

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, September 8, was designated as the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We did not celebrate it because yesterday was Sunday which took precedence. Our Gospel reading of this feast day is the genealogy of Jesus, Mathew 1:1-23. It would seem that Mathew has chosen an extraordinary way to begin his Gospel. But to the Jew it was the most natural, interesting, and essential way to begin the story of man's life. This was because the Jew placed great importance on the purity of lineage. To us, it means much more. It shows our connection to our heritage, our rootedness in "purity" and "simplicity of faith", our connection to a tradition that has been tested and proved to be good and true. It shows that we have roots and have a ground to stand on! We have our story - our story of birth, life and death. Our church and our religious practices did not just happen. We have an ancient religious tradition!

Mathew's genealogy (referenced above) is interesting, extraordinary, unlike any other in Jewish traditions. It is not normal to find names of women in Jewish genealogies. To include a Gentile is unimaginable. And Mathew includes even sinners in his genealogy. This is an amazing story. The barriers between Jew and Gentile, male and female, saint and sinner is broken. Rahab was a harlot of Jericho; Ruth was not a Jewess but a Moabite; Tamar was a deliberate seducer and an adulteress; Bethsheba, the mother of Solomon, was the woman whom David seduced. This is an incredible ancestry of Jesus. Incredible revelation of the "all-embracing Love" of God.

The genealogy is arranged in three sections, reflecting three great stages in Jewish history. The first section takes the history down to David, the second to Exile and the third to Jesus. We can even recognize something symbolic about the whole of human life in the way the three stages are arranged: (1) Man was birthed for greatness; (2) Man lost his greatness; (3) Man was restored to greatness. Mathew shows us our call to royalty (greatness); the tragedy of lost royalty; and the glory of restored royalty.

Our royalty has been restored in Jesus. I encourage you to take few minutes each day this week to be still and to reflect on how your day has been and on how your behaviors and activities of the day reflected your noble and royal character.

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

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

# **Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time**

**September 9-14, 2024**

**Christian life is not a loyalty to certain doctrine or philosophy,  
but faithfulness in relationship to Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life.**

**September 9 – Monday, Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time**

**Be patient - hard trials will not hurt you. In suffering hardships  
and in patience, take the Prophets as models”**

**(James 5:7-11).**

## **1 Corinthians 5:1-8**

Paul speaks of Christ as a mystery within, a powerful force within, the force that transforms you. Just as a little yeast has its effect all through the dough, the Spirit within transforms the whole being. In this excerpt, Paul says, “Get rid of the old yeast to make yourselves fresh dough, unleavened loaves.... celebrate with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”.

**Search your hearts and discover the treasure, the gift of the Holy Spirit within and let it transform you!**

## **Psalm 5**

**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 6:6-11**

There was a man with a withered hand. He was prepared to attempt the impossible. Jesus said: “Stretch out your hand” and he did without arguments or doubt.

**The difference between difficult and impossible is that the difficult is outside and the impossible is inside....it is an attitude, a disposition of mind and heart. Change your attitude**

**and attempt the impossible! With God all things are possible!**

One of the apocryphal Gospels tells us that this man was a stone mason and he asked Jesus healing for his hand so that he could work. He was a man who wanted to work. It is this attitude that made it possible for him to attempt the impossible. **Do you want to be well? Then, with confidence in the power of God within you, attempt what seems impossible!**

Jesus was prepared to take the risk of taking the displeasure and even the anger of the Pharisees to do good for others. The Pharisees loved the prescriptions of their religion more than the God of their religion. Their religion, in effect, had become their God.

**Be watchful! Values get reversed. God first.**

**Religion is at the service of God. Religion is a vehicle - not the destination!**

### **Saint of the Day, September 9 - St. Peter Claver and 14 other saints are remembered this day**

Peter Claver was born on June 26, 1580 into a devoutly Catholic and prosperous farming family in the Catalan village of Verdú in Spain. He was born 70 years after King Ferdinand of Spain set the colonial slavery culture into motion by authorizing the purchase of 250 African slaves in Lisbon for his territories in New Spain. Peter was distressed by the number of captive African slaves brought in to port each month and the cruelty they suffered. At early age, he wrote these words in the notebook he kept throughout his life: "I must dedicate myself to the service of God until death, on the understanding that I am like a slave."

After his ordination in 1616 and for the next 38 years, he dedicated himself to the service of the slaves Cartagena, which began in the cargo hold of the slave boat after it docked. Peter Claver showed them abundant kindness, offered them nourishment, and cared for the sick and dying. He followed them to the plantation or other sites where they were sent and became their advocate for humane treatment by their masters. With the help of other Africans as interpreters, he was able to bring Jesus to them and prepare them for the sacraments. As time passed, Father Claver became a moral force for all the people of Cartagena. He preached in the city square and gave missions to sailors and traders. The people named him "Apostle of Cartagena." Father Claver died on September 8, 1654 after four years of serious illness. During his life's work, he baptized three hundred thousand black African slaves. Pope Leo XIII canonized Saint Peter Claver on January 15, 1888.

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## September 10 - Tuesday, Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**Strive to be gentle, patient and forbearing so as to ease the burdens and pressures of others.**

### **1 Corinthians 6:1-11**

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to settle disputes in the community rather than bring lawsuits against one another and take matters to court. He told them that they have been washed clean, consecrated and justified in the name of Jesus.

**Paul challenged them to live decent and virtuous and godly lives and that alone will bring them to the kingdom.**

### **Psalm 149**

**Sing to the Lord a new song  
Of praise in the assembly of the faithful.  
Let Israel be glad in their maker,  
Let the children of Zion rejoice in their king.**

### **Luke 6:12-19**

Jesus, after a night in prayer, chose a group of twelve and trusted them with his mission. His Life and Message must be lived out in fellowship. The Pharisees always isolated themselves from the people –Pharisee meant “separated”. The message of Jesus is to be lived in fellowship, in Community...shared life ... Shared Mission ... Shared spirit... Shared journey.

He chose a strange group of 12. A group of extremes met – shared their Master’s Vision and Mission – With Jesus they could transcend differences and barriers of culture, ethnicity, ideology, religious practices, etc. – They lived in fellowship.

**The most diverse type of people must live together in fellowship and fulfill a mission, which is far greater than all of them put together.**

He chose very ordinary people - men without any special qualification. All they had was an attraction to Jesus, courage to break free to follow Him and courage to witness. Jesus called

them to be with him and to be sent out on his mission. He gave them a message, a power, a life-style, a presence and community to live in and care for.

**TODAY YOU ARE CALLED TO COMPLETE HIS MISSION.....**

**Saint of the day, September 10 - St. Thomas of Villanova and 55 other saints are remembered this day.**

Thomas of Villanova was born Tomás García y Martínez in Fuenllana, Spain, in 1488. His father was a miller, who regularly distributed food and provisions to the poor, as did his mother. He grew up and was educated in Villanueva de los Infantes, in the Province of Ciudad Real, Spain, therefore the name Thomas of Villanueva. In spite of his family's wealth, as a young boy he often went about naked because he had given his clothing to the poor.

At the age of sixteen years, Thomas entered the University of Alcalá de Henares to study Arts and Theology. He became a professor there, teaching arts, logic, and philosophy, despite a continuing absentmindedness and poor memory. In 1516, he decided to join the Augustinian friars in Salamanca and in 1518 was ordained a priest.

He became renowned for his eloquent and effective preaching in the churches of Salamanca. Within the Order, he successively held the positions of prior of his local monastery, Visitor General, and Prior Provincial for Andalusia and Castile. In 1533, Thomas sent out the first Augustinian friars to arrive in Mexico.

In 1544 he was nominated as Archbishop of Valencia and he continued to refuse the position until ordered to accept by his superior. Given a donation to decorate his residence, he sent the money to a hospital in need of repair. He began his episcopacy by visiting every parish in the Archdiocese to discover what the needs of the people were. Aided by his assistant bishop, Juan Segriá, he put in order an archdiocese that for a century had not had direct pastoral government. He organized a special college for Moorish converts, and in particular an effective plan for social assistance, welfare, and charity.

He was well known for his great personal austerity (he sold the straw mattress on which he slept in order to give money to the poor) and wore the same habit that he had received in the novitiate, mending it himself. Thomas was known as "father of the poor." His continual charitable efforts were untiring, especially towards orphans, poor women without a dowry, and the sick. He established boarding schools and high schools. Thomas died in Valencia on September 8, 1555 of angina at the age of 67 and was canonized on January 15, 1888.

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**September 11 – Wednesday, Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time**

**“Have patience with everyone, but especially with yourself.  
I mean, do not be over-troubled about your imperfections, but always have  
courage enough at once to rise up again when you fall into any of them.  
(St. Francis de Sales)**

### **1 Corinthians 7:25-31**

Paul challenged the Corinthian converts to set their priorities in light of the fact that “the world in its present form is passing away”. At the time he wrote this letter to the Corinthians, Paul was convinced of the imminence of the return of Jesus. In light of the expectation of Christ’s return, Paul invited his readers to reassess their priorities and align them with their commitment to Christ. The expectation of Christ’s return should shape and direct their thoughts, plans, choices and actions. Christians should not invest themselves into the issues and affairs of the world. Their life should characterize their expectation of the coming of Christ.

**Though the exhortation of Paul was to a community that expected Christ’s immediate return, it still has meaning and value for our times. Paul’s teaching invites us even today to set our priorities straight, to invest our life into the enduring and the eternal rather than the passing realities of life, to be cautious of the standards of the world and to live our life in the context of the eternal existence of love and truth.**

### **Psalm 45**

**Hear, O daughter and see, turn your ear,  
Forget your people and your father’s house.  
So shall the king desire your beauty;  
For he is your lord, and you must worship him.**

### **Luke 6:20-26**

Jesus proclaims a new set of values, each of which is a challenge and radically different from what the world has to offer. He takes the accepted standards and values and turns them upside down. “Woe to you rich because you have all the comfort you are going to get”. The word Jesus uses for “have” is the word used for receiving payment in full for an account. It simply means that if we set our heart and bend all our energies to get the things which the world values, we may get them, but that’s all we may ever get.” It’s another way of saying: “You have had it!”

**If you set your hearts on things of the “Kingdom” and channel your energies to being loyal to God, you may get into trouble, but “eternal joy” will be yours - “eternal” - not in the sense of lasting or everlasting, but in the sense of “what befits God”, joy that is characteristic of God. We are offered a choice: the ways of the world or the ways of God.**

## **Saint of the Day, September 11 - St. Cyprian and 18 other saints are remembered this day.**

Cyprian was born into a rich, pagan, Roman African Carthage family sometime during the early third century, between 200-210. He was baptized when he was thirty-five years old. After his baptism, he gave away a portion of his wealth to the poor of Carthage. Not long after his baptism he was ordained a deacon, and soon afterwards a priest. Sometime between July 248 and April 249 he was elected bishop of Carthage,

Christians in North Africa had not suffered persecution for many years. Cyprian complained that the peace the Church had enjoyed had weakened the spirit of many Christians and had opened the door to converts who did not have the true spirit of faith. When the Decian persecution began, many Christians easily abandoned the Church. It was their reinstatement that caused the great controversies of the third century and helped the Church progress in its understanding of the Sacrament of Penance.

The Emperor Decius issued an edict ordering sacrifices to the gods to be made throughout the Empire. Jews were specifically exempted from this requirement. Cyprian chose to go into hiding rather than face potential execution. Novatus, a priest who had opposed Cyprian’s election, set himself up in Cyprian’s absence and received back all apostates without imposing any canonical penance. Cyprian held that those who had actually sacrificed to idols could receive Communion only at death, whereas those who had only bought certificates saying they had sacrificed could be admitted after a more or less lengthy period of penance.

During a plague in Carthage, Cyprian urged Christians to help everyone, including their enemies and persecutors. A friend of Pope Cornelius, Cyprian opposed the following pope, Stephen. He and the other African bishops would not recognize the validity of baptism conferred by heretics and schismatics. This was not the universal view of the Church, but Cyprian was not intimidated even by Stephen’s threat of excommunication. He was exiled by the emperor and then recalled for trial. He refused to leave the city, insisting that his people should have the witness of his martyrdom.

On September 13, 258, Cyprian was imprisoned on the orders of the new proconsul, Galerius Maximus. After trial, Cyprian was sentenced to be executed with the sword. The execution was carried out in an open place near the city. A vast multitude followed Cyprian on his last journey.

He removed his garments without assistance, knelt down, and prayed. After he blindfolded himself, he was beheaded by the sword on September 14, 258 in Carthage.

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## **September 12 – Thursday, Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time**

**Consider letting forbearance define who you are,  
especially in conflicting situations?**

### **I Corinthians 8:1-7, 11-13**

Paul tells the Corinthians that love must dominate their lifestyle and not knowledge. Knowledge is good, but it has a way of “inflating” while love has a way of “up-building”. To know God is to love God and to love God is to know God. There is only one God, Paul says, the God of love. And this God made everything through his Son Jesus. Paul also taught them the principle that however safe the strong and enlightened Christian may feel, he must do nothing to hurt or scandalize or confuse those who are less enlightened and those who are weak in their faith.

**Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and do it with love.**

### **Psalm 139**

**O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;  
You know when I sit and when I stand;  
You understand my thoughts from afar.  
My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,  
With all my ways you are familiar.**

### **Luke 6:27-38**

Jesus taught his disciples to love and be compassionate even when there is no return or reward for loving. He told them, “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who maltreat you”. He told them that their standard must be more noble than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees and that their spirituality must be deeper than that of the unbeliever.



**Be benevolent. Let your love be invincible, unconquerable, unyielding, steadfast, befitting your call, befitting your character as "sons of God".**

Be compassionate as your father is compassionate!

Be generous. Give without measure!

**Saint of the Day, September 12 - Most Holy Name of Mary and 13 other saints are remembered this day.**

The Feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary is an optional memorial celebrated on September 12. This feast began in Spain in 1513 and in 1671 was extended to all of Spain and the Kingdom of Naples.

It has been a universal Roman Rite feast since 1684, when Pope Innocent XI included it in the General Roman Calendar to commemorate the victory at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. In 1683, John Sobieski, king of Poland, brought an army to the outskirts of Vienna to stop the advance of Muslim armies loyal to Mohammed IV of Constantinople. After Sobieski entrusted himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary, he and his soldiers thoroughly defeated the Muslims. Pope Innocent XI extended this feast to the entire Church in memory of this victory. It was removed from the Church calendar in the liturgical reform following Vatican II but restored by Pope John Paul II in 2002, along with the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.

In Hebrew, the name Mary is "Miryam". In Aramaic the language spoken in her own time, the form of the name was "Mariam". Based on the root "merur", the name signifies "bitterness". This is reflected in the words of Naomi, who, after losing a husband and two sons lamented, "Do not call me Naomi ('Sweet'). Call me Mara ('Bitter'), for the Almighty has made my life very bitter." There are over seventeen interpretations of the name Mary.

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**September 13 – Friday, Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time**

**The virtue of hope nurtures forbearance and enables us to wait patiently.**

**I Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-27**

In this excerpt, Paul speaks of himself as a servant of all. He says that he has been serving the

community out of an inner urge and not from compulsion from anyone else and not for profit or prestige. The only thing that he has to boast about is the Gospel of Jesus. He also says that he had disciplined himself to be faithful to what he preaches.

**Be faithful to who you are and to what you preach and teach.**

## **Psalm 84**

**My soul yearns and pines  
for the courts of the Lord.  
My heart and my flesh  
cry out for the living God.**

## **Luke 6: 39-42**

Jesus taught his disciples to keep their eyes open, not to be blind to their own weaknesses and shortcomings, not to be misled and not to mislead...

**Try to deepen your vision of yourself. Have a clearer vision of who you are, what your strengths and weaknesses are.**

It is not difficult to find fault with others, to criticize others, to point out other's mistakes. But remember: "there is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it ill becomes any of us to find fault with the rest of us" (Francis Bacon)

**Jesus calls us to be compassionate, to develop a non-blaming, non-judgmental attitude, to have a generous heart, to be sensitive to others feelings and needs, to be mindful of others in their weaknesses and limitations and failures.....and not be judgmental of others.**

**Saint of the Day, September 13 - St. John Chrysostom and 10 other saints are remembered this day.**

John was born in Antioch in 347 to Greek parents from Syria. John's father died soon after his birth and he was raised by his mother. As a result of his mother's influential connections in the city, John began his education under the pagan teacher Libanius. From Libanius, John acquired the skills for a career in rhetoric, as well as a love of the Greek language and literature. As he grew older, however, John became more deeply committed to Christianity and went on to study theology.

John lived in extreme asceticism and became a hermit in about 375; he spent the next two years continually standing, scarcely sleeping, and committing the Bible to memory. As a

consequence of these practices, his stomach and kidneys were permanently damaged and poor health forced him to return to Antioch.

John was ordained as a deacon in 381 and a priest in 386. In Antioch, over the course of twelve years (386–397), John gained popularity because of the eloquence of his public speaking at the Golden Church, Antioch's cathedral, especially his insightful expositions of Bible passages and moral teaching.

In the autumn of 397, John was appointed Archbishop of Constantinople. He had to leave Antioch in secret due to fears that the departure of such a popular figure would cause civil unrest. During his time as Archbishop he refused to host lavish social gatherings, which made him popular with the common people, but unpopular with wealthy citizens and the clergy. His reforms of the clergy were also unpopular. He told visiting regional preachers to return to the churches they were meant to be serving. Also, he founded a number of hospitals in Constantinople.

John's enemies held a synod in 403 which resulted in his deposition and banishment. The causes of John's exile are not clear. He never reached this destination, as he died at on September 14, 407 during the journey.

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## **September 14 – Saturday, Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time**

**Forbearance is patience with our own imperfection and those of others!**

### **I Corinthians 10:14-22**

Paul lays down the norm: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and likewise the table of demons". This is another way of saying that a person who has handled sacred things, cannot soil his hands with mean and unworthy things. You cannot choose the way of grace and at the same time the way of sin.

### **Psalm 116**

**How shall I make return to the Lord  
for all the goods he has done for me?  
The cup of salvation I will take up,  
and I will call upon the name of the Lord.**

## **Luke 6:43-49**

**This excerpt from Luke offers us several important teachings of Jesus:**

Your fruitfulness reflects your character. True character of a person is reflected in his actions. Fine words do not take the place of fine deeds. Fine words can never be a substitute for fine deeds. Proclaiming (teaching, preaching) truth and values happens through your personality.

Faith without practice is a contradiction in terms. It is not difficult to recite the creed, but it could be difficult to live a Christian life.

There is only one proof of love - Obedience, faithfulness. Love without obedience is an impossibility. Love without surrender is not love, yet.

Response must follow the listening. Hearing is not enough - obedience to what is heard is just as important. Knowledge becomes relevant only when it is translated into action.

Knowledge must become action. Theory must become practice. Theology must become life. Spirituality must become incarnate.

Only a house whose foundations are strong can withstand the storm - only a life whose foundations are solid can survive the testing times. Be strong! Be grounded in faith!

## **Saint of the Day, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross and 8 other saints are remembered this day**

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, celebrated every year on September 14, recalls three events:

- 1.The finding of the True Cross by Saint Helena.
- 2.The dedication of churches built by Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary.
- 3.The restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem in AD 629 by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, after it had fallen into the hands of the Persian Emperor Chosroes II in the AD 614 Sasanian conquest of Jerusalem.

Early in the fourth century, Saint Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, went to Jerusalem in search of the holy places of Christ's life. She razed the second-century Temple of Aphrodite, which tradition held was built over the Savior's tomb, and her son built the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher on that spot. During the excavation, workers found three crosses. Legend has it that the one on which Jesus died was identified when its touch healed a dying woman.

The cross immediately became an object of veneration. At a Good Friday celebration in Jerusalem toward the end of the fourth century, according to an eyewitness, the wood was taken out of its silver container and placed on a table together with the inscription Pilate ordered placed above Jesus' head: Then "all the people pass through one by one; all of them bow down, touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and, after kissing the cross, they move on."

To this day, the Eastern Churches, Catholic and Orthodox alike, celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the September anniversary of the basilica's dedication. The feast entered the Western calendar in the seventh century after Emperor Heraclius recovered the cross from the Persians, who had carried it off in 614, 15 years earlier. According to the story, the emperor intended to carry the cross back into Jerusalem himself but was unable to move forward until he took off his imperial garb and became a barefoot pilgrim.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Some use their faith like a bus – they ride on it only when it is going their way.  
Be faithful even when things are not going your way.**

