

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today's Gospel reading tells us about Jesus pointing to a poor widow as a model of generosity. Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury at the temple. He saw many rich people putting in large sums of money, and then a poor widow putting in two small copper coins – like a penny or two in our terms. He called his disciples and gave this poor widow as an example to follow. The rich gave out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty had put in everything she had. What Jesus praised was not the amount of money that she gave, but the person that she was – she was benevolent, generous and self-sacrificing. The widow's small gift came from a heart of abundance. Her way of giving is the practice that Jesus offered the disciples as an example.

The most profound giving is sacrificial giving, whether big or small and it is the sacrifice that really counts. Young children give their allowance, Old people give their Social Security or the little pension they have, Young couples help other young people getting married, rich people offer the largest gift they can give in response to urgent needs, etc. Whatever the size of the gift, it is the sacrifice that counts. When you meet a person, young or old, rich or poor, who sets his need aside and gives, you have found a truly generous person and that is a very special gift!

Generosity is other-centeredness...being mindful of others and looking out for the needs of others! Generosity is giving...giving of ourselves and not just sharing our possession. Generosity is sacrificial...it is easy to give from our abundance, but true giving requires sacrifice. Generous people give in response to urgent needs even when they are in need themselves...it is genuine, unconditional giving, without expecting a return. Generosity is not something that happens because we have become wealthy. It is our lifestyle, the way we live, think and act. It is the way we approach the world.

We just celebrated thanksgiving, remembering the generosity of the many who blessed us, served us, made sacrifices for us and gave of themselves generously. In a few days, we will begin the season of Advent and work our way to Christmas and New Year. Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas are not just days of celebrations...they are seasons of celebrations, remembering the generosity of our God and that of many people in our lives. They are seasons of generosity and not just seasons of celebrations. During this season of generosity, let us be mindful of the less privileged in our communities, rethink our needs, downsize our appetites, share with the hungry and the needy from the abundance that is available to us...gratefully and generously!

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

November 27- December 2, 2023

**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:6-7)**

November 27 – Monday, Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**God's love for us is so strong, so unconditional, so steadfast and so unfailing
that God is always there in us, for us, with us,
around us...always loving us and calling us to love!**

Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah show wisdom, knowledge and prudence which surpassed that of the magicians of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The source of their wisdom was their fidelity to God and God's ways, even at great risk to their own lives.

Be faithful to God and God's ways even when it costs much.

Daniel 3:52-56

**Blessed are you O Lord, the God of our fathers,
Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
And blessed is your holy and glorious name,
Praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.**

Luke 21:1-4

In the court of the women in the temple, there were thirteen collection boxes known as the trumpets. They were shaped like trumpets with the narrow part at the top and the wider part at the foot. Each was assigned to offerings for a different purpose - for the wood that was burned for sacrifice, for the incense burned on the altar, for the upkeep of the vessels and so

on. It is into these that the rich were flinging their coins. Among them was a poor widow who put in “two lepta”. A lepton was the smallest of coins; the name means “the thin one”.

Jesus said, this “thin one” outvalued all the other offerings because it was all she had. She gave from her want and not from her surplus. She was in her gift, and she was her gift.

The value of any gift is in the spirit in which it is given and the sacrifice which it involves and above all the presence of the giver in the gift. The gift must carry something of the giver. It is not the size or the weight or the shape or the color or glitter or the glamour, but the presence of the giver in the gift that makes the gift a GIFT.

Saint of the day, November 27 - Saint Francesco Antonio Fasani and 39 other saints are remembered this day.

Francesco was born Giovanniello Fasani on August 6, 1681 in Lucera, in the Province of Foggia, then part of the Kingdom of Naples. He began his studies at the Conventual friary in his town and there entered the Order, taking the religious name Francesco and Antonio. After his ordination to the priesthood, he taught philosophy to younger friars, served as guardian of his friary, and later became provincial minister. When his term of office ended, Francesco became master of novices and finally pastor in his hometown.

In his various ministries, he was loving, devout, and penitential. He was a sought-after confessor and preacher. One witness at the canonical hearings regarding Francesco’s holiness testified, “In his preaching he spoke in a familiar way, filled as he was with the love of God and neighbor; fired by the Spirit, he made use of the word and deed of holy Scripture, stirring his listeners and moving them to do penance.” Francesco showed himself a loyal friend of the poor, never hesitating to seek from benefactors what was needed.

At his death in Lucera in 1742, children ran through the streets crying out, “The saint is dead! The saint is dead!” Francesco was canonized in 1986.

November 28 – Tuesday, Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Steadfastness is the character of a person who simply loves
and inspires a sense of confidence and trust in another,
even when things don’t seem to be going well.**

Daniel 2:31-45

Daniel interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. The meaning of the dream was that there would be a succession of kingdoms and none of them would last. Finally, God will raise up a Kingdom that will endure and will absorb all other kingdoms. The kingdom which God raises will never end.

Daniel 3:57-61

**Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord,
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord,
Praise and exalt him above all forever.**

Luke 21:5-11

Jesus had just pointed to a widow and her simple offering as an example and inspiration for all. The widow's simple gift involved great sacrifice. She gave out of her want and not from the surplus. Even as they listened to the call for simplicity, generosity, and sacrifice, they could think only about the glory of the temple adorned with expensive stones and ornaments. The pillars of the porches in the temple were made of single blocks of white marble, forty feet high. The most famous among the ornaments was the great vine made of solid gold.

Their comment on the splendor of the temple moved Jesus to prophecy. He told them that these stones and ornaments would not endure. They would all be pulled down and destroyed. To the Jews it was unthinkable that the glory of the temple would be shattered to dust. Jesus called his listeners to be watchful and learn to read the signs of the time.

Do not seek glory in things that do not last. Seek glory in enduring lasting things which are of God and from God!

Be alert! Stay awake! Be watchful! Read the sign of the times! Prayerfully listen and discern what God is saying to you now!

Saint of the Day, November 28 - Saint James of the March and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

St. James of the March was born Dominic Gangala in early 1390 to a poor family in the March of Ancona in central Italy. As a child, he began his studies at Offida under the guidance of his

uncle, a priest, who soon afterwards sent him to school in the nearby city of Ascoli Piceno. He later studied at the University of Perugia where he took the degree of Doctor in Canon and Civil Law.

He entered the Order of Friars Minor in Assisi in 1416 and took the name Jacobus (James in English). During his novitiate, he practiced all virtues so well that he became a model of religious perfection. Soon after his ordination, he was sent out as a missionary. He traveled through Italy, Dalmatia, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia, Austria, Bohemia, Saxony, Prussia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia for over 50 years. During the years 1427 and 1428 he preached in Vienna, Augsburg, Ratisbon, Ulm, Limburg, Brandenburg, and Leipzig. He spent the last three years of his life in Naples, and died there on November 28., 1476.

November 29 – Wednesday, Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**"Be steadfast, persevering, my beloved brothers,
fully engaged in the work of the Lord."**

(1Corinthians 15:58)

Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14, 16-17, 23-28

King Belshazzar gave a banquet for his lords, in which he used the sacred vessels from the temple, which his father had confiscated. Suddenly, the king saw the fingers of a human hand, writing on the wall in his palace. And he was terrified. Daniel was called to interpret this vision. Daniel's interpretation was that while the king honored his lords, he failed to honor God. So, God has found the king "wanting" and he would divide the kingdom and give it to the Medes and the Persians.

Seek to honor God and all that belongs to God! Honor people and things as a way of honoring God, the author of all creation!

Daniel 3:62-67

**Sun and moon, bless the Lord;
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Stars of heaven, bless the Lord;
Praise and exalt him above all forever.**

Luke 21:12-19

Jesus told his disciples that they will be arrested and persecuted, even delivered over by their own families; that they will be hated, but not a "hair on their head will be lost". Jesus encouraged them to stand strong and not be afraid.

Trust in the Lord! Stand strong and be not afraid!

Jesus told them to trust and not be worried about defending themselves. He promised to give them words to speak and wisdom to know what to say to the adversaries. He said to them "by patient endurance, you will save your lives".

Pray for the gift of "patient endurance".

Pray for the gift of wisdom. And prayerfully listen and discern what God is saying to you now!

Saint of the Day, November 29 – Saint Saturnin of Toulouse and 389 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint Saturnin of Toulouse was one of the seven "Apostles to the Gauls" sent out, probably by Pope Fabian (236 – 250), after the persecutions under Emperor Decius. He was the first Bishop of Tolosa (Toulouse). Legends place Saturninus in the 1st century as one of the 72 disciples of Christ and placed him at the Last Supper. Legends also state that St. Peter consecrated him as a bishop.

One of the legends tells us that Saturninus had to pass before the capitol of Toulouse, where there was an altar. The pagan priests ascribed the silence of their oracles to the frequent presence of Saturninus. One day they seized him and, on his refusal to sacrifice to the images, they condemned him to be tied by the feet to a bull which dragged him about the town and the limbs and blood were scattered on every side, till the rope broke.

Two devout women laid the sacred remains on a bier, and hid them in a deep ditch, to secure them from any further insult, where they lay in "wooden coffin" till the reign of Constantine the Great. Then Hilary, bishop of Toulouse, built a small chapel over this site. The martyrdom of this saint probably happened during the reign of Valerian, in 257.

November 30 – Saint Andrew, Apostle

**Steadfastness is a firm purpose of the heart to rely on the Lord
and do His will without reservation.**

Romans 10:9-18

Paul tells the Christians in Rome that no one who believes in Jesus would be put to shame! He praises all who proclaim the good news of Jesus, "How wonderful are the feet of those who announce good news!"

Bring the good news of Jesus to someone today!

Psalm 19

**The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy,
Giving wisdom to the simple.**

Mathew 4:18-22

Simon and Andrew; James and John left all they had to follow Jesus. They were not men of great scholarship or influence or wealth or social background. They were not poor either. They were just men, simple working men, just ordinary folks. They were fishermen. Good fishermen must possess certain qualities which make them good fishermen:

Patience - learn to wait till fish takes the bait. **Gentleness and Calmness** - Quick moves and restlessness will never make a good fisherman. **Perseverance** - learn to try and try again.

Courage - be ready to risk and face the fury of the sea. **An eye for (a vision of) the right moment** - discern the right time to fish, certain times the fish won't bite.

Fit the bait for the fish - one fish rises to one bait, another to another bait.

Be invisible - stay out of sight, even his shadow keeps the fish from biting.

Reflect on these qualities of fishermen and let them become your quality!

Saint of the Day, November 30 - St. Andrew, Apostle and 5 other saints are remembered this day.

Andrew, the brother of Peter, from Bethsaida in Galilee was a fisherman. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that while walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Andrew and Simon Peter fishing and called them to become his disciples and they did. However, the Gospel of John tells us that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When Jesus walked by one day, John the Baptist stated, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" and then Andrew followed Jesus.

We do not know much more about Andrew. Andrew is often shown as the man who brings others to Jesus. He brings his brother, helps the Greek men who wanted to speak to Jesus and brings the boy with five loaves and fishes.

Tradition tells us that Andrew went to preach the Good News around the shores of the Black Sea and throughout what is now Greece and Turkey. Andrew was martyred by crucifixion in Patras (Greece). He was bound, rather than nailed, to a cross, as is described in the Acts of Andrew. He was crucified on a cross form known as "crux decussata," which is an X-shaped cross or a "saltire." Today this is commonly referred to as "St. Andrew's Cross." It is believed that Andrew requested to be crucified this way, because he deemed himself "unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus."

December 1 - Friday, Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Steadfastness in the face of trouble
is the mark of a really admirable man.**

(Beethoven)

Daniel 7:2-14

This excerpt describes Daniel's vision of four beasts that emerged from the sea, from the depth of chaos. The first beast was a lion with eagle's wings and a human heart representing the Babylonian empire; the second was a bear with three ribs hanging from its teeth representing the Medes; the third was a leopard with four heads and four wings representing the Persians; and the fourth with iron teeth and huge feet representing the Greek empire.

The fifth figure that appeared in Daniel's vision was not a beast, not an evil earthly king, but the glorious Son of Man. This Son of man is the one on whom the Ancient one, God, would confer dominion, glory and sovereignty. The four beasts emerged from the depths, from chaos, from evil...but the Son of Man comes from heaven, from goodness, from God. The four beasts reigned only for a period of time and

were overthrown by others like them, but the Son of Man would reign over all people and forever. We have come to know today that this Son of Man is Jesus. Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man who came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Reflect on being called to give yourself in service to others.

Daniel 3:75-81

**Mountains and hill bless the Lord;
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord;
Praise and exalt him above all forever.**

Luke 21:29-33

Jesus had talked about the “Day of the Lord” and the terrible events that surround that day. He talked about what he himself had to face and what his disciples eventually would face. Hearing all this, the disciples wanted to know what they should do and what signs they should be looking for. Jesus used familiar imageries of sun, moon, stars, gathering of clouds, budding fig tree, etc. to describe the reality of God breaking into history. Jesus called them to recognize the coming of God in all happenings and not look for God in extra-ordinary events.

Be alert, stay awake and continue to fulfill the mission of Jesus in whatever situation you may be.....recognize the presence and movement of God in all you do!

Saint of the Day, December 1 - Bl. Charles de Foucauld and 20 other saints are remembered this day.

Charles de Foucauld (Brother Charles of Jesus) was born in Strasbourg, France on September 15, 1858. Orphaned at the age of six, he and his sister Marie were raised by their grandfather in whose footsteps he followed by taking up a military career. He lost his faith as an adolescent. His taste for easy living was well known to all and yet he showed that he could be strong willed and constant in difficult situations. He undertook a risky exploration of Morocco. Seeing the way Muslims expressed their faith questioned him and he began repeating, “My God, if you exist, let me come to know you.”

On his return to France, the warm, respectful welcome he received from his deeply Christian family made him continue his search. Under the guidance of Fr. Huvelin he rediscovered God in October 1886. He was then 28 years old. He said, “As soon as I believed in God, I understood that I could not do otherwise than to live for him alone.”

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land revealed his vocation to him: to follow Jesus in his life at Nazareth. He spent 7 years as a Trappist, first in France and then at Akbès in Syria. Later he began to lead a life of prayer and adoration, alone, near a convent of Poor Clares in Nazareth.

Ordained a priest at 43 (1901) he left for the Sahara, living at first in Beni Abbès and later at Tamanrasset among the Tuaregs of the Hoggar. He wanted to be among those who were, “the furthest removed, the most abandoned.” He wanted all who drew close to him to find in him a brother, “a universal brother.” In a great respect for the culture and faith of those among whom he lived, his desire was to “shout the Gospel with his life”. “I would like to be sufficiently good that people would say, “If such is the servant, what must the Master be like?” On the evening of December 1, 1916, he was killed by a band of marauders who had encircled his house.

December 2 - Saturday, Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Steadfast love can accomplish almost anything and in this lies the distinction between great men and little men.

Daniel 7:15-27

Daniel became disturbed and upset with his vision of the four beasts and the fifth image of the son of man. He entered into deep reflection on his vision and began to understand it as the process through which the Kingdom of the “holy one” has been emerging. He affirmed, “the holy one shall receive the kingdom to last forever”. The kingdom of the Most High will emerge and God will reign forever, and all kingdoms will be subject to God and God’s ways.

Pray: May your kingdom come, and your will be done.

Daniel 3:82-87

**You sons of men, bless the Lord;
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
O Israel, bless the Lord;
Praise and exalt him above all forever.**

Luke 21:34-36

Jesus continued to call his disciples to be alert and awake and to stand strong. He told them about the difficulties ahead. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that the suffering of persecution for the sake of the Kingdom and for the cause of justice was an integral part of being a disciple. The “Day of the Lord” will come. No one knew the time or the day or the hour. God will break in at the least expected moment, through least expected events, people, and situations. So, it is urgent to stay awake, alert and prepared. Jesus said to them, “Pray constantly for strength...”

Be alert and awake and be prepared to continue to fulfill the mission of Jesus in proclaiming the kingdom of justice and peace for all.

Saint of the Day, December 2 - Saint Bibiana and 7 other saints are remembered this day.

We know very little about St. Bibiana. Tradition tells us that, in the year 363, she suffered persecution under the then governor of Rome. She was the daughter of Christians, Flavian, a Roman knight, and Dafrosa, his wife. Flavian was tortured and sent into exile, where he died of his wounds. Dafrosa was beheaded, and their two daughters, Bibiana and Demetria, were stripped of their possessions and left to suffer poverty. However, they remained in their house, spending their time in fasting and prayer. Demetria, after confessing her Faith, fell dead at the feet of the governor Apronianus. St. Bibiana was placed in the hands of a wicked woman called Rufina, who in vain endeavored to seduce her. She used blows as well as persuasion, but Bibiana remained faithful. Enraged at the constancy of this saintly virgin, Apronianus ordered her to be tied to a pillar and beaten with scourges, laden with lead plummets, until she expired. The saint endured the torments with joy and died under the blows inflicted by the hands of the executioner.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Be thankful for the struggles you go through.
They make you stronger, wiser, and humble.
Don't let them break you.
Let them make you!**