

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

We have been making our journey with Jesus through the Gospel of Mathew. We heard Jesus calling all his followers to nurture a positive attitude and bless the world in a spirit of hospitality, fidelity, humility, generosity, gentleness, and patience. We heard Jesus calling us to search and discover the kingdom of God, the treasure within us and among us. Last Sunday, we found Jesus coming to the frightened disciples on troubled waters when the wind was contrary.

Today, on this twentieth Sunday in ordinary time, all our Scripture readings as well as the Responsorial Psalm speak of the universal nature of God's love and the salvation offered to all people. The prophet Isaiah (first reading) speaks of the house of God as a house of prayer for all peoples. The Psalmist (today's responsorial - Psalm 67) calls all peoples and nations to praise God. Paul explains that the salvation offered first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles is still available to all people because of God's mercy (the second reading). The Gospel reading tells us the story of Jesus healing the daughter of a Gentile woman.

We live in a world where conflicts, competitions, divisions, separations, jealousies, and hatred exist between political and social organizations and religion and religious organization, even among Christian denominations. Such realities betray the word religion itself. Religion stands for harmony, integrity, unity, and wholeness. The word religion comes from the Latin word, "re-ligare" – "re-bind or re-connect". Religion is supposed to be a binding force, a healing power, and a channel of harmony and peace. We live in a broken world. Religion is supposed to bring healing for the broken.

Religion is supposed to re-establish our connection with God and one another. We may have differences of beliefs, doctrines, liturgies, prayer and worship forms and other religious practices. Religion must transcend these differences and nurture harmony and unity. Religion is about harmony, integrity, unity, and wholeness and not uniformity. Differences in religious beliefs and practices should help us appreciate the many ways our loving God heals our brokenness and holds us together.

We need to pull down our walls of separation and share in the universality of God's love. Very often we set up walls which separate us from God and from one another. Today's Gospel reminds us that God's love and mercy are extended to all who call on Him in Faith and trust, no matter who they are. God's care extends beyond the bounds of race and nation to the hearts of all who live, and God's House should become a House of Prayer for all peoples.

An Anthropologist proposed a game to the African tribal Children. He placed a basket of candy under a tree and made the children stand 300 feet away. Then he announced that whoever reaches the basket first would get all the candy in the basket. When he said “get, set, ready, go”, the children held each other’s hands, ran together towards the tree, picked up the basket, divided the candy equally among themselves, ate and enjoyed the candy. They ran together, they had fun and they enjoyed the candy.

When the anthropologist asked them why they did so, they answered, “Ubuntu”, which meant, “How can one be happy when the others are sad?” “Ubuntu” in Shona language means, “I am because we are.” It expresses the idea that being a person involves being part of a web of connections and relationships. We are interdependent beings. As Thomas Merton says, “No man is an Island.” We are called to shape our future together. As St. Paul says to the Corinthians, “Together we live and together we die.” (2 Corinthians 7:3)

We are now in the midst of cultural, political, racial as well as religious conflicts and tensions. Our unity as a nation is disrupted and threatened and it is urgent that we recognize our need to be together as one nation. Our unity as Christians is challenged by the differences in doctrines and worship forms and it is urgent that we recognize and nurture our unity in Christ. Our unity as Catholic Christians is being compromised and challenged by differences in customs, liturgical practices, spiritual traditions, worship forms, etc. It is urgent that we recognize our need to be together as one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and renew our commitment to live Jesus. We must strive to not only appreciate others for what and who they are, but also live in a way that they can appreciate who and what we are as well.

Our Church is alive and vibrant only when we experience what the early Christians experienced at Pentecost – unity in diversity, togetherness in faith. We must pray for healing of brokenness, communion of cultures, respect for differences, unity in diversity and the courage to change what must be changed. The prayer of Jesus, as he was preparing himself to face the cross, was that all will be one just as he and the father are one (John 17:20-26). It is this unity, harmony, oneness that will convince the world of the truth of Christianity, and the place of Jesus in our life and the life of the world.

Let us learn to appreciate our cultural, political, racial and religious differences and allow diversities to be our strength. Diversity makes us beautiful and respect for diversity makes us strong. During the coming week, take a few moments each day to meditate on the universality of God’s love and the call to maintain unity in diversity, with due respect for differences.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

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

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 16, 2026

Divine love is sacrificial love.

**Love does not mean to have and to own and to possess. It means to be had and to be owned
and to be possessed. It is not a circle circumscribed by self;
it is arms outstretched to embrace all humanity within its grasp.**

(Fulton J. Sheen)

Collect

O God, who have prepared for those who love you
good things which no eye can see,
fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love,
so that, loving you in all things and above all things,
we may attain your promises,
which surpass every human desire.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever 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.

**Movement is good for the body. Stillness is good for the mind.
Serenity is good for the spirit.**

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

After the Hebrews returned from Babylon, they found many foreigners, not of the Jewish religion living there. The anonymous prophet, whom we call the third Isaiah, had to face this changed situation. Ezekiel, the prophet was opposed to uncircumcised foreigners in the temple precincts. The third Isaiah has a more lenient attitude. This excerpt is a poem which lists the conditions under which non-Jews may worship in the temple. "Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar".

The prophet has introduced universalism in the history of salvation. God is a God of all and not just of Israel and God's salvation is open to all. God's intent is to welcome all who observe what is right and do what is just. This is reflected in the Gospel of this Sunday. We read about Jesus reaching out to Canaanite woman and healing her.

Cultivate a deep respect for all people. Pray for unity in diversity.

Psalm 67

This Psalm was composed for public worship. It begins with the traditional Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24-25. It is a simple and beautiful prayer for God's blessing for all people, that all people and nations may know the salvation of our God; that all people and nations may shout for joy; that God may be known to the ends of the earth.

**May God have pity on us and bless us;
May he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon the earth;
Among all nations, your salvation.**

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Paul continued to explain to the Christians in Rome that no one can be saved except through the mercy of God. God's purpose is a purpose of salvation, not destruction. The purpose of God can never be frustrated. Paul insisted that the salvation offered first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles is still available to all because of God's mercy.

Regardless of human sin and imperfection, God's word remains true and accomplishes its saving purpose for the Jews for the Gentiles and for all. Nothing will separate us from the Love of God, said Paul. God's mercy extends to all regardless of their land of origin, language, and culture. The gifts that are God's alone to bestow are irrevocable.

Neither sin nor disobedience or any act of man can frustrate the plan and purpose of God.

Mathew 15:21-28

This excerpt must be understood in light of the friction that continued to exist between Christians from Jewish background and pagan converts. It was basically a tension between classic Jewish exclusionism and the universal will of salvation of all people, revealed in Jesus.

This excerpt teaches us that faith breaks down barriers between Jews and Gentiles and in fact

faith breaks down all barriers. "Woman, you have great faith. Your wish will come to pass," Jesus said to the Canaanite woman.

Let your faith make you free to love all people.

Be open-minded! Cultivate respect for all.

Break down barriers that keep you apart from other people and cultures and religious traditions.

Saint of the day, August 16 - St. Stephen of Hungary and 11 other saints are remembered this day

Stephen was born around the year 975. He was born as Vajk, a name derived from the Turkic word baj, meaning "hero", "master", "prince" or "rich". Legend tells us that he was baptized by the saintly Bishop Adalbert of Prague around the age of 10, together with his father, chief of the Magyars, a group who migrated to the Danube area in the ninth century.

At 20, he married Gisela, sister to the future emperor, Saint Henry. When he succeeded his father, Stephen adopted a policy of Christianization of the country for both political and religious reasons. He suppressed a series of revolts by pagan nobles and welded the Magyars into a strong national group. He asked the pope to provide for the Church's organization in Hungary and requested that the pope confer the title of king upon him. He was crowned on Christmas day in 1001.

Stephen established a system of tithes to support churches and pastors and to relieve the poor. Out of every 10 towns one had to build a church and support a priest. He abolished pagan customs with a certain amount of violence, and commanded all to marry, except clergy and religious. He was easily accessible to all, especially the poor. In 1031, his son Emeric died, and the rest of Stephen's days were embittered by controversy over his successor. His nephews attempted to kill him. He died in 1038 and was canonized, along with his son, in 1083.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Behold the turtle!
He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.**