

Sunday, October 1, 2023

XXVI Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Doctor of the Church and Patroness of Missions

Eze 18:25–28; Ps 23; Phil 2:1–11; Mt 21:28–32

We begin with the month of October which is traditionally known as Mission Month, in the Church, that guides us to Jesus, the Saviour of the world. In today's Gospel, the Lord Jesus himself draws attention on the subject of doing God's will and on struggling with oneself. It is not easy to listen to the voice of God, like the prophets did. The struggle to one's own holiness is a path undertaken by great people, such as Therese of the Child Jesus, Paolo Manna, or Pauline Marie Jaricot. Today, we all need to have a strong faith in our Saviour in order to discover our potential commitment to mission. It is useless to waste our time in theoretical reflections or debates about reforming something over which we have no influence. We can say to God: "I believe in you, take care of the rest." God awaits our decision, siding with life. Often, we are the reason that stops the enthusiasm of others, because we criticize the decisions of Church superiors, because we are frightened when we look at young people away from the Church or think about the shortage of vocations. Let us rather seize the occasion for evangelizing, which first implies listening to the voice of God who speaks constantly. Let us listen and seek God. What is God's will? Where can I listen to him? God invites us to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. We can realize this with our lives, even with our family.

Monday, October 2, 2023

XXVI Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Guardian Angels

Zech 8:1–8; Ps 101; Lk 9:46–50

It is so natural to want to be first, to always dream of winning a competition or getting the best results in school. This puts us in a certain position and gives us hope in later victories. In today's Gospel, the disciples tried to daydream, and their thoughts went far beyond Jesus' thinking. The greatness of the world is not the greatness of the Kingdom of God, because Christ is not of this world. As an example, the Messiah shows a small child and places the child next to him. But the disciples were not close to their Master, their hearts and minds were drifting far away.

Those who engage in missionary work risk a similar mistake. You can create new projects, get money, build churches, but lose closeness to the Messiah. The greatness of an apostle is recognized by his closeness to Christ. The title of today's Gospel could be "dispute over priorities." The dispute in our hearts should be about the primacy of God. Everything we do every day, at home, at church, at work, poses a question: is Christ first? Saintt Therese of the Child Jesus, Patroness of Missions, lived in a cloistered convent, opening her heart to prayer. Saint Therese said, "I have never heard his voice, but I can feel that Christ is in me at all times. He is guiding me and giving me inspiration about what I should say or do." Listen to God's voice and you will discover who you are, how great you are in his eyes.

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

XXVI Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Zech 8:20–23; Ps 86; Lk 9:51–56

The closing of the city to Jesus is a special sign that accompanies the proclamation of the Good News. Jesus's journey and eventual arrival to Jerusalem is the fulfillment of the will of God the Father. Even today, the preaching of the Gospel faces political, cultural, and economic adversity. But the greatest obstacle is the closing of the human heart. The Good News of the Messiah is not about cultural upheavals or the creation of a new socio-political order; rather, the Saviour comes to convert the human heart. This is challenging! In the month of October, which traditionally serves to discover the missionary vocation of all the baptized people, we also encounter many difficulties and words that discourage and hurt. Why go on a mission? There are few priests, why send them to dangerous places? Blessed Paul Manna, founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union, and Patron of Missionary Cooperation, said: "The world is tired, discouraged and lost. It needs light, it needs peace, it needs guidance. We need faith, we need a universal crusade of fervent prayers, we need much generosity, solicitude, and a big heart. We need to respond to this situation with the intelligent and constant cooperation of bishops, priests and all baptized people."

God alone can open and enlighten the closed hearts of men and women. Therefore, the first task of evangelization is prayer, united with the offering of sacrifices and sufferings for the growth of missions. Let us not forget that we are witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

St. Francis of Assisi

Ne 2:1-8; Ps 136; Lk 9:57-62 (Readings for the day)

Gal 6:14-18; Ps 15; Mt 11:25-30 (Readings for the Feast)

“A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, collaborates with him. He senses Jesus alive with him during the missionary enterprise” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, № 266).

The Holy Father is such a disciple, who preaches the Gospel with his whole being. Today, the world hears many such witnesses: people determined to follow Jesus.

Today’s Gospel shows various attitudes of different people who have good desires, recognize the presence of the Messiah, but find it difficult to enter the path of perfection, the path of Jesus. We can always build on our past, on the wealth of experience we have gained, this is especially necessary in the work of the New Evangelization. We should not be afraid to use our talents that we can “baptize,” that is, give them the name of God. The great saints did the same. The patron of today’s feast, St. Francis of Assisi, liked to say to his brothers, “It is not worth going to preach the Good News if your only way is not the Good News.” Being close to Jesus is the goal of the journey; Christ himself helps us in our daily lives. A good evangelizer cannot divide his lifetime into work, school, monasteries, marriage, and evangelization. Everything we do, what we offer with our deeds and words, can be Good News. Following Jesus, as in today’s Gospel, there can be nostalgia, burning enthusiasm, fatigue, and a desire to return to our former life. Then it is worth repeating the confident words of Saint Francis of Assisi (Praises of God Most High [FF 261]):

You our faith, You our hope.

You are our great sweetness.

You are our eternal life.

Great and admirable Lord, almighty God, merciful Saviour.

Thursday, October 5, 2023

XXVI Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Faustina Kowalska, Apostle of Mercy

Ne 8:1-4,5-6,7-12; Ps 18; Lk 10:1-12

“The harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few; so, ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest.” Preaching the Good News requires human involvement, but it should not be forgotten that, before God we are only beggars. There are many hearts waiting for the Gospel, so there must also be many hearts praying. God teaches us to trust and confirms this with the signs of Heaven that this is his harvest, and these are his labourers. As we read today’s Gospel carefully, we will notice that Jesus prepared this project himself, who sent his chosen, kept them, and equipped them with everything they needed for evangelization. Our attitude should be constant thanksgiving as the Messiah invites all baptized people to go and preach. In tradition, sending two by two is an image of a combination of action and prayer, a symbol of preaching and silence. One student “opens” his mouth to the people he meets, while the other “opens” his heart to the voice of God. In missionary cooperation, we need both wings of evangelization, namely action and prayer. Therefore, during Missionary Month, we show activity and creativity in spreading the Good News and, on the other hand, we also feel the need to pray and immerse ourselves in God’s Word. Evangelization is a matter of faith, so our faith must be strong to bring Jesus into the world. This is what Blessed Paolo Manna, the PMU founder said, “The spirit of faith in your holy vocation means a living, deep and abiding conviction, and that the Lord has entrusted you with a task on the fulfillment of which depends on your sanctification and the sanctification of many souls.”

Friday, October 6, 2023

XXVI Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Bruno, Priest, and Monk

Bar 1:15–22; Ps 78; Lk 10:13–16

Today, we hear very difficult words from the Gospel. Christ does not curse these cities; it is the people who inhabit them who exclude themselves from the Good News. The Kingdom of God is an invitation from God made in love and respect for human freedom. This boundary (of love and freedom) must never be crossed regarding people seeking God, and the evangelizer's task is to point to the Lord's Messiah and not to himself. Sodom and Gomorrah, mentioned in the teachings, are examples of communities that fell in love with themselves, believed in the power of stone buildings and the strength of the army. They had not heard the warning of God that came from the lips of the Prophets. That is why today, a baptized person can also be a pious person but remain focused on himself. Being a true disciple of Jesus is being a missionary disciple. This cry can be related to the cry of Saint Paul the apostle who says, "Woe to me if I do not preach it [the Gospel]" (1 Cor. 9:16). Today, this cry is addressed to every baptized person because there are billions of people in the world who do not know the Gospel of life. Our humble confession in the hour of judgment will be that we have done little or nothing to make Jesus known and loved by the world. "The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God's word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed. Finally, an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, №. 24).

Saturday, October 7, 2023

XXVI Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Queen of Missions,

Bar 4:5–12,27–29; Ps 68; Lk 10:17–24

The name written in heaven is an indelible sign of the grace of Baptism. It is by virtue of this sacrament that God recognizes us as his children, but he also sends us in his name. The Blessed Virgin Mary, whose memory we celebrate today, reveals this mystery in the most complete way. God chooses her in advance, teaches her to listen to the Word, sends her as the first Apostle with the Good News when the Immaculate brings Jesus into her heart. And in the end, she is recognized as the Bride of the Holy Spirit and as the one who has most accurately fulfilled God's will on earth as a human being. This is what Blessed Paolo Manna said, "Although only in heaven will we truly see Mary's glory, admire her forever and glorify her greatness, already here on earth, immediately after Jesus, our feelings, pity and confidence should be turned to Mary." Today, the greatest joy of the missionary disciple, that is, of each of us who are baptized, is the opportunity to look upon Christ in the Eucharist. In today's Gospel, Jesus calls his disciples and tells them, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see." We do not always appreciate the power of the daily Mass, complaining of monotony and repetitiveness. However, we forget that God is there, that he is here. The missionary activity of the Church does not lead to any success, but to an ever more authentic witness of faith that God is love, revealed to us in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Love Jesus like the Immaculate Virgin, and the world will see in you the greatest love it needs today.

Sunday, October 8, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Justina, virgin, and martyr

Is 5:1–7; Ps 79; Phil 4:6–9; Mt 21:33–43

People in relationships are often aloof and cautious. Why? Because honesty is very risky and dangerous, and revealing one's heart to others is often difficult and painful.

In the story of the vine that we received today, God reveals himself; he discovers his weakness which is love for man. Through the image of the building of the vineyard, he shows how carefully and precisely he approaches relationships with people; he cares about every detail of human life like a friend who sets up and builds a vineyard and makes every effort to create the perfect place for the vine to develop. However, despite this great care (good place, fences, defensive towers, pruning, waterin...), the vine does not bear good fruit.

God's plan for man's life is the best possible plan, but it is often incomprehensible — to man. Therefore, rebellion, opposition and even reproach to God often arise in the human heart. Referring to today's Word, like the vine we often rebuke the farmer: you built a fence and towers, that is, you wanted to limit me, you took my freedom; you pruned the branches, that is, you constantly hurt me; you weeded the vineyard, that is, you took what I was attached to from my life, you took what was close to me, you stole my pleasure. You sent rain when I wanted sunshine, that is, you took away my dreams and desires... Man aspires to live as if God did not exist, according to his own life plan. But what will happen to a vineyard if the farmer does not fence it in, water it and take care of the vines? They will rake it and trample it.

Monday, October 9, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

St. Dionysius, Bishop, and Companions Martyrs; St. John Leonardi, Priest

Jon 1:1–2,1,11; From Jon; Lk 10:25–37

“Go and do likewise” — this is a task Jesus left not only to a person asking the Master “who is my neighbour,” but to each of us. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho, in fact, does not differ much from the streets of our cities and villages, nor from the stairways of our houses and the corridors of our hospitals. Many people live in these places without help and support, alone. So close to us yet so far from our hearts. Sometimes it is difficult for us to be good to these people. It is much easier to act like the priest or the Levite, passing by and moving on. How often do we justify our hearts by saying, “There are several institutions to help — let others take care of this man!” Jesus calls us today to keep our eyes open to other people, to those who need our support and love. The Good Samaritan did not wonder whether the man deserved such a fate or not. He took pity on him, cared for him, and showed mercy: he became a true neighbour. Today’s parable teaches that love transcends all ethnic, social, and religious differences. And that every man deserves love, no matter who he is or what life he has led up to that point. That is why Jesus repeats, “Go and do likewise.”

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Jon 3:1–10; Ps 129; Lk 10:38–42

In today's Gospel, Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary, not only as their friend, but more importantly as their teacher. From then on, their home becomes a place for proclaiming and listening to God's word. The ordinary house becomes a small church, in which there is a place to hear, preach and contemplate God.

Martha experienced this visit as one from a great guest; Mary read in this a deep spiritual meaning. Both sisters wanted to show due respect to the Master, but each in a different way. Martha is so agitated that her heart begins to be restless and worried. Most of us experience haste when we are busy with various tasks, problems, or services to be done from morning to evening. Blessed Edmund Bojanowski repeated that "man has a beautiful life when he is open to God." Openness to God is listening to his words. This is what Mary did: sitting at Jesus' feet, she listened to what he said. By listening to God's word, we not only take time away from our sorrows, but also restore meaning to our days. In our busy lives, we sometimes forget prayer or fail to see how important it is. And it is instead the best part of the day, prayer and listening to God's word, that often becomes a cure for our daily problems and worries. So, let us change our life priorities!

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint John XXIII

Jon 4:1–11; Ps 85; Lk 11:1–4

Father... Dad... In the *Story of a Soul* by Saint Therese of Lisieux, it is difficult to find expressions like “Lord” or “Ruler of the Universe,” while we can easily find her phrases like those that children used to address their parents. The straightforward attitude of this Patron Saint of Missions, her confidence and her gaze on God show us the truth that Jesus communicates to us through today’s Gospel.

The apostles repeatedly prayed in ways known to them, but their master’s prayer had to be unique, different from any other prayer they knew. Therefore, one of the disciples asks Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray ...”. Here, one might add, “... as you pray.” To this request, Jesus replies, “When you pray, say, Father,” and then continues the prayer we know so well. He uses the Aramaic word “Abba,” which children use to address their parents. This is what distinguishes our master’s prayer. It is like the attitude of a small child speaking to his father — he speaks openly, naturally, directly, and spontaneously. It also teaches us this unique relationship and prayer, making us aware that we are God’s children. So, we are not lonely orphans but we have a Father to whom we can turn with full trust, love, and certainty that we will receive tender protection from him.

Thursday, October 12, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Mt 3:13-4:2; Ps 1; Lk 11:5-13

“Father, I prayed for so many months and God took my son away. Why didn’t he hear my prayer?” Such conversations are always difficult, especially when there are emotions related to the loss of loved ones. Where, in all this, can we find assurance from Jesus in today’s Gospel?

Saint Francis Xavier once wrote that “The most terrible danger is the loss of trust in God in the midst of the greatest tragedies.” Each of our prayers is answered, but not all our ideas for life are God’s ideas. Often, the requests we make are more an extortion of God’s will than consent to the implementation of his plan. Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand what God expects of us or what his plans are in getting us through some concrete event in life. In the end, it is not a matter of a full understanding of God’s will, but of trusting him. We are God’s children, and God, like a great parent, gives us everything we need. He gives it to us according to his plan, amid situations and things that we cannot understand at that moment.

It is difficult for a person to remain in prayer, especially when life does not go according to his plan. However, God, in his wisdom, acts and listens in his own way, first by giving himself. Therefore, in situations when we feel that our prayers have not been answered, we must trust in God and pray that the light of the Holy Spirit will make us understand God’s work in the plan of our salvation.

Friday, October 13, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Gal 1:13–15; 2:1–2; Ps 9; Lk 11:15–26

Every time she received Holy Communion, young Teresa paraphrased the words of Saint Paul the Apostle from the letter to the Galatians, saying, “No longer do I live, but Jesus lives in me.” He understood perfectly that the human heart cannot remain empty, that someone must live in it. And the choice is simple: if Christ who brings peace does not dwell in it, then all the evil spirits mentioned in today’s Gospel will dwell in it, bringing only chaos and inner division.

The sacrament of penance and reconciliation is an instrument of God’s great mercy. There is not an hour or a minute on the clock when man does not receive God’s love. Every day, in many places and churches around the world, thousands of people leave the confessionals and become sin-free people with a “pure heart.” However, it is imperative that Christ live in this “purified heart” as soon as possible. Only he, as true God, can give man inner peace and make him truly free.

Let this Word we receive today be some encouragement for us to allow our sins, bondage, and attachments to die away, to finally live a full life for God. All that we need to accomplish this task is our consent that eventually Christ may dwell in our hearts. Are you ready to say to him: live in my heart?

Saturday, October 14, 2023

XXVII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Calixtus I, Pope, and Martyr

Gal 4:12–21; Ps 96; Lk 11:27–28

“Although only in heaven will we truly see Mary’s glory, admire her forever and praise her greatness,” wrote Blessed Paolo Manna, we can now accept without a doubt that she is unique and blessed among women. Her motherhood and trust in God’s promise make her a special woman.

Today’s Gospel shows us an anonymous woman among the crowd, who admires Jesus by praising his mother. Christ agrees with her but emphasizes that blessed are those who hear God’s word and keep it. Thus, each of us can be like Virgin Mary, so blessed, so happy, that is, so open to receive God himself. All it takes is one thing: listening to God’s word and fulfilling it. This is not a painless process. It is important that this Word is not listened to, but heard, understood, and lived. We are constantly learning to do this, and in fact everything we do, our life and our pursuit of heaven, everything is centred on this.

Through today’s Gospel, Jesus wants to tell us that it is possible to be blessed, that his grace works in us so that others, looking at us, will want to glorify God. May Virgin Mary support us in this effort of ours to hear and carry out the Word of God, just as she believed in the Word and put it into practice.

Sunday, October 15, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Is 25:6–10; Ps 22; Phil 4:12–14,19–20; Mt 22:1–14

This Sunday's Gospel, at the heart of Missionary Month, urges us to invite people to the wedding feast. The wedding feast is an image close to us. The wedding dreamed of and desired by the bride and groom represents their feast day for which they prepare, taking care of every detail so that it will be an unforgettable day to remember for a lifetime. A day of celebration to be shared with the people who are close to them. The image of the wedding is present and often recurring in the Bible. Many events in the history of salvation happen in this context. The prophet Hosea uses the wedding image to describe the covenant relationship between God and his people, a covenant made by God, eternal and joyful, that overcomes the crises and repeated infidelities of the people. Even the sacraments of Christian life are interpreted as the celebration of this marriage between God and man. But the emphasis of today's Gospel passage is on the invitation: "He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast [...] A second time he sent other servants [...] Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find." Go out to invite to the feast. Being a messenger heralding a joyful invitation is our task, each one of us. This being sent implies carrying an invitation to the feast. Mission consists in this and demands messengers who bring good news that they themselves live and witness. In the face of a needy and often indifferent humanity, which often rejects the invitations made by the Lord, may the Lord rise up messengers of hope and comforters of hearts.

Monday, October 16, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Hedwig, Religious

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin

Rom 1:1-7; Ps 97; Lk 11:29–32

Walking on mountain trails, in inaccessible areas when visibility is reduced due to sudden bad weather, it becomes imperative to be “faithful” to the markings placed along the path, lest we lose our bearings and end up in dangerous situations. There are situations in life that require, indeed “demand”, the presence of signs. Even on the level of faith, of relationship with God, something similar happens. In the face of danger, when calamity strikes, when critical situations frighten us, it comes naturally to invoke God’s help: Lord help me! A positive response to this invocation confirms and strengthens faith in God, otherwise the relationship with God comes out wounded and weakened. Why did the Lord not listen to me? How could he allow this? Questions like these appear after asking for something from the Lord that he did not grant. These complaints are described in the Bible as lack of faith in God. Rather than demands, here, one should speak of claims. To understand the issue and try to resolve it, it is necessary to find the correspondence between what we ask for and what God offers us. In fact, these plans are on the same level.

God knows what we really need better than we ourselves can ask for. Every grace and gift are given to us through his Son Jesus Christ, the Father’s envoy. To him we turn our gaze, to him we ask for every grace, and from him we learn humility and service to render to our brothers and sisters near and far. Jesus is the sign God has given us, the greatest and closest sign we can imagine. Who has a God as close as ours?

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop, and Martyr

Rom 1:16-25; Ps 18; Lk 11:37–41

Often, in the Gospels, we find some encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees, people who showed themselves blameless before the Law of God and its commandments. In fact, in the eyes of the people, the Pharisees were those who showed themselves to be perfect in keeping the Law, to such an extent that they kept all the commandments given by God to Moses even more scrupulously than the Law itself required. In all this, however, there was one problem that Jesus fearlessly and hesitantly pointed out and denounced: the outward observance of the Law. All the blamelessness of the Pharisees was merely an outward way of life, in order to be admired and revered by the people who saw them as individuals without blemish, incapable of doing wrong. Not only that, by virtue of this apparent moral superiority they felt justified in judging others. Jesus spoke plainly in exposing these false worshippers of God. A plant is recognized by the fruit it bears. For us today, too, this Gospel warns us of the risk of living like the Pharisees, caring much about the appearance of our faith such as observing certain outward practices, but not having God in our hearts. May the Lord help us to always be simple people who live their faith in charity toward their neighbour and sincere love to God.

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Luke, Evangelist

2 Tim 4:10–17; Ps 144; Lk 10:1–9

The Church is a mission. Today's Gospel makes this clear. The Lord Jesus sends seventy-two apostles who will repeat the deeds and words spoken and carried out by Jesus himself. This getting close to others, through proclamation and concrete gestures, essentially represents the very action of God, his nature. God coming out of himself to meet man, a man wounded and without orientation because of the wound of sin. In this going out of God in search of man, one must find the reason for the Church and its mission. The Church and each Christian who composes it, find their meaning in bearing witness to God, to the God whom Jesus Christ has made known and revealed to us. The evangelist Luke, whose memory we commemorate today, through the Gospel account and from the Acts of the Apostles he wrote, tells us this Good News. Here then is the task of the Church and every baptized person: to be a sign of this good news, in the simplicity of life.

“When you come across a good thing, you talk about it. And when you come across a true thing, you talk about it. And if you have realized that the story of Jesus has illuminated the path of the world and of man by giving it meaning, then you talk about it. You cannot do without it. And if the encounter with Jesus has changed your existence giving it strength, direction, meaning, then you invite friends to share it.” (Bruno Maggioni)

Thursday, October 19, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Paul of the Cross, Priest

Rom 3:21-30; Ps 129; Lk 11:47–54

“Woe to you!”: with these harsh words, Jesus addresses those who stubbornly stand in the way, locked in their injustices. Already, the prophets in the Old Testament used strong words denouncing the unfaithfulness of the chosen people for abandoning the Lord. The prophetic word is not so much a prediction of what will happen in the future, as we sometimes think, as if everything is preordained. Rather, the prophetic word is God’s reading judging the works of man. “Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.” (Heb 4:12). This word is meant to shake and repent. In the face of grave and imminent danger, the Lord’s loud call sounds like a wake-up call that is meant to warn so that we can get to safety. In the face of these signals the Lord sends, it is necessary to be responsive. To shake ourselves in order to begin again. Then even a strong word of denunciation and warning becomes a word of salvation offered to all, especially for those who think they do not need it, but without which they would remain closed in their selfishness.

Friday, October 20, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 4:1–8; Ps 31; Lk 12:1–7

Feeling fear is typical of human experience. When faced with dangers or unfamiliar situations, humans react by feeling fear. Some people, who always appear strong and capable in every situation, hide the emotion of fear well, yet fail to deny it. Who can say, “I am never afraid”? On the contrary, some people live blocked by fear, for fear of making mistakes (who does not make mistakes?), or for fear of being judged. The Gospel tells us that even the Lord Jesus was afraid, thus showing us his humanity so close to ours. Today, Jesus himself shows us whom to be afraid of, whom to fear: “who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna.” Jesus by pointing us to the devil as the source of all evil points us to the real enemy, caught at the root. The devil with his intelligence undermines every man by driving him as far away from God as possible. He does this by mixing the cards, making what is evil appear as good and deceiving us. His goal is to separate us from God forever, beginning here on earth and continuing into eternity. Today’s warning is important and puts us on guard. It is up to each of us to take it seriously, with an attitude of vigilance but also of awareness, choosing the true good in our lives, knowing through our faith that the Lord Jesus has overcome evil in the most radical way and this victory of his is offered to each of us. This, in the end, is the main content of the Good News of the Gospel.

Saturday, October 21, 2023

XXVIII Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 4:13.16–18; Ps 104; Lk 12:8–12

It is said that true friendship is known in times of hardships. And it is also true that very few people accept being friends with someone who is going through a difficult time. This is even more emphasized when our suffering is caused by a friend! This is what the Gospel teaches us today. Being Jesus's friends, his missionary disciples, means to expose oneself and to take into consideration that this friendship has consequences. The fact of professing being Christian and missionary of the Gospel is sometimes considered with respect, in certain cases with admiration. Nevertheless, in other circumstances, being on Jesus's side also exposes you to many risks, such as not being understood or accepted. In some radical cases, it even means to be persecuted.

Jesus said: “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Jn 3:20), thus, be ready! Through these hardships, we are called to be faithful and to not be discouraged. Let us have faith in that even if this effort might seem beyond human endurance, we are not alone. The Lord supports us with his grace and he doesn't allow us to be tested beyond our strengths. If, through our prayers, we often remember those who are experiencing hardships and tribulations by invoking perseverance amid hardships, let us also ask that same perseverance for us in moments when hardships and difficulties affect us, without ever getting discouraged, but by trusting the Lord and the strength he gives us even more.

Sunday, October 22, 2023, World Mission Day.

XXIX Sunday of Ordinary Time—Year A

St. John Paul II

Is 45:1,4–6; Ps 95; 1 Th 1:1-5b; Mt 22:15–21

In 1926, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith proposed to Pope Pius XI to hold an annual day in favour of the missionary activity of the Universal Church. The request was granted, and it was established that this would take place every penultimate Sunday in October: thus began the annual celebration of World Mission Day. It aims to arouse missionary commitment in every baptized person, to arouse the desire for missionary animation and collaboration. This purpose can be achieved in two ways.

First, by remembering that at the ends of the world, in the young and poor communities of the Church, our brothers and sisters need our help. They cannot cope by themselves with the shortage of priests, chapels, churches, disease and illiteracy. Thousands of missionaries serve “on the front lines”, to whom we, as “missionaries in the back lines,” must offer spiritual and material help, because this is a “fight for the Gospel” on our behalf as well. Saint Paul reminds us today that the proclamation of the Gospel does not happen by human strength alone, but primarily by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who bring Christ need his strength and guidance.

Second, World Mission Day is an opportunity to renew our baptismal call to be missionary disciples, to be those who hear Christ and then witness to him, wherever God places them today, here, and now. This is not easy in today’s world. In Jesus’ day, he was often put to test with questions: what was more important, the secular law or the faith of Israel? Did one have to pay taxes to Caesar to recognize him as authority, or not?

Even today, there are many who assess us – disciples of Jesus – and ask us, “What is from God and what is not? Where is God amid the suffering of the world?” The missionary disciple, fixing his eyes on his Saviour, reminds us, however, that God alone is the Lord. It is he who sustains and protects not only his followers, but everyone, even those who do not yet know him.

Let us remember that the Church of Christ is not limited to our parish or country. Let us make sure that our brothers and sisters at the ends of the world can enjoy the grace of faith. Let us always support them with our prayers and offerings.

Monday, October 23, 2023

XXIX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint John of Capestrano, Priest

Rom 4:20-25; Ps from Lk 1; Lk 12:13–21

A man who does not believe in God may want to decide everything for himself, even to the point of feeling equal to God and giving orders to his Creator. A person may sometimes try to dictate to God what they should do. Just like the one in the crowd in today's Gospel passage, who said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." A man without faith forgets God and spiritual things. He focuses only on the mundane and the material. He reasons about where and how to store his earthly goods, forgetting that all this is only temporary, fleeting, and ephemeral.

A man without faith is not interested in missions, evangelisation or spreading the Kingdom of God. The more important missions are to us, the stronger our faith in God's presence and works in the history of the world and the Church, will be. Our interest in missions shows how important the death and resurrection of Christ are for us, he who gave his life for every man and woman so that all might know him, love him. It is no coincidence that John Paul II wrote, "Mission is an issue of faith, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love for us" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 11) Lack of missionary commitment shows our ignorance toward what is spiritual and eternal.

During this Mission Month, we want to constantly remind ourselves of our missionary vocation, our brothers and sisters at the ends of the world and the missionaries working there. May the example of Abraham, in the first reading, strengthen us in not doubting the meaning of what comes from God that is eternal. May our faith in God's love and our concern for this truth to reach every man, be "credited as righteousness" to us (cf. Rom. 4:22). Let us ask for more faith and involve ourselves even more in missionary animation and cooperation.

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

XXIX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Saint Anthony Mary Claret, Bishop

Rom 5:12,15b.17-19,20b-21; Ps 39; Lk 12:35–38

Only God can transform death into life. He transformed the cross of Christ into the joy of resurrection. The tears of many – hungry, abandoned, sick and slaves of the evil spirit – were transformed into serenity and peace, a reflection of the freedom of God’s children. Today Saint Paul reminds us of this extraordinary paradox of God’s action. Interestingly, the Apostle of the Gentiles does not tell us that, after Christ’s resurrection, all suffering and all sin would disappear from the world. He does not promise heaven on earth. Rather, he reminds us that after the dawn of Resurrection Sunday, evil and death no longer have the last word nor will they ever have it again. Where sin abounds, grace abounds. The more man goes astray, the more God goes to meet him. But he never breaks people’s freedom and never forces them to faith.

In order not to lose God – who comes to meet us every day – and to receive his grace, we must constantly be ready. When readiness and expectation are lacking, it is easy to ignore or fail to recognize the signs of God’s presence and action.

Today, we remember Saint Anthony Mary Claret, a great 19th-century bishop and missionary, founder of the three religious families and father of the First Vatican Council, defender of the dogma of papal infallibility. Although this is an optional memorial, the person of Father Claret fits perfectly into the Missionary Month. This tireless proclaimer of the Gospel, short but great in spirit, repeated that the love of Christ inflamed him and impelled him to carry the fire of faith to the entire world. He often prayed, “Grant, Lord, that I may know you, and through me others may know you, that I may love you, and that I may make you loved and served by all...” He was always ready to listen to God and bring him to others.

May the desire to bring Christ to others by our of life, prayer and missionary collaboration, be kindled in us. May we always be ready for the encounter with God who always wins, who always has the last word and wants to grant us graces, regardless of our behaviour.

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

XXIX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 6:12–18; Ps 123; Lk 12:39–48

Peter asked, “Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?” Sometimes we act like Peter. We listen to sermons, messages from the Pope, the bishops, the pastor. We also read Church documents and think that these words are not meant for us, but for someone else. “Let someone else take care of it.” “Let someone else live this way.” We only choose what suits us from Faith, from morals and tradition in the Church. But there will come a time where we will have to do more. We still have time; may it be tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or ten years from now. God’s grace is always linked to an event. The Lord God sends us his grace “at the appropriate time,” here and now, because for him it is *always* now. Right now he is waiting for our response, our commitment, and our will to be “on his side.” We Christians have been given much: the grace of faith, the sacraments, the Word of God, the commandments, clear instructions for living. Therefore, much is required of us. Others who look at us have every right to expect us to show how to be CHRISTIAN, how to be of CHRIST. If you are baptized, you are a “missionary disciple,” a witness to Christ, and others are watching you, looking to you.

Of the eight billion people on Earth, more than five and a half billion have not yet experienced this grace, have never heard of Jesus, have not yet been reached by any missionaries. It is therefore the duty of us Christians to pray and work together so that each of our siblings on this Earth may experience that they are loved and chosen by God.

Thursday, October 26, 2023

XXIX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 6:19–23; Ps 1; Lk 12:49–53

Jesus understood his teaching was not easy and would arouse opposition and rejection among many. This is because the Lord God makes a clear distinction between what comes from him and what comes from the evil spirit. Not everyone likes such clear requirements. That is why Jesus's words in today's Gospel passage do not seem to match our idea of him.

What fire is Jesus talking about? The commentary in the Jerusalem Bible translation offers us two explanations. Fire is the Holy Spirit who purifies and puts people's hearts aflame. It is the fire that was ignited on the cross. After humanity's previous divisions, this fire initiated unity. This fire is capable of purifying gold. Christ brought the fire of God's teaching to Earth to purify and burn that which does not correspond to the Father's will and does not serve man. The demands of the Gospel do not destroy, but purify, enable, and give value.

Fire is also a symbol of spiritual warfare. Where there is war, there is fire. Jesus does not want to threaten us. Jesus warns us and prepares us for this war we fight within ourselves against our weaknesses, sins, and imperfections. And he also prepares us for the war we become part of, willingly or unwillingly, when we sincerely and openly profess our faith in Christ. It is not unusual for there to be people who fight against Christ and the Church. In many parts of the world, there is still no freedom to profess one's faith, and confessing Christ is tantamount to being imprisoned, harassed, or even executed to death. Sometimes, this struggle takes place even in our immediate surroundings. Jesus foresaw it two thousand years ago. But it is always his fire that wins, the fire of the Spirit and of Unity, not the belligerent fire of destruction. Especially now, during Mission Month, we ask Christians to persevere in faithfulness despite the worldwide struggle against Christ, goodness and the Church.

Friday, October 27, 2023

XXIX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 7:18-25a; Ps 118; Lk 12:54–59

If someone were to ask us where, in what signs and in what forms the Lord is present among us, we would answer immediately: in the Word of God and in the Eucharist. This is certainly true, but let us not forget that God is the God of time and history. He is present at events, in people, in everything that surrounds us every day. It is not easy to recognize the signs of this divine presence, certainly much more difficult than predicting weather forecasts. This requires great humility, openness to the Holy Spirit, and prudence. Discernment of God's action in history and reality must always take place in prayer, together with the Holy Spirit, and, very importantly, in the Church! Confirmation from the confessor, from the person who accompanies us in our spiritual life, from superiors ... is necessary. Whoever wants to decide for himself what is and what is not God, risks becoming a slave of his own pride, falling into the trap of that spirit that always opposes God.

Today is Friday: the day that makes us think of Jesus's passion and death. There, on the Cross, occurred the most important event of all humanity and the greatest event in world history: the redemption of humanity. For Christians, the Cross is a clear sign of this event. Saint Paul today thanks the Lord God for this, because he knows that he would not have been able to do anything good by himself alone. That Friday, when the sun darkened and darkness enveloped the Earth, few people were able to interpret these signs. The Lord reveals the secrets of his Kingdom only to people with simple hearts, to those who do not complicate things, who do not divide God into four, but simply welcome him. We ask for simple and humble hearts who can recognize the signs of God's presence every day.

Saturday, October 28, 2023

XXIX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Feast of Saints Simon and Jude Thaddeus, Apostles

Eph 2:19–22; Ps 18; Lk 6:12–16

Feast of the Apostles Simon and Judas Thaddeus. The apostles were the first missionaries, chosen and sent by Jesus. Jesus prayed all night long before choosing them. This could have meant that it was a difficult prayer. He had talked all night with his Father, discussing whom he should choose as his apostles? Or he was discussing Judas's presence in this group? None of us know. It is a secret between Father and Son, but two things are nevertheless certain. First, the more important decisions were being made, the more intense Jesus's prayer became. Next, Jesus did not choose anyone that extraordinary; he did not choose anyone among the rich or the learned, but rather simple, ordinary people with their own problems and imperfections. And it was precisely they who were sent by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel, making them his closest co-workers. Into their hands he entrusted the future of the Church and the mission of evangelization, and into our hands as well, because even today God calls us by name. On each of our birthdays, God has shown that the world could not exist without us.

Mission Month is ending, but our missionary efforts do not end. Let us participate in missionary animation and cooperation through witness of life, personal formation, dissemination of information about the Church's missionary work and with economic support. Let us not forget prayer, the first means of missionary cooperation (Remember: Jesus prayed all night long before choosing the apostles). Let us support today's missionaries with our prayer. Just as the whole building is in danger of collapsing without the cornerstone, so too the mission of the Church (and therefore ours) must rest on this cornerstone which is Christ Jesus. Only "through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord" (Eph 2:21), the temple of our personal and family life, the temple of the whole universal Church, beginning with our parish to the ends of the Earth.

Sunday, October 29, 2023

XXX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Ex 22:20–26; Ps 17; 1 Th 1:5–10; Mt 22:34–40

God cares for every man and woman. He cares deeply for each one of us. He harms no one and especially defends the weakest and those who lack something: widows, orphans, the poor, foreigners. No human being is ever indifferent to God. However, it is hard to believe this when we look at the world around us with so much war, suffering, disease, and violence. Some people ask, “Why does God allow this?” But is it God who allows it or is it man who allows himself too much? It is not God’s fault if men do not listen and do not want to live as he asks. God gave us the commandments so that we could discern and choose from what is good and what is bad for us; what helps us and what destroys us. But for centuries men have been testing God, doing what they want, deciding for themselves how they want to live, and then, when all has fallen apart and they really become very sick, they will ask God for help. It is like someone continually breaking traffic laws, going against the grain at excessive speeds, but then blaming others for having an accident.

Saint Paul praises the Thessalonians for their conversion. They began to obey the living and true God and to serve him. Through this attitude they accomplished extraordinary things. They became missionaries, witnesses of God and a model for all believers in Macedonia, Achaia, and other parts of the world. This is true evangelization. In this way, the baptismal duty of being missionary disciples is fulfilled. Christianity consists in listening with a sincere heart to God and his commandments, a faith so strong and deep that it does not need to say anything about Christ, nothing at all, because others, looking at us, see in us the living and true Gospel.

We listen. We believe. Let us try to be witnesses; let us love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind; let us love our neighbour as ourselves. The whole Gospel is contained in this.

Monday, October 30, 2023

XXX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 8:12–17; Ps 67; Lk 13:10–17

The great drama of a woman who had been ill for 18 years. Her suffering was twofold, not only physical but also spiritual. She was a slave to the spirit of helplessness, chained by it and bent over. Instead of the Spirit of God being within her, it was rather the spirit of he, who seeks at all costs to destroy the image and likeness of God in us. Therefore, the poor woman could not stand up straight and look up to heaven. She was focusing on herself and on worldly things. Freedom is only in the Spirit of God. Only he can free us from fear, anxiety, and spiritual depression. Only the Holy Spirit enables us to look to heaven with the joy and freedom of a child of God.

Jesus freed the woman from her spirit of helplessness; he restored her dignity. But the good that was done did not please everyone. The cold rules of the Law wanted to override a human and natural attitude of the heart: to help one's neighbour. Jesus did not get involved in the discussion. He demonstrated their hypocrisy with simple arguments, and his words reached those who murmured to such an extent that they were shamed. A missionary disciple is one who looks to heaven, focuses on God and not on himself, and by God's grace is able to show people the truth of the Gospel to which he is a witness through calm speech. The missionary disciple does not forget his dignity as a child of God, and tries to remember it and give it back to others. There are so many in the world today who are slaves to their own selfishness, desire for power, possession, money. They have forgotten who they are; they only remember what they have. Our task is to bring them the spirit of the Gospel of God. It is not an easy task, but we are not alone. By our side is the One through whom we cry out to God, "Abba, Father!"

Tuesday, October 31, 2023

XXX Week of Ordinary Time—Year A

Rom 8:18–25; Ps 125; Lk 13:18–21

Every gardener knows how small a mustard seed is. Every woman in the kitchen knows how little yeast is needed to grow a good pizza or a focaccia. A small “thing” can transform the whole of reality. But there is one condition: it will not happen by itself. One must get to work. It takes commitment, action, human cooperation. The gardener took the seed and sowed it, cultivated it, watered it... The woman took yeast and put it in flour, then made dough and baked it. It does not take great skill or extraordinary wisdom to be a missionary disciple, but it does take willingness and commitment. Pope Francis wrote, “In all the baptized people, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization. [...] In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized people, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization” (EG 119 – 120). Every baptized person has the task of being a witness for Christ. He must remember that all men created “share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). All it takes on our part is a little will and commitment to the mission of the Church, and the Lord will complete the rest with his grace. And the Kingdom of God will grow like a great mustard tree.

