

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We begin this week with Jesus in Nazareth, in his hometown, in the Synagogue on a Sabbath, reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (the Gospel reading of Monday, this week). Jesus had differences with the Synagogue officials and was often critical of their practices. And yet, there he was, in the Synagogue in his hometown.

Jesus inspires to participate in our community's spiritual practices and traditions even though we may have different views on those practices and may not appreciate them. He calls us to be agents of change from within our communities rather than be critical and judgmental from outside. It is not difficult to find fault with our families, churches and communities and pass judgements from a distance. Real change can happen only when we can stand together in our communities and look at our differences and search for ways to make the necessary changes. And that is what Jesus did. He stepped into the Synagogue just as he stepped into the waters of baptism with self-proclaimed sinners.

In the Synagogue, Jesus read from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." Jesus speaks of being "anointed" to bring the good news and proclaim liberty. He came to save and liberate us from sin, but he also came to liberate us from all other forms of enslavement as well: sickness, poverty, injustice, corruption, inequality, etc. Jesus, in his words and works, taught us that salvation and liberation are not simply otherworldly realities; rather, they are to shape our human experience now. And this must happen from within our churches and communities and not from forces or powers outside. Jesus came to liberate us from all binding and oppressive forces and restore us to our dignity as sons of God. This is the mission of the church, his body and it is our mission today!

I encourage you to take few minutes each day this week to think about the negative and oppressive forces in your life from which you need liberation. Think also about those negative and oppressive forces from which your family, your church and your country needs liberation. Pray for courage to work for the liberation of all people.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

September 2-7, 2024

**The door of life is a door of mystery.
It becomes slightly shorter than the one who wishes to enter it.
And thus only he who bows in humility can cross its threshold.**

September 2 – Monday, Twenty Second week of the year

**Forbearance is putting up with the imperfections of others
or enduring their shortcoming.**

I Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul taught the Corinthians to trust the wisdom of God and not any philosophical arguments. He said, he did not come with any particular eloquence or “wisdom” but with the message of Jesus, crucified. Faith, he said, rests not on the wisdom of men but on the wisdom of God and this wisdom is revealed in Jesus, in his death on the cross.

Be humble! Keep seeking the wisdom of God.

Psalm 119

**How I love your law, O Lord!
It is my meditation all the day.
Your command has made me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.**

Luke 4:16-30

Jesus came to Nazareth, to his hometown, went into the Synagogue on a Sabbath and read from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Then he said: “Today, this Scripture passage is being fulfilled in your hearing”. They admired his eloquence but rejected his message. And what they rejected was “GOOD NEWS” - liberty to captives, sight to the blind - a year of Grace. They failed to look beyond. Hence, they saw only a local carpenter.

Pray: Lord, help me to look beyond what I see. Give me a clearer and deeper vision of your presence in all that I encounter on my journey of life.

Prejudice blinds the mind and narrows the heart.

Pray: Lord, give me the wisdom to recognize and accept my own prejudices and the courage to overcome them.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me; He has anointed me to proclaim good news....

Pray: Lord, empower me with your Holy spirit, that I may proclaim your good news.

Saint of the Day, September 2 - St. Ingrid of Sweden and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

Ingrid was born in Skänninge, Sweden, in the 13th century and belonged to the elite of the Swedish nobility. Ingrid married a nobleman who died in 1271. After being widowed, Ingrid and her sister Kristina became a part of a circle of pious women around the Dominican priest Petrus de Dacia in Skänninge. In 1272, this circle of women formed an informal convent under the leadership of Ingrid by adopting the habit of the Dominicans and practicing its rules. Ingrid made pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, Jerusalem and Rome. After the death of her sister, Ingrid applied for formal recognition of her convent. This was granted in 1281, a year before her death. She was the first Dominican nun in Sweden and in 1281 she founded the first Dominican cloister there, called St. Martin's in Skänninge. She died in 1282.

September 3 - Tuesday, Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time

Little inconveniences and problems become big in the absence of forbearance!

I Corinthians 2:10-16

Paul tells us that the only person who can tell us the truth about God is the spirit of God. He uses a human analogy to explain this. There are feelings, thoughts, memories, etc. so private and so intimate that no one knows except a man's own spirit. Paul says that the same is true of God. Only the spirit of God can lead us into the really intimate things of God. So only a person who is sensitive to the Spirit of God can discern and come to know the wisdom of God.

Psalm 145

**The Lord is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger and of great kindness.
The Lord is good to all
And compassionate to ward all his works.**

Luke 4:31-37

Jesus began to teach in the town of Capernaum. Luke tells us that his listeners were “spellbound by his teaching, for his words had authority”. His authority was something new and different from what they were accustomed to. When the Rabbis taught, they relied on the authority of someone else before them...they supported their teaching with quotations from Moses or the Prophets or some great men of the past. What Jesus taught came from within and what came from within was visible in his person.... this was a new kind of authority.

The “authority” that Luke speaks of is not the authority that comes from occupying a position or from having a qualifying certificate. It is the authority of his person.... He was what he spoke. His message was evident in him. He didn’t speak about faith...his word carried faith. He didn’t speak about love.... he was love in person, incarnate. He didn’t speak about compassion.... he was compassion in person. There was no discrepancy between his word and himself..... he was God’s word incarnate, in the flesh, in person.

May the words of your mouth and the thoughts of your heart reflect who you are...you are called to image God, to be godlike in your ways, to live godly lives!

Saint of the day, September 3 - St. Gregory the Great and 203 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Gregory was born into a wealthy noble Roman family with close connections to the church around the year 540. He was born into a period of upheaval in Italy. From 542 the so-called Plague of Justinian swept through the provinces of the empire, including Italy. The plague caused famine, panic, and sometimes rioting. In some parts of the country, over 1/3 of the population was wiped out or destroyed, with heavy spiritual and emotional effects on the people of the Empire.

Like most young men of his position in Roman society, Gregory was well educated, learning grammar, rhetoric, the sciences, literature, and law; he excelled in all these fields. He knew Latin authors, natural science, history, mathematics and music and had such a "fluency with imperial law" that he may have trained in it "as a preparation for a career in public life". He became a government official, advancing quickly in rank to become, like his father, Prefect of Rome, the highest civil office in the city, when only thirty-three years old.

On his father's death, Gregory converted his family villa into a monastery dedicated to Andrew the Apostle. Eventually, Pope Pelagius II ordained Gregory a deacon. Gregory was elected Pope by acclamation to succeed Pelagius II in 590, when the latter died of the plague spreading through the city. Gregory bemoaned the burden of office and mourned the loss of the undisturbed life of prayer he had once enjoyed as a monk. When he became pope in 590, among his first acts was writing a series of letters disavowing any ambition to the throne of Peter and praising the contemplative life of the monks.

In his official documents, Gregory was the first to make extensive use of the term "Servant of the Servants of God" (servus servorum Dei) as a papal title, thus initiating a practice that was to be followed by most subsequent popes. He made a general revision of the liturgy of the Pre-Tridentine Mass, "removing many things, changing a few, adding some". The mainstream form of Western plainchant, standardized in the late 9th century, was attributed to Pope Gregory and so took the name of Gregorian chant. He died on March 12, 604.

September 4 – Wednesday, Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time

Forbearance leads to unity, establishes harmony and builds community.

I Corinthians 3:1-9

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were co-workers with God, that they were stewards who must do God's work. It is God who accomplishes the work and it is he who gives the increase and yield. Paul cautioned them about their party spirit with its glorification of human leaders. In a garden one may plant the seed and another water it; but neither can make the seed grow...that belongs to God and God alone. Similarly, we may preach, proclaim and teach God's truth. But God alone wakes the hearts of people to new life...he alone created the heart and he alone re-creates the heart.

Psalm 33

**Happy the nations whose God is the Lord,
The people he has chosen to be his own inheritance.
From heaven the Lord looks down;
He sees all mankind.**

Luke 4:38-44

Jesus was always ready to serve. He had just left the synagogue. He needed rest and it was for rest that he went to Peter's house. He reached out, beyond his own need for rest; saw the need of Peter's mother-in-law for healing and he responded.

Jesus did not need a crowd to work a miracle. Jesus was ready to put out his power and strength and love in a village cottage in Capernaum when the crowd was gone. When Peter's mother-in-law was cured, she began to serve others. The gift of healing and health is shared in service.

May you be men and women of service! May your gifts be shared in love, in kindness and in service.

Jesus spends time alone. He met His father before he met men in service. He was able to meet the urgent needs of others because he was at-one-with His Father. When people came in while he chose to be alone, he didn't resent. He didn't complain because his privacy was invaded by the crowd.

May you be men and women of prayer! Meet God before serving people!

Sant of the Day, September 4 - St. Rosalie and 26 others are remembered this day.

St. Rosalia, daughter of Sinibald, Lord of Roses and Quisquina, was a descendant of the great Charlemagne. She was born at Palermo in Sicily in 1130. In her youth, her heart turned from earthly vanities to God. She left her home and took up her abode in a cave, on the walls of which she wrote these words: "I, Rosalia, daughter of Sinibald, Lord of Roses and Quisquina, have taken the resolution to live in this cave for the love of my Lord, Jesus Christ." She remained there entirely hidden from the world. She practiced great mortifications and lived in constant communion with God. Afterward she transferred her abode to Mount Pellegrino, about three miles from Palermo, to triumph entirely over the instincts of flesh and blood, in sight of her paternal home. She is said to have appeared after death and to have revealed that she spent several years in a little excavation near the grotto. She died alone, in 1160, ending her strange and wonderful life unknown to the world. Her body was discovered several centuries later, in 1625, during the pontificate of Pope Urban VIII.

September 5 – Thursday, Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time

**If we try to be little more forbearing with ourselves or with others,
we will discover how forbearing God is with us.**

I Corinthians 3:18-23

Paul taught the Corinthians that the Church was the temple of God. He taught them again that comparisons, competitions, and divisions destroy this temple and that the Church's greatest weakness was its divisions. In this excerpt, he describes the root cause of this division in the Church as the worship of worldly wisdom with which the Corinthians assessed the worth of different teachers and preachers. It was this intellectual pride that caused the breakdown. So, Paul says that the wisest thing for a man would be to become humble enough to learn... "let him become a fool that he may become wise".

Psalm 24

**The Lord's is the earth and its fullness.
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.**

Luke 5:1-11

Jesus got into the boat belonging to Simon and began to teach.

Make your 'boat' available, whatever the "boat" may be in your life - OR may be, "surrender your boat" for proclaiming goodness and truth and love.

Jesus asked Peter to move his boat a little distance from the shore - move from familiar, shallow, and safe grounds.....Jesus said to peter, put out into the deep water for a catch.

Try harder, go deeper, take another approach...

Peter said to Jesus, "leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man". Peter recognized his own limitations and incompleteness in the presence of someone so great and wonderful. But then came the call: "come with me...I will make you different". Peter began to experience a transformation of his life in response to the call of Jesus.

Saint of the Day, September 5 - St. Teresa of Calcutta and 15 other saints are remembered this day

Saint Teresa of Calcutta was born on August 26, 1910 in Skopje, North Macedonia. She was called by God to serve the poor and marginalized of the world. In 1928, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu of Macedonia joined the Sisters of Loreto, a missionary and teaching order as a postulant. From 1929 to 1937, Agnes lived in the convent in Darjeeling, India until she

professed her final vows. Agnes was given the name Teresa in honor of St. Teresa of Lisieux. For the next 15 years she taught geography and history in a Catholic girl's school in Calcutta.

In 1946, while she was on the train traveling to a retreat in Darjeeling, she heard a call from the Lord to leave the Sisters of Loreto and establish a new order in which she would bring Him to the "poorest of the poor." Mother Teresa followed His call, and in 1950, the new congregation of the Missionaries of Charity was officially erected as a religious institute for the Diocese of Calcutta. She cared for the untouchables, those who were sick and dying on the streets. She showed them God's love through her compassionate and loving care. Throughout the rest of her life, she followed Jesus to countries all over the world. She established orphanages, AIDS hospices, and charity centers. By 1997, her members numbered nearly 4,000 in 600 foundations and 123 countries. She died in Calcutta on September 5, 1997. Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa on September 4, 2016.

September 6 – Friday, Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time

**Lack of forbearance leads to disunity
and breakdown in families, communities and countries.**

I Corinthians 4:1-5

Paul had taught the Corinthians not to get into factions and parties which cause divisions in community. In this excerpt, we hear Paul urging them not to consider him and the other apostles as leaders of parties, but as servants of Christ. The Corinthians, with their party spirit, had made judgments on their leaders, preferring one to the other. Paul taught them to leave the judgments to God and accept their leaders as stewards of the mysteries which God in his goodness and mercy reveals to his people.

Psalm 37

**Trust in the Lord and do good,
that you may dwell in the land and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord,
And he will grant you your hearts requests.**

Luke 5:33-39

This excerpt is about a discussion Jesus had with the Scribes and the Pharisees about fasting and other religious practices. Jesus offered them a new way of seeing religious practices. He challenged them to develop new attitudes and live by new values.

Religion by rule seems to be a standard for many. Some even make an agony of their religion. Many have the idea, like the Jews of the time of Jesus, that a person was not being religious unless he/she was being uncomfortable. If it is not bitter, it is not medicine. If it is not uncomfortable, it is not religion. Jesus brought a new vision: You don't have to be uncomfortable. In fact, you need to rejoice. More than once, Jesus compared the Christian life to a wedding feast. Joy is the primary characteristic of Christian life.

A passion for the old and a closed mind will not allow change or growth or transformation. Never be afraid of change! Remain open to new approaches, new methods, new possibilities. However, be discerning and wise in choosing the new. Fearlessness is a good thing. Recklessness brings disaster.

Saint of the Day, September 6 - St. Eleutherius and 18 other saints are remembered this day

Saint Eleutherius was born in Nicopolis, Epirus, Roman Empire (now in Greece) sometime after 100 AD. His name means "frank, honest, free-spirited". Whether that is his real name, or a description of the man is unknown. Eleutherius was Bishop of Rome from about 175 to May 24, 189 AD. It is said that he was martyred at that time.

The biggest problem Eleutherius had to face was the continuing problem of the Montanists, also known as the "New Prophecy" and the Marcionists. These were groups of people who described themselves as Christians but tended to claim that the Holy Spirit was directing them to do and say things not adopted by the orthodox church. In many ways, they were similar to the Pentacostalists of today. However, with their fasting and ascetic ways, it was difficult to piece together whether they were actually heretical or not. The most embarrassing activities they held were their large public displays of ecstatic prophesying.

In 177, Eleutherius received a letter from the Church at Lyon, France, asking him to consider carefully the Marcionists, to show mercy but to not compromise in his dealing. The letter was delivered by the deacon, Ireneus, who shortly became the bishop of Lyon. Many of the bishops in Asia Minor, where the heresy began, were totally against the sect early on. They had synods and wrote letters, disclaiming the followers. Eventually, the followers of Montanus claimed that he, himself was the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, sent from Jesus to guide and direct the Church. That was the beginning of the end for this heresy.

Some references say Eleutherius was martyred, others that he died a natural death. In either case, Pope Eleutherius was buried on Vatican Hill after his death, near other popes.

September 7 – Saturday, Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time

Consider making forbearance an important part of your character...letting forbearance be your virtue.

I Corinthians 4:6-15

Paul taught the Corinthians that humility is the root of all virtues and pride the root of all sin. He says, in this excerpt, “we are fools for Christ’s account.... but in Christ we are wise”. The source of humility is that we are all children of God; we have one and the same Father and only one father. We may be more in the eyes of some and less in the eyes of others. But we come from the same father and we go to the same Father.

Psalm 145

**The Lord is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.
The Lord is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.**

Luke 6:1-5

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.

Jesus taught them 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 ritual services, church services and synagogue services 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, September 7 - Bl. Frédéric Ozanam and 29 other saints are remembered this day

Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam was born on April 23, 1813 in Milan, Italy. He was a French literary scholar, lawyer, journalist and equal rights advocate. Frédéric was the fifth of Jean and Marie Ozanam's 14 children, one of only three to reach adulthood. As a teenager he began having doubts about his religion. Reading and prayer did not seem to help, but long walking discussions with Father Noirot of the Lyons College clarified matters a great deal.

A discussion club which Frédéric organized sparked the turning point in his life. In this club, Catholics, atheists, and agnostics debated the issues of the day. Once, after Frédéric spoke about Christianity's role in civilization, a club member said: "Let us be frank, Mr. Ozanam; let us also be very particular. What do you do besides talk to prove the faith you claim is in you?" Frédéric was stung by the question. He soon decided that his words needed a grounding in action. He and a friend began visiting Paris tenements and offering assistance as best as they could. Soon a group dedicated to helping individuals in need under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul formed around Frédéric.

He founded with fellow students the Conference of Charity, later known as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. His experiences of service to the poor, reflected on and informed by the Vincentian Spirituality that he and his friends followed, transformed Frédéric and led him to anticipate many of the elements of modern Catholic Social Teaching. A husband and father, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, offers an example of living with integrity and charity. In 1852, poor health forced Frédéric to return to Italy with his wife and daughter. He died on September 8, 1853. Frédéric was beatified in 1997.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not.
Just be grateful for what you have and let them bless you with joy.**

