

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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May 4, 2026

Brothers and Sisters,

The theme of love permeates the Scripture readings of this week. Love has been defined and described in many and varied ways by philosophers, psychologists, spiritual leaders, and theologians as well as the sages of the ancient world. One thought that stands out among the disciplines mentioned is that love is a give and take, a two-way street. This idea has its own merit. However, I would like to suggest that love is a one-way street. I am thinking of love that is pure and simple. I invite you to reflect on this thought for some time and if possible, have a dialogue with someone else about love that is pure and simple.

I know an ancient story of a sage trying to save a scorpion from drowning in the river Ganges. He picked up this scorpion to save him, but the scorpion just stung him, and he dropped it. He picked it up again and it stung again, and the process continued for a while. The sage was beginning to lose balance because of the poison of the scorpion. One of his disciples who was watching this process asked this great sage why he was picking up the scorpion that was stinging him. He replied, "it is the nature of the scorpion to sting, and it is my nature to be willing to endure even the greatest sufferings to help and save a living being in need. Should I be unfaithful to my nature because it causes me suffering to be true to my nature? The scorpion acts according to his nature. I must act according to mine."

God loves us because God is love - it his nature to love. He is faithful to his nature even when we are unfaithful to our nature, even when we do not respond to His love, even when we strike back. God's love is simple, pure, benevolent, unconditional, unconquerable, and steadfast. His love is a one-way street. His love is not conditioned by our response. The command of Jesus is to "love one another" as he does (John 13:34). Our love is imperfect and often selfish. We must strive to let our love become benevolent, unconditional, sacrificial and other centered. Mahatma Gandhi says, "real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbor even though you distrust him." St. Francis de Sales says, "The measure of love is to love without measure."

I encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to reflect on the quality of your love for God, for yourself and for others and look at the possibility of raising the quality of your love as you go about doing your daily chores. God bless you and your family and keep you safe in His Love.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fifth Week of Easter

May 4 - 9, 2026

**Impossible dreams will remain mere dreams
if they are not followed up with determination, patience,
and persistence - with steadfastness!**

May 4 – Monday, Fifth Week of Easter

**Do your work, then step back. The only path to serenity.
(Lao Tzu)**

Acts 14:5-18

Paul healed a crippled man at Lystra. The people, including their priests, came to honor Paul and Barnabas with garlands and oxen to offer them sacrifice. Paul explained to them that they were only men and that the healing was done through the power of Jesus.

May all you do give honor and glory to God!

Psalm 115

**Not to us, O Lord, not to us
But to your name give glory
Because of your kindness, because of your truth....
May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth...**

John 14:21-26

There is much about love in this Gospel passage – Jesus and the Father, the disciples and Jesus, the disciples and other disciples – all in one communion of love and fellowship.

Obedience is presented as the only sign of Love – faithfulness to the word of Jesus is faithfulness and obedience to the word of the Father.

Keep listening and be obedient to the word of Jesus. The word of Jesus is the word of the Father, and it is the word of love.

This faithfulness to the word deepens the relationship of love and it facilitates further revelation of love and truth and all that follow. Fidelity not only maintains relationship, but also deepens it. Jesus promised that those who are faithful will experience the indwelling of God, that he and the father will make a dwelling place within. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, he said, would teach us all things and help us understand the teachings of Jesus

Fidelity, Obedience and loyalty are not values lived out in monasteries and religious houses. They are lived out where we are - where we live and work - where God has placed us. God is faithful where God is. We are called to be faithful where we are.

Saint of the Day, May 4 - St. Florian and 361 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Florian was born around the year 250 in the ancient Roman city of Aelium Cetium, present-day Sankt Pölten, Austria. He joined the Roman Army and advanced in the ranks, rising to commander of the imperial army in the Roman province of Noricum. In addition to his military duties, he was also responsible for organizing and leading firefighting brigades. Florian organized and trained an elite group of soldiers whose sole duty was to fight fires.

During the Diocletianic Persecution of Christians, reports reached Rome that Florian was not enforcing the proscriptions against Christians in his territory. Aquilinus was sent to investigate these reports. When Aquilinus ordered Florian to offer sacrifice to the Roman gods in accordance with Roman religion, Florian refused. Florian was sentenced to be burned at the stake. Standing on the funeral pyre, Florian is reputed to have challenged the Roman soldiers to light the fire, saying "If you wish to know that I am not afraid of your torture, light the fire, and in the name of the Lord I will climb onto it." Apprehensive of his words, the soldiers did not burn Florian but executed him by drowning him in the Enns River with a millstone tied around his neck.

His body, recovered and buried by a pious woman, was eventually removed to the Augustinian Abbey of St. Florian, near Linz. St. Florian has been regarded as a patron of Poland as well as of Linz, Upper Austria. In recent years, Saint Florian has come to be honored as the patron saint of firefighters and for protection against fire and floods.

May 5 – Tuesday, Fifth Week of Easter

**Serenity is not the absence of trouble,
but the capacity to remain centered.**

Acts 14:19-28

Some Jews from Antioch and Iconium stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town. Paul's disciples formed a circle around him and protected him. Paul and Barnabas continued their missionary journey, instructing people and encouraging them to stand strong in the face of difficulties.

Be strong and be faithful even in the face of difficulties!

Psalm 145

**Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord,
And let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom
And speak of your might.**

John 14:27-31

Jesus gave his disciples his farewell gift: PEACE. He said that this was not the kind of peace the world would give. It is enduring peace, lasting peace, eternal peace. The word for peace used in this context is "shalom" and shalom means "total Well-being", "the highest good", "that which befits God". It is not the absence or the end of war or conflict. It is the presence of shalom, even in the midst of tension. This is the kind of peace, shalom that Jesus experienced in loving and fulfilling the Father's will.

Pray for:

- **respect for the individual**
- **respect for all persons; unity in families; fellowship in communities; communion of cultures; respect for diversity and tolerance of differences**
- **hunger for brotherhood, justice, righteousness and peace in the world.**
- **recognition of the hunger of people and the willingness to share from the abundance we have received, food for the body as well as food for the spirit.**
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Saint of the Day, May 5 - St. Hilary of Arles and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Hilary of Arles was born around the year 401, probably northern Gaul. In his early youth, around 420, Hilary entered the Abbey of Lérins that was presided over by his kinsman Honoratus, who later became bishop of Arles. In 429 Hilary succeeded Honoratus as bishop and

continued to follow in his footsteps. Hilary was only 29 when he was chosen to be bishop of Arles.

The new, youthful bishop undertook the role with confidence. He did manual labor to earn money for the poor. He sold sacred vessels to ransom captives. He became a magnificent orator. He traveled everywhere on foot, always wearing simple clothing.

That was the bright side. Hilary encountered difficulty in his relationships with other bishops over whom he had some jurisdiction. He unilaterally deposed one bishop. He selected another bishop to replace one who was very ill—but, to complicate matters, did not die! Pope Saint Leo the Great kept Hilary a bishop but stripped him of some of his powers. Hilary died on May 5, 449 in Arles.

May 6 – Wednesday, Fifth Week of Easter

**Serenity may be cultivated through mindfulness and watchfulness
and letting go of expectations.**

Acts 15:1-6

The number of Christians continued to increase, and many gentile converts joined the community. Some converted Pharisees demanded that the gentile converts follow the Mosaic Law. This created dissension in the early Church. Paul and Barnabas were delegated to consult the apostles and the elders on this matter.

Psalm 122

**I rejoiced because they said to me,
“We will go up to the house of the Lord.”
And now we have set foot
Within your gates O Jerusalem.**

John 15:1-8

**I am the vine, you are the branches...remain in me, you will be fruitful...you can do nothing
without me...**

The fruitfulness of the branches depends on their union, connection with the vine. The branches become fruitful only in the vine. The vine itself doesn't bear the fruit. Vine bears the branches and feeds the branches, and the branches bear the fruit.

Abide in Christ....be united with him.... live in his spirit.....you will bear much fruit! Be constantly fed by the “word” of Jesus and the “bread” of life and “cup” of compassion that Jesus offers. You will be fruitful.

Fruitfulness also depends on the branches being trimmed, pruned and cleaned. We could rephrase it to read “fruitfulness depends on being tamed, disciplined, controlled, directed, channeled, etc. – wild branches do not yield.... they become unyielding!”

Be open and docile to the Holy Spirit! Be open to being pruned, trimmed, cleansed, disciplined, tamed....be docile to the pruning process of the heavenly father...wild branches become unyielding!

Saint of the Day, May 6 - St. Dominic Savio and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

Dominic Savio was born on April 2, 1842 in the village of Riva in northern Italy. He was given the name Domenico at baptism. The name Domenico means "of the Lord" and the surname Savio means "wise". His parents had ten children in all. His father was a blacksmith and his mother, a seamstress. They were poor, hardworking and pious. His parents took great care to give him a Christian upbringing. By the age of four, Dominic was able to pray by himself and was occasionally found in solitude, praying. At the age of five, he learned to serve Mass, and would try to participate at Mass every day as well as go regularly to Confession. Having been permitted to make his First Communion at an early age, he had much reverence for the Eucharist.

Dominic joined Saint John Bosco as a student at the Oratory in Turin at the age of 12. He impressed Don Bosco with his desire to be a priest and to help him in his work with neglected boys. A peacemaker and an organizer, young Dominic founded the Company of the Immaculate Conception which, besides being devotional, aided St. John Bosco with the boys and with manual work. All the members except Dominic, would, in 1859, join St. John Bosco in the beginnings of his Salesian congregation. By that time, Dominic had been called home to heaven.

As a youth, Dominic spent hours rapt in prayer. His raptures he called “my distractions.” Even in play, he said that at times, “It seems heaven is opening just above me. I am afraid I may say or do something that will make the other boys laugh.” Dominic would say, “I can’t do big things. But I want all I do, even the smallest thing, to be for the greater glory of God.”

Dominic’s health, always frail, led to lung problems and he was sent home to recuperate. As was the custom of the day, he was bled in the thought that this would help, but it only worsened his condition. He died on March 9, 1857, after receiving the Last Sacraments. Some thought that Dominic was too young to be considered a saint. Saint Pius X declared that just the opposite was true and went ahead with his cause. Dominic was canonized in 1954.

May 7 – Thursday, Fifth Week of Easter

"Serenity comes from not having any investment in the outcome."

(Unknown)

Acts 15:7-21

The apostles discerned that the regulations of the Old Testament were meant to be a preparation for Christ and that the Old had passed away giving way to the New. At the close of the discernment process, James encouraged them to be patient and considerate to all converts and not to make the new life difficult for them.

Be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Be open to new ways, opportunities, and possibilities.

Psalm 96

**Sing to the Lord a new song,
Sing to the Lord all you lands,
Sing to the Lord, bless his name.....**

John 15:9-11

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.....Abide in my love.....that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete."

The secret of the life of Jesus was his contact with the Father. Again, and again, he withdrew to quiet places to be alone with the father. He knew what it meant to "abide" in the Father's Love. His disciples must do the same.

To "abide" is to be in close contact, to be in touch, to be intimate, to live an intense and personal relationship, to surrender in fidelity, to surrender in obedience, etc.

Stay focused on developing a personal, intense, intimate relationship with the Lord. Stay close...stay connected...be in touch....

Abide in the presence of the Lord, in silence and in solitude.....Speak to the Lord from the depth of your heart.....

Saint of the Day, May 7 - St. Rose Venerini and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

Rose Venerini was born in 1656 at Viterbo in Italy, then a part of the Papal States.. Her father was a doctor at a major hospital in Viterbo. Following the death of her fiancé she entered a convent, but soon returned home to care for her newly widowed mother. During this period, Rose used to gather the women and girls of the neighborhood to say the rosary together in the evenings, and when she found how ignorant many of them were of their religion, she began to instruct them.

Under the guidance of her spiritual director, a Jesuit priest, she saw the need to dedicate herself to the instruction and Christian formation of the young. She became convinced that she was called to be a teacher in the world rather than a contemplative nun in a convent. In 1685, with two helpers, Rose opened a preschool for girls in Viterbo to give poor girls a complete Christian formation and to prepare them for life in society. Rose opened the first public school for girls in Italy.

Her reputation spread, and in 1692, she was invited by Cardinal Barbarigo to advise and help in the training of teachers and organizing of schools in his diocese of Montefiascone. Rose organized a number of schools in various places, sometimes in the face of violent opposition. Her patience and trust overcame all obstacles, and in 1713 she made a foundation in Rome that received the praise of Pope Clement XI. She died in Rome on May 7, 1728 and was canonized in 2006. The sodality, or group of women she had invited to prayer, was ultimately given the rank of a religious congregation. Today, the Venerini Sisters can be found in the United States and elsewhere, working among Italian immigrants.

May 8 - Friday, Fifth Week of Easter

**Serenity is not merely the absence of stress,
but the powerful presence of peace.**

Acts 15:22-31

The apostles and the elders came to the following decision regarding the Mosaic Law, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and ours too, not to lay on you any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary....." They sent representatives to the different communities with a letter announcing the decision and the people accepted it with delight. Great respect was paid to the apostles and the elders and their decisions.

Be docile to the Holy Spirit! Listen and be obedient to the Spirit's promptings! Do not let your standards, plans and projects get in the way of the movement of the Holy Spirit!

Psalm 57

My heart is steadfast, O Lord, my heart is steadfast;

I will sing and chant praise.

Awake, O my soul; awake, lyre and harp!

I will awake the dawn.

John 15:12-17

It is a challenge to reach out to others in love - "not to withhold" our love from others. We are called to give what we have received as gifts from the Lord. Jesus calls us his friends, not slaves....it was his choice, not ours. Now it is up to us to respond. It is never sufficient to abstain from wrong-doing or sin or evil. We are called to be good and to do good - a good word and a good deed proclaim who we are. We have many opportunities to share God's gift of Love and life.

The standard of love is NOT an eye for an eye or love others as they love us or love others as we love ourselves...it is "Love one another as I have loved you". The standard is to love as God loves us, as Jesus loves us.....it is joyful, unconditional, unconquerable, invincible, non-possessive, self-sacrificing, enduring, steadfast love!

May your love transcend competition and control...May your love transcend ill feelings, jealousies, hatred, etc....May you reach out in selfless and generous service!

Saint of the Day, May 8 - St. Peter of Tarantaise and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

There are two men named Peter of Tarentaise who lived one century apart. The man we honor today is the younger Peter, born in France in 1102, not far from the Cistercian Bonnevaux Abbey. His father often offered hospitality to the monks when they had to leave the monastery on business. The other man with the same name became Pope Innocent the Fifth.

In 1122, Peter, our saint of the day, joined the Cistercians at Bonnevaux and was soon followed by his father and his brothers Lambert and Andrew. His mother and sister joined the Cistercian nuns. At age thirty he was sent to serve as the first abbot of Tamie, in the Tarantaise Mountains, between Geneva and Savoy. There he built a hospice for travelers.

In 1142, he was named the archbishop of Tarantaise against his wishes, replacing a bishop who had been deposed because of corruption. Peter brought reform into his diocese, replaced lax clergy, reached out to the poor and promoted education. He is also credited with starting the custom of distributing bread and soup, the so-called May Bread, just before the harvest, a custom which endured throughout France until the French Revolution.

After thirteen years as bishop, Peter suddenly disappeared. Eventually he was discovered serving as a lay brother in a Cistercian abbey in Switzerland and was persuaded to return to Tarantaise and resume his episcopal duties. Peter died in 1175 on his way home from an unsuccessful papal assignment to reconcile the kings of France and England. Peter was canonized in 1191.

May 9 – Saturday, Fifth Week of Easter

**Every breath we take, every step we make,
can be filled with peace, joy and serenity.**

(Thich Nhat Hanh)

Acts 16:1-10

Paul made a long missionary journey with great success. He took Timothy along as a companion. Paul has a special gift of welcoming good men from the community to accompany him on his missionary journey. He was a good pastor, recognizing and affirming the goodness and generosity of faithful people in the community and calling them to share their gifts with others.

The Church continued to grow and become stronger in faith in spite of many hardships. Paul continued to discern and respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the good news in many new towns and territories.

Psalm 100

**Sing joyfully to the Lord all you lands;
Serve the Lord with gladness;
Come before him with joyful song.**

John 15:18-21

Jesus warned his disciples that they cannot conform to the world's standards and they would be hated for not conforming to the ways of the world. He told them that they did not belong to the world and that the world would not recognize them because they live a different standard and have a different lifestyle.

The price of non-conformity is alienation. Christians throughout the centuries have experienced alienation from the world in many different ways. In fact, anyone who chooses a different lifestyle from that of the world, at any particular time, is disliked, alienated, even hated and persecuted for it. Socrates was killed just because he challenged men to think and reason and come to certain logical conclusions for themselves.

It is dangerous to be different. The disciples of Jesus must choose to be different, think different, see different, live different and even die different. This is the challenge that Jesus offered his disciples.

Saint of the Day, May 9 - St. John of Avila and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

John was born in Almodóvar del Campo, Ciudad Real, Spain to a wealthy and pious couple on January 6, 1499. At the age of fourteen, he was sent to the University of Salamanca to study law. He later moved to Alcala, where he studied philosophy and theology before his ordination as a diocesan priest. Both his parents died while he was still a student, and after his ordination, he celebrated his first Mass in the church where they were buried. He then sold the family property and gave the proceeds to the poor.

In 1527, he traveled to Seville, hoping to become a missionary in Mexico. While waiting in Seville, his unusually great devotion in celebrating Mass, and his skills in catechesis and preaching, attracted the attention of the Archbishop of Seville. The archbishop saw in the young cleric a powerful instrument to stir up the faith in Andalusia, and after considerable persuasion John was persuaded to abandon his journey to Mexico. During nine years of work there, he developed a reputation as an eloquent preacher, a spiritual director, and a wise confessor.

He was friends with Saints Francis Borgia, Ignatius of Loyola, John of God, John of the Cross, Peter of Alcantara, and Teresa of Avila. John of Avila worked closely with members of the Society of Jesus and helped their growth within Spain and its colonies. John's mystical writings have been translated into several languages. John died on May 10, 1569 in Córdoba, Spain. He was canonized in 1970 and declared a doctor of the Church on October 7, 2012.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**In God's eyes, love is never absent.
In God's heart, forgiveness is never impossible.
In God's embrace, no one is ever alone or forgotten.**

