

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel reading of the Mass today (Monday, second week in ordinary time) is the story of the Pharisees questioning Jesus about his disciples not following the traditional religious practices (Mark 2:18-22). Jesus and his disciples deviated from traditional practices. They neither fasted nor prayed like the Pharisees and the disciples of John. So, they questioned Jesus about why he and his disciples did not follow the traditional spiritual practices.

Jesus used a vivid picture of a Jewish wedding celebration to explain why his disciples did not fast. After a Jewish wedding the couple did not go away for a honeymoon. They stayed home and kept an open house with feasting and rejoicing because it was the happiest week in a man's life. The closest friends of the bride and groom were invited to this week of rejoicing and these friends were called "children of the bridechamber" and these guests were exempt from fasting. Jesus compared his little group of men to the men who were children of the bridechamber, chosen guests at a wedding. They were to rejoice and were exempt from required fasting.

Jesus came to proclaim the "reign of God" and the reign of God is a joyful celebration of life. The message of Jesus is a message of Hope and of joy. Jesus said to his disciples, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete" (John 15:11). One day, the seventy-two disciples returned to Jesus after a day's work and shared their joy in their work, especially in the demons being subject to them. Jesus urged them to find joy in their names "being inscribed in heaven" and not in having authority over the demons. The disciples must find joy in being accepted into the kingdom and not in their accomplishments.

Jesus told his disciples to find joy in their relationship with God. The joy of the Christian should not be primarily in the destruction of evil forces, but in belonging to God. The disciple must find joy in his role in being a disciple rather than in his accomplishments just as the master found joy in fulfilling the will of the Father who sent him. It is the joy of being and belonging rather than doing and accomplishing.

I encourage you take a few moments each day of this week to reflect on how your day has been, how you found joy in being disciples of Jesus and how you brought joy to others.

May God bless you and keep you faithful on your journey.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Second Week In Ordinary Time

January 20-25, 2025

**Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy.
That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business.
What we are asked to do is to love,
and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy.
(Thomas Merton)**

January 20 – Monday, Second Week in Ordinary Time

**We are created and ordained to participate in the creating, governing
and unifying wisdom of God.**

Hebrews 5:1-10

The mission of a priest is the sanctification of himself and those he serves. It is in sharing in this mission of “sanctification” that we participate in the priestly mission of Christ

Psalm 110

**The Lord has sworn and he will not repent,
“You are a priest forever,
According to the order of Melchizedek.”**

Mark 2:18-22

Jesus and his disciples deviated from traditional practices. They neither fasted nor prayed like the Pharisees and the disciples of John. So, they questioned Jesus about why he and his disciples did not follow the traditional spiritual practices.

The presence of Jesus is a presence of Joy. Jesus came to proclaim the “reign of God” and the reign of God is a joyful celebration of life. The message of Jesus is a message of Hope and of joy. The characteristic Christian attitude toward life is “JOY”. Share your joy with someone today.

Remember three things that usually make you happy. Do one of them today.

Jesus knew that he was coming with a radically different message, and he also knew that his way of life was shatteringly different from that of the orthodox rabbinic teacher.

He also knew how difficult it is for people to accept new truth and change their attitudes. So, he called his listeners to an adventurous and open mind.

Jesus said, no one sews a patch of un-shrunken cloth on an old cloak. No man pours new wine into old wineskins. New wine is poured into new skins.

The day of “patching” is over – recreation must begin! There are times when break with the past and new beginnings become necessary, an adventurous and open mind become necessary. Be open! Be flexible! Be adventurous!

Saint of the Day, January 20 - St. Sebastian and 9 other saints are remembered this day.

We know very little about St. Sebastian with historical accuracy. We know that he was a Roman martyr, venerated in Milan at the time of Saint Ambrose and buried, probably near the present Basilica of St. Sebastian. Tradition tells us that during the persecution of Diocletian, he was tied to a post or tree and shot with arrows. He was rescued and healed by Saint Irene of Rome, which became a popular subject in 17th-century painting. In all versions of the story, shortly after his recovery he went to Diocletian to warn him about his sins, and as a result was clubbed to death. He lived and died probably between 256 – 288 C.E. He is regarded, in some parts of the world, as a saint with a special ability to intercede for protection from plague, and devotion to him increased greatly when plague was active.

January 21 – Tuesday, Second Week in Ordinary Time

Being purposeful means being single-minded, having pure and unmixed intention.

Hebrews 6:10-20

Our God will remember our service in love! Devout and zealous perseverance should characterize Christian service, founded in hope. Christian hope is founded in the Lord’s sacrifice and entry into the heavenly sanctuary.

Keep on loving! Go on serving! Don’t grow weary! Be patient and Be persevering in service!

Psalm 111

I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart
in the company and assembly of the just.
Great are the works of the Lord,
exquisite in all their delight.

Mark 2:23-28

The story of how the disciples plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath Day. The scribes and the Pharisees became more suspicious of a teacher who allowed his disciples to violate the Sabbath law. This kind of thing could not be allowed to spread unchecked.

Jesus used this occasion to teach: Man is not at the service of the law. The law is at the service of man.

In this incident Jesus lays it down that the claim of human need must take precedence over all other claims. The claims of worship, the claims of ritual, and the claims of liturgy are important, but prior to any of them is the claim of human need. Jesus insisted that the greatest ritual service is the service that meets urgent human need.

Jesus called his disciples to go beyond rituals service, church service, synagogue service, to the service of human need. In fact, the Gospels tell of only one synagogue service that Jesus conducted. But we have an abundance of incidence of Jesus at the service of human need. Christian service is involvement in the demands and problems and tragedies of the human situation.

Saint of the Day, January 21 - St. Agnes and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

We have very little knowledge of Agnes with historical accuracy. Much of what we know is tradition as well as legend. According to tradition, Agnes was a member of the Roman nobility, born around 291 and raised in an early Christian family. She suffered martyrdom at the age of twelve or thirteen during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, on January 21, 304.

She was a beautiful young girl from a wealthy family. She had many suitors of high rank, and the young men, slighted by her resolute devotion to religious purity, submitted her name to the authorities as a follower of Christianity. The Prefect condemned Agnes to be dragged naked through the streets to a brothel. Legend tells us that all men who attempted to rape her were immediately struck blind. The son of the prefect was struck dead but revived after she prayed for him, causing her release. She was later sentenced to death, led out and bound to a stake, but the bundle of wood would not burn, or the flames parted away from her. The officer in charge of the troops drew his sword and beheaded her.

Saint Agnes is also known as Agnes of Rome, Ines, Ines del Campo, and Ynez. The name "Agnes" is similar to the Latin word agnus, which means "lamb". For this reason depictions of Saint Agnes often include a lamb. The name actually comes from a Greek word which means "chaste, pure, sacred".

January 22 - Wednesday, Second Week in Ordinary Time

Being purposeful is having a clear focus.

Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17

This excerpt describes the qualities of the priesthood of Melchizedek as the priesthood of righteousness and peace, as royal and eternal, without beginning and end and as superior to the priesthood of Aaron. Jesus is presented as the priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Psalm 110

**Yours is princely power from the day of your birth.
In holy splendor before the daystar, like the dew I begot you."
The LORD has sworn and will not waver:
"Like Melchizedek you are a priest forever."**

Mark 3:1-6

Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on a Sabbath. Our Gospel does not tell us anything more about this man. The Gospel according to Hebrews, which was one of the early Gospels that didn't get into the New Testament, tells us that this man was a stone mason. He said to Jesus, "I was a stone mason, seeking my living with my hands. I pray you, Jesus, to give me back my health so that I shall not need to beg for food in shame."

Jesus gave the man his health, his dignity, his self-respect and work for his living. Sabbath was not a barrier for Jesus to restore someone's dignity and worth, to heal and bring wholeness.

To the Pharisee, religion was ritual; it meant obeying certain rules and regulations. One could be very religious without being sensitive to human needs, blind to the tears of the world around.

To Jesus, religion had to find its way into service, into the care of human beings. Religion was love of God and of people. Ritual was irrelevant compared with love in action. To Jesus, the most important thing was not correct performance of rituals, but spontaneous response to the human need. There is no time so sacred that it cannot be used for helping a person in need.

Saint of the Day, January 22 - St Vincent of Zaragoza and 19 others are remembered this day.

Vincent was born at Huesca, near Saragossa, Spain during the latter part of the 3rd century, the actual date is not known. He spent most of his life in the city of Saragossa, where he was educated and ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Valerius of Saragossa, who commissioned Vincent to preach throughout the diocese. Because Valerius suffered from a speech impediment, Vincent acted as his spokesman.

When the Roman Emperor Diocletian began persecuting Christians in Spain, both were brought before the Roman governor, Dacian in Valencia. Vincent and his bishop Valerius were confined to the prison of Valencia. Though he was finally offered release if he would consign Scripture to the fire, Vincent refused. Speaking on behalf of his bishop, he informed the judge that they were ready to suffer everything for their faith, and that they could pay no heed either to threats or promises.

His outspoken manner so angered the governor that Vincent was inflicted every sort of torture on him. He was stretched on the rack and his flesh torn with iron hooks. Then his wounds were rubbed with salt and he was burned alive upon a red-hot gridiron. Finally, he was cast into prison and laid on a floor scattered with broken pottery, where he died. During his martyrdom he preserved such peace and tranquility that it astonished his jailer, who repented from his sins and was converted. Vincent's dead body was thrown into the sea in a sack but was later recovered by the Christians and his veneration immediately spread throughout the Church. The aged bishop Valerius was exiled.

January 23 – Thursday, Second Week in Ordinary Time

Purposefulness helps us concentrate on our goals and achieve them.

Hebrews 7:25-8:6

This excerpt tells us that Jesus, forever, lives to save those who approach him. Unlike other priests, Jesus has no need to offer sacrifice day after day – he offered himself once and for all. We participate in this mission of Jesus, the mission of total giving.

Psalm 40

Sacrifices and oblations you wished not,
But ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
Then said I, "Behold I come".

Mark 3:7-12

Jesus withdrew to the lakeside and the open sky. People came from all over – Mark gives us the details of towns and cities from which people came. Mark tells us that a boat had to be kept ready, just offshore, in case he might be overwhelmed by the crushing mob, sick people didn't wait for him to touch them, they rushed to touch him. Mark tells us that evil spirits called him "the Son of God". And Jesus demanded silence from them.

In few verses Mark tells us much about the movement of Jesus and how people recognized in Jesus' "Sonship", an identity with the Father, an intimacy, a union, a communion with the Father. No other word than the word "Son" could describe this relationship.

Reflect on your "sonship", your identity, intimacy and communion with God, our father...

Mark also tells us that Jesus didn't want publicity – called for silence. People expected a political messiah. Jesus thought of Messiahship in terms of sacrificial Love; the people thought of it in terms of Jewish nationalism. Jesus had to educate them into the true idea of the Messiah. Jesus had to wait patiently to educate his followers.

Reflect on your own vision of Jesus. Reflect on the possibility of deepening your knowledge and experience of Jesus...

Saint of the Day, January 23 - St. Marianne Cope and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

Marianne was born to Peter and Barbara Cope of Hessen-Darmstadt, Germany on January 23, 1838. Two years later the Cope family emigrated to the United States and settled in Utica, New York. Young Barbara worked in a factory until August 1862, when she went to the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis in Syracuse, New York. After profession in November of the following year, she began teaching at Assumption parish school. Marianne held the post of superior in several places and was twice the novice mistress of her congregation. A natural leader, three different times, she was superior of St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse, where she learned much that would be useful during her years in Hawaii.

Elected provincial in 1877, Mother Marianne was unanimously re-elected in 1881. Two years later the Hawaiian government was searching for someone to run the Kakaako Receiving Station for people suspected of having leprosy. More than 50 religious communities in the United States and Canada were asked. When the request was put to the Syracuse sisters, 35 of them volunteered immediately. On October 22, 1883, Mother Marianne and six other sisters left for Hawaii where they took charge of the Kakaako Receiving Station outside Honolulu; on the island of Maui they also opened a hospital and a school for girls.

In 1888, Mother Marianne and two sisters went to Molokai to open a home for “unprotected women and girls” there. On Molokai she took charge of the home that Saint Damien de Veuster had established for men and boys. Mother Marianne changed life on Molokai by introducing cleanliness, pride, and fun to the colony. Bright scarves and pretty dresses for the women were part of her approach.

Mother Marianne came to be known as Mother Marianne of Molokai. Awarded the Royal Order of Kapiolani by the Hawaiian government and celebrated in a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson, Mother Marianne continued her work faithfully. Her sisters have attracted vocations among the Hawaiian people and still work on Molokai. Mother Marianne died on August 9, 1918 and was beatified in 2005 and canonized seven years later.

January 24 – St. Francis De Sales (1567-1622)

We wish all who follow the spirituality of St. Francis De Sales, especially the Missionaries of St. Francis De Sales, a very Happy Feast. We gratefully and joyfully remember our patron St. Francis De Sales for passing on to us a spirituality that is human, simple, joyful, optimistic, and down to earth. We draw our inspiration from him as we continue to live out our religious commitments and serve God’s people.

Purposefulness is focusing on aligning your actions with God's will in the present moment, rather than striving for immediate perfection.

Ephesians 3:2-12

Jews regarded Gentiles as unclean, unholy, and worthless in God's eyes. In this excerpt, the author of Ephesians describes the equal status of Jews and Gentiles in Christ as a "mystery" being revealed through him. The author says that Gentiles and Jews are Co-heirs, members of the same body and sharers of the promises of God. This was the vision of the prophets, a vision of universal salvation, realized in the person of Jesus.

Pray for a broader, clearer, and cosmic vision of the freedom and salvation offered to us in and through Jesus.

Psalm 112

**Happy the Man who fears the Lord,
who takes delight in all his commands.
His sons will be powerful on earth;
the children of the upright are blessed.**

John 15:9-17

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.....Abide in my love.....that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete.” The secret of the life of Jesus was his constant contact with the Father. Again and again, he withdrew to quiet places to be alone with the father. He knew what it meant to “abide” in the Father’s Love. His disciples must do the same.

To “abide” is to be in close contact; to be in touch; to be intimate; to live an intense, personal relationship; to surrender in fidelity; to surrender in obedience. Stay focused on developing a personal, intense, intimate relationship with the Lord. Stay close...stay connected...be in touch.....Abide in the presence of the Lord, in silence and in solitude.....

Love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12-17). It is a challenge to reach out to others in love, “not to withhold” our love from others. We are called to give what we have received as gifts from the Lord. Jesus calls us his friends, not slaves....it was his choice, not ours. Now it is up to us to respond. It is never sufficient to abstain from wrong-doing or sin or evil. We are called to be good and to do good - a good word and a good deed proclaim who we are. We have many opportunities to share God’s gift of Love and life.

The standard of love is NOT an eye for an eye or love others as they love us or love others as we love ourselves...it is “Love one another as I have loved you”. The standard is to love as God loves us, as Jesus loves us.....it is enduring, joyful, unconditional, unconquerable, invincible, non-possessive, self-sacrificing, steadfast love! May your love transcend competition and control...May your love transcend ill feelings, jealousies, hatred, etc....May you reach out in selfless and generous service!

Saint of the Day, January 24 - St. Francis de Sales and 20 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Francis De Sales was born on August 21, 1567 at Thonon, near Annecy in France. He graduated from the University of Padua with Doctorate in both civil law and ecclesiastical law. He was ordained a priest on December 18, 1593. He worked among the Calvinists, faced much opposition, including attempt on his life and converted the whole district of Chablais to the catholic faith.

He was ordained a bishop on December 8, 1602. He was a good shepherd, caring for all with a special love for the poor. He founded a contemplative religious order, "The Sisters of the Visitation" on June 6, 1610. This order was to accept as members the poor, the weak in health, the handicapped and the widows whom normally religious orders did not admit. He wrote two books, Spiritual Classics: "The Introduction to Devout Life" and "A Treatise on The Love Of God". He died at the age of 55 on December 28, 1622. He was canonized a saint by Pope Alexander VII on April 19, 1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius IX on November 16, 1877.

Francis De Sales is foremost among those who were consistently and visibly human in his relationship to God and people. His spirituality was so human that those without theological insights could understand and follow his spirituality. He was very human and gentle, optimistic, and positive about life and the world, strong in character and compassionate in ministry and most of all he had a harmonious and peaceful spirit. He encouraged people to find holiness in everyday matters, emphasizing the freedom each one has to choose to be good and to do good, to live noble and virtuous lives and reject what is bad and harmful.

In whatever state of life men and women find themselves, they can discover the way to God, joyfully and without fear. God can be found anywhere, everywhere and by everyone. The hours we spend in our daily chores need not be spiritually empty or useless. It is in faithfully and generously doing our daily chores and fulfilling our responsibilities that we live our life of faith.

January 25 – The conversion of Saint Paul

Purposefulness can motivate us to accomplish great things.

Acts 9:1-22

Saul was on his way to Damascus while persecuting the Christians. He had a great fall and lost his sight. He heard a voice instructing him to go to the city for further directions. In the city, he met Ananias who prayed over him. With this, Saul experienced a radical transformation of his life and began a new life proclaiming the risen Lord.

Trust in the transforming power of the faithful and praying community.

Psalm 117

**Praise the Lord, all you nations;
Glorify him, all you peoples!
For steadfast is his kindness towards us,
And the fidelity of the Lord endures forever.**

Mark 16:15-18

This is an amazing story. In verse 16:14, we read about Jesus taking the disciples “to task for their disbelief and their stubbornness since they had not put faith in those who had seen him after he had been raised”. In verse 15, the excerpt of today, we read about Jesus trusting the same men with all their “disbelief and stubbornness” and sending them with his mission of bringing good news to the world.

Today, we, with all our limitations and inconsistencies are trusted with this good news and called to bring this good news of Jesus to the world.

Saint of the Day, January 25 - Conversion of St. Paul and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

Paul was a highly educated and zealous Jewish Pharisee, who, like many of his peers, wanted to erase the notion that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God. Paul witnessed and supported the stoning of St. Stephen for his belief, faith and mission in Christ. Paul’s own mission was to find, arrest, and imprison all who believed and followed Christ’s teachings.

However, in 36 C.E., Paul’s life changed forever. While he was on his way to Damascus to find and capture more of Jesus’ followers, Paul had a personal encounter with Jesus in which Jesus called Paul to bring the Gospel to all people, including the gentiles. Paul’s hatred turned to joy and devotion to the Lord. He wrote that it is “for this reason that I labor and struggle, in accord with the exercise of his power working within me” (Colossians 1:29). Paul’s ministry and writings bringing Christ’s redeeming salvation spanned 32 years. Paul traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia and Rome where he proclaimed the richness and power of God’s love. Paul suffered for the sake of Christ, too. He endured beatings, imprisonments, and finally martyrdom in Rome in 68 C.E. through the order of the Roman Emperor Nero.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**In family life, love is the oil that eases friction,
the cement that binds closer together, and the music that brings harmony.
(Friedrich Nietzsche)**