

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

The Scripture readings of the daily mass this week focus on the challenges of witnessing to Jesus Christ. For our inspiration, we are given the witness of great men and women like Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Bridget, Sint Sharbel Makhluf, Saint James the Apostle and Saint Anne. It is not difficult to recite a creed, but to live the Christian life and to give witness to our life in Christ is demanding and challenging and often difficult. The late Pope Francis said, "giving witness always bears fruit whether it is just one's daily witness to Christ, witness during very difficult times, during persecution or witness that ends in death. The church bears fruit and is a mother when it gives witness to Jesus Christ. But people need the help of the Holy Spirit, especially in difficult moments, when faced with hard choices or when tempted by the world's standards. Pray to the Holy Spirit who makes us strong in order to take the path of witness."

Witnessing to Christ is not a matter of carrying a Bible, wearing a cross, saying a few prayers, or teaching church doctrines although they are good, commendable as well as necessary practices. Witnessing is more about our attitudes, our behavior patterns, our lifestyle, our relationships, and the way we are present wherever we may be. There are many factors that prevent a person from witnessing. Cultural pressure makes people hesitant. Many assume that witnessing creates intolerance. Witnessing about the cross of Christ is foolishness to those who don't believe. The fear of losing friends silences a witness. The insecurity of not having the right answers prevents some from sharing their faith. In many parts of the world, persecution is a threat. Other times a lack of conviction regarding faith and morals prevents witnessing. The failure to live a consistent Christian life negates a convincing witness.

Christians have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to testify to the Gospel. "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8). Witnessing was a command, not a choice. The disciples boldly testified, "we were eyewitnesses from the beginning" (Luke 1:2).

Let us take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on the quality of our witnessing to Christ and look at the possibility of raising the quality of our witness as we go about doing our daily chores.

God bless you and your family and keep you safe in His Love.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

July 20 – 25, 2026

**Peacefulness is not a garment to be put on and off at will.
It is a quality of the heart and inseparable part of our being.
Overcome prejudices, break down barriers, move beyond boundaries,
treat all creation with respect...peacefulness will follow**

July 20 – Monday, Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**We will find peace and serenity when we recognize that
our worries can't do much and surrender ourselves to God and God's way.**

Micah 6:1-4, 6-8

Micah recalls the various sacrifices and offerings his people made and tells his people that what the Lord requires is not such sacrifices and offerings. What God requires is: "to do the right, to love goodness and to walk humbly with your God".

Take a moment...reflect on walking justly and humbly before God!

Psalm 50

**He that offers praise as a sacrifice glorifies me;
And to him that goes the right way,
I will show the salvation of God.**

Mathew 12:38-42

This excerpt tells us about the Scribes and the Pharisees asking Jesus for a sign to prove his claims. The Scribes and Pharisees looked for God in the abnormal - in extraordinary happenings. Jesus refused their demands for extraordinary signs and challenged them to find God in the ordinary things of every day. Jesus presented himself as the sign, God's sign - not what he does, but himself.

Jesus is God's sign for all, just as Jonah was God's sign to the Nineties and Solomon God's sign to the Queen of Sheba.

The disciple must become a sign of the Master. The world must meet the master in the disciple. We can't all be shining examples, but we can, at least, twinkle a little.

Saint of the Day, July 20 - St. Apollinaris and 14 other saints are remembered this day

We do not have any historical information about St. Apollinaris. According to traditions and legends, Appollinaris was a native of Antioch in the Roman Province of Syria. Saint Peter sent Apollinaris to Ravenna, Italy, as its first bishop. As the first Bishop of Ravenna, he faced nearly constant persecution under Emperor Vespasian (Nero, according to some tradition).

His preaching of the Good News was so successful that the pagans there beat him and drove him from the city. He returned, however, and was exiled a second time. After preaching in the area surrounding Ravenna, he entered the city again. After being cruelly tortured, he was put on a ship heading to Greece. Pagans there caused him to be expelled to Italy, where he went to Ravenna for a fourth time. He died from wounds received during a savage beating at Classis, a suburb of Ravenna. A beautiful basilica honoring him was built there in the sixth century.

July 21 - Tuesday, Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Care about doing your best, giving your best and being your best.
Don't care about the rest and you will find peace and serenity.**

Micah 7:14-15 & 18-20

Micah asks God to "shepherd" his people just as he did when he brought them from the land of Egypt. He speaks of God as a God of kindness and compassion and expresses his confidence in God's faithfulness to his people.

Psalms 85

**You have favored, O Lord, your land;
You have restored the well-being of Jacob,
You have forgiven the guilt of your people;
You have covered all their sins.**

Mathew 12:46-50

Jesus was addressing the crowd when his mother and relatives came to speak with him. When someone told Jesus about it, he said, “who is my mother and who are my brothers.....whoever does the will of my Father is brother and sister and mother to me”.

Jesus spoke of a new kind of relationship...one that goes far beyond blood relationships. Nothing can break the “blood connection” and yet we know that “blood ties” don’t necessarily create a bond of love or dedication or affection. History has shown that often a man’s enemies were those with whom he had “blood ties”.

Real relationships, true connections, bonds of love are established around shared goals, shared ideals, shared conflicts and pains, shared cause, shared obedience.

Jesus calls us to enter into a relationship of love and obedience....an obedience that binds us together as brothers and sisters of Jesus, sons and daughters of the heavenly Father. Our common obedience makes us true brothers and sisters.

Saint of the day, July 21 - St. Lawrence of Brindisi and 9 other saints are remembered this day.

Giulio Cesare Russo was born on July 22, 1559 in Brindisi, Kingdom of Naples, to a family of Venetian merchants. After the early death of his parents, he was raised by his uncle and educated at Saint Mark's College in Venice. He joined the Capuchins in Verona as Brother Lawrence. He received further instruction from the University of Padua. An accomplished linguist, in addition to his native Italian, Lawrence could read and speak Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, Bohemian, Spanish, and French. Lawrence was ordained a priest at the age of 23.

At the age of thirty-one, Lawrence was elected superior of the Capuchin Franciscan province of Tuscany. He was appointed definitor general to Rome for the Capuchins in 1596. Pope Clement VIII assigned him the task of preaching to the Jews in the city. He was sufficiently proficient in Hebrew that the rabbis assumed he had been a convert from Judaism. Beginning in 1599, Lawrence established Capuchin monasteries in modern Germany and Austria, furthering the Counter-Reformation and bringing many Protestants back to the Catholic faith.

In 1601, he served as the imperial chaplain for the army of Rudolph II, Holy Roman Emperor, and successfully recruited Philippe Emmanuel, Duke of Mercœur, to help fight against the Ottoman Turks. He then led the army during the brief liberation of Székesfehérvár in Hungary from the Ottoman Empire, armed only with a crucifix.

In 1602, he was elected vicar general of the Capuchin friars, at that time the highest office in the Order. He was elected again in 1605 but refused the office. He entered the service of the

Holy See, becoming papal nuncio to Bavaria. After serving as nuncio to Spain, he retired to a monastery in 1618. He was recalled as a special envoy to the King of Spain regarding the actions of the Viceroy of Naples in 1619, and after finishing his mission, died on his birthday on July 22, 1619 in Lisbon.

July 22 - Saint Mary Magdalene

**Serenity is present deep within us
and at the depth of all creation here and now.
All we need is to wake up to it.**

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Paul says, “the love of Christ impels us” – the love of Christ became the moving force in the life of Paul. This love, he says, makes us a “new creation”, with a new life style. This is God’s gift of reconciliation and peace. In Jesus, God has reconciled us to himself so that we may become “the very holiness of God.” How awesome and how challenging!

Be faithful to your calling! You have been reconciled and called to the “very holiness of God”!

Psalm 63

**O God, you are my God whom I seek;
For you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts,
Like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.**

John 20:1-2, 11-18

Mary of Magdala wept, standing by the tomb of Jesus. She saw two angels through her tears...behind her stood Jesus whom she did not recognize. She was afraid, she wept, she did not understand the scriptures...But she recognized the voice of Jesus, the one she loved much.

**Our ability to recognize the voice of Jesus depends on how much we have listened to him,
known him and loved him. We recognize the voice of the one we love!**

Jesus tells Mary not to hang on to him, but to go and announce the good news to the disciples. She went and she proclaimed: “I have seen the Lord.”

It is up to us, Easter people, people of the resurrection, people of hope to proclaim the good news today! We are called to deepen our experience of the risen Lord and are sent to share the good news with the world around us!

Saint of the day, July 22 - St. Mary Magdalene and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

Mary was from Magdala, a fishing town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus healed her of physical and spiritual illness and that she was one of the women who traveled with Jesus and helped support his ministry "out of their resources" (Luke 8). According to the four canonical gospels, she traveled with Jesus as one of his followers and was a witness to his crucifixion and resurrection. She is mentioned by name twelve times in the canonical gospels, more than most of the apostles and more than any other non-family woman in the Gospels.

Many scenes from the Gospels tell us that Mary had an intense devotion to Jesus. The Gospel of John tells us that Mary was one those who stood by the cross as Jesus hung on the cross and that she went to the tomb of Jesus early in the morning on the first day of the week, found the tomb empty, ran to tell the disciples what she found, returned to the tomb and wept, met the risen Lord and became the messenger of the good news of the resurrection to the disciples of Jesus. All four gospels identify her as the first to witness the empty tomb and the first to witness Jesus's resurrection. For these reasons, Mary Magdalene is known in some Christian traditions as the apostle to the apostles.

July 23 – Thursday, Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**The law of tranquility: where there is no resistance,
there is no conflict.**

(Zen)

Jeremiah 2:1-3; 7-8; 12-13

Jeremiah recalls the original dignity of Israel as God's special people. Israel was chosen by the Lord and so loved by God. But they have left the Lord and his ways...even the priests have abandoned the Lord's ways. Israel has dug for themselves "broken cisterns which hold no water", forsaking the Lord, the source of living water".

Psalm 36

**O Lord, your kindness reaches to heaven;
your faithfulness, to the clouds.
Your justice is like the mountain of God;
Your judgments, like the mighty deep.**

Mathew 13:10-17

Jesus spoke to his disciples about the law of increase. To the man who has, more will be given and from the man who has not, even what he has, will be taken away. The more you know, the more you are capable of knowing; the more you train the body, the more able it becomes; the more the effort, the more the result; the more responsibility one shoulders, the more one is able to accept responsibility; the more you work with a skill, the more developed the skill becomes; the diligent and the hard-working may get more and more while the lazy and careless may lose even what he has.....

This is the law of increase. When we overcome one weakness or problem, our capacity to overcome other weaknesses and problems increases.

Every good thing we do, every act of sacrifice, kindness we show, etc. make us better persons.....Keep doing the good you can do!

Jesus called the disciples to remember how blessed they were. They have seen what many in history only dreamed of.

Remember, with gratitude, how blessed you are: to see what you see; to know what you know; to touch what you touch; to feel what you feel.....Be grateful!!! How Blessed!!! How Graced!!!!

Saint of the Day, July 23 - St. Bridget of Sweden and 10 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Bridget of Sweden was born as Birgitta Birgersdotter in 1303 in Uppland, Sweden. She was the daughter of the governor and provincial judge of Uppland, and of Ingeborg Bengtsdotter. From the time she was a child, she had a great devotion to the passion of Jesus. When she was 14, Bridget married an 18-year old man named Ulf. Like Bridget, Ulf had set his heart on serving God. They had eight children, of whom one was St. Catherine of Sweden. Bridget and Ulf also served the Swedish court, Bridget as the queen's personal maid.

All her life, Bridget had marvelous visions and received special messages from God. In response to these messages, she visited many rulers and important people in the Church. She explained

humbly what God expected of them. After her husband died, Bridget put away her rich clothes and lived as a poor nun. In 1346, she began the order of the Most Holy Savior, also known as Bridgettines.

In 1350, a year of jubilee, Bridget braved a plague-stricken Europe to make a pilgrimage to Rome. Although she never returned to Sweden, her years in Rome were far from happy, being hounded by debts and by opposition to her work against Church abuses. Shortly before her death, she went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. At the shrines there, she had visions of what Jesus had said and done in each place. All St. Bridget's revelations on the sufferings of Jesus were published after her death. St. Bridget died in Rome on July 23, 1373 and was canonized by Pope Boniface IX in 1391.

July 24 – Friday, Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Be comfortable with not knowing and be open to mystery
and you will find peace and serenity.**

Jeremiah 3:14-17

Jerusalem was destroyed and the Ark of the Covenant had disappeared. Jeremiah calls the “rebellious children” of God to return to the Lord. He says, God will appoint shepherds after his “own heart”, who will shepherd them “wisely and prudently”. He says Jerusalem will once again become the center and the glory of Israel.

Be prudent and wise in all your relationships and activities!

Jeremiah 31

**Hear the word of the Lord, O Nations,
Proclaim it on distant coasts and say:
He, who scattered Israel, now gathers them together,
He guards them as a shepherd his flock.**

Mathew 13:18-23

Jesus spoke the parable of the Sower. Seeds fall into all kinds of soil...only those that fall into good soil has the opportunity to sprout and grow and yield a rich harvest. Knowing that the

seeds will fall into different types of soil, even into rocky and thorny ground with little chance of growing to fruitfulness, the good and diligent and faithful farmer keeps sowing, trusting in the possibility of a good harvest.

Sower must keep sowing...Seeds keep sprouting...Earth keeps nurturing...Harvest is sure to happen.

Those who have the WORD must speak.....Those who hear must welcome the WORD
The WORD must become flesh...

Keep listening.... Keep speaking.... Keep nurturing.... Be patient.....Harvest will happen.

Saint of the Day, July 24 - St. Charbel Makhlef and 27 other saints are remembered this day

Youssef Antoun Makhlef was born on May 8, 1828. They lived in the village of Bekaa Kafra, possibly the highest in the Lebanese mountains. Youssef was raised by an uncle because his father, a mule driver, died when he was only three. His mother remarried a man who went on to seek Holy Orders and became the parish priest of the village.

Youssef was raised in a pious home and became drawn to the lives of the saints and to the hermit life, as was practiced by two of his uncles. As a young boy, he was responsible for caring for the family's small flock. He would take the flock to a grotto nearby, where he had installed an icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He would spend the day in prayer.

In 1851, Youssef left his family and entered the Lebanese Maronite Order at the Monastery of Our Lady in Mayfouq to begin his training as a monk, later transferring to the Monastery of St. Maron in Annaya, located in the Byblos District near Beirut. Here he received the religious habit of a monk and took the name Charbel, after a Christian martyr in Antioch from the 2nd century. He made his final religious profession in the Order on November 1, 1853.

As a young monk Charbel began his study of philosophy and theology at the Monastery of Saints Cyprian & Justina in Kfifan, in the Batroun District of Lebanon, to prepare himself for receiving Holy Orders. He was ordained a priest six years later, on July 23, 1859. He was sent back to St. Maron Monastery, where he lived a life of severe asceticism in the monastery.

In 1875, Charbel was granted the privilege of living as a hermit at the Hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul, by the abbot of the monastery. He spent the next 23 years living as a solitary hermit, until his death from a stroke on December 24, 1898.

July 25 – St. James, the Apostle

**Change what cannot be accepted
and accept what cannot be changed.**

(Reinhold Niebuhr)

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

“We possess a treasure in earthen vessels to make it clear that it’s surpassing power comes from God and not from us”

Psalm 126

**When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion,
We were like men dreaming.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongues with rejoicing.**

Mathew 20:20-28

The mother of James (and John) was curious about whether he would be able to sit beside Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus told her that “sitting beside” was a gift from the father. It is up to him now to surrender in service. First rank goes to those who surrender themselves in service!!! “Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest and whoever wants to rank first must serve the needs of all”. Pray that you may have the courage and the wisdom to surrender in service.

Saint of the Day, 25 - St. James, Apostle and 12 other saints are remembered this day

James and his brother John were sons of Zebedee, fishermen from Galilee. Before Jesus called them to discipleship, they were followers of St. John the Baptist. Jesus called the two of them to be fishers of men and they followed. James had become special in the company of the disciples. James was present at many of the miracles of Jesus, at the transfiguration of Jesus and in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of the last supper. He was brought into the home of Jairus to witness Jesus restore life to a girl who had recently died, and on the night before Jesus was crucified, Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to keep watch while he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

James and John are shown to be bull-headed. When Jesus and his disciples were poorly treated in a Samaritan town, they suggested that they ask God to strike the town with fire from heaven. Jesus rebuked the two and called them to be tolerant. They were given the name “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus to acknowledge their impetuous personalities. They didn’t understand the mission of Jesus and the nature of the Kingdom He proclaimed. According to the 12th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, James was the first of the twelve to be martyred. King Herod Agrippa had James captured and beheaded In Jerusalem, in the year 44 A.D.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek
but a means by which we arrive at that goal.**
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

