

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the second Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Scripture readings of today's mass remind us of the new name that God has for us. A new name means a new identity. We have a new name...we are called children of God, children of light! **We are called to rejoice and celebrate our new identity and be faithful to this new identity!** Fidelity to the new identity means fidelity to Christ because we have been immersed into Christ and our identity is in him. St. Paul reminds us, "In him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28) "I live, no longer I, but Christ, my Lord, lives in me." (Galatian 2:20)

In the first Scripture reading of today's mass, the sixth century B.C. prophet tells us that the people of Judah were being given new and endearing names by God. These names give us images reflecting God's special love for his people. They also reflect a change of status...."you shall be called by a new name...." says the Prophet - the exiles who were "Forsaken" and "Desolate" would soon be free to rebuild their home, temple and country and return to their own way of life. They will be newly named "My delight" and "espoused".

God was claiming Judah as a groom claims his bride. A new relationship was emerging between God and his people. **They were gaining a new identity. They were going to be God's people and God's delight!** The exiles were going to be forgiven and healed and that was going to be so complete that Judah would still be in a virginal state, untouched and untainted. So, the prophet says, "I will not be silent." He must sing and shout about what God was doing for His people.

In today's first reading (Isaiah 62:1-5) the prophet's imagery is about a conversion from gloom to joy and confidence. Isaiah compares the dispirited people to a woman who thought herself unmarriageable (a much more dreadful situation in the ancient Middle East than it is in the modern West). But she suddenly finds a suitor before her, proposing marriage! It is the land of the Jews that the Lord proposes to marry and make fertile. And the prophet's real goal was probably to get the hopeless people to plant crops in the land, despite their "Why bother? What good will it do?" attitude. You can see that in the above referenced verses where the land is described at first as "Desolate," then "Espoused."

Another feature of Judah's reversal of fortune is that she will be able to hold up her head again among the other nations, which shall see her vindication. All kings shall behold her glory. This is something that Isaiah can't be quiet about. "I will not be silent", he says (verses 1 & 2). What else can one do but sing and shout and celebrate when such transformation of people

happens? Lonely, desperate, forsaken, and scared people are becoming free and unafraid and new life is emerging for them. They are becoming a new people with a new name and new identity – they are God’s chosen people in whom God delights.

This is what happens to us at our baptism. At the concluding rite of baptism, the minister says, “you have put on Christ, in him you have been baptized.” He continues, “this child has been reborn in baptism. He (she) is now called the child of God, for so indeed he (she) is.” This is our new name, new identity and we have put on Christ. We must be faithful to who we are and give witness to our identity.

In the second reading of today’s mass, we read about Paul advising the Corinthians and us today (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) that the Holy Spirit has gifted us in diverse ways, and we must use those gifts for the good of the community. That is one of the tangible ways of giving witness to our identity in Christ.

In the Gospel reading of today, we read about Jesus changing water into wine. The water that was changed into wine was meant for the ceremonial washing prescribed by Jewish law ...for washing their feet...hand washing before the meal and so on. **It was the water used for purification that Jesus turned into choice wine. Just as water meant for washing was transformed into “good wine,” the waters of baptisms transform a person and gives him/her the new identity in Christ.** The baptized person is given a clean, white garment with the words, “See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity.... bring that dignity unstained into eternal life.” You have a Christ character...Be faithful!

At the beginning of the new year and of the Ordinary time of the Year, we are reminded, called and challenged to be in Christ, to live and move and have our whole being in him. We must give witness to our identity by giving others what God gave us, acting toward others the way God has acted toward us, loving others the way God has loved us, “love one another as I have loved you” was the command Jesus gave his disciples! Pope Francis reminds us, “Christianity is not a school of ideas or a collection of beautiful temples and lovely art; it is a living people who follow Jesus and give witness to him every day.....**we are a people who follow Jesus Christ and give witness** -- that is, want to give witness to Jesus Christ -- and this witness sometimes ends up being giving one's life,"

I encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and reflect on being baptized into Christ, on wearing the “garment of Christian dignity” and on how you have been witnessing Christ as you went about doing your daily chores.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today’s mass....

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 19, 2025

**God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden,
can restore life to dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14). Let us be renewed by God's mercy,
let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too;
and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth,
protect all creation, and make justice and peace flourish.
(Pope Francis)**

Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
who govern all things,
both in heaven and on earth,
mercifully hear the pleading of your people
and bestow your peace on our times.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

Purposefulness is single-mindedness and pure-heartedness.

Isaiah 62:1-5

In this excerpt, the sixth century B.C.E. prophet tells us that the people of Judah were being given endearing names by God. These names give us images reflecting God's special love for his people. They also reflect a change of status...."you shall be called by a new name"the exiles who were "Forsaken" and "Desolate" would soon be free to return home to their own land and their own way of life. They will be newly named "My delight" and "espoused". God was claiming Judah as a groom claims his bride. A new relationship was emerging between God and the people.

The return from exile meant forgiveness, healing and reconciliation with God and the renewal of spousal love. God's forgiveness was so complete that the prophet spoke of Judah as one still in a virginal state, untouched and untainted. So, the prophet shouts, "I will not be silent".

You have a new name...you are called children of God, children of light! Rejoice and celebrate your new name and be faithful to this new identity!

Psalm 96

This Psalm celebrates the return of the exiles from Babylon and the new beginning that God had offered them. The Psalmist calls the whole earth to sing to the Lord and tell the nations about the salvation God has won for His people, to glorify God for what He has done and to bring an offering of thanksgiving. This Psalm is a beautiful worship song, singing the praises of God who creates and renews and constantly makes new beginnings.

This Psalm also has a missionary dimension as it calls to proclaim God's salvation to all the nations. It proclaims the God of Israel as radically different from gods of all other nations. Our God is a God of Holiness, who does marvelous things, who judges all peoples with righteousness and loving kindness and a God of unfailing faithfulness. All peoples are to be reached with this good news.

This Psalm also is a beautiful Poem calling the heaven to be glad, the earth to rejoice, the sea to roar, the field to exult, the trees to sing for joy because God has created, renewed and established the world and "it shall never be moved". This is the reason for singing a new song of joy.

God makes all things new. Each day is a new day and each day calls for a new song. Every day that we wake up is a good day. Every breath that we take is filled with hope for a better day. Every word that we speak is a chance to change what is bad into something good.

**Sing to the Lord a news song,
Sing to the Lord all you lands,
Sing to the Lord bless his name.
Announce his salvation day after day.**

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

The Corinthian church had been experiencing disharmony as some of its members had claimed that their gifts were greater than those of others. Paul reminded his readers that their gifts, though different, had a common source: the same spirit and a common purpose: the well-being

of the whole community. God has gifted the community in diverse ways for the good of the community.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to see all works and services rendered by the community as good, necessary and valuable gifts.....that those who do the household chores such as arranging the gathering space, fixing the meals, cleaning the house, etc. are just as important, and just as graced by God in their giving, as those who act as ministers of God's Word. Therefore, all should be respected and appreciated, as all work together for a harmonious community. In order to foster the quality of community life that befits disciples of Jesus, Paul invited the community to simply place their gifts at the service of all.

Be grateful for all the gifts that God has given you and use them for the well-being of your family and community!

John 2:1-11

Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding at Cana. A wedding was traditionally associated with the coming of the messiah and the age of salvation. In this excerpt, John presents Jesus as the long-awaited messiah who changed water into wine and thus provided an abundance of fine-quality wine..... 6 jars of 20-30 gallons of water was changed into wine! The water, contained in the six stone jars, was meant for the ceremonial washing prescribed by Jewish law (Leviticus 11:29-38).....for washing their feet....hand washing before the meal and so on. Not to wash, as prescribed by law, would have rendered a person ritually unclean and therefore unfit to participate in the communal celebration. It was the water used for purification that Jesus turned into choice wine.

Jesus had come to replace the religious customs and institutions of Israel with himself. No longer would washing with water be a means of achieving purity or holiness. Purification or holiness would be achieved by accepting the new wine Jesus offered. This new wine of his wisdom, his words and his works was far greater, more precious and a profoundly more effective means of salvation than anything that had preceded it, including the Jewish law, which was often described by the rabbis as a font of living water. The challenge was and is to look no longer to the law as a font of life, but to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life...

Look to Jesus as your way, your truth and your life!

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, January 19 - Saint Fabian and 26 other saints are remembered this day

We do not have much information about the early days of St. Fabian. What we know is that Fabian was a noble Roman by birth, and his father's name was Fabius. A legend, preserved by the fourth-century writer Eusebius of Caesarea, tells us of the circumstances of his election as Pope. Fabian had come into the city from his farm one day as clergy and people were preparing to elect a new pope. While the names of several illustrious and noble churchmen were being considered over the course of thirteen days, a dove suddenly descended upon the head of Fabian. This sign united the votes of clergy and laity, and Fabian was chosen unanimously to be the bishop of Rome, the Pope.

According to sixth-century historians, Fabian sent seven bishops from Rome to Gaul to preach the Gospel. He divided the Christian communities of Rome into seven districts, each supervised by a deacon. He appointed seven sub-deacons to help collect the acts of the martyrs—the reports of the court proceedings on the occasion of their trials. There is also a tradition that he instituted the four minor clerical orders: porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte. However, most scholars believe that these offices evolved gradually and were formally instituted at a later date. He led the Church well for 14 years and died a martyr's death during the persecution of Decius in 250 A.D..

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**“Put on Christ!” in your life,
and you will find a friend in whom you can always trust;
“put on Christ” and you will see
the wings of hope spreading and letting you journey with joy towards the future;
“put on Christ” and your life will be full of his love;
it will be a fruitful life.
(Pope Francis)**