

December 27, 2020

Feast of the Holy Family

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 ♦ Colossians 3:12-21 ♣ Luke 2:22-40

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. —Luke 2:40

It's amazing that the Son of God was part of a family here on earth and grew up just like each of us. He is God but he still was a human being and had to learn things just like we do. The favor of God was upon him and the favor of God is upon us. Just as Jesus was a child of God, so are we! We are precious to God, and he wants us to become strong and grow to love him and others, more and more. We also learn how to not be tricked into turning away from God and his teachings. God gives us parents to guide us and teach us right from wrong.

Dear Lord, fill me with wisdom so I will know the right things to do so I will grow closer to you and to give you honor and glory. Help me to trust and obey my parents.

Take a moment to thank your parents for caring for you and guiding you each day.

January 3, 2021

Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6 ♦ Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6 ♣ Matthew 2:1-12

They were overjoyed at seeing the star... —Matt. 2:10

The Magi were called to find the child that had come into the world as a king. They knew that he was the chosen one. They made many sacrifices in order to find him, and most likely encountered hardships on their journey. They didn't quit. They didn't give up. They persevered. Can you imagine their joy in finally arriving at their destination, the place where the child lay in his mother's arms? It must have been the greatest blessing they'd ever known. We can have that same joy when we seek out Jesus in our lives and find him.

Lord, teach us to look and search for you in our lives with the same desire that the Magi had when they set out on their journey.

How do you seek Jesus in your life? When you find him, how does it make you feel?

January 10, 2021

Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 55: 1-11 ♦ 1 John 5: 1-9 ♣ Mark 1:7-11

"...a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." —Mark 1:11

Jesus' Baptism is the acceptance and the beginning of his mission on this earth. He allowed himself to be numbered among sinners to save us from our sins. Jesus submitted himself entirely to his Father's will. As his followers, we should reflect on whether we are following the will of God in all that we do. At the end of our life, we hope to hear the same words that were said by the Father to Jesus: "in You I am well pleased".

Dear Lord, show me what you would like me to do to complete the mission you have for me. Help me to be obedient and loving in all things.

Is there a particular commandment that you find most difficult to obey? Remember, these are God's laws given to us for guidance.

January 17, 2021

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19 ♦ 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a,17-20 ♣ John 1:35-42

"Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." —1 Sam. 3:10

Many times we enter into prayer with a long list of requests—things we think God should do for us because we know what's best. But in today's scripture, God is the one calling out to Samuel. When Samuel realizes that it is the Lord speaking to him, he doesn't say what he wants. Instead, he says that he is ready to hear what God wants of him. As usual, the Bible is setting an example for how we should live our own lives to grow closer to God. The next time you feel like sitting down with your list for God in prayer, try something new. Sit and listen to what God wants to say to you.

Dear Lord, help me to quiet myself in prayer to hear what you want to say to me.

What are some places where you like to pray? Do they help you quiet yourself enough for you to hear God speaking to you?

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January 24, 2021

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jonah 3:1-5,10 ♦ 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 ♣ Mark 1:14-20

“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” —Mark 1:17

This is a little confusing, isn't it? The men that Jesus called to follow him were fishers of fish. What did he mean when he said he would make them fishers of men? Jesus hoped that these men he chose would set such a beautiful example of their faith in God that it would attract other people to also want to follow Jesus. This is something that we are all called to do. If we love Jesus and try to live our lives reflecting his light, then we too will become “fishers of men.”

Lord, help us to love you so much that all we do, say, think, and feel will radiate the love we have for you. Please allow that light to touch those we meet each day, so that they too will want to follow you.

What is one thing Jesus' disciples did then that we can still do today to help people know and follow Jesus?

February 7, 2021

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 7:1-4,6-7 ♦ 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23 ♣ Mark 1:29-39

**“All this I do for the sake of the gospel,
so that I too may have a share in it.” —1 Cor. 9:23**

Do WHAT for the sake of the gospel? In today's scripture verse, we are called to do EVERYTHING for the glory of God. The Gospel tells of Jesus' life and how he tried to please God with all he did and said, the way he loved, the way he treated others, the way he did everything! We too are called to do everything in our lives to live out the Gospel. The word “gospel” means “good news.” We want to have a share of this Good News, just like St. Paul did. All we have to do is live the Gospel in our own lives. So listen carefully to the scripture readings at Mass. They will guide you to live for God!

Dear Lord, we want to experience your Good News today and be with you in heaven someday! Please help us to learn what we need to do to have a share in that gift.

What do you think it would be like to have a share of the Good News?

January 31, 2021

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 ♦ 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 ♣ Mark 1:21-28

“A new teaching with authority.

He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.” —Mark 1:27

Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt the presence of evil? Maybe a TV show scared you, or you met someone who was really mean. In today's Gospel, Jesus shows us that if we ask anything in Jesus' name, especially against evil, that he can make that evil go away. What an awesome God! All we have to do is ask!

So the next time you are feeling afraid or hurt, call on the name of Jesus and see what happens.

Dear Lord, your name is above all names. You are Lord, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lamb of God. We love you and praise you for your powerful presence in our lives.

When do you feel most fearful? Remember to call on Jesus and he will help you!

February 14, 2021

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 ♦ 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 ♣ Mark 1:40-45

**... Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do everything for the glory of God.” —1 Cor. 10:31**

How could what I eat or drink glorify God? St. Paul reminds us in this reading to remember God and give him glory for all the normal, everyday things we do in our lives. It's easy to forget and take things for granted, but everything is a gift from God.

Paul also reminds us to be kind to others in everyday situations. We can make choices like holding the door for others, when all we want to do is get into the place we are going. We can choose to be last in line, allowing others to go before us and offering that as a prayer. These are all small ways we can give glory to God—and show God's love—in our daily lives.

Dear Lord, I don't always feel like I can do great things to show you my love. Please help me to find small ways every day in my own life to give you glory.

What are some ways you can show glory to God in your life every day?

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February 21, 2021

1st Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-15 ♦ 1 Peter 3:18-22 ♦ Mark 1:12-15

***“The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert,
and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.” —Mark 1:12***

Even Jesus was called for forty days to fast and pray. It was not easy for him. Satan was there whispering in his ear to try to get him to stop fasting and walk away from his prayer. He could have done that. He was God. But he chose the harder way. He chose to offer up his discomfort to glorify God and grow closer to him. We too are called to forty days of fasting and praying. We may even be tempted as Jesus was to walk away from the sacrifices. But just as the Spirit gave Jesus the strength to keep going, he will give us what we need to continue and grow closer to him.

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us the opportunity to join with you in this time of fasting and praying during Lent. Please give us the grace not to give in to temptation.

What are some ways that you can fight off temptations? What are your favorite ways to pray?

March 7, 2021

3rd Sunday in Lent

Exodus 20:1-17 ♦ 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 ♦ John 2:13-25

***“Take these out of here, and stop making
my Father’s house a marketplace.” —John 2:16***

Today in the Gospel we see that Jesus was angry with the way people viewed his Father’s house. It makes me think about how we view God’s house today. Would Jesus be happy with the way we act in church? Do we rush in and out because we have better things planned for our day, or do we take a few extra minutes to speak privately with Jesus? Do we prepare ourselves by the way we dress and quiet ourselves before we enter into the church knowing that Jesus is truly present there in the Eucharist? Do we genuflect out of respect? When we do these things we show God how much we love him.

Dear Lord, we want to honor and worship you when we spend time in your house. Please give us the grace to fight off temptations of distraction so we may love and glorify you by our presence in church.

What are some ways your family prepares for Mass? What could you change to prepare better?

February 28, 2021

2nd Sunday in Lent

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18 ♦ Romans 8:31b-34 ♦ Mark 9:2-10

***Then God said: “Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love...
there you shall offer him up as a holocaust...” —Genesis 22:2***

Think of the one person you love the most in the world. Is it your mom, dad, a brother or sister? Maybe it’s a best friend or a cousin. Can you imagine if you heard God ask you to give them up forever? That would be the hardest thing you’d ever have to do. Yet, in today’s scripture, that is what God asks Abraham to do. Abraham is a great example of faith and trust in God. He didn’t understand why God wanted him to give up his only son, whom he loved with all his heart. But he trusted in God. In the end, we learn that God didn’t want him to give up his son, he just wanted to test Abraham’s faith and trust. I think he passed the test, what about you?

Lord, may we learn to have the same faith and trust in you that Abraham had, even when we don’t understand your ways.

Are there things in your life that God may want you to give up that would help you grow closer to him?

March 14, 2021

4th Sunday in Lent

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23 ♦ Ephesians 2:4-10 ♦ John 3:14-21

***“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved through him.” —John 3:17***

Some people think God is like an angry judge. They forget that he is a loving parent. He loves each one of us as his own children. Ask your parents how much they love you. It may be hard for them to express all the love they have for you in their hearts. But parents love their children *a lot*, wanting the best for them. God wants that for us, too. He saw that we needed to know his love, and the best way show us was to send his Son. But he didn’t stop there. He allowed his Son to show us God’s love all the way to the cross. Jesus laid down his life for us, and then rose from the dead to love us even more. Our God really loves us a lot!

Dear Lord, thank you for being a Father who is willing to go to any length to show us, your children, that you love us.

How do you view God? As an angry judge or a loving parent? Are you afraid of him or do you run into God’s arms for love?

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March 21, 2021

5th Sunday in Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34 ♦ Hebrews 5:7-9 ♣ John 12:20-33

“Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.” —John 12:25

Today’s scripture from the Gospel sounds kind of confusing. Most of us like our lives. It is hard to understand why we would lose it just because we like it. But I think that Jesus is looking deeper than what meets the eye. In different words, “whoever loves his life *more than God* will lose it and whoever *puts God first* will gain eternal life.” If we live our lives only to please ourselves, we lose out in the end. But if we learn to put God first in our lives, we take steps closer to being with him forever in heaven.

Dear Lord, help me to put you first, even before all the things I want. Teach me to seek you in all I do.

What are ways I put myself ahead of God? How can I make a change to start putting God before myself?

April 4, 2021

Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34a, 37-43 ♦ Colossians 3:1-4 ♣ John 20:1-18

“...he saw and believed.” —John 20:8

Those who went to the tomb to see that Jesus was not there—that he had risen—were indeed blessed. But Jesus said, “Blessed are those who believe without seeing.” That’s us! We believe because of the stories we have been told, the traditions that have been passed down to us, the experiences we have had through Holy Week and Easter. We are blessed to have the gift of faith to hear and believe that:

Jesus Christ is Risen today! Alleluia!!!

Dear Lord, we praise you and thank for this Easter Sunday that reminds us of your gift of salvation. We are forever grateful for such a gift!

What does God want to bring to life in you today?

May you and your family be blessed with God’s abundant graces on this Easter Sunday! Happy Easter!

March 28, 2021

Palm/Passion Sunday

Mark 11:1-10 ♣ Isaiah 50:4-7 ♦ Philippians 2:6-11 ♣ Mark 14:1—15:47

...every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. —Phil. 2:11

Today we reflect on Christ’s passion and death. In the midst of the story it is hard to believe that “every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Most voices at this moment are condemning him. There are only a few people that are standing by him, suffering with him. There are times in life when we have the choice to be a person who stands for God, even it’s really difficult, or to be a person of anger, betrayal, and abandonment.

Lord, you suffered because of your great love for us. Give me a voice to tell people how important you are to me!

Which voice will you have in this week before Easter? Which side will you be on, Christ’s or the world’s?

April 11, 2021

2nd Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday

Acts 4:32-35 ♦ 1 John 5:1-6 ♣ John 20:19-31

Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” —John 20:19

Today in the Church we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. It is a day to remember that God is constantly pouring out his mercy to us at every moment of our lives. He isn’t always happy with some of the choices we make, or the ways we turn away from him. But he keeps showering us with his love, forgiveness, and mercy, all the time. Today’s Gospel reminds us of that mercy. Jesus could have been very upset with the apostles for abandoning and denying him. Instead, he gives them peace. He showers them with love and forgiveness...**mercy**. We are blessed to have a God who loves us so much!

Dear Lord, thank you for loving us more than we can ever understand. Please give us the grace we need to live a life worthy of your gift of mercy.

What are some ways we can show mercy to others?

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April 18, 2021

3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19 ♦ 1 John 2:1-5a ♣ Luke 24:35-48

“Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” —Luke 24:38-39

When we feel alone or unable to handle problems, we often rely on our own strength. But Jesus wants us to return to him with all our heart and find the strength we need in HIM. The wounds he shows us in today’s gospel remind us that he would do anything to help us. It’s hard to let go because we want to be in control and do things our way. Sometimes we must be quiet to hear Jesus answer us and give us the love that will build our trust in him.

Dear Lord, sometimes when I am troubled, it is easier to feel sorry for myself and turn to comforts instead of you. Please give me the desire I need to turn to you in those times to receive your great love and compassion.

Are there times when you’ve turned to God and found comfort? Share these times with your family.

May 2, 2021

5th Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:26-31 ♦ 1 John 3:18-24 ♣ John 15:1-8

“By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.” —John 15:8

Grapes grew all over Israel, so the people around Jesus knew all about grapevines. But for us, it may need a little explanation. When Jesus calls himself a vine, he is telling us that we are connected to him. Sometimes, vines need to be pruned so they will bear fruit. In the same way, Jesus needs to help us so we will grow and be able to produce more fruit. The kinds of “Holy Spirit” fruit Jesus helps us grow include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Jesus shows us through our parents and teachers how to stay close to him and grow.

Lord, help me grow in the knowledge of how to live, so I can be filled with more love, joy, and peace. Help me to accept the guidance you give me.

Pick one of the “Holy Spirit” fruits in the list above to work on this week. How can you grow some of that kind of fruit?

April 25, 2021

4th Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:8-12 ♦ 1 John 3:1-2 ♣ John 10:11-18

He is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. —Acts 4:11

Life has a way of throwing us many curve balls. We think one thing is going to happen, and in the next moment it has gone exactly the opposite way. When we walk with the Lord these things can happen, too. Things look one way on the surface, but underneath God’s plan is bigger than what our own eyes can see. He often takes bad things and makes good out of them, if we allow him to. Jesus was a great example of this. His life looked like a failure. He came to spread love and forgiveness and was killed for it. But his death and resurrection became the foundation of the Church we are a part of over 2000 years later. Our God is amazing!

Lord, thank you for always having the “big picture,” beyond what our eyes can see. Give us the faith to always trust in your plan for our lives.

Can you remember a time when something seemed to turn out wrong, but later you realized that God’s plan was even better than what you had in mind?

May 9, 2021

6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48 ♦ 1 John 4:7-10 ♣ John 15:9-17

“I no longer call you slaves....I have called you friends...” —John 15:15

Can you imagine God calling us a friend? Think about your best friend at school or work. What are some things you would do for him or her, even if you were tired, had a lot of other work to do, or had the opportunity to doing something with someone else? You would do whatever you could to make your friend happy, wouldn’t you? Even very difficult things.

The more we come to know and love Jesus, the sooner we will consider HIM our best friend. He told us and showed us how much he loves us—he even died for us. Now it’s our turn to show him how much we love him. Jesus told us how to do that. He said “Love one another.”

Jesus, help me to put you first in my life. Help me to remember that you are my best friend. Help me to love all people as you taught us.

What can you do to show Jesus that he is your best friend?

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May 16, 2021

Ascension of Our Lord

Acts 1:1-11 ♦ Ephesians 4:1-13 ♦ Mark 16:15-20

***“Go into all the whole world
and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” —Mark 16:15***

Jesus’ ascension into heaven was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. It was the end of the time when the disciples could see Jesus, touch him, and eat with him. It was also the beginning of Jesus’ presence with them in a new way. As he ascended to heaven, Jesus promised to send his disciples the Holy Spirit who would bring them power to continue his mission on earth.

Their task was to proclaim the good news of salvation to all the nations. That’s what “Gospel” means – good news. It’s the good news that God loves us and forgives us. Like the disciples, it is our task to spread this Good News of God’s love.

Lord, thank you for loving and forgiving us! We want to know you and love you and serve you in this world and help to spread the good news of your love.

How can you spread the Good News to your friends and family?

May 23, 2021

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-11 ♦ 1 Corinthians 12: 3b-7, 12-13 ♦ John 20:19-23

***Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them,
“Peace be with you” —John 20:19***

Have you ever been absolutely terrified by something? Maybe you experienced a tornado or earthquake. Or maybe you had to give a talk in front of a huge group of people. In our Gospel today, the disciples were terrified beyond words. They were hiding for fear of being killed like Jesus was. They bolted the door shut and huddled together, worried they would be discovered at any moment. Imagine their great relief when, all of a sudden, Jesus was standing there in the room! They knew Jesus died on the cross, but here he was, alive and well! Jesus’ words to them—“Peace be with you”—are the same words he says to us. We have nothing to fear because Jesus is with us.

Lord, help me to remember that even in the worst of situations, you are with me.

Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Church because the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the courage to go out and spread the Good News of God’s great love and forgiveness. How will you celebrate this special birthday?

May 30, 2021

Holy Trinity

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40 ♦ Romans 8:14-17 ♦ Matthew 28:16-20

***“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. —Matt. 28:19***

If you were baptized when you were a little baby, you won’t remember what happened, but your family remembers. Ask them and they’ll tell you that the priest or deacon poured water over your head three times saying “In the name of the Father... and of the Son... and of the Holy Spirit.”

When we enter a church, we bless ourselves with holy water, using the same words. In the Gospel today, Jesus commands that this blessing be used to change us from ordinary human beings into his disciples who live like children of God. On this Holy Trinity Sunday, we remember how much God loves us, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit.

Thank you dear Father, loving Son, and divine Spirit! Please keep me close to you always, my God.

Why do you think water is used in baptism? What does your family remember about the day you were baptized?

June 6, 2021

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

Exodus 24:3-8 ♦ Hebrews 9:11-15 ♦ Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

***“The Teacher says, ‘Where is my guest room
where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” —Mark 14:14***

Jesus sent his disciples out ahead of him to prepare a place where they could eat together and celebrate the Jewish feast of Passover. That same miracle happens at every Mass—Jesus becomes present to us as our spiritual food. He gives his very body and blood to us. But, before we receive this gift, there are some preparations that need to be made. The servers prepare the altar, the bread and wine are brought forward, we pray the Eucharistic prayer together, and Jesus becomes present to us again.

There is still one more thing that needs to be prepared—our hearts! We become the guest room where Jesus will come and visit. Is everything ready? Have we taken time to speak to Our Lord and ask him to come? We want to welcome him in the best way possible.

Thank you, dear Jesus, for giving us your Body and Blood. Help us to prepare well for your coming!

Discuss with your family some other ways you can prepare to receive Jesus.

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June 13, 2021

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 17:22-24 ♦ 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 ♣ Mark 4:26-34

“To what shall we compare the kingdom of God?...It is like a mustard seed... the smallest of all the seeds on the earth.” —Mark 4:30-31

Have you ever been to Disney World or Disneyland? There are all sorts of theme rides and displays, plus spectacular fireworks. Wouldn't you think that God's kingdom would exceed any kingdom here on earth?

In our Gospel today, we read that God's kingdom is spectacular, but in a very quiet way. There are no loud sounds, unusual sights, or fast rides. Jesus compares his kingdom to a tiny seed that secretly begins to grow underground and, when the time is right, emerges and becomes a great tree that gives shade and shelter. God does not want to shock our senses; instead he wants to capture our attention with wonder and awe and challenge us to share this with others until his kingdom gives shelter to all who come looking for his love.

Lord, when I really look at the world around me, I am amazed by your greatness. Help me to share your love in quiet, simple ways that will bring others to worship you with wonder and awe.

Make a list with your family of some things you see in nature that God created with great beauty.

June 27, 2021

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24 ♦ 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15 ♣ Mark 5:21-43

He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.” —Mark 5:34

In today's Gospel, we hear two accounts of Jesus healing. In one account, a woman was healed simply by touching Jesus' clothing. In the other account, Jesus restored the health of a child who had already died. These stories can make us wonder why Jesus doesn't heal everyone so there will be no more suffering or pain. The question remains, do we have faith, even if he doesn't answer our prayers the way we wish? Do we trust that he still loves us and accompanies us even during our darkest moments? Do we believe that by his death and resurrection, we can look forward to a time when there will be no more suffering? We may not understand God's plans for us, but we can be assured that ultimately they are for our good because “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and love conquers all evil.

Lord, save me from my doubts. Help me remember your goodness at all times.

Is there someone in your family or community who needs to feel the healing touch of Jesus today? Is there something you can do to be Jesus' comforting presence for them?

June 20, 2021

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 38:1, 8-11 ♦ 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 ♣ Mark 4:35-41

“Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?” —Mark 4:40

If you have ever been on an airplane when turbulence bounces it around, you know how unsettling it can be. When the pilot or flight attendant comes on the loudspeaker and announces there is nothing to be concerned about—it's just a temporary change in the wind or air pressure—you sigh in relief. But it wouldn't be unusual to still be a little worried. Why is that? Well, probably it's because it's hard to place our trust in another human being, even if he or she seems very qualified.

In our Gospel today, a storm threatens to capsize the boat in which Jesus and his disciples are sailing. Jesus isn't the least bit worried. In fact, he's fast asleep! His disciples, on the other hand, are terrified. They wake Jesus and he calms the storm with just a wave of his hand. They have seen Jesus perform other miracles, but still they are amazed that he can control creation. When we are faced with frightening situations, it might be hard for us to believe that Jesus can change our predicament. This Gospel should remind us that God can do anything!

Lord, please give me unwavering faith that you are God, and you will not abandon me.

As a family, write a simple prayer that you can all pray when you are afraid.

July 4, 2021

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 2:2-5 ♦ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ♣ Mark 6:1-6

When the sabbath came he began to teach....and many...said “Where did this man get all this?...” —Mark 6:2

Have you ever heard these sayings: “You can't judge a book by its cover” or “Still water runs deep” or “All that is gold does not glitter”? Each of these statements cautions us to look deeper before deciding the value of something or someone.

In today's Gospel, we see that people in the synagogue had trouble believing that Jesus could interpret the scriptures because they knew him as just another one of their neighbors. They knew his family and considered them ordinary people. How wrong they were about Jesus! We sometimes make the same mistake when we see someone who does not appear to be knowledgeable or successful and judge him or her without really knowing them. The Gospel passage concludes with an observation that Jesus was unable to perform many miracles there because of their lack of faith. How many blessings have we missed that could have come through people we dismissed?

Lord, help me treat all people with love, respect, and dignity because everyone has a valuable role in your plan.

Write a note of encouragement to someone who might need a friend today.

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July 11, 2021

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Amos 7:12-15 ♦ Ephesians 1:3-14 ♣ Mark 6:7-13

He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two.... —Mark 6:7

Why do you suppose Jesus sent his disciples out “two by two”? Have you ever had a school or work project where you were part of a team? If everyone does their part, it’s much easier to accomplish the task. The task Jesus was entrusting to his disciples was huge! In some places, the disciples were well received, given a place to stay, food to eat, and even clothes to wear. But some villages rejected them. Jesus cautioned them not to feel defeated when this happened, just to “shake the dust from their feet” and move on to the next town. But if you have ever felt rejection, you know that if just one other person stands with you, it can make all the difference in the world. Jesus’ strategy to send them out “two by two” provided the support they would need to meet with opposition. When we are standing up for Jesus, people may sometimes reject us, but we do not stand alone. We have other believers, as well as the angels and saints, who God gives us to lean on.

Help me remember, Lord, that you will always give me what I need to accomplish your will.

Make a list of people who have helped you in your life. Remember to thank God for them.

July 25, 2021

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

2 Kings 4:42-44 ♦ Ephesians 4:1-6 ♣ John 6:1-15

“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” —John 6:9

Summer is a great time for picnics! Imagine that you and your family pack a basket with enough food and snacks for a nice lunch and you head out to a picnic grove that has a pool. When you arrive, you find that it is crowded. It’s not long before the long lines to get into the pool changing room and to use the rest rooms become a problem. You are very glad that you brought lunch because the concession stands ran out of food. Before long, people are getting irritable as they get more hungry, hot, and tired. Would you give away the food you brought, knowing that it could hardly make a difference with so many people in need?

This must have been a little like the scenario in our Gospel today. Still, a little boy gave up his meager lunch and Jesus performed a miracle that fed thousands with lots left over. The next time you assume that the little you could give wouldn’t make a dent in the problem, remember that God can perform miracles!

Keep me open to sharing whatever I have, Lord. I know that you will do the rest.

Is there a local food pantry or clothing resale store to which you can donate something today?

July 18, 2021

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 23:1-6 ♦ Ephesians 2:13-18 ♣ Mark 6:30-34

“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” —Mark 6:31

When you take a vacation, you may not feel as busy as when you are working on homework deadlines and meeting an overabundance of requirements. But following Jesus is not a seasonal job. When we are not in school, we may have more opportunities for gathering with friends and can find ourselves having to choose between God’s way and the world’s way. That can be stressful. No doubt, Jesus’ disciples could attest to this! After traveling to many villages preaching and healing, they needed a break. So, they came back to be with Jesus. They needed to rest and be close to him so they would have the strength to go on.

This is a good example for us. When we feel conflicted about what to do or challenged by people who think we are silly for standing up for what we believe, we need some quiet time away from the crowds to be with Jesus. He has the strength and refreshment we need to go on as his year-round disciples.

Thank you, Jesus, for always listening, guiding, and refreshing me.

What is your favorite place to be alone with Jesus?

August 1, 2021

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 ♦ Ephesians 4:17, 20-24 ♣ John 6:24-35

“I am the bread of life” —John 6:35

If you have ever known someone who is wealthy enough to pick up the tab whenever you go out to dinner or to a movie, you know that there are some people who might like him just for what he can give them. We see a similar scenario in the Gospel reading today. Jesus had just miraculously fed thousands of people and the crowds were now following him everywhere. He knew that many of them were only interested in what they could get or in seeing some new spectacular display of his power. But they were missing the point of the miracles. Jesus performed the miracles as evidence for who he is. He is the Son of God who reunites us with his Father. He is going to share with us his Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Jesus told his followers—and that includes us—to believe in him not for what he does but for who he is.

I often pray for the things I want you to give me, Lord. Today I want to simply praise you for who you are and thank you for being my God.

Make a list of some of your positive traits that make you who you are today.

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August 8, 2021

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:4-8 ♦ Ephesians 4:30-5:2 ♦ John 6:41-51

“...whoever believes has eternal life.” —John 6:47

Many TV and radio commercials today give the impression that there are products we can buy that will eliminate suffering. It is a temptation to believe that these products ensure we will live forever. While more and more people are living past 100 years old, that is still a short time compared to eternity. In today’s Gospel, Jesus promises unending life, but life after death remains a mystery. This is where faith comes in.

Faith is believing what we can’t see. We trust it is true because the person telling us is trustworthy. Jesus promises that if we believe in him, heaven awaits us and is a place of happiness that will never end. Do you believe Jesus? Is he trustworthy? When you look at the cross can you think of anyone who has done more to prove his love for us?

Thank you for preparing a place for us, Jesus. We trust that you are the Son of the living God. We do believe!

What do you think heaven will be like?

August 22, 2021

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b ♦ Ephesians 5:21-32 ♦ John 6:53, 60-69

“We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.” —John 6:69

When Jesus told his followers that unless they eat his flesh and drink his blood they will not have eternal life, many of them left. They could not accept this. If we are honest, we can understand why they had a difficult time with this concept. But there were some followers who did not leave. Peter was one of them. Did he understand? Probably not. Still he said he was CONVINCED that Jesus is God and that was enough for him to accept every word that came from the mouth of Christ.

St. Teresa of Calcutta—Mother Teresa—said “God does not expect us to be successful, only faithful.” Even if we don’t understand, we can still be faithful to the teachings of Christ. During the Mass when the priest repeats Jesus’ words “This is my Body; this is my Blood”, we don’t need to analyze it, question how it could be, or wonder why Christ would choose to come to us in this way. We can just be thankful that he does!

Oh Jesus, we are convinced that you are the Holy One of God. Strengthen our belief if we begin to doubt.

Begin and end each day this week with this simple prayer: “Jesus, I trust in you.”

August 15, 2021

Assumption of the Virgin Mary

Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10 ♦ 1 Corinthians 15:20-27 ♦ Luke 1:39-56

“...blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” —Luke 1:42

If you have ever prayed the rosary you are very familiar with this quote from today’s Gospel. These words which Elizabeth proclaimed when Mary came to visit her are included in the Hail Mary—which we pray 53 times in the rosary. The word blessed means holy, and the word holy means “set apart.” Mary was set apart from all other humans to accomplish a special plan for God to enter our world and become human like us. Because of her unique role, Mary was given special gifts and she was “full of grace.” After her life here on earth was over, Mary was brought into heaven, body and soul.

Everything about Mary’s life points us to Jesus. She is like the moon reflecting light from the sun—the Son of God. She is a model of faith for us. She said “Yes” to God’s call to be the Mother of our Lord without knowing any of the details. When God calls us, we can ask Mary to help us trust her Son and help us say “Yes” as she did.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

To honor Mary on this special feast day, pray the rosary, or at least a part of a rosary together. Ask Mary to show you the way to her Son.

August 29, 2021

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8 ♦ James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27 ♦ Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

“This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me...” —Mark 7:6

Have you ever tasted 100% pure chocolate? It looks luscious and sweet but because it has no sugar in it, it tastes bitter and dry. It’s not at all like milk chocolate found in the candy we love so much. Can you think of other things that look good on the outside but are quite different on the inside? Sadly, sometimes people seem charming and smart by the things they say and do but inside they are bitter and selfish.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus confronts some church leaders who see themselves as more important than Jesus’ followers. These scribes and Pharisees judge Jesus’ disciples by a set of man-made rules while ignoring the commandments given by God himself. They are using these rules to put the disciples down and criticize Jesus, their leader.

When people bully and degrade others, it should be a warning sign to us not to follow their example. To be a follower of Jesus, we must love like he does.

Lord Jesus, help me to be good on the inside and out.

Do you know someone in your community who is being judged unfairly because of their looks, language, or culture? Make a point this week to reach out to that person.

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