

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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February 3, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel reading of today's mass speaks of Jesus healing a man with a legion of unclean spirits. Jesus sent the demons into the herd of about two thousand swine. The man and his neighbors who were convinced that they were under oppression of demons were freed...they encountered a greater power - a power that does not oppress but frees. The power of God, the power of Grace, the power of love is always freeing - never oppressive.

Even in this amazing experience of deliverance and freedom, people found a problem. It did not matter that a man regained his good senses - all that mattered was that their pigs perished. So they were afraid - they had "some-thing" to lose, and that "some-thing" was more important than the loss of people. The value of a person cannot be compared with the value of a herd of swine. But people did compare, and contrast and they got scared.

Our sacred Scriptures frequently remind us of the dignity and value of the human person. The Psalmist exclaims in Psalm 8, "thou has made him little less than god and crowned him with glory." God made man to image Him - to live godly lives, to do what he does and to reflect his glory! In Psalm 139, the Psalmist says, "You created my inmost being and knit me together in my mother's womb... for the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your works, I thank you." Again he says, "How weighty are your designs, O God." (Psalm 139:17)

God has created us to be greater and stronger and more creative than we often believe ourselves to be. We have an inherent ability to develop our physical, mental and spiritual abilities, boundaries, gifts, powers and talents. Just when we feel we have no more strength to get through another day, the strength we need emerges. Just when we feel that we have no more energy to deal with the disappointments and pains of life, more energy flows from within us. Just when we feel more indecisive and uncertain, greater decision-making powers and certainty of purpose emerges from within us. Just when we feel "nobody cares, nobody loves", there comes someone to whom we can say; "nobody cares, nobody loves."

I encourage you take a few moments each day of this week to reflect on how your day has been, how you have tried to be who you are, who God made you to be and found joy and fulfillment as you went about doing your daily chores and fulfilling your responsibilities. May God bless you and your family and keep you safe in His Love.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fourth Week In Ordinary Time

February 3-8, 2025

**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. Praise the Lord!**
(Psalm 117:1-2)

February 3 – Monday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**God has created us as special individuals
and has endowed us all with a great purpose.**

Hebrews 11:32-40

The author remembers the heroes and saints of the Old Testament and the sufferings and trials they endured. He sees the fulfillment of their sufferings in Christ and all of us being included in the plan of fulfillment in and through Christ.

Psalm 31

**How great is the goodness, O Lord,
Which you have in store for those who fear you,
And which, toward those who take refuge in you,
You show in the sight of the children of men.**

Mark 5:1-20

Encounter with Jesus brings freedom to a man who was demon-possessed.

Encounter with Jesus is always a freeing experience.

Jesus sends the demons into the swine. The place of demons is with the swine - not with people. The man and his neighbors who were convinced that they were under oppression of demons encountered a greater power - a power that does not oppress but frees.

The power of God, the power of Grace, the power of love is always freeing - never oppressive.

The value of a person cannot be compared with the value of a herd of swine. But people did compare. It did not matter that a man regained his good senses - all that mattered was that their pigs perished. So, they were afraid - they had "some-thing" to lose and that "some-thing" was more important than the loss of people.

Stay focused on higher values.

Helping people is more important than profit or gain.

Saint of the Day, February 3 - St. Blaise and 22 other saints are remembered this day

According to tradition, St. Blaise was born to rich and noble parents and received a Christian education. He was a physician before being consecrated bishop of Sebastia, Armenia. During the persecution of Licinius, St. Blaise moved from the town and lived as a hermit in a cave. Blaise was discovered and apprehended. While in prison, he miraculously cured a small boy who was choking to death on a fishbone lodged in his throat. Also, the woman whose pig had been saved brought St. Blaise candles so that his cell would have light and he could read the Sacred Scriptures.

Agricolaus, governor of Cappadocia, tried to persuade Blaise to sacrifice to pagan idols. The first time Blaise refused, he was beaten. The next time he was suspended from a tree and his flesh torn with iron combs or rakes. Finally, he was beheaded.

By the sixth century, St. Blaise's intercession was invoked for diseases of the throat in the East. As early as the eighth century, records attest to the veneration of St. Blaise in Europe, and he became one of the most popular saints in the spiritual life of the Middle Ages. Many altars were dedicated to his honor, and even the Abbey of St. Blaise in southern Germany claimed to have some of his relics.

We know more about the devotion to Saint Blaise by Christians around the world than we know about the saint himself. His feast is observed as a holy day in some Eastern Churches. In 1222, the Council of Oxford prohibited servile labor in England on Blaise's feast day. The Germans and Slavs hold him in special honor, and for decades many United States Catholics have sought the annual Saint Blaise blessing for their throats.

February 4 – Tuesday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Purposefulness includes virtues of determination, intentionality,
sense of direction and steadfastness.**

Hebrews 12:1-4

The author encourages us to keep our “eyes fixed on Jesus” and keep “running the race” which lies ahead. Jesus endured the cross and its shame and did not give up. It is up to us to persevere in our efforts and follow the example of Jesus. **Stay focused on Jesus.**

Psalm 22

**I will fulfill my vows before those who fear him.
The lowly shall eat their fill;
They who seek the Lord shall praise him:
“May your hearts be ever merry!”**

Mark 5:21-43

There are two miracles in Mk.9:21-43 - the healing of the ruler’s daughter and the healing of the woman with hemorrhage. Each of them came with what we could be interpreted as “inadequate” faith: desperate, having tried everything.....The amazing thing is: they were, all, accepted, with inadequate faith - with what they brought, the way they were.

No matter, how imperfectly we come, His love and his arms are open to us in welcome embrace. We come as we are. We do not wait until our motivations, our faith and our theology are perfect. We come....just as we are!

The ruler left all that he was.....his prejudices, his dignity as a ruler, his pride, his prestige.....and came, himself, to Jesus leaving his daughter when she was on the point of death. He left himself behind only to find himself again in the person of Jesus!

The woman with hemorrhage also had to leave everything behind and risk being caught and punished for being in public with a hemorrhage. She had to go through humiliating experience in order to reach out and touch the power that healed her and made her whole.

There is nothing beyond facing, nothing beyond conquest for the one who believes and hopes and loves.

Saint of the day, February 4 – St. John de Britto and 19 other saints are remembered this day.

John de Britto was born on March 1, 1647 to a noble Portuguese family in Lisbon. His father died while serving as Viceroy of Brazil. At the age of fifteen, he joined the Society of Jesus.

Against the strenuous objections of his family, he volunteered for the missions in India in 1673 and was sent to Madura. He studied the complex Indian caste system and found that most converts belonged to the lowest caste.

He realized that for Christianity to have a lasting influence in India, higher caste members must also convert. He worked in Malabar, Tanjore, Marava, and Madura. He established himself as an Indian ascetic, a Pandara Suami, lived as they lived, dressed in saffron cloak and turban, and held retreats in the wilderness in southern India where interested Indians could visit him.

Though the practice of Catholicism was not illegal in India, John was hated by many because of his faith. He and his followers were often subjected to agonizing torture, but each time John miraculously recovered. In 1683, John was banished from India to Portugal. He returned soon after and continued his ministry for three more years. In 1693, he was again arrested, tortured and once more commanded to leave India. When he refused, John was sentenced to death.

On February 4, John de Britto was executed. As he knelt at the execution block, the rajah's order of death was read aloud. The executioner hesitated, but John said to him, "My friend, I have prayed to God. On my part, I have done what I should do. Now do your part." John de Britto was canonized in 1947.

February 5 – Wednesday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Purposefulness is the virtue that signifies a positive character,
a trait of having a clear focus, knowing your goals,
and actively working towards achieving them.**

Hebrews 12:4-7, 11-15

All discipline seems to be cause for grief, not joy. However, discipline later brings forth fruits of peace and justice to those who are trained in the school of discipline. Strengthen your drooping hands and weak knees. Strive for peace with all. See that no one falls away from God's Grace.

Psalm 103

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

Mark 6:1-6

They admired his eloquence but rejected his message. And what they rejected was “GOOD NEWS” - liberty to captives, sight to the blind - a year of Grace. They failed to look beyond. Hence, they saw only a local carpenter.

Lord, help me to look beyond what I see. Give me a clearer and deeper vision of your presence in all that I encounter on my journey of life.

Prejudice blinds the mind and narrows the heart.

Lord, give me the wisdom to recognize and accept my own prejudices and the courage to overcome them.

To his own people he came, but they did not accept him. Jesus went about doing good and teaching and proclaiming good news in the neighboring villages.

**Lord, empower me with your Holy spirit,
that I may proclaim your good news!**

Saint of the Day, February 5 - St. Agatha and 11 other saints are remembered this day

Almost nothing is historically certain about saint St. Agatha. She is, however, one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. It is believed that she was born around 231 in either Catania or Palermo, Sicily to a rich and noble family. From her very early years, Agatha dedicated her life to God and became a consecrated virgin, giving herself wholly to Jesus and the Church in a life of prayer and service. That did not stop men from desiring her and making unwanted advances toward her. As she resisted the advances of men, she was betrayed as a Christian during the persecution of Emperor Decius. Tradition tells us that Agatha was arrested as a Christian, tortured, and sent to a house of prostitution to be mistreated. She was preserved from being violated and was later martyred in Sicily in 251. The year after her death, the stilling of an eruption of Mt. Etna was attributed to her intercession. As a result, apparently, people continued to ask her prayers for protection against fire.

February 6 – Thursday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Purposefulness is a dynamic and positive character trait
that shows clarity of purpose, intentionality, and determination.**

Hebrews 12:18-19, 21-24

The author makes a contrast between the assembly of Israel gathered for the making of the Old Covenant and the assembly of those who have entered into the new covenant. He says, in this excerpt, "You are being drawn into the city of God, to a festival of angels, to the gathering of saints, to Jesus the mediator of the new Covenant and NOT to gloomy darkness or fearful place.

Rejoice! Your call is to the festival of saints!

Psalm 48

**Great is the Lord and wholly to be praised,
in the city of our God.
His holy mountain, fairest of heights,
is the joy of all the earth.**

Mark 6:7-13

Jesus sent out the twelve to proclaim the reign of God - not to display what they had! They were to spread "good news" everywhere; They were not to force themselves on anyone; They were to move free, without possessions, without attachment to place or things or persons.....

Reflect on your call to proclaim the presence of God's kingdom.....

Do everything - all your service, all your ministry - to proclaim the presence of God's Kingdom.

Do not set out to acquire, to collect, to possess - but to give. The gift you have received, give as a gift freely and joyfully.....

Stay close to good and noble people and reach out to all.

Be agents and messengers of the good news of forgiveness and healing!

Saint of the Day, February 6 – St. Paul Miki & Companions and 28 other saints are remembered this day.

Paul Miki was born into the family of a rich Japanese military leader at Tounucumada, Japan. He had his education at the Jesuit college of Anziquiama. He joined the Jesuits in 1580 and began his education and formation to the priesthood. In 1587, Emperor Hideyoshi of Japan ordered the banishment of all Catholics, forcing the Jesuit missionaries to operate from hiding. In 1596,

Hideyoshi rounded up twenty-six Christians. Miki was jailed along with other Christians. He and his Christian companions were forced to walk about 600 miles from Kyoto as a punishment for the whole community. On the way they sang the Te Deum, the Church's hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Finally, they arrived at Nagasaki, the city which had the most conversions to Christianity. Paul, still a Jesuit scholastic, at the of aged 35, was crucified on February 5, 1597, along with 25 other Catholics.

While hanging upon a cross, Paul Miki preached to the people gathered for the execution: "The sentence of judgment says these men came to Japan from the Philippines, but I did not come from any other country. I am a true Japanese. The only reason for my being killed is that I have taught the doctrine of Christ. I certainly did teach the doctrine of Christ. I thank God it is for this reason I die. I believe that I am telling only the truth before I die. I know you believe me and I want to say to you all once again: Ask Christ to help you to become happy. I obey Christ. After Christ's example I forgive my persecutors. I do not hate them. I ask God to have pity on all, and I hope my blood will fall on my fellow men as a fruitful rain."

Together with him died Santiago Kisai, also a Jesuit scholastic, and Diego Kisai (or Kizayemon), a Jesuit brother, in addition to 22 priests and lay people. This took place during the persecution of Christians under the Taiko, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who ruled Japan in the name of the emperor. All were canonized as the Martyrs of Japan by Pope Pius IX in 1862.

February 7 - Friday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Purposefulness is the virtue of the person with clear vision of purpose, who actively, intentionally and tenaciously works towards fulfilling the discerned purpose.

Hebrews 13:1-8

The author encourages his readers to cultivate the following virtues:

- Love your brothers and sisters always.....
- Be hospitable.....you may be entertaining angels without knowing it!
- Be mindful of prisoners as if you were sharing their imprisonment.....
- Honor your marriage and its commitments.....
- Be content with what you have.....
- Be mindful of your leaders who remained faithful to the word they proclaimed and imitate their faithfulness.....

Psalm 27

**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?
Though an army encamps against me, my heart will not fear;
Though war be waged upon me, even then will I trust.**

Mark 6:14-29

The disciples spread the good news. They proclaimed the name of Jesus and the message that he brought. Herod heard about Jesus and became curious: "who is this man that I hear about?! Could he be John the Baptist?" Herod feared John and respected him at the same time. It was as though he was haunted by the goodness of John and his own sinfulness at the same time. Herod could not escape the call of goodness and virtue...he was afraid! Herod acted on impulse, afraid of what people might think or say.....

Herodias shows us what bitterness can do to a person.....

John the Baptist shows us what courage and faithfulness can do. His life also reveals to us the cost of such courage and faithfulness.

Reflect on the three characters and their qualities and get in touch with what they call forth from you.

Saint of the day, February 7 - Pope Pius IX and 20 other saints are remembered this day.

Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti was born on May 13, 1792 in Senigallia, Italy. He was the ninth child born into the noble family of Girolamo dei conti Ferretti and was baptized on the same day of his birth with the name of Giovanni Maria Battista Pietro Pellegrino Isidoro. He was educated at the Piarist College in Volterra and in Rome. As a young man, he was engaged to be married to an Irishwoman, Miss Foster (the daughter of the Bishop of Kilmore), and arrangements were made for the wedding. His parents opposed the marriage and he did not appear at the church on the appointed day.

As a theology student in his hometown Sinigaglia in 1814, he met Pope Pius VII, who had returned from French captivity. In 1815, he entered the Papal Noble Guard but was soon dismissed after an epileptic seizure. He threw himself at the feet of Pius VII, who elevated him and supported his continued theological studies. He was ordained a priest on April 10, 1819. He initially worked as the rector of the Tata Giovanni Institute in Rome. Shortly before his death, Pius VII sent him as Auditor to Chile and Peru in 1823 and 1825 to assist the Apostolic Nuncio.

When he returned to Rome, the successor of Pius VII, Pope Leo XII appointed him head of the hospital of San Michele in Rome (1825–1827) and canon of Santa Maria in Via Lata.

Pope Leo XII appointed him Archbishop of Spoleto in 1827 at the age of 35 and cardinal in 1839. His episcopal priorities were the formation of priests through improved education and charities. He became known for visiting prisoners in jail, and for programs for street children. He was chosen the 255th pope in the conclave of 1846.

He was the last pope to hold temporal power, that is, to rule a secular state. His election raised the hopes of patriotic and liberal circles of Catholics. One of his first acts was an amnesty for all political prisoners. He defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 8, 1854. Celebrated the First Vatican Council from 1869 to 1870, which was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War. This council defined the dogma of papal infallibility. He supported several reforms in the Papal States. He created 123 cardinals. Gained a reputation for being a patriotic, and reforming Pope.

He died on February 7, 1878 in Vatican City of natural causes. Pius IX's cause for beatification was one of the longest and most difficult in Church history. Begun under Pius X on February 11, 1907, re-launched by Benedict XV without much success, later by Pius XI, and then by Pius XII on December 7, 1954. The decree on the heroic exercise of theological and cardinal virtues was finally promulgated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on July 6, 1985, allowing his proclamation as Venerable. Among Pius IX's most outstanding virtues were his unconditional love for the Church, his charity, and his high regard for the priesthood and for missionaries.

February 8 – Saturday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Take small steps towards fulfilling your purpose,
instead of aiming for immediate results.**

(St. Francis de Sales)

Hebrews 13:15-17, 20-21

This excerpt encourages us to praise God constantly through Jesus and to do good deeds generously and graciously. We are called to pray for our leaders and make it a joy for them to lead us. The most important thing is that those who lead and those who follow, together, do God's will, do all that is pleasing to God.

Psalm 23

**The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths for his name's sake.....**

Mark 6:30-34

Jesus had sent out his disciples on their first mission. They returned from their mission and began to tell him about their accomplishments. Jesus, gently and quietly, invited them to a "deserted place" to rest a while. From the very beginning of their ministry, Jesus taught the disciples about the need for time, away from work and service projects, the need for time to rest, relax, pray...time for peace...time to spend with their master...to abide in him. The disciple must go from the master to fulfill the master's mission and must return to the master to be strengthened and filled again with the master's wisdom.

The "busyness", the trials, the testing times, the challenges, etc. of the mission can stifle the spirit and become burdens heavy to carry. One can become so busy with the master's work that he/she can forget the master himself. It is easy to lose focus. It is urgent to maintain focus, to be centered again and again on God and God's way.

"If the heart wanders or is distracted, bring it back quite gently and place it tenderly in God's presence. And if you do nothing else while at prayer but bring your heart back again and again and place it in God's presence.....though it went away every time you brought it back, your time of prayer would be very well spent" (Introduction to Devout Life, St. Francis De Sales).

Saint of the Day, February 8 - St. Jerome Emiliani and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Jerome was born in Venice in 1486. His father died when he was a teenager and he ran away at the age of 15 to join the army. He was appointed governor of a fortress in the mountains of Treviso, and while defending his post he was taken prisoner. In prison Jerome had a lot of time to think, and he gradually learned how to pray. He had not cared about God, but he attributed his escape to the intercession of the Mother of God; and he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Treviso, in fulfillment of a vow, and left his chains as an offering.

When he escaped, he returned to Venice where he took charge of the education of his nephews and began his own studies for the priesthood. In the years after his ordination, events again called Jerome to a decision and a new lifestyle.

All his spare time was devoted to the study of theology and to works of charity. In the year of plague and famine (1528), he seemed to be everywhere and showed his zeal, especially for the orphans, whose number had so greatly increased. Jerome began caring for the sick and feeding the hungry at his own expense. He rented a house for them near the church of St. Rose and, with the assistance of some pious men, ministered to their needs. In 1531 he went to Verona and persuaded the citizens to build a hospital. He opened orphanages, for boys and for girls in Brescia, Bergamo, Milan and other places in northern Italy. At Bergamo, he also founded a hostel for repentant prostitutes.

Around 1532, Jerome and two other priests established a congregation, the Clerks Regular of Somasca, dedicated to the care of orphans and the education of youth. Jerome died on February 8, 1537 from a disease he caught while tending the sick. He was canonized in 1767. In 1928, Pius XI named him the patron of orphans and abandoned children.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Almighty God has crowded miracles into you.
Why not let them come forth and live?
(Norman Vincent Peale)**

