

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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January 13, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, we celebrated the Baptism of the Lord and began ordinary time of the year in the liturgical calendar of the Church. "Ordinary" does not mean routine, dull, boring or non-exciting time in the Church's life of prayer and worship. It is 33 or 34 weeks between Christmas and Lent and between Easter and Advent. They are called "Ordinary days" because they are ordered and numbered, since Sundays of Ordinary Time are expressed numerically.

The liturgical year follows the natural rhythms of life - periods of intense concentration and celebration, followed by times of quiet reflection and maturation. Ordinary Time of the Year challenges us to live the mysteries we celebrated during the great seasons in extraordinary ways as we continue our spiritual journey. We set aside the major anniversaries and feasts of our Faith and concentrate on our own intimacy with Christ in order to live the message of the Gospels in down to earth, practical ways as we go about doing our daily chores.

This year (2025), our Sunday liturgies follow Cycle C of the Lectionary which uses the Gospel of Luke. Cycle A uses the Gospel of Mathew and Cycle B uses the Gospel of Mark and Easter season uses the Gospel of John. Our weekday readings begin with the Gospel of Mark. Mark wrote in Rome before A.D.70 for Christians of a Gentile (non-Jewish) background. Mark's profile of Jesus was influenced by the fact that he wrote mainly for Christians in Rome who were suffering persecution under the Roman Emperor, Nero. Thus, Mark stresses the suffering of Jesus. And if Jesus suffered, his disciples must not be surprised if they are called upon to suffer (Mark 8:34-35). So, Mark's profile of Jesus is that of the Suffering Messiah or Suffering Savior. Mark does not have an infancy narrative, so we first meet Jesus as an adult.

Mark's Gospel begins with a brief prelude consisting of the proclamation of John the Baptist; Jesus being baptized by John in the river Jordan; and finally, Jesus being driven by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, and there being tested by Satan. Then he gives an account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, his journey with his disciples to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover followed by a day by day account of the last week in the life of Jesus. Mark's Gospel ends with the story of Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus and being instructed to tell the disciples of Jesus that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that he was going to Galilee where he would meet them.... Now, I encourage you to read the whole Gospel of Mark and meet and get to know Jesus as Mark presents him to us.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

First Week In Ordinary Time

January 13-18, 2025

**If you want to have real meaning and fulfilment, as you want and as you deserve,
I say to each one of you, “Put on faith”, and your life will take on a new flavor,
it will have a compass to show you the way; “put on hope” and every one of your days will
be enlightened and your horizon will no longer be dark, but luminous; “put on love”,
and your life will be like a house built on rock, your journey will be joyful,
because you will find many friends to journey with you.**

(Pope Francis)

January 13 – Monday, First Week in Ordinary Time

**We are created and ordained to participate in God’s creative, redeeming
and sustaining activity where we are placed in the universe.**

Hebrews 1:1-6

The author of this letter presents Jesus as the reflection of the Father’s image. The disciples of Jesus must reflect this image.

Psalm 97

The Lord is king; let the earth rejoice;
Let the many isles be glad.
Justice and judgments are the foundation of his throne.

Mark 1:14-20

John the Baptist had prepared the way for Jesus. John was arrested and in prison. Now Jesus begins to get on the “Way” that John had prepared. Eventually, we know that Jesus would become the “WAY”. Jesus began his ministry in Galilee by proclaiming “GOOD NEWS”: “now is the time...the reign of God is at hand...repent and believe the good news”. It is good news that Jesus came to bring and it is the same good news that we are called to proclaim with our lives: Good News of forgiveness, of healing, of hope, of peace, of promise, of salvation, of God’s unconditional love, of everlasting life.....

This Good News calls us to “repentance”. The Greek word “metanoia” literally means “a change of mind”. It refers, therefore, to a change of attitude, to a change of mentality, to a change of heart. It is not about feeling sorry for the consequences one’s sins. It is “change of sinfulness”, sinful attitudes, sinful ways, sinful relationships, sinful behavior patterns, sinful presence.....

Belief in the good news means that we take in the good news Jesus proclaimed. We can not welcome (take in) good news without real repentance, without a change of heart, of mind, of attitude.....

The men Jesus called were simple folks. Jesus called them while they were doing their day’s work. The call of God comes not only in the house of God, not only in secret places, but in the middle of the day’s work. We live in a world that is “full of God” and we hear his call if we listen. The simple folks that Jesus called responded and now it is up to us to respond to God’s call and proclaim the “good news”.

Saint of the day, January 13 - St. Hilary and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

Hilary of Poitiers was Bishop of Poitiers and is a Doctor of the Church. He was sometimes referred to as the "Hammer of the Arians" and the "Athanasius of the West." His name comes from the Latin word, “hilarius” for happy or cheerful.

Hilary was born around 310 C.E. in Poitiers, France. His parents were pagans who gave him a good pagan education, which included a high level of Greek. He studied, later on, the Old and New Testament writings and consequently, abandoned his Neo-Platonism for Christianity, and with his wife and his daughter (traditionally named Saint Abra), was baptized and received into the Church.

The Christians of Poitiers so respected Hilary that around the year 350, they unanimously elected him their bishop. At that time Arianism threatened to overrun the Western Church. Hilary began battling Arianism, which denied the divinity of Christ. The heresy, Arianism, spread rapidly. When Emperor Constantius ordered all the bishops of the West to sign a condemnation of Athanasius, the great defender of the faith in the East, Hilary refused and was banished from France to far off Phrygia.

Hilary spent nearly four years in exile, all the while defending the doctrine of the Church. While in exile, Hilary sought public debate with the heretical bishop who had exiled him. The Arians, dreading the meeting and its outcome, pleaded with the emperor to send this troublemaker back home. Hilary was welcomed back by his people. He died around the year 368 in Poitiers, France

January 14 - Tuesday, First Week in Ordinary Time

Social sciences see our purpose as self-actualization, self-realization, the final goal, goal of personal fulfillment, the goal of perfection, etc.

Hebrews 2:5-12

In this excerpt, the author of this letter tells us that God created man only a little less than himself to have mastery over all things. He quotes Psalm 8, “crowned him with honor and glory...subjected all things beneath his feet”. He tells us that man entered into defeat instead of glory and mastery. Jesus came into this state of defeat and frustration and restored man to the honor and glory that was his through suffering and death

Psalm 8

**O Lord, our God, how glorious is your name over all the earth!
What is man that you should be mindful of him,
Or the son of man that you should care for him?
You have made him little less than the angels
And crowned him with glory and honor.**

Mark 1:21-28

Jesus went into the Synagogue. Jesus had differences with the synagogue practices. Yet he went to the synagogue.

People were spellbound by his teaching because he taught with authority, not like the scribes. People saw in Jesus what he taught and that was his authority. Jesus was “word” in the flesh. This is our call: the word of Jesus has to become flesh in us. And that is where our authority comes from. Our authority comes from our fidelity to the Word of Jesus, our fidelity to what we have come to know as truth, our fidelity to what we have come to know as “from God”.

Welcome God’s word into your life. Contemplate his Word. Let his word transform your life.

Saint of the Day, January 14 – Felix of Nola and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Felix was the elder son of Hermias, a Syrian centurion who had retired to Nola, Italy, around the year 250. After his father's death Felix sold off most of his property and possessions, gave the proceeds to the poor, and pursued a clerical vocation. Felix was ordained by Saint Maximus of Nola and became his assistant after ordination. When Maximus fled to the desert at the beginning of Decius' persecution of the Christians in 250, Felix was seized in his stead, imprisoned and tortured.

Tradition tells us that he was reputedly released from prison by an angel, who directed him to the ailing Maximus, whom he brought back to Nola. Even after Decius' death in 251, Felix was a hunted man but kept well-hidden until the persecution ended. When Maximus died, the people unanimously selected Felix as their Bishop, but he declined the honor in favor of Quintus, a senior priest. Felix spent the rest of his life on a small piece of land sharing what he had with the poor and died there on January 14.

Much of the little information we have about Felix came from the letters and poetry of Saint Paulinus of Nola, who served at a porter at the door of a church dedicated to Saint Felix, and who gathered information about him from churchmen and pilgrims. Though Felix died of natural causes, he is normally listed as a martyr because of the torture, imprisonment, and privations he experienced in the persecutions.

January 15 - Wednesday, First Week in Ordinary Time

**The followers of Jesus see their purpose as holiness, perfection,
fullness of life with God, eternal life, fulness of joy life in heaven, etc.**

Hebrews 2:14-18

In the biblical sense, “flesh” means human nature considered in its weakness and frailty and is contrasted with the “spirit” which is from God. Jesus has conquered this “flesh” by his death and has empowered us to conquer our own “flesh”.

Psalm 105

Give thanks to the Lord, invoke his name;
Make known among the nations his deeds.
Sing to him, sing his praise,
Proclaim all his wondrous deeds.

Mark 1:29-39

Jesus cures Simon's mother-in-law, in Simon's house. Jesus was prepared to heal in a simple cottage and did not require the great audience of the synagogue. Jesus had an exciting and exhausting experience in the synagogue. He was never too tired to help and to heal. Simon's mother-in-law began to wait on them after being cured. She used her recovered health for renewed service.

Rising early, Jesus went into a quiet place and was absorbed in prayer. They managed to "track him down". "Everybody is looking for you", they said. Jesus brought good news to the disciples. The disciples had no problem bringing their troubles to the man with good news.

Saint of the Day, January 15 - St. Paul the Hermit and 27 other saints are remembered this day.

Paul of Thebes, commonly known as Paul, the First Hermit or Paul the Anchorite, is regarded as the first Christian hermit. Tradition has it that he lived alone in the desert from the age of sixteen to one hundred and thirteen years of age. He was probably born around 227 C.E. in Egypt.

Paul and his married sister lost their parents when he was only 15. In order to obtain Paul's inheritance, his brother-in-law sought to betray him to the persecutors. Paul fled to the Theban desert as a young man during the persecution of Decius and Valerian around A.D. 250. Tradition tells us that he lived in the mountains of this desert in a cave near a clear spring and a palm tree. The leaves of the palm tree provided him with clothing and its fruit provided him with his only source of food until he was 43 years old, when a raven started bringing him half a loaf of bread daily. He would remain in that cave for the rest of his life, almost a hundred years.

Tradition also tells us that St. Anthony the Great visited Paul of Thebes around the year 342. Anthony the Great was told in a dream about Paul's life as a hermit and went to find him. Anthony the Great and Paul met when the latter was aged 113. They spent one day and one night together. Paul was dead when Anthony visited him again around the year 342. Anthony clothed him in a tunic which was a present from Athanasius of Alexandria and buried him. Anthony returned to his monastery taking with him the robe woven with palm leaf. He honored the robe so much that he only wore it twice a year: at the Feast of Easter, and at the Pentecost.

January 16 - Thursday, First Week in Ordinary Time

**Purposefulness is the ultimate virtue that inspires
and moves you to fulfill your God-given purpose.**

Hebrews 3:7-14

The author instructs his readers to encourage one another daily because “we have become partners with Christ”.

Psalm 95

Come let us bow down in worship;
Let us kneel before the Lord who made us.
For he is our God,
And we are the People he shepherds, the flock he guides.

Mark 1:40-45

Jesus healed a leper. Lepers were excluded from community by law. Jesus welcomed the one who has been so excluded and alienated from community. **Be a welcoming person. Be a builder of community. Encourage and pray for fellowship with all people.**

Jesus touched the untouchable, and his touch brought healing and wholeness. **Reflect on the healing touch of the Lord! Reflect on your own need to be touched and to touch others. Let your touch be healing, loving, compassionate.**

Jesus instructs the healed leper not to publicize what he had done but do what the law requires. The healed leper went and made the story public, and it became difficult for Jesus to freely move. **Reflect on maintaining confidence. Reflect on what happens when confidence is not maintained.**

Whatever is shared or published may be the truth. Yet certain information, however true they may be, might bring conflict, tension, and harm to self or to others. **Reflect on the need to use discernment and wisdom in sharing things you know.**

Saint of the Day. January 16 - Saint Berard and Companions and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

We know very little about the early life of St. Berard. According to tradition, he was born into a noble family of Leopardi, and was a native of Carbio in Umbria, a province of the Papal States. He was received into the newly founded Franciscan Order by St. Francis of Assisi in 1213. At the conclusion of the Second General Chapter of the Franciscan friars in 1219, Francis believed that the time had come for the friars to extend their apostolic activities beyond the Italian peninsula and northern Europe. Berard was well versed in Arabic, was an eloquent preacher, and was chosen by Francis, together with two other priests, Peter and Otho, and two lay brothers, Accursius and Adjutus, to evangelize in Morocco.

The five missionaries set sail from Italy and arriving in Portugal, crossed into Spain and then to Seville, then still under Muslim rule, where their preaching antagonized the king. After imprisoning them for three weeks, he expelled them to the Kingdom of Morocco. Despite the fact that only one of the five, Berard, knew Arabic, their open preaching of the Gospel and their bold denunciation of Islam soon caused them to be viewed as insane.

The king ordered them escorted to Ceuta and put aboard ships bound for Christian lands. However, the friars left the ships, returned to Morocco, and resumed preaching. They were then released and given guides to take them to Christian territory, but they once again returned. When it became apparent, they would neither go away nor stop preaching, they were apprehended and cast into prison. Since they could not be persuaded to abandon their Catholic faith, the Moorish king, in a fit of rage, beheaded them with his scimitar, making them the first martyrs of the Franciscan Order.

January 17 - Friday, First Week in Ordinary Time

**Purposefulness is a dynamic and positive character trait
that shows clarity of purpose, intentionality, determination.**

Hebrews 4:1-5, 11

The author assures his readers, “those who are faithful will enter God’s rest, God’s abode”. So, strive to be faithful and enter God’s resting place.

Psalm 78

**What we have heard and know
and what our fathers have declared to us,
we will declare to the generations to come,
the glorious deeds of the Lord and his strength.**

Mark 2:1-12

Four men went up the roof, carrying a paralyzed man on a mat, made a hole in the roof and let down the mat with the man in it in order to bring him to Jesus.

Nothing is an obstacle to men of faith and determination!

Jesus affirmed the faith of those who reached out to him and healed the paralyzed man.

Think of the kind of paralysis, from which, you or someone else you know, need healing and pray about it.

Why do you harbor evil in your hearts? Jesus asked.

Well, think of harboring evil thoughts about others - may be not evil, but may be unkind, uncharitable, unloving.... **Reflect on the need to think "well" of others - to bless others, to see good in others, to bring out the good from others.....**

Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven. "

Isn't that another way of saying, you are acceptable, you are welcome here, you are called to "wholeness", you don't have to stay in guilt and shame, you can be better...

Saint of the Day, January 17 - St. Anthony, Abbot and 10 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint Anthony the Abbot, also known as Anthony the Great, Anthony of Egypt, Anthony of the Fire, Anthony of the Desert, Anthony the Anchorite was born at Qumans, a village on the left bank of the Nile, around 251 C.E. He was born into a wealthy family. When his parents died, he distributed all his wealth to the poor. He chose to live as a hermit and retired into solitude, to work and pray, at first near his hometown and later in the desert. He spent many years living in an ancient rock-hewn tomb in prayer and contemplation.

His reputation as a hermit soon spread among the faithful. Anthony, who wanted to live totally detached from the rest of the world, was forced to change his place of "residence" to escape the crowds of people who flocked to him from all over to get his advice. Around 311 he went to Alexandria to give aid and comfort to the Christians persecuted by Emperor Maximian, and then retired to the Qolzoum mountain along the Red Sea. He had to return to Alexandria shortly after to fight the Arian heresy. Anthony lived a very long life. He died at the age of 105, on January 17, 355 (or 356), in his hermitage on Mount Qol

January 11 - Saturday, First Week in Ordinary Time

Purposefulness is the virtue of the person with clear vision of purpose, who actively, intentionally and tenaciously works towards fulfilling the discerned purpose.

Hebrews 4:12-16

The author of this letter describes God's word as effective, sharp, penetrating the soul and capable of scrutinizing the intentions/motivations of the heart. He concluded this excerpt by saying that a time will come when every person must meet God from whom nothing can be concealed.

Psalm 19

**The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple;
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes.**

Mark 2:13-17

One of the most unlikely candidates for being a follower of Jesus was Mathew. But he was called, and he followed. Mathew was a man who not only extorted his own people but also swindled the government. Jesus saw not only what Mathew was but also what he could be - So Jesus called, and Mathew responded. What does this say to you? What does it mean to you?

Reflect on what Mathew lost and what Mathew found. He lost a comfortable job, income, security, power.....But he found a new mission, honor, adventure, peace, joy, love, destiny, treasure eternal - wealth that he never dreamed of.

Jesus sat with Mathew and few others like him. Imagine sitting at table with the likes of Mathew!!!! Jesus did much more. He dined with Mathew and others like him.

"I came not to call the righteous but sinners". The word used for "call" in Greek here is the technical word for inviting a guest to a house or to a meal.

Jesus called Mathew and he calls all of us today to the feast of the kingdom.

Saint of the Day, January 18 - St. Charles of Sezze and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint Charles of Sezze was born Giancarlo Marchioni on October 19, 1613 in Sezze, Italy, to poor farmers. He grew up with a devotion to St. Francis through the encouragement of his mother. He worked on the farm as a shepherd to help his parents to plough the fields. He made a private vow to remain chaste in 1630 and in 1633 fell ill to the point of near death. He pledged to join the Order of Friars Minor if he were to be healed of his ailment. His parents

encouraged his vocation to become a priest but he was a poor student. He could not read or write much. So, there was little hope of succeeding in advanced studies.

He became a religious in the Order of Friars Minor despite the opposition of his parents who wanted him to become a priest and he led an austere life. He lived the life of a religious and never requested ordination to the priesthood despite the protests of his parents to do so. He worked in various friaries as a cook, served as a porter, worked as a sacristan and gardener. He also went out into the streets as a beggar. Though he kept himself under the guidance of a spiritual director, he himself - though not a priest - was often sought for spiritual advice and even Pope Innocent X and Alexander VII sought him out for advice. Pope Clement IX summoned him to his deathbed for comfort and a blessing not long before the two men died. He died on January 6, 1670 in the convent attached to San Francesco a Ripa in Rome. Pope John XXIII canonized him on April 12, 1959.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**The road may be rough, the journey may be tough,
and the experience may be bitter, but they are steppingstones
to becoming who you are meant to be.**

