

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have come to the end of our Easter Season with the celebration of the feast of Pentecost yesterday. We now return to Ordinary Time of the year, beginning with the seventh week. (You may remember that we had celebrated six weeks of Ordinary Time before the Lenten Season.) The first reading of our weekday masses this week is from the Letter of St. James. We began reading this letter on Monday of the sixth week in Ordinary Time and will continue to read it through Saturday of this week.

The Letter of James may be considered a formal teaching document with moral and spiritual guidance for everyday Christian living. The letter instructs the Christian community on Faith and Wisdom; Poverty and Riches; Trials and Temptation; Hearing and Doing the Word of God; Warning against Partiality toward the rich; Faith and Works; Use of the Tongue; The Wisdom from Above; Friendship with the World; Judging a Brother; Warning against Boasting; Warning to the Rich; and Patience and Prayer. All of these powerful topics are in four pages of text in my New American Bible (may be more or less pages depending on the size of your Bible's print).

The Letter of James is probably one of the most socially conscious writings in the New Testament. Prayerful reading and reflection will show a correlation between this letter of James and the beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew. This letter is truly a compendium of the laws of everyday life, a life formed, informed, and transformed by the word of God. Those of us who claim to be cradle Catholics tend to think that we know how to behave and how not to behave. Read this letter and be surprised on how little we know or how much more we need to know about Christian behavior. We definitely need to be reminded of how to behave justly, kindly, patiently, generously and to put God first and be mindful of others and their needs first, without neglecting our own concerns and needs.

James teaches us that Wisdom from God leads us to a harvest of justice while Jealousy, ambition, competition, strife, etc. lead us to cunning and evil behavior. Wisdom from God is peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere. James reminds us that life is uncertain – man proposes, but God disposes. The uncertainty of life is not a cause for fear or inaction. It is the reason for complete trust in the Lord. Let us read this letter during this week – only five chapters in four pages - and draw inspiration from St. James about Christian living in families and communities.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

May 20-25, 2024

He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms that it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near, but rather he who, whether it be far off or near, awaits it with sincere faith, unflinching hope, and steadfast love.

(St. Augustine)

May 20 – Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

Forbearance is bringing your best when others are bringing their worst.

Genesis 3:9-15, 20

In the garden, man enjoyed an intimacy with God which was destroyed by disobedience. Ashamed and afraid man and woman hid themselves from God. This excerpt tells us that through disobedience sin entered the world, and as a result, man and woman experienced separation, suffering, and ultimately death. Man and woman failed to be faithful to what God made them to be. Sin is a violation of what God made us to be.

Be faithful to what God made you to be.

Psalm 87

His foundation is on holy mountains,
The LORD loves the gates* of Zion
more than any dwelling in Jacob.
Glorious things are said of you,
O city of God!

John 19:25-34

This is a beautiful and inspiring story of how Jesus, even as he hung on the cross, was thinking of other's pain rather than his own. He stepped into the sorrow of others around him. The same chapter also tells us how those who loved him remained faithful and loyal to the one they loved as he suffered and eventually died on the cross. They stepped into and shared each other's sorrow.

This is what the sorrowful mother did. She stepped into the pain, rejection, loneliness, anguish, and passion of her son and also that of his disciples, without going under. She stood strong and steadfast for her son and for his disciples. She became strength for the suffering, lonely, rejected and the sorrowful. She emerged from her pain and sorrow to become for us a fearless, powerful, courageous and moving figure.

Let us be inspired by the example of the sorrowful mother and learn to be present to each other in times of disappointment, pain, suffering and sorrow.

Saint of the Day, May 20 -) St. Bernadine of Siena and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

Bernardine was born on September 8, 1380 in a noble family in Massa Marittima, Italy. He was orphaned at six and was raised by a pious aunt. In 1397, after a course of civil and canon law, he joined the Confraternity of Our Lady attached to the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala church. When he was 20, the plague was at its height in his hometown of Siena. Sometimes as many as 20 people died in one day at the hospital. Bernardine offered to run the hospital and, with the help of other young men, nursed patients there for four months. He escaped the plague but was so exhausted that a fever confined him for several months. He spent another year caring for a beloved aunt whose parents had died when he was a child, and at her death began to fast and pray to know God's will for him.

At the age of 22, he entered the Franciscan Order. He was ordained a priest in 1404 and was commissioned as a preacher the next year. He always traveled on foot, sometimes speaking for hours in one place, then doing the same in another town. Most preachers of the time either read a prepared speech or recited a rhetorical oration. Instead of remaining cloistered and preaching only during the liturgy, Bernardine preached directly to the public. For more than 30 years, he preached all over Italy and played a great part in the religious revival of the early fifteenth century. Although he had a weak and hoarse voice, he is said to have been one of the greatest preachers of his time. His style was simple, familiar, and abounding in imagery.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Bernardine chose his themes not from the daily liturgy, but from the ordinary lives of the people of Siena. He selected biblical themes to focus on the immediate interests of his audience. He travelled from place to place, remaining nowhere more than a few weeks. These journeys were all made on foot. In the towns, the crowds assembled to hear him were at times so great that it became necessary to erect a pulpit in the marketplace. The sermons often lasted three or four hours.

He was especially known for his devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. He devised a symbol—IHS, the first three letters of the name of Jesus in Greek—in Gothic letters on a blazing sun. This was to displace the superstitious symbols of the day. The devotion spread, and the symbol began to appear in churches, homes and public buildings. Opposition arose from those who thought it a

dangerous innovation. Three attempts were made to have the pope take action against him, but Bernardine's holiness, orthodoxy, and intelligence were evidence of his faithfulness. He died on May 20, 1444 at L'Aquila in the Abruzzi and is buried in the Basilica of San Bernardino. He was canonized on May 24, 1450 by Pope Nicholas V

May 21 - Tuesday, Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

**Forbearance is the discipline that helps us
develop our spiritual muscles.**

James 4:1-10

James teaches us to cleanse and purify our hearts and live a life of obedience to God and God's ways and turn away from the ways of the world that are opposed to God's ways. Worldly ambition leads to conflict, jealousy, quarrel and the like. Draw close to God and God will draw close to you. Be humble before God.

Psalm 55

**Cast your care upon the Lord,
And he will support you;
Never will he permit the just man to be disturbed...**

Mark 9:30-37

Jesus and the disciples came down the mountain after a wonderful experience of glory and peace. He began to talk about being betrayed and about being put to death. Mark tells us that the disciples failed to understand what he was saying.

Jesus began teaching the disciple a new way of being.....way of serving, being at the service of God by serving people, even at great cost...even to death!

Even when the disciples heard this urgent and difficult call, they began thinking about their honor, about occupying important position and about who among them was really important...

Jesus challenged them to put themselves at the service of others and gave them a little child as an example...

Be at the service of the “little ones”, whoever they may be, the ones who cannot give you important positions, the ones who cannot make you important before others...

True honor for those who follow the master, Jesus, lies in serving the “little ones” in the world! Be there, faithfully and gratefully for the “little ones” of the world!

Saint of the Day, May 21 - St. Eugene de Mazenod and 30 other saints are remembered this day.

Eugene de Mazenod was born on August 1, 1782 in Aix-en-Provence, France. Because of the French revolution, the family was forced to flee to Italy. In spite of the upheaval of the French Revolution, he entered the seminary, and was ordained a priest at Amiens in 1811. Soon after his ordination, he organized missionaries to go to rural parts of Provence, instructing the people whose religious training had been disrupted for many years by the French Revolution and its aftermath. Eugene directed his ministry toward the poorest of the poor. Others joined his labors, and became the nucleus of a religious community, the Missionaries of Provence.

Eugene began the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1816, obtaining papal approval for them 10 years later. From rural preaching, they soon moved into running seminaries to improve the quality of the clergy. Their first foreign mission was in Canada in 1841; soon they were in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Latin America.

Eugene became Bishop of Marseille, following his uncle. There he built churches, founded parishes, cared for his priests, and developed catechetics for the young. After a life dedicated to spreading the Good News, Eugene died on May 21, 1861 and was canonized in 1998.

May 22 – Wednesday, Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

St. Francis de Sales reminds us that “correcting a person should be gradual and gentle and with much compassion, prudence and discretion.”

James 4:13-17

In this excerpt, we read the advice that James gave the Jews who went from city to city looking for opportunities to practice their commercial abilities. He says, no man has a right to make

confident plans for the future. Because he does not know what even a single day may bring forth. Man proposes, but God disposes. The uncertainty of life is not a cause for fear or inaction. It is the reason for complete trust in the Lord.

Psalm 49

**Hear this, all you peoples;
Hearken all you who dwell in the world,
Of lowly birth or high degree, rich and poor alike.....
In no way can a man redeem himself,
Or pay his own ransom to God.**

Mark 9:38-40

Jesus teaches tolerance. This is of great significance to us at this time in our history. Let the one, who lives a good life, live the good life.....let the one, who does a good work, do the good work.....there may be differences in thinking, ideologies, beliefs and doctrines.....be tolerant and appreciate the good you see.....

Doctrines and beliefs and churches and religions are judged by the people they hold, nurture and sustain.

Our character, our life style, our values, our relationship – who we are and how we live, how good and noble our lives are – these are the most important factors and not our affiliation to groups and organizations.

“God fulfills himself in many ways” (Tennyson). We need to learn to respect the ways others have found to fulfill themselves in God.

Let God reveal himself and do His work the way he chooses to.....Let God be God!

Saint of the Day, May 22 –St. Rita of Cascia and 23 other saints are remembered this day.

Rita was born in 1386 in Roccaparena, Umbria, Italy. She was married at the age of 12 to a violent and ill-tempered husband. He was murdered 18 years later and she forgave his murderers, praying that her twin sons, who had sworn to avenge their father’s death may also forgive. She was granted this grace, and her sons, who died young, died reconciled to God.

After the death of her husband and sons, Rita tried to join the Augustinian nuns in Cascia. She

was refused at first because she was a widow, but eventually allowed to enter the convent where she lived the last 40 years of her life in prayer, mortification and service to the people of Cascia. Rita was bedridden for the last four years of her life, consuming almost nothing except for the Eucharist. She died of tuberculosis at the age of 70 on May 22, 1456 and was canonized in 1900 by Pope Leo XIII

May 23 – Thursday, Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Forbearance involves choosing to act gently, kindly and tenderly.

James 5:1-6

James advises his readers to stay focused on things that really matter, those things that will bring them to the eternal and be cautious of the passing things of the material world. Wealth and riches have a way of making people selfish and bringing anxieties, pain and suffering. Be generous to all people and especially those who serve you.

Psalm 49

**This is the way of those whose trust is folly,
The end of those contented with their lot:
Like sheep they are herded into the nether world;
Death is their shepherd and the upright rule over them.**

Mark 9:41-50

Mark offers us several sayings of Jesus for reflection. To help, even in small ways, is to gather wealth into the eternal.....But to hurt or to cause a weaker person to stumble is to lose the wealth.....Take care to remove the stumbling blocks.....**It will cost you much if you chose to enter the Kingdom of God.....You will have to sacrifice everything that get in the way.....Ultimate goal in life is worth the sacrifice.**

Everyone must be salted with fire. According to Jewish covenant law it was the salt that made the sacrifice acceptable to God. (sacrifice had to be salted - treated with salt - before it was offered).

Our life must be treated (salted) with fire, must be purified, cleansed.....by the discipline that Jesus offers.

What if the salt loses its taste...? What if it loses its quality to flavor and to preserve? Disciples of Jesus must remain “flavoring, preserving, healing, purifying” agents. What would a Christian be in the world without the qualities of Christian living?

Have salt in your heart and live at peace with each other. Keep your heart pure....You will be at peace with one another. Be a purifying influence in the world!

Saint of the day, May 23 - St. John Baptist de Rossi and 25 other saints are remembered this day.

John Baptist de Rossi was born into a poor family on February 22, 1698, in Genoa. When his father died, he lived with his cousin, Lorenzo de Rossi, who was the canon at St. Mary’s in Cosmedin. He began his studies at the Collegium Romanum under the guidance of the Jesuits. He then studied philosophy and theology at the Dominican College of St. Thomas. During this time, it was discovered that he had epileptic seizures.

John wanted to become a priest, but his epilepsy was an impediment for becoming a priest. However, John was given a dispensation and was ordained a priest on March 8, 1721.

As a priest, he worked in Rome, caring for the homeless who wandered the streets of the city. He tended to the needs of the sick and assisted in helping find a hospice for homeless women. He aided prisoners, helped workers, and literally touched thousands of needy people—the sick, the homeless, prostitutes, transient cattle drivers who came to market in Rome, and other rough sorts. By day he devoted himself to the sick poor in Rome’s hospitals. By night he ministered to street people at a refuge. He did this for over forty years.

From around 1748, his health began to deteriorate, and his epileptic seizures became more violent and he was confined to the sick bed. He died on May 23, 1764 and was canonized on December 8, 1881 by Pope Leo XIII

May 24 – Friday, Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Forbearance is bringing our best when others bring their worst.

James 5:9-12

James continues to advise his readers to patiently endure hardships and learn to stand strong in difficult times like the prophets and other men of holiness. He calls them to be honest, open and steadfast without grumbling and complaining.

Be patient with all, especially with yourself.

Psalm 103

**Blessed the Lord, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.**

Mark 10:1-12

In his response to the question about divorce, Jesus sets before us very high ideals of marriage and family. He sets intimacy, “communion of persons”, as the ideal to strive for. Intimacy is not a “fusion’ of individuals but a “communion” of persons.

The secret of intimacy/communion/unity is the “sacredness’ of relationship, the “unconditional” presence in love. This is the “sacred secret” of communion of persons in a family or in a community. Not a fusion of individuals, but a communion of persons.....
Persons living in communion without losing or crushing individuality, personality.

This intimacy or communion calls forth Simplicity, Fidelity and Purity which makes unconditional love and personal surrender possible.

Saint of the day, May 24 - Feast of Mary Help of Christians and 16 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint John Chrysostom was the first person to use this Marian title in the year 345 as a devotion to the Virgin Mary. In 1572, during the expansion of the Islamic Ottoman Empire intended to invade Christian Europe, Pope Pius V invoked Christian armies and its victory achieved was consequently attributed to the intercession of Mary under this title.

Saint Don Bosco and Saint Vincent Pallotti also promoted Marian devotion under this title. Don Bosco built a huge basilica in her honor in 1868 and founded a religious congregation for women, under the title of, "The Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians". The title of Mary Help

of Christians is associated with the defense of Christian Europe, the north of Africa and the Middle East from non-Christian peoples during the Middle Ages.

The feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians as we have it today, was instituted by Pope Pius VII. When Napoleon returned to Paris and Murat became king of Naples in March 1815, Pope Pius VII fled to Savona. After the Congress of Vienna and the battle of Waterloo, the pope returned to Rome in July 1815. To give thanks to God and Our Lady, he declared May 24, the anniversary of his return to be henceforth the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians.

May 25 – Saturday, Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Forbearance is a powerful virtue and a transforming gift.

James 5:13-20

James encourages his readers to pray when suffering and hardships set in. He also advises them to call in God's ministers to pray for them. He says, "the fervent prayer of a holy man is powerful"....trust in his prayer.

James also advises his readers to be sensitive and attentive to those who stray from the truth and do all that is possible to bring them back to truth. This is a ministry that is worthy of honor and praise.

Psalm 141

**LORD, I call to you; hasten to me;
listen to my plea when I call.
Let my prayer be incense before you;
my uplifted hands an evening offering.**

Mark 10:13-16

The disciples of Jesus tried to keep the children away from their master. Their master was busy and they did not want him disturbed by noisy children. Jesus said to them, let the children come to me.....the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.....Jesus calls, invites and

challenges us to welcome the Kingdom as a child would. Children are blessed with certain gifts which they naturally and spontaneously share.

Reflect on some of those gifts such as qualities of welcoming , giving and receiving, joyfulness, remembering the joyful and forgetting the sorrowful, trusting people, capacity to obey, freedom to be, non-pretentious attitude, etc.

Welcome the Kingdom as a child would, feely, joyfully, gratefully.....To welcome the Kingdom is to welcome the values of the kingdom and be cautious of the values of the world. We are a kingdom people, royal people, and God’s people. Royal people must live noble lives.

Saint of the day, May 25 – St. Bede the Venerable and 23 other saints are remembered this day.

Bede was born in the year 673 near the English town of Jarrow. At an early age, his parents entrusted him to the care of the abbot of the Monastery of St. Paul, Jarrow. The abbot and a group of other monks instructed Bede not only in scripture and theology, but also in sacred music, poetry and the Greek language.

Recognizing his remarkable devotion to prayer and study, Bede was ordained a deacon at the age of 19 and ordained a priest at the age of 30. After becoming a priest, he began working on farming, baking, and other works of the monastery, besides celebration Mass. He gave priority to prayer, fasting and charitable hospitality. He showed excellence in a wide range of subjects.

Bede declined a request to become abbot of his monastery. Instead, he concentrated on writing, and produced more than 45 books – primarily about theology and the Bible, but also on science, literature, and history. He also taught hundreds of students at the monastery and its school, which became renowned throughout Britain.

Bede died in Jarrow on May 26, 735 praying his favorite prayer, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As in the beginning, so now, and forever” shortly after finishing an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospel of John. Pope Leo XIII canonized and declared him a Doctor of the Church in 1899.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence then, is not a single act, but a habit.
(Aristotle)**

