

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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September 18, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thursday this week, September 21, is the feast of Saint Mathew. This year, our Sunday Gospel readings are from the Gospel of Mathew. It is good for us to refresh our knowledge of who this great Evangelist is. Little is known about his background, except that he was a Jew, son of Alpheus. He was working for the occupying Roman forces, collecting taxes from other Jews. The Romans were not concerned about what the tax collectors took for themselves. Therefore, the tax collectors were generally hated as traitors by their fellow Jews. The Pharisees considered them “publicans” and “sinners”. So, it was shocking to them to hear Jesus calling such a man to be one of his intimate followers and to see Jesus having dinner at his house.

The Gospel tells us that many tax collectors and “those known as sinners” came to the dinner. How could the supposedly great teacher associate with such immoral people? Jesus’ answer was, “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:1-13). From such an unlikely situation, Jesus chose one of the foundations of the Church, a man, judging from his job, was not holy enough for the position. Jesus called and Mathew got up and followed him.” Many years following the death of Christ, around 41 and 50 A.D., Matthew wrote his Gospel in Aramaic, the common language spoken at the time of Jesus.

Most of the disciples of Jesus were fishermen. They had very little skill and practice in putting words together on paper. Mathew was a tax collector. He knew how to organize facts and had practice in putting things together on paper. He was gifted that way. When Jesus called Mathew, the Gospel says, Mathew left everything and followed him. But we know that he didn’t leave everything...he brought his pen with him – that is, his gift of organizing and putting things together on paper. He used his skill well to become the first man ever to compile an account of the teachings of Jesus.

Mathew tells us many parables and stories which Jesus told about finding and using our gifts and talents. Those stories have taught us that using and working with our gifts and talents make them grow and become blessings for us and that we lose them if we don’t use them. It is up to us to use them gratefully and find them growing and becoming more for us and for others. Let us use our gifts and talents gratefully and joyfully and honor our God, the giver of gifts.

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

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

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

**September 18-23, 2023**

**The door of life is a door of mystery.  
It becomes slightly shorter than the one who wishes to enter it.  
And thus only he who bows in humility can cross its threshold.**

**September 18 – Monday, Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**

**God is steadfast Love. The Psalmist tells us, “He will cover you  
with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”**

**(Psalm 94:4)**

## **I Timothy 2:1-8**

Paul urged Timothy to offer prayers for all, especially for those in authority. He encouraged prayer for “leading undisturbed and tranquil lives”. He expressed his prayer wish that, in every place, men offer prayer with blameless hands and that they be free from anger and dissension.

**Let us pray today that God will bless us with the grace to lead “undisturbed and tranquil lives”.**

**Let us pray for our leaders that they will work toward building a world of peace and harmony.**

## **Psalm 28**

**The Lord is the strength of his people,  
the saving refuge of his anointed.  
Save your people and bless your inheritance;  
feed them and carry them forever.**

## **Luke 7:1-10**

We read the story of the centurion who asked Jesus to save the life of his servant who was at the point of death. The centurion had a quality of faith that we need to grow into. He had humility. He had faith. He was a down-to-earth-believer. He could say with confidence, “I know

what it means to command, and I know what it means to obey. So just speak a word and it will happen”.

**Be humble. Be faithful. Be obedient. Be trusting!**

Jesus was amazed at the faith of the Centurion, and he said, “I have never found so much faith...” He responded to this faith by healing the servant. The word of Jesus healed the servant from a distance. Jesus is the WORD that closes the gap, annihilates distances, heals brokenness.

**Learn to speak words of healing and harmony. May your word never create distance or alienation or separation.**

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

Joseph Cupertino was born in the village of Cupertino, in the Kingdom of Naples on June 17, 1603. His father died before his birth. The family home was seized to settle the large debts that his father had left, and his mother was forced to give birth to him in a stable.

Joseph began to experience ecstatic visions as a child, which were to continue throughout his life, and made him the object of scorn. His life was not helped by his frequent outbursts of anger. He was soon apprenticed by his uncle to a shoemaker.

Feeling drawn to religious life, in 1620 he applied to the Conventual Franciscan friars, but was rejected due to his lack of education. He then applied to the Capuchin friars in Martino, near Taranto and got accepted in 1620 as a lay brother. He was dismissed as his continued ecstasies made him unfit for the duties required of him.

After Joseph returned to the scorn of his family, he pleaded with the Conventual friars near Cupertino to be allowed to serve in their stables. After several years of working there, he had so impressed the friars with the devotion and simplicity of his life that he was admitted to their Order and was ordained a priest on March 28, 1628.

After this point, the occasions of ecstasy in Joseph's life began to multiply. It was claimed that he began to levitate while participating at the Mass or joining the community for the Divine Office, thereby gaining a widespread reputation of holiness among the people of the region and beyond. He was deemed disruptive by his religious superiors and Church authorities, however, and eventually was confined to a small cell, forbidden from joining in any public gathering of the community.

As the phenomenon of flying or levitation was widely believed to be connected with witchcraft, Joseph was denounced to the Inquisition. At their command, he was transferred from one Franciscan friary in the region to another for observation, where he lived under the supervision of the Capuchin friars. He practiced a severe asceticism throughout his life, usually eating solid

food only twice a week, and adding bitter powders to his meals. He passed 35 years of his life following this regimen.

Finally, on July 9, 1657, Joseph was allowed to return to a Conventual community in Osimo, where he died on September 18, 1663. He was canonized in 1767.

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## **September 19 – Tuesday, Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**

**God is steadfast love. The Psalmist muses, "You created my inmost being and knit me together in my mother's womb."**

(Psalm 139)

### **I Tim. 3:1-13**

Paul describes the many positive qualities expected of a bishop who is to lead his people. Deacons also must distinguish themselves with noble qualities. All who are called to ministry in the Church should live a life worthy of their calling.

**Pray for Bishops, priests, deacons and all in ministry in the Church that they will live lives worthy of their noble calling.**

### **Psalm 101**

**Of kindness and judgments, I will sing;  
To you O Lord, I will sing praise.  
I will persevere in the way of integrity;  
When will you come to me?**

### **Luke 7:11-17**

Jesus came into the town of Nain and met a funeral procession of the only son of a mother. Moved with compassion, Jesus restored the boy back to life and gave him to the grieving mother. Jesus claimed life for a boy who was marked for burial.

This is one of those events in the life of Jesus that help us understand what he meant when he said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted". (Mt. 5:4)

The Word "mourn" used here in Greek means a passionate lament for the one who was loved.

It is the kind of grief, which a person cannot hide. It is sorrow that brings "ache to the heart and tears to the eyes". This is what Jesus encountered when he came to Nain.

There are certain things only the rain can produce and certain experiences only sorrow can bring. Sorrow can reveal the kindness, comfort and compassion of God and of other human persons. Sorrow can also help a person discover deeper things of life, a new power and a new strength. Sorrow can help a person discover his brothers/sisters and His God as He never did before. The person who cares enters deeply into the sorrow and pain of others - enters into union of mind and heart. Such caring is a participation in the pain of another - it is being with another in his/her pain. It is an experience of solidarity with those who suffer. This is what Jesus shared with the woman who mourned the death of her only son.

### **Saint of the day, September 19 - St. Januarius and 12 other saints are remembered this day**

Little is known about the life of St. Januarius. He was born in Italy and was bishop of Benevento during the Diocletian persecution, around the year 305. Bishop Januarius went to visit two deacons and two laymen in prison. He was then also imprisoned along with his deacon and lector. Legend has it that Januarius and his companions were thrown to the bears in the amphitheater of Pozzuoli, but the animals failed to attack them. They were then beheaded. What is believed to be Januarius' blood is kept in Naples, as a relic. It liquifies and bubbles when exposed in the cathedral. Scientists have not been able to explain this miracle to date.

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### **September 20 – Wednesday, Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.**

(Psalm 117:1-2)

### **I Tim. 3:14-16**

Paul tells Timothy that Christian conduct should be what befits God's household. They must live as though they are in God's house.

**May the Lord strengthen your hearts, making them blameless and holy before God, our Father. May God's Grace enable you to live a life worthy of your calling.**

## **Psalm 111**

**I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart,  
in the company and assembly of the just.  
Great are the works of the Lord,  
exquisite in all their delight.**

## **Luke 7:31-35**

Jesus rebuked his listeners for being deaf, hard-hearted and unresponsive. God had reached out to them in so many ways and each time, they refused to respond.

John the Baptist came and lived a life of austerity and the scribes and Pharisees said that he was a mad eccentric - a lunatic.

Jesus came, living the life of men, entering into their activities, eating and drinking and celebrating life with them and the scribes and Pharisees said that he was a drunkard and glutton.

Neither the simple and austere life of the wilderness nor the joyful, loving life with people in the open, made an impression on the closed, hardened mind of the scribes and the Pharisees. How about you?

**Be attentive. Be docile. Be Open. Look beyond. Be sensitive to the world around you.**

**Look around and rejoice in the presence of good and faithful people. Draw inspiration and strength from the witness of their life.**

**Saint of the day, September 20 - St. Andrew Kim Tae-gon, St. Paul Chong Ha-sang and 8100 saints are remembered this day.**

Saint Andrew Kim Taegon generally referred to as Saint Andrew Kim in English, was the first Korean-born Catholic priest and is the patron saint of Korea. Christianity came to Korea during the Japanese invasion in 1592. During this time a small number of Koreans were baptized, probably by Japanese soldiers who were Christians. Soon after, Korea cut itself off from the rest of the world.

When a Chinese priest secretly arrived about 12 years later, he found 4,000 Catholics who had never seen a priest. Korea's first Christian community was made up entirely of laypeople! Between 1839 and 1867, there were fierce persecutions. One hundred three members of this

community were martyred along with three bishops and seven priests from the Paris Foreign Mission Society.

Andrew Kim Taegon was the son of converts, born on August 21, 1821. His father, a farmer, was also martyred. Andrew was baptized when he was 15. He then attended the seminary in Macao, China, 1,300 miles away from home. After six years Andrew returned to Korea and assumed the job of bringing missionaries into the country secretly. Almost immediately he was arrested, tortured, and beheaded on September 16, 1846.

On May 6, 1984, Pope John Paul II canonized Kim along with 102 other Korean Martyrs, including Paul Chong Hasang, during his trip to Korea.

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## **September 21 – St. Mathew, Apostle and Evangelist**

**God's love is steadfast and always something we can depend on, no matter what we have done or what our circumstances are.**

### **Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13**

Live a life worthy of your calling, with humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another lovingly. Do all you can to preserve the unity which has the spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force.

**Each of us, in our own way, must contribute to the building of the Body of Christ.**

### **Psalm 19**

**The heavens proclaim the glory of God;  
And the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day pours out the word today,  
And night to night imparts knowledge.**

## **Mathew 9:9-13**

One of the most unlikely candidates was Mathew and he was called, and he rose and followed. Mathew was a man who not only extorted his own people but also swindled the government. Jesus saw not only what Mathew was but also what he could be - So Jesus called, and Mathew rose. What does this say to you today?

Reflect on what Mathew lost and what Mathew found. He lost a comfortable job, income, security, power.....But he found a new mission, honor, adventure, peace, joy, love, destiny, treasure eternal - wealth that he never dreamed of.

Jesus sits with Mathew and few others like him. Imagin sitting at table with the likes of Mathew!!! Jesus did much more. He dined with Mathew and others like him. Reflect on what this means to you today.

“I came not to call the righteous but sinners”. The word used for “call” in Greek here is the technical word for inviting a guest to a house or to a meal. Remember, Jesus called Mathew! Reflect on what this means for you.

## **Saint of the day, September 21 - St. Mathew, Apostle and Evangelist and 11 other saints are remembered this day.**

Little is known about the background of St. Matthew, except that he was a Jew, son of Alphaeus. He was working for the occupying Roman forces, collecting taxes from other Jews. The Romans were not scrupulous about what the tax collectors took for themselves. Therefore, the tax collectors were generally hated as traitors by their fellow Jews. The Pharisees considered them “publicans” and “sinners”. So, it was shocking to them to hear Jesus call such a man to be one of his intimate followers and to see Jesus having dinner at a sinner’s house.

The Gospel tells us that many tax collectors and “those known as sinners” came to the dinner. How could the supposedly great teacher associate with such immoral people? Jesus’ answer was, “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:1-13). From such an unlikely situation, Jesus chose one of the foundations of the Church, a man, judging from his job, thought was not holy enough for the position. Jesus called and Mathew got up and followed him” (Matthew 9:9). Many years following the death of Christ, around 41 and 50 A.D., Matthew wrote his Gospel in Aramaic, which was the common language spoken at the time of Jesus, hoping that his account would convince his fellow Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

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## **September 22 – Friday, Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**

**God is steadfast love. God is not a deceiver, that He should offer to support us, and then, when we lean upon Him, should slip away from us.**

**(St. Augustine)**

### **I Timothy 6:2-12**

Paul instructs Timothy to treasure and teach sound doctrine, seek virtue, avoid evil and persevere in following the way of Jesus.

**Paul says, “man of God that you are, seek after integrity, piety, faith, steadfastness and gentle spirit. Fight the good fight of faith.”**

### **Psalm 49**

**Hear this, all you peoples; hearken all who dwell in the world.**

**Of lowly birth or high degree, rich and poor alike,**

**My mouth shall speak wisdom;**

**Prudence shall be the utterance of my heart.**

### **Luke 8:1-3**

This excerpt remembers women who ministered to Jesus. They are remembered as women who received the gift of love that their master, Jesus offered, followed him, and supported him out of the generosity of their hearts. Their hearts were opened, and they opened their hearts and minds and treasures in turn and ministered to others.

This kind of opening is at the heart of the Christian story, the story of God’s life and love, the story of our salvation. It began with the openness of a woman full of Grace, a woman of faith, of great love and compassion - a woman who opened her heart and said, “YES”, “may your will happen”. In this excerpt, we read about other women who opened their hearts and minds and ministered to Jesus out of their means.

After the death of Jesus, we find these women of compassion standing beside the tomb, listening to the messenger of God inviting them to open their minds and encouraging them not to be afraid. They opened their hearts to the great news, welcomed the word of the resurrection like thirsty soil and hurried away to share the wonderful news with others because they were open, ready, receptive, docile.....

**Your spirit must be opened for God’s goodness and love to grow there. Open minds and hearts are ready to receive the abundant life, love and grace which God constantly offers.**

**Saint of the Day, September 22 - St. Lorenzo Ruiz and 16 companion martyrs are remembered this day.**

Lorenzo Ruiz was born in Binondo, Manila, on November 28, 1594 to a Chinese father and a Filipino mother who were both Catholic. His father taught him Chinese while his mother taught him Tagalog. Lorenzo served as an altar boy at the Binondo Church. After being educated by the Dominican friars for a few years, Lorenzo became a professional calligrapher, transcribing documents in beautiful penmanship. He became a member of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary. He married Rosario, a native, and they had two sons and a daughter. The Ruiz family led a peaceful and devout religious life.

In 1636, while working as a clerk for the Binondo Church, Lorenzo was falsely accused of killing a Spaniard. At that time, three Dominican priests, Antonio Gonzalez, Guillermo Courtet, and Miguel de Aozaraza, were about to sail to Japan in spite of a violent persecution there. With them was a Japanese priest, Vicente Shiwozuka de la Cruz, and a layman named Lazaro, a leper. Lorenzo, having taken asylum with them, was allowed to accompany them. But only when they were at sea, he learned that they were going to Japan.

The Tokugawa Shogunate was persecuting Christians by the time Lorenzo had arrived in Japan. The missionaries were arrested and thrown into prison, and after two years, they were transferred to Nagasaki to face trial by torture. They were subjected to an unspeakable kind of torture: After huge quantities of water were forced down their throats, they were made to lie down. Long boards were placed on their stomachs and guards then stepped on the ends of the boards, forcing the water to spurt violently from mouth, nose and ears.

The group endured many and various cruel methods of torture. On September 27, 1637, Lorenzo and his companions were taken to Nishizaka Hill, where they were tortured by being hung upside-down over a pit. Despite his suffering, Lorenzo refused to renounce Christianity. He died two days later on September 29, 1637, aged 42. His body was cremated, with the ashes thrown into the sea. Lorenzo was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 18, 1987. He was among the 16 Martyrs of Japan, making him the first Filipino saint.

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## September 23 – Saturday, Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**God has supplied all my needs and has not failed me once  
and he will never fail me because his love is steadfast.**

### **I Timothy 6:13-16**

Paul instructed Timothy to be faithful, to bear witness to Christ and to give honor and glory to God just as Christ gave honor and glory to God.

### **Psalm 100**

**Serve the Lord with gladness,  
Come before him with joyful songs  
Know that he the Lord is God;  
He made us, his we are;  
His people, the flock he tends.....**

### **Luke 8:4-15**

Jesus told his listeners the parable of the farmer going out to sow seeds. The seeds, which fell on various kinds of unproductive soil, failed to yield and the seeds, which fell on good soil, yielded abundance.

The farmer keeps sowing knowing well that some of the seeds may fall on the way side or among thorns or on rocky ground and may become unproductive. But he knows that some will fall on good soil and will yield.

The farmer also knows that if he wants a good harvest, he has to prepare the soil, he has to choose good seeds, he has to sow and allow the seeds to sprout. He knows that if he wants a harvest, he has to sow even if some seeds may not meet his expectations.

**The preacher must keep preaching, the teacher must keep teaching, the parent must keep loving, caring, educating and forming the character of children...knowing well that all that is taught may not be learned, all the love may not be fruitful, all children may not learn, all efforts may not be successful.....**

**Be faithful to your calling! All you do may not be successful in your eyes. The real success lies in your fidelity to who you are and what you have come to know as your calling. Just be faithful!**

## **Saint of the Day, September 23 - St. Pio of Pietrelcina and 14 other saints are remembered this day**

Francesco Forgione was born on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, a town in the province of Benevento, in the Southern Italian region of Campania. His parents were peasant farmers. He worked on the land up to the age of 10, looking after the small flock of sheep the family owned. At the age of 15, Francesco joined the Capuchins and took the name of Pio. He was ordained a priest in 1910 and was drafted during World War I. After he was discovered to have tuberculosis, he was discharged. In 1917, he was assigned to the friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, 75 miles from the city of Bari on the Adriatic.

On September 20, 1918, as he was making his thanksgiving after Mass, Padre Pio had a vision of Jesus. When the vision ended, he had the stigmata in his hands, feet, and side. Life became more complicated after that. Medical doctors, Church authorities, and curiosity seekers came to see Padre Pio. In 1924, and again in 1931, the authenticity of the stigmata was questioned; Padre Pio was not permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to hear confessions. He did not complain of these decisions, which were soon reversed.

Padre Pio rarely left the friary after he received the stigmata, but busloads of people soon began coming to see him. Each morning after a 5 a.m. Mass in a crowded church, he heard confessions until noon. He took a mid-morning break to bless the sick and all who came to see him. Every afternoon he also heard confessions. In time his confessional ministry would take 10 hours a day; penitents had to take a number so that the situation could be handled. Many of them have said that Padre Pio knew details of their lives that they had never mentioned.

Padre Pio saw Jesus in all the sick and suffering. At his urging, a fine hospital was built on nearby Mount Gargano. The idea arose in 1940; a committee began to collect money. Ground was broken in 1946. Building the hospital was a technical wonder because of the difficulty of getting water there and of hauling up the building supplies. This "House for the Alleviation of Suffering" has 350 beds.

One of Padre Pio's sufferings was that unscrupulous people several times circulated prophecies that they claimed originated from him. He never made prophecies about world events and never gave an opinion on matters that he felt belonged to Church authorities to decide. He died on September 23, 1968 and was canonized on June 16, 2002 by Pope John Paul II

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.**

