

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

P. O. Box 440, Whitehouse, Texas 75791

www.wellspringcommunity.net

frgusmsfs@gmail.com

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Brothers and Sisters,

We have been making our journey with Jesus through the Gospel of Mathew. The following is what we have learned so far about being his disciples. We are sent into the world with a positive attitude to bless and befriend the world. We must nurture a blessing attitude and cultivate virtues of hospitality, fidelity, humility, gentleness, patience, generosity and a habit of listening to the voice of God, as well as listening and responding to those beyond family and friendship circles and strive to be the rock on which Christ would build his Church. Last Sunday, we heard a profound and challenging call to reflect on the cost of being the rock on which Christ builds his Church...the cross, suffering, and death await all disciples who follow Jesus.

Today, we celebrate the Twenty-Third Sunday in ordinary time of the year. Our Scripture readings of this Sunday call us to be patient and tolerant with our imperfections, failures, mistakes and shortfalls and those of others as well. We are called to be mutually correcting and forgiving and supportive of each other in families and communities. This call is an integral part of our baptismal anointing. At our Baptism, we were anointed priest, prophet, and king. Mutual correction, forgiveness and support reflect our priestly, prophetic, and royal mission.

The Prophet Ezekiel (first reading) reflects on being vigilant like a watchman on the city wall. We share in this prophetic mission of Ezekiel to be vigilant, to be the voice of God, to be mutually correcting and forgiving, and being supportive of each other. Paul speaks of Mutual love calling forth mutual support and mutual correction (second reading). Love, he says, is the complete fulfillment of the Law. This is expressed in our concern for the well-being of others.

Jesus teaches (Gospel) his disciples and us today to make honest efforts to help one another recognize and correct the mistakes and wrong-doings. He taught them to spare no effort to correct a person. He also taught them to be patient in correcting brothers and sisters as God is patient and offer one another every chance for change. If a brother or sister refuses to respond to our efforts to correct their mistakes, "treat him (or her) as you would a gentile or a tax collector," says Jesus. Some people have interpreted this to mean, "have nothing to do with them." However, we know how Jesus treated the gentiles and tax collectors and that is how we are called to treat erring brothers and sisters – with kindness, compassion, gentleness and patience because the sinning brother is still our brother and the sinning sister is still our sister.

According to an old Hebrew legend, Abraham was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out,

greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man's feet and gave him food and drink. The old man immediately began eating without saying any prayer or blessing. So, Abraham asked him, "Don't you worship God?" The old traveler replied, "I worship fire only and reverence no other god." When Abraham heard this, he became incensed, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out of his tent into the cold night air. When the old man had departed, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, "I forced him out because he did not worship You." God answered, "I have suffered him these eighty years although he dishonors me. Could you not endure him one night?"

Let us strive to cultivate patience and tolerance as one of our virtues.

People are sensitive to correction these days, and often, being corrected brings with it feelings of inadequacy, resentment, and other negative emotions. We often have to tip-toe around topics of potential conflict, especially when it comes to correcting someone's ethics, morals and values. There are many who don't believe that anyone has the right to correct them and they take offense at being corrected.

In our imperfect world, we have a need for correction throughout our entire lives. We have an obligation to provide fraternal correction to others as well, as the Scripture readings of today remind us, however hard it may be. Correction must always come from a heart of kindness, compassion, love and understanding. You will remember how Jesus corrected Peter after his threefold denial of Jesus. The Gospel of Luke says, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times. He went out and began to weep bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62). Legend tells us that he wept so much that even his cheeks became furrowed with tears!!!! It was the gentle glance of Jesus that moved Peter to tears and eventual transformation of his life. The man who denied Jesus was able to give witness to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:32).

St. Francis de Sales advises us, "The manner of correcting a person should be gradual and gentle and with much compassion, prudence and discretion." and again, "As much as possible, we must touch the hearts of others as do the angels, delicately and without coercion."

I encourage you to take a few moments this week to be still and to reflect on your behavior patterns and discern the corrections that you need to make and pray for the grace to make those corrections. Pray for the gift of courage to help others recognize the corrections that they need to make. In this process, be gentle and patient with yourself and others and be understanding and tolerant of your imperfections and those of others.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

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

Twenty-third Sunday In Ordinary Time

September 6, 2026

What does love look like?
It has the hands to help others.
It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy.
It has eyes to see misery and want.
It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men.
That is what love looks like.
(St. Augustine)

Collect

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ
may receive true freedom
and an everlasting inheritance.
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.

Silence, Solitude and stillness are prerequisites for serenity.

Ezekiel 33: 7-9

Watchman on the city walls or out on the hills formed part of the defense system in biblical times. They had to sound a warning when undesired foreigners or strangers were spotted. Ezekiel sees the prophet as such a watchman in charge of the well-being of the community. He must fulfill his mission.

In this excerpt, the prophet reflects on his responsibility to call his people to conversion, to point to the presence of evil, to warn people of the dangers of wickedness and call forth change. He reflects on his responsibility to be vigilant like a watchman on the city wall. We share in this prophetic mission of Ezekiel: to be vigilant, to be the voice of God, to be mutually

correcting and forgiving, and be supportive of each other. Ezekiel describes this mutual concern as a personal responsibility for which God will hold us accountable.

Be vigilant! Be watchful! Correct one another! Help one another change!

Psalm 95

This psalm is well known. It is part of the morning prayer of the Church. By the end of the OT period, the temple covered a large area. One reached its first gate by ascending a broad flight of steps. Then having gone through the gates at the top (Ps.24), the worshiper entered the court of the Gentiles, an open space, colonnaded round its walls. Into it anyone could enter, Jew or Gentile. Having crossed over this courtyard, one entered another court, into which Jewish women were allowed to accompany their men folk. But only the male Jew could go into the next court.

The division between these three courts is what St. Paul says Jesus broke down, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). The lay worshiper could go no further. Entry into the final court was for the priests alone. Even this was broken down eventually. During the reformation in Europe, the railing was removed which had prevented the laity from approaching right up to the Altar and finally after the second Vatican Council in our catholic tradition. This is not because the priest had become mere laymen. It was because all people were granted what belonged to them in the first place by their call in OT times “a kingdom of priests” (Ex.19:6) and by Baptism anointed “priest, prophet and king”.

**Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;
Let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
Let us joyfully sing psalms to him.**

Romans 13:8-10

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul spoke about man’s debt to society. He insisted that man should pay his debt to society however unpleasant it may be. He has certain obligations to the state and to the local authorities and he must fulfill these obligations.

Immediately after these thoughts, now, he turns to obligations to one another. He says, we have no debts to each other “except to love each other”. This is the fulfillment of the Law. All commandments are held together by this one command to “love each other”. Mutual love calls forth mutual support and mutual correction. Love, he says, is the complete fulfillment of the Law. This is expressed in our concern for the well-being of others.

The one debt that a man must pay every day and yet, at the same time, must go on owing every day, is the debt to “love each other”.

Mathew 18:15-20

Jesus taught his disciples to make honest efforts to help one another recognize and correct the mistakes and wrong-doings. He taught them to spare no effort to correct a person. He also taught them to be patient in correcting brothers and sisters as God is patient and offer one another every chance for change.

He taught them to treat them as Gentiles and tax collectors if they refuse to respond, after all efforts have been made. Jesus gave them his own example of how to treat Gentiles and tax Collectors, with understanding and compassion.

Help and support one another realize mistakes and correct them.

In this excerpt, Mathew makes special reference to the power and the responsibility of the community to forgive “to bind and to lose” and coming to experience the Lord’s presence in prayer, “where two or three are gathered...I will be there”. A community gathered and united in prayer has the power to forgive and to heal and hold each other as brothers and sisters in mutual love. A praying community is a forgiving and healing and loving community.

Jesus promised them his presence whenever they are gathered in his name. “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them”.

Saint of the Day, September 6 - Bl. Frédéric Ozanam and 29 other saints are remembered on 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

**What counts is not the fulfilment of my desires, but of his will.
In this way, life becomes authentic.**
(Pope Benedict XVI)

