

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year, we follow cycle A of our Sunday Lectionary. It is the year of the Gospel of Mathew. I want to take a moment to introduce Mathew and his Gospel at the beginning of this season. Mathew wrote in Antioch (Syria) between 70-90 A.D. for Christians of Jewish background. Mathew's profile of Jesus was influenced by the fact that he wrote mainly for Jews. They were deeply interested in how Jesus' teaching fit in with that of Moses. So, Mathew stresses how Jesus brought the teaching of Moses to fulfillment (Mt.5:17).

Mathew has chosen an extraordinary way to begin his Gospel. To the Jew genealogy 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. For us however, it means much more than purity of lineage – it is about 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 means that we have roots, a history and a tradition of faith and that we have a ground to stand on! We have something and someone to remember! We have our story of faith and hope and love – we have our story of redemption and salvation.

It was the dream of the common people that a descendant of David would lead them to glory. And Jesus was the fulfillment of that dream. Many saw the answer to their dream in power, in wealth, in material plenty, in the realization of personal ambitions, etc. Jesus came to the common folks who dreamed of peace.

The Genealogy in Mathew 1:1-17 is arranged in three sections, reflecting three great stages in Jewish history. The first section takes the history from Abraham to David, fourteen generations; the second from David to the Babylonian Exile, fourteen generations; and the third from Babylonian Exile to the coming of the Messiah, fourteen generations. 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 (creation); (2) Man lost his greatness (de-creation); (3) Man was restored to greatness (re-creation).

Mathew shows us that we were and are called to royalty (greatness); that there was the tragedy of lost royalty (lost greatness); and that this royalty was restored (restored greatness) in and through Christ. Mathew's genealogy 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 in Jewish genealogy 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; Bathsheba, 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.

We read Mathew’s genealogy at the Mass on Christmas Eve. After giving us the genealogy, Matthew tells us about the birth of Jesus, important events after his birth, the baptism of Jesus and the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness (Mathew chapters 1-4). Today, we begin reading from chapter 4. Mathew, a Jew, writing for Christians of Jewish background, sees Isaiah’s dream (Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3, first reading) being fulfilled in Jesus who begins his ministry in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. Assyria had invaded Israel and annexed the provinces of Zebulun and Naphtali around 733 B.C. Isaiah saw all this as a punishment for sin, especially the king’s lack of faith in God. As descendants of the great king David, they should be representatives of God on earth. But they failed. It is here in this degraded provinces that Jesus begins his ministry.

John the Baptist was arrested and imprisoned. For Jesus, the time had come to go forth and fulfill His mission. So he left Nazareth and took up residence in Capernaum. He left his home never again to return to live in it. He went to Galilee to begin his mission. Among the many characteristics of Galilee, one that is of special significance is that it had a mixed population, surrounded by the Gentiles. His message was going to be proclaimed to a wider circle from the beginning, his was a more inclusive mission!

The message of Jesus was simple, pure, uncomplicated good news! He proclaimed the good news with a voice of certainty, with a voice of authority, with the voice of God. His message was to repent, to turn from our own ways and turn to God and God’s ways, to rent our hearts, to change our attitudes because the Kingdom has come. Eternity has invaded time! God has entered the earth in Jesus and chose to stay!

We often burden ourselves with thoughts of past failures and mistakes or fears about the future and future problems. Jesus tells us that we are going in the wrong direction and listening to wrong voices. He calls us to repent, to turn around, to restructure and reorient our lives in His way. The reason for the repentance is not our sinfulness. It is God’s gracefulness calling us to his kingdom. Saint John XXIII says, “Every time I fell, I got up, looked at Jesus and went straight ahead.” And that is what repentance is about...getting up from where we have fallen and going forward with our eyes fixed on the Lord and His way.

I want to encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on your need for repentance and reorienting your life to God and God’s way.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 22, 2023

Thus says the Lord GOD: If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he committed, if he keeps all my statutes and does what is right and just, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of the crimes he committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live because of the virtue he has practiced.
(Ezekiel 18:22)

Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.
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.

Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3

The setting is a civil war between the two kingdoms into which the Jewish nation was split after the death of Solomon: Judah (South) and Israel (North). Judah had called in the Assyrians to help. They invaded Israel and took many captives among the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali (735-732 B.C.) Isaiah saw all this as a punishment for sin, especially the king's lack of faith in God. As descendant of the great king David, they should be representatives of God on earth. They failed. In this excerpt, Isaiah sings his dream of an ideal king, a king of peace, who would dispel darkness, bring joy in abundance, break the yoke that burdens and crush the rod of the task master.

Wait patiently and in hope.... He comes...Emmanuel...wait with courage!

Psalm 27

Psalm 27 proclaims the firm faith and boundless hope that God is all that the Psalmist longs for and God will bring deliverance, salvation. The psalmist longs for the presence of God in the

Temple and protection from all enemies. He says, “I believe” and “I trust” and speaks of “seeking his face”. To “seek the face” is to be in God’s presence, to be in communion with God.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;

Whom should I fear?

The Lord is my life’s refuge;

Of whom should I be afraid?

I Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

There were dissensions and factions in the community at Corinth. Paul wrote to the community, challenging them to be united in mind and heart. All are called to share in the life and mission of Jesus. It is unwise to take sides, form clicks, factions and exclusive groups. The disciples of Jesus must work toward cultivating and maintaining a sense of community, belongingness, unity in spirit, life and mission.

Pray for respect for differences, unity in diversity, and peace and harmony in our world.

Mathew 4:12-23

Mathew, a Jew, writing for Christians of Jewish background, sees Isaiah’s dream (today’s first reading) being fulfilled in Jesus, who begins his ministry in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. John the Baptist was arrested and imprisoned. For Jesus, time had come to go forth and fulfill His mission. So he left Nazareth and took up residence in Capernaum. He left his home never again to return to live in it. He went to Galilee to begin his mission. Among the many characteristics of Galilee, one that is of special significance is that it had a mixed population, surrounded by the Gentiles.

His message was going to be proclaimed to a wider circle from the beginning - a more inclusive mission!

The message of Jesus was not preached or taught but proclaimed... His message was simple, pure, uncomplicated good news...He proclaimed the good news with a voice of certainty, with a voice of authority, with the voice of God. His message was to repent, to turn from our own ways and turn to God and God’s ways...to rent your hearts, to Change your attitudes... because the Kingdom has come...Eternity has invaded time...God has entered the earth in Jesus and chose to stay...

So, it is urgent to choose to close the door behind and open the door in front and walk in.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, January 22 – St Vincent of Zaragossa 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.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**The Steadfast Love of the Lord is not Seasonal.
His Loving kindness does not have winter or summer days.
His love is forever fresh and new.**

