, encourage and help others—remaining committed without becoming anxious. Fifth, repair broken relationships quickly. Hurt and misunderstanding are inevitable, but resentment destroys our peace. Forgiveness does not excuse the wrong; it frees our hearts from hatred. Finally, remain constant in prayer. Jesus Himself remained united with the Father through prayer. Prayer gives us the strength to face temptation, suffering and opposition with faith and peace. Let us ask ourselves: Do I pray for those who hurt me? Do I forgive those who oppose me? Do I remain faithful when I am afraid? May we remain close to Jesus, constant in prayer, quick to forgive, and courageous in doing good. When Christ is at the centre of our lives, we remain secure in God's love.

Response: Blessed be the Lord, my Rock!

30
FRI**Bound in Love, Called to Compassion*****Ordinary Weekday***

Phil 1: 1-11/ Ps 111: 1-2. 3-4. 5-6/ Lk 14: 1-6

Most people in prison grow resentful, angry, and bitter with each passing day, but Paul's letter to Philippians written from prison overflows with joy and encouragement. The Philippians and Paul had developed a deep relationship through riots, imprisonment, and hardship. The warmth of this relationship is evident throughout the letter. Paul had a genuine affection for them. Their joys were his joys; their struggles, his struggles. Even in prison, he remained bound to them in love.

The Philippians were not only friends with Paul, but partners in the Gospel. They actively shared in proclaiming, defending, and confirming the faith. They believed the Gospel and trusted in Christ, whose blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins. Paul was thankful for their continued partnership and fellowship in the Gospel. He prayed that their love would abound more and more, bringing discernment, purity, and spiritual fruitfulness.

In the Gospel Jesus challenges the Pharisees: if it is right to help an animal on the Sabbath, how can it be wrong to help a suffering person? Jesus never refused an invitation to hospitality, even when a Pharisee invited Him with the intention of testing Him. The man with dropsy seems to have been deliberately brought to the meal as a test, to see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath. He may not have been welcomed because he was valued, but because he was being used as bait to trap Jesus. The Pharisees saw the man as an opportunity; Jesus saw him as a person. They were concerned about rules; Jesus was concerned about life. He showed him dignity by responding to his suffering and leading him towards wholeness.

Paul's love for the Philippians and Jesus' compassion for the suffering man reveal the same truth: the Gospel is not merely something we believe; it is a love we embody. True discipleship means carrying one another in our hearts, standing with those who suffer, and choosing mercy over indifference. Like Paul, we are called to remain bound to others in love; like Jesus, we are called to see the person behind the problem and respond with compassion.

Response: How great are the works of the Lord!

31
SAT**Jesus' Table Talk****Ordinary Weekday**

Phil 1: 18b-26/ Ps 42: 2. 3. 5cdef/ Lk 14: 1, 7-11

The setting of the days gospel is a Sabbath meal hosted by one of the leading Pharisees, to which Jesus graciously accepts an invitation. Jesus observes how the invited guests are eager to secure places of honor at the table. In response, He shares a parable directed not only to those present but also to all of us who are invited to partake in God's banquet. Jesus draws a very clear distinction between the Value's of the world and the Value's of the kingdom. In the world, status, recognition, and prestige are often pursued; in the Kingdom, humility is the defining virtue. The climax of this Gospel passage is found in Jesus' teaching: *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

In the Greco-Roman world, humility was generally viewed negatively, often associated with weakness, insignificance, or low social status. Jesus radically transforms this understanding by presenting humility as a virtue and a pathway to true greatness. His parable is an invitation to stop competing for places of honor and instead to rest in God's unconditional love. Once we are secure in the knowledge that we are loved by God, we no longer need to seek the "best seat at the table." Humility reflects trust in God rather than dependence on social standing or human approval. Throughout Scripture, God consistently works through surrender and self-emptying. The Gospel, the Good News, calls us toward service, simplicity, and self-giving love. This pattern reaches its fullest expression in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That same Risen Christ is accessible to us today. If Christ could transform Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle, can He not also transform us? The question we must honestly ask ourselves is this: Is our ego-self greater than God's humble self? Until we surrender our pride and allow Christ to reign within us, we will continue to struggle for places of honor. But when we embrace humility, we discover the freedom, joy, and dignity of being seated where God desires us to be—in His presence and in His love.

Response: My soul is thirsting for the living God.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Part IV – Apostolic Church (30 – 100AD)

Introduction: The Sacrament of Confession (also called the Sacrament of Penance, Reconciliation, or Forgiveness) has undergone a remarkable historical development. While the essential reality - Christ giving the Church authority to forgive sins - has remained unchanged, the manner of celebrating the sacrament has evolved significantly according to pastoral needs. We began with the Old Testament trying to understand Israel's understating of sin as not just violation of the law but the rupture of communion with God. Sin also had a social dimension as it ruptured interpersonal relationships also. In the New Testament we saw Jesus forgiving sins and helping humans to restore this broken relationship with God and with one another. He also authorized the apostles to forgive sins. In the present and coming issues let us try to briefly study the development of the theological understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation down through the centuries beginning from the Apostolic Church.

I) Timeline of Development

Period Practice

30 – 100	Baptism and limited public penance
100 – 250	Public confession before the community for grave sins
250 – 600	Canonical public penance under the Bishop
600 – 800	Irish monks introduce private and repeatable confession
800 – 1200	Private confessions become widespread
1215	Annual confession mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council
1545 – 1563	Council of Trent defines Catholic doctrine on penance
1973	Revised Rite of Penance promulgated after Vatican II
Today	Individual confession remains the ordinary form, with communal celebrations and general absolution used according to Church law

II) Development of Theological Understanding

Period	Main Emphasis
Apostolic Church	Baptism as primary forgiveness
Early Church	Public reconciliation
Patristic Era	Canonical public penance
Irish Monastic	Private, repeatable confession
Medieval	Sacramental theology and priestly ministry
Lateran IV	Annual confession; seal of confession reinforced
Trent	Doctrinal clarification against Protestant objections
Vatican II	Reconciliation, healing, mercy and renewed rites
Today	Encounter with Christ, conversion and ecclesial communion

1) Apostolic Church (30 – 100 AD)

The most important biblical foundation for the sacrament of confession occurs after Christ's resurrection. On Easter Sunday evening, Jesus appeared to the apostles and breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22 - 23). This passage occupies a central place in Catholic theology. Several important elements appear here. First, the authority comes directly from the risen Christ. Second, the gift is linked with the Holy Spirit, indicating that forgiveness is God's action exercised through the Church. Third, the apostles receive genuine authority to forgive or retain sins. Such discernment would necessarily require knowledge of the sinner's repentance and disposition, implying some form of confession. Fourth, forgiveness becomes an ecclesial ministry rather than merely a private act between the individual and God. The Apostolic Church regarded this commission as the foundation of its ministry of reconciliation.

a) The Apostolic Preaching of Repentance: Immediately after Pentecost, the apostles began proclaiming repentance as an essential response to the Gospel. Peter's first sermon concluded: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Here repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and reception of the Holy

Spirit form one unified process of Christian initiation. Peter later preached: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). The apostles consistently proclaimed that forgiveness required conversion of heart rather than merely external observance.

b) Baptism as the First Forgiveness of Sins: During the Apostolic Age, Baptism occupied the central place in the forgiveness of sins. Saint Paul teaches:

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death... so that we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3 - 4). Similarly, Titus 3:5 describes baptism as "the washing of regeneration." The early Church believed that Baptism completely removed original sin and every personal sin committed before baptism. Because adult converts often came from pagan backgrounds, Baptism represented a radical break with their former life. However, the apostles soon confronted an important pastoral question: What should happen when baptized Christians committed serious sins? This question eventually became one of the major theological issues inherited by the post-apostolic Church.

c) The Reality of Sin after Baptism: The Apostolic Church never assumed that baptism eliminated the possibility of future sin. St. Paul repeatedly warned Christians against immorality, idolatry, greed, drunkenness, and divisions within the Church. The Corinthian community especially illustrates this reality. Members were guilty of incest (1 Corinthians 5), there were lawsuits among believers (1 Corinthians 6), abuses during the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11), and serious divisions among themselves. Rather than declaring such sinners permanently excluded from salvation, Paul called them to repentance and restoration. This pastoral concern eventually gave rise to organized practices of ecclesial reconciliation.

d) Ecclesial Discipline and Reconciliation: One important example appears in 1 Corinthians 5. A member of the Corinthian Church had entered an incestuous relationship. Paul instructed the Church to exclude the offender from the Christian community: "Deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved" (1 Corinthians 5:5). The punishment was medicinal rather than vindictive. Later, in 2 Corinthians 2:6 - 11, Paul encouraged the community to forgive and welcome back the repentant sinner: "You should rather turn to forgive and comfort him." This episode reveals several important principles - Sin affects

the entire Church, The Church possesses authority to impose discipline, Repentance leads to restoration, and finally Forgiveness includes reconciliation with the Christian community. These principles later became central to the sacrament of penance.

e) Confession of Sins in the Apostolic Church: The New Testament contains several indications that Christians openly confessed their sins. Acts 19:18 records: “Many of those who became believers confessed and disclosed their practices.” This confession accompanied genuine conversion. Likewise, James instructs believers: “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). Catholic theology has always regarded this text as evidence that confession of sins already formed part of the Church’s life. Although the exact ritual is not described, confession was clearly associated with prayer, healing, forgiveness, and restoration.

f) The Ministry of the Presbyters: James also writes: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters of the Church” (James 5:14-15). The presbyters pray over the sick, anoint them, and assure forgiveness of sins. Immediately afterward comes the instruction to confess sins (James 5:16). The close connection between the ministry of the presbyters and confession strongly influenced later sacramental theology. Although the structured sacrament had not yet emerged, ordained ministers already exercised pastoral responsibility for reconciliation.

g) The Theology of Reconciliation in St. Paul: St. Paul viewed reconciliation primarily as God’s initiative. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 he writes: “God... reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” Paul describes himself and the apostles as “ambassadors for Christ.” This passage became one of the most important theological foundations for the Church’s ministry of forgiveness. The ministry belongs ultimately to Christ but is exercised through His apostles and their successors.

h) The Role of the Christian Community: In the Apostolic Church, sin was never regarded as purely private. Every serious sin wounded the entire Body of Christ. Therefore, reconciliation always possessed both personal and communal dimensions. Repentance restored the sinner not only to friendship with God but also to communion with the Church. This explains why early reconciliation often occurred publicly, especially for grave sins. Only centuries later would private confession gradually replace public penitential discipline.

i) Characteristics of Confession during the Apostolic Age:

The practice of reconciliation between AD 30 and 100 possessed several distinctive features:

- Forgiveness originated entirely from Christ's redemptive death and resurrection.
- The apostles exercised Christ's authority to forgive sins.
- Repentance was always required before forgiveness.
- Confession of sins was already practiced within the Christian community.
- Serious sinners underwent ecclesial discipline before being restored.
- Reconciliation always involved both God and the Church.
- No fixed sacramental ritual comparable to modern individual confession had yet developed. The essential theological foundations, however, were firmly established.

Conclusion

The Apostolic Church did not possess the detailed sacramental discipline familiar to Catholics today, yet it clearly possessed the essential elements from which the Sacrament of Confession developed. Christ entrusted His apostles with the authority to forgive sins through the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22 - 23). The apostles preached repentance, baptized for the forgiveness of sins, exercised ecclesial discipline over serious sinners, welcomed the repentant back into communion, encouraged the confession of sins, and understood themselves as ministers of reconciliation entrusted with Christ's authority.

Thus, the Apostolic Age established the enduring foundations of the sacrament: Christ as the source of forgiveness, the Church as the minister of reconciliation, sincere repentance, confession of sins, ecclesial absolution, and restoration to full communion. While the outward forms of penance would continue to evolve over the following centuries, these foundational realities remained constant and provided the basis for the sacramental practice that would be more fully articulated in the patristic period and formally defined in later Church councils.

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98 - SABBATH

The word 'Sabbath' is exclusively used in the Jewish religious context implying an important sacred day assigned for prayer, rest and temple rituals. Middle English *sabat*, from Old English *sabat* "seventh day of the week in the Jewish calendar; Saturday" as observed by the Jews as a day of rest from secular employment and of religious observance, from Old French *sabat* and directly from Latin *sabbatum*, from Greek *sabbaton*, from Hebrew *shabbath*, properly "day of rest," from *shabath* "he rested" (from labor).

Old Testament

We are introduced to the idea of Sabbath in the opening creation account in Genesis 1. After God has formed the world (days 1–3) and filled the world (days 4–6), and then, unexpectedly, God stops, and rests. It feels like a television competition: 'Time is up! Stop your work, and stand away from your table!' Despite division between chapters 1 and 2, the creation is not complete until God rests. And this is shocking, because God does not *need* to rest. Work does not exhaust God; God does not need to replenish himself as we do. Although there is a strong sense of 'stopping', the stronger sense is of enjoyment. God has seen all that he has created, and declared it not just good, but 'very good'. He can now sit back and celebrate, and revel in its wonder.

We are invited into this rest of celebration and enjoyment—but in quite a different way. Humanity is created on the sixth day, and so the very first thing we do is to rest! Only God can rest from work; we need to work from rest. We do not have the capacity to join in God's work in the world until we have first rested in God. Yes, we are created to live and work for God, to be in relationship with one another, and to care for the animals and the plants. But ultimately, we are created to enjoy resting with God.

Sabbath in Israel

Following its prominence in creation, Sabbath forms a key part of the life of Israel. The direction to 'remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy' comes fourth in the Ten Commandments (known in Judaism as 'the ten words')—but is the first command about community relations. It is the foundation of communal and relational life for the people. And it offers both grace and demand. The explanation in Exodus 20.11 is a theological one—that this is way that God created the world, and we should imitate him.

But the parallel in Deuteronomy 5.15 adds another dimension—‘remember that you were slaves in Egypt’, without any rest from labour, and that God delivered you. Exodus tells us why it is right, and Deuteronomy tells us what happens when it goes wrong.

And both accounts draw out the social impact in slightly different ways. Both include a list of seven groups who should enjoy Sabbath rest—both male and female, both master and servants, both human and animal, both citizen and ‘resident alien’. Rest should be accessible to all; Sabbath is a theological principle which has a radical social impact.

Whilst the grace is explicit, the demand is implicit. If you live in a subsistence agrarian economy, when you do not work, you do not eat. In ancient Israel the pressure to work all day, every day was much greater than it now is in leisurely modernity. The command to rest, and forfeit vital hours of work, demanded a robust sense of trust that God will supply all our needs. What God gives in six days of work will feed us for seven.

Sabbath in Jesus

Sabbath observance is a regular point of conflict between Jesus and his opponents in the gospels—but one which we regularly misinterpret, whether concerning plucking grain (Mark 2.23), bringing a man healing (Mark 3.4), or releasing a woman from Satan’s bonds (Luke 13.16). Jesus does not disregard the law (Torah) in these examples; after all, he appeals to Torah in his counter arguments each time. Jesus was a Torah-observant Jew, but he observed Torah as it was intended to be, as a demanding path to life, not a burdensome, deadening regulation. Sabbath observance is to be a time of joy and rest for all.

This opens up new meaning for us. Sabbath is a sign of the rest in salvation that is only found in Jesus (Hebrews 4.1–11). This rest is not a mere marker in time; it signifies what God longs for us to have. We receive this rest as a gift, just as both the creation and the Exodus deliverance were a gift—it is not something we need to work for. It signifies the new creation we enter through Jesus (2 Cor 5.17) and so we no rest not on the last day of the first creation but on the first day of the new creation, the day of Jesus’ resurrection.

Thus, every Sunday we celebrate God’s gift in creation, invite all to enjoy this rest, and together look forward to the final rest we will know in him in The End.

Jesus Fulfilment of Sabbath

In John chapter 5, Jesus heals a man at Bethesda, a pool believed to bring healing through angelic stirring—an act that points us to something greater. Jesus' divine power not only heals physically but symbolizes a new kind of rest. When Jesus heals the lame man and tells him to carry his bed, He's showing us that He is the new source of true rest, replacing the old rituals.

His actions reveal that the real rest is not tied to a place or a ritual but to a person—Himself. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus challenges the old rules and shows that His authority exceeds the limitations of the letter of the law.

Connecting Sacrifice

The pool near the Sheep Gate was used for ritual cleansing. It was meant to prepare people for worship. In that context, the sheep gate symbolized atonement—shedding blood for forgiveness. Jesus, the Lamb of God, enters through this gate to offer Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. His death ends the need for ongoing rituals because it accomplishes full atonement. When Jesus heals the man and later finds him in the temple, He points out that true spiritual healing comes through trusting in Him, not in superficial rituals. He invites us to find our rest in Him—"Come to Me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The Essentials of New Sabbath

Trying to earn peace through works leaves us exhausted and empty. Hebrews 4:1-11 explains that despite God's promise of rest, many do not enter it because of disbelief. The only way to find real rest is to cease trying and trust in Christ's finished work. Our efforts are like crumbs not enough to earn God's favour or peace. Rest is not about trying harder but recognizing that Jesus has already done everything needed for our salvation. The day of Sabbath/Sunday helps us reaffirm our dependence on God and begin the work again when we really learn to be in the presence of his grace.

It is Finished"

In John 19:30, Jesus declares, "It is finished," showing that His work of salvation is complete. This moment marks the beginning of true biblical rest—rest in the security of His sacrifice. When Jesus bowed His head and gave up His spirit, He secured eternal peace for anyone who believes. Because His work is finished, believers are invited to rest. We no longer rely on trying to measure up or

perform for God's approval. Rest is about trusting in Christ's completed work, knowing that we are fully accepted.

Faith as the Path to Rest

St. Paul in his letter to Ephesians 2.8-9 reminds us that salvation is by grace through faith. It is not earned; it is received. When we put our trust in Jesus, we enter a rest that cannot be shaken. Faith unites us with Christ, our true Sabbath, who provides peace through His finished act.

Living the New Sabbath

Rest in Christ

Finding peace is not just a one-time decision but a daily practice. Ask yourself: Am I trusting Jesus today? Is His finished work enough for my worries? Setting aside time to pray, meditate on Scripture, and reflect on Christ's sacrifice can help keep our hearts rooted in His peace.

In busy lives, it's easy to forget. Simple actions, like taking a moment of silence during the day or worshiping with other believers, keep us aligned with the reality of our eternal rest.

The Holy Spirit Our Guide

The Spirit gently leads believers into ongoing peace and assurance. Trusting the Spirit's work helps us overcome anxiety and hold tight to the promise that Jesus is our rest. We obey not out of obligation but out of love and gratitude, letting His peace fill our hearts. Sabbath/Sunday is a day of upliftment through the Holy Spirit. When we really appreciate the need for rest and also need for connecting with the Divine through Jesus our Saviour, the becomes truly meaningful and relevant.

Restlessness and Rest

Speaking of Sabbath in the Christian sense, we can learn that the world offers fleeting comforts—vacations, hobbies, entertainment—that never truly satisfy in the place of worshipping God through the Holy Eucharistic celebration. Remember 1 Peter 5.7: "Casting all your cares on Him, because He cares for you." When we surrender our worries daily, we step into the deep rest Jesus offers, and the Sabbath in a Christian sense really uplifts us.

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Dear Subscriber,

Greetings of peace and gratitude from the '*Spirings of Living Water*' editorial team.

First and foremost, we want to sincerely thank you for your faithful support and encouragement over the years. Your commitment has kept '*Spirings of Living Water*' flowing into homes and hearts, nourishing many with reflections and inspiration.

As you are aware, times have changed rapidly. With rising printing and distribution costs and a decline in subscriptions, continuing the magazine in its current printed form has become increasingly difficult. After much prayer, discussion, and discernment, our editorial team has decided that the **November 2026 issue will be the final printed edition** of '*Spirings of Living Water*'.

From December 2026 onwards, with the new Liturgical year, we will continue to share '*Spirings of Living Water*' digitally. This will allow us to reach more readers, reduce costs, and remain faithful to our mission of spreading reflections and inspiration in a sustainable way.

We are aware that some of you have subscribed for longer periods. Please be assured that your subscription will be honored in full through digital delivery. You will continue to receive every issue without interruption, and we are committed to making the digital format accessible and reader-friendly.

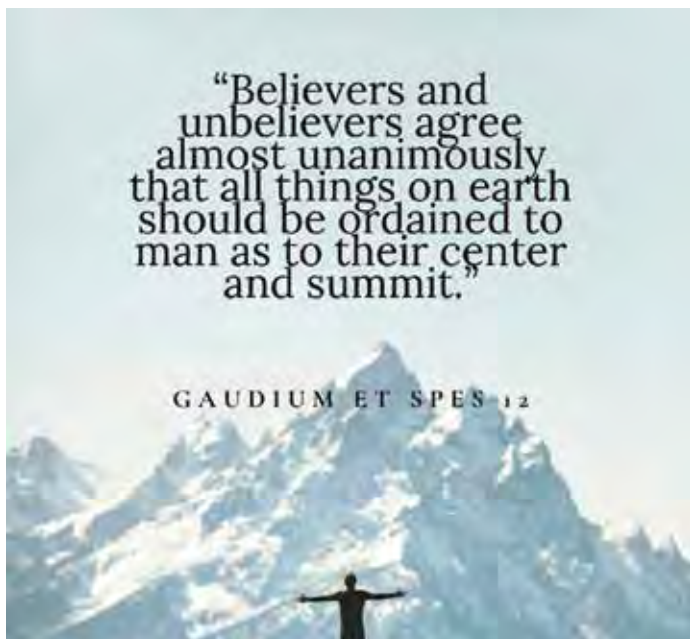
We deeply value your trust and companionship on this journey. While the medium changes, the message remains the same: to bring living water to thirsty souls. We hope you will continue to walk with us in this new chapter.

With heartfelt thanks and blessings,

The Editorial Team

'Spirings of Living Water'

Echoes of Magisterium



In *Gaudium et Spes* 12, the Church affirms the unique dignity and central place of the human person within creation. Although believers and unbelievers may differ in their understanding of God, both can recognize that the world is ordered toward human flourishing. Yet humanity is not the absolute master of creation; rather, creation is entrusted to human beings to be cultivated, developed, and used responsibly for the common good. As the summit of earthly creation, the human person possesses intellect, freedom, and moral responsibility, and is ultimately oriented beyond the created world toward communion with God. Thus, the dignity of the human person becomes the foundation for the Church's concern for human rights, society, culture, work, and the common good.

SAINT THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS



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

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

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

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

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

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

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