

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

P. O. Box 440, Whitehouse, Texas 75791

www.wellspringcommunity.net

frgusmsfs@gmail.com

November 20, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Gospel readings of Monday and Tuesday, we meet two people who wanted to see. One wanted just to see because he was blind and the other wanted to see Jesus and could not because he was short of stature and Jesus was in the middle of the crowd. Encounter with Jesus opened their eyes and they saw Jesus and they saw themselves as they were. Their lives have been transformed forever. Encounter with Jesus is always a life-transforming experience.

Mark tells us that the blind man was a beggar named Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus. The name Timaeus means honor. Although the Gospels do not tell us about his background, it is very possible that Bartimaeus was a man of honor before he became blind as the name Timaeus indicates. Being blind, he must have lost that honor and respect and became a beggar. He cried to Jesus for mercy and Jesus healed him. Jesus restored not only his sight but also his dignity and honor. The blind man turned his life around and followed Jesus.

The other man who wanted to see Jesus was Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and a man of wealth, dignity, and honor. He wanted to see who Jesus was but could not because he was short in stature and Jesus was in the middle of the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. Jesus found him up the tree and called him to come down. So, Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed Jesus home. Zacchaeus was now a changed man. He restructured his life and pledged to give half of his possessions to the poor, and to pay four times the amount to anyone that he may have cheated.

The blind man and Zacchaeus were transformed people. Such transformation happened to them because they wanted to see Jesus and did whatever they could to see him. The blind man cried for mercy and Zacchaeus climbed the tree and they, both, listened to his word. How nice it would be if our good intentions, combined with fulfilling our Sunday obligations could transform us in Christ and make us amazing witnesses of our commitment to Christ. We know that it just doesn't work that way. It is not going to happen until we can be still to listen to His word and let it touch our hearts and shape our life. If transformation in Christ has to happen, we must listen to His Word, meditate on His Word and remain open to the change that His Word calls forth. We must cry for help as the blind man did and climb a tree as Zacchaeus did if that is what we must do. Let us strive to listen to Jesus, respond to his word, follow him more closely and be transformed in Him.....

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

November 20-25, 2023

**Many people have no stable points of reference on which to build their lives,
and so they end up deeply insecure.
There is a growing mentality of relativism,
which holds that everything is equally valid,
that truth and absolute points of reference do not exist.
But this way of thinking does not lead to true freedom,
but rather to instability, confusion and blind conformity to the fads of the moment.
(Pope Benedict XVI)**

November 20 – Monday, Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Steadfast love is love that pours itself out generously and fully, whatever the cost, in order that the other might benefit, flourish and thrive.

I Maccabees 1:10-15, 41-43, 54-57, 62-63

Persecution of the Israelites began under king Antiochus Epiphanes. Many Israelites gave up their traditions and joined the “life-style of the Gentiles”, sacrificed to idols, profaned the Sabbath, etc. But many stood strong and remained faithful to their traditions, to the law of Yahweh rather than obey the King and his orders. Many chose to die in faithfulness to Yahweh and His law. This is the beginning of the Maccabee revolution.

Psalm 119

**Redeem me form oppression of men,
that I may keep your precepts.
I am attacked by malicious persecutors,
Who are far from your law!**

Luke 18:35-43

The blind man near Jericho, cried out “have pity on me, Jesus”. What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked. The blind man responded: “I want to see”. The blind man was determined to come face to face with Jesus. He refused to be silent. He refused to be restrained. The urgency

of his need drove him into the presence of Jesus. He was passionate. His desire was intense. He wanted to see.

How intense, how passionate, how deep is your desire to know, to see.....? Try to make this your prayer this week: "Master, I want to see". Let the Lord open your eyes...the eyes of your mind and your heart.....let him help you see yourself better, see the world more positively and creatively and the Lord more fully....

When the blind man cried out Jesus was busy with discoursing to the crowd, like any other Rabbi. He stopped at the blind man's cry of urgency. For Jesus, words took second place to deeds. Response to the human person in need was a priority. Many admire a man with great ideas, but they love a man with a big heart.

Have a big heart! Live from the heart! Reach out to someone today. Let him/her see what's in your heart!

Saint of the Day, November 20 - St. Edmund Rich and 62 other saints are remembered this day.

Edmund Rich was born in Abingdon, England on November 30, 1180. He studied at Oxford, England, and in Paris, France. He taught art and mathematics at Oxford and was ordained a priest. He spent eight years teaching theology and became a Canon and treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral. An eloquent speaker, Edmund preached a crusade for Pope Gregory IX and was named archbishop of Canterbury. He became an advisor to King Henry III and presided in 1237 at Henry's ratification of the Great Charter. When Cardinal Olt became a papal legate with the patronage of King Henry, Edmund protested. A long-lasting feud between Edmund, the king, and his legate led him to resigning his see in 1240. He went to Pontigny, France, where he became a Cistercian monk. He died at Soissons, on November 16, 1240 in Soisy-Bouy, France and was canonized in 1246 or 1247.

November 21 – Tuesday, Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**My lips will glorify you because Your loving kindness is better than life.
I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.**

(Psalm 63:3-4)

2 Maccabees 6:18-31

Eleazar, an aging scribe was forced to eat pork, unclean meat according to their law. He preferred to die rather than break the law of cleanliness. He refused to disobey God's law, as he understood. He refused even to pretend to eat to satisfy the demands of the king. Knowing that he would die and with great courage, he accepted torture rather than disobey the law. He said as he accepted torture, "by manfully giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age and I will leave to the young a noble example of how to die willingly and generously for the revered and holy laws". He became a model of courage and fidelity to all of Israel.

Be courageous! Be strong! Stand your ground!

Psalm 3

**You, O Lord, are my shield;
My glory, you lift up my head!
When I call out to the Lord,
He answered me from his holy mountain.**

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus came into Jericho, a wealthy and important town, considered to be "the fattest in Palestine". Jericho was one of the greatest taxation centers. Zacchaeus was a wealthy man in Jericho, a tax collector on top in his profession. He was curious about Jesus and was determined to take a look at him. So, he climbed a tree, being small of stature, to take a look at Jesus. Jesus saw him before Zacchaeus did and invited him to come down the tree and take him home as a guest.

Zacchaeus was a changed man when he came down from the tree. He went home with Jesus and gave a wonderful testimony of the radical change that came into his life: "I give half my belongings to the poor and if I have defrauded any one in the least, I will pay back four-fold".

Let the changed and renewed life be the testimony of your encounter with Christ!

Saint of the Day, November 21 - Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

The feast of the presentation of Mary dates back to the 6th century in the East and the 15th century in the West. It is based on an ancient tradition that Mary was taken to the temple in

Jerusalem when she was 3-years-old and dedicated to God. A church was built there in honor of this mystery. The Eastern Church was more interested in the feast, but it does appear in the West in the 11th century and became a feast of the universal Church in the 16th century.

We read about Mary's birth and of her presentation in the temple only in apocryphal literature. The Gospel of James (unrecognized as historical) tells us that Anna and Joachim offered Mary to God in the Temple when she was 3 years old. This was to carry out a promise made to God when Anna was still childless. Though it cannot be proven historically, Mary's presentation has an important theological purpose. It continues the impact of the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and of the birth of Mary. It emphasizes that the holiness conferred on Mary from the beginning of her life on earth continued through her early childhood and beyond.

November 22 – Wednesday, Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**Faithful people reflect God's faithfulness
and steadfast people reflect God's steadfastness.**

2 Maccabees 7:1, 20-31

Seven brothers and their mother were tortured at the King's orders. Six of them suffered death, remaining faithful to the law of God, rather than obey the king's order. The mother encouraged the seventh son to persevere and be faithful to God's law and he did. The mother advised her sons, "God, who gave you life, will give it again".

Reflect on qualities of patient endurance, perseverance in the face of trials and temptations, fidelity to commitments...

Psalm 17

**I call upon you, for you will answer me O God;
Incline your ear to me; hear my word.
Hide me in the shadow of your wings.
But I in justice shall behold your face...**

Luke 19:11-28

Jesus told them the parable of a noble man who gave ten of his servants sums of ten units for investment. The noble man trusted his servants with his wealth.

Reflect on God's trust! We are trusted with life, family, children, vocation.....

Trust calls for loyalty, Fidelity. Trust calls for "TRUST" in return.

Reflect on what it means to be trusted.

The reward for faithfulness to trust is "more trust". Faithfulness to responsibilities and duties bring more responsibilities.

Reflect: Faithfulness is its own reward!

To him, who has, more will be given.

Reflect: There is no such thing as standing still in Christian life. We either grow in virtue or we become weak...we become more committed or get side-tracked.....

Saint of the Day, November 22 - Saint Cecilia and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Cecilia was a young Roman Christian who made a vow of virginity (around second century). Her parents, however, insisted that she marry Valerian, a pagan. On her wedding night, she courageously told her new husband about her vow and that an angel was with her to protect her. Valerian was skeptical and told her he wanted proof of the angel. Cecilia sent him to the future Pope Urban. Valerian found Pope Urban and explained why Cecilia sent him. Pope Urban baptized Valerian, and when he returned to Cecilia, he saw an angel sitting beside her. So strong was Valerian's conversion that his brother Tibertius also wanted baptism. The brothers then began to serve Christ by burying Christians who were martyred.

Cecilia spent her time preaching the Word of God, and she converted up to 400 persons. Eventually, the brothers were arrested and put to death for refusing to worship pagan gods. Cecilia buried them, and she, too, was soon arrested and was to die for her faith. The official ordered her death by suffocating heat in her own bathhouse. That attempt failed. Then the official ordered the executioner to decapitate her. The executioner struck Cecilia's neck three times, but he could not completely sever her head. He left her on the floor, bleeding profusely. She lived like that for three days before she died. Cecilia was declared a saint by the early Christians because of her martyrdom. Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians.

November 23 – Thursday, Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**The fourth Thursday of November is Thanksgiving Day in U.S.A.
We wish all visitors to our website in USA a very happy and joyful day. May God
bless you and your families with grateful hearts, joyful sharing,
and peace-filled days. May this day be a day of blessing and grace for you!**

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

**Be Steadfast in loving and giving yourself in loving kindness
to the world around you!**

1 Maccabees 2:15-29

Mattathias and his sons refused to abandon the traditions and religious practices of their ancestors. Neither the promise of great wealth nor the threat of death could persuade them to abandon their religion even in smallest matters. Mattathias challenged his people to follow his example and stand strong in the face of trials and severe testing times.

Psalm 50

**Offer to God praise as your sacrifice
And fulfill your vows to the Most High;
Then call upon me in time of distress;
I will rescue you and you shall glorify me.....**

Luke 19:41-44

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem! He knew what would happen to that city! He read the signs of the times!

Reflect on how Jesus expressed his own feelings and what that means for you!

If you only had known the path to peace, Jesus exclaimed!

Share this urgent longing of Jesus for “peace” and pray with it. Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you. (Jn. 14:27)

The Jews were embarking on political maneuvers that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. The tragedy was that if they had only abandoned their dreams of political power and taken the way of Christ, it would not have happened.

Reflect on what this means for us today in the context of what is happening in our world. Pray about it.

Saint of the Day, November 23 - Saint Clement and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

Clement of Rome was the third successor of Saint Peter, reigning as pope during the last decade of the first century. He’s known as one of the Church’s five “Apostolic Fathers,” those who provided a direct link between the Apostles and later generations of Church Fathers. Clément’s First Epistle to the Corinthians was preserved and widely read in the early Church. This letter from the bishop of Rome to the Church in Corinth concerns a split that alienated a large number of the laity from the clergy. Deploring the unauthorized and unjustifiable division in the Corinthian community, Clement urged charity to heal the rift.

According to tradition, Clement was imprisoned under the Emperor Trajan and during this time led a ministry among fellow prisoners. Thereafter he was executed by being tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea. He was Pope, probably, from the year 88 till his death in 99.

November 24 - Friday, Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**Stand your ground trusting in the grace of God
and be steadfast under pressure, under adverse conditions!**

I Maccabees 4:36-37; 52-59

The Maccabee brothers won the revolution and celebrated their freedom from persecution. They constructed an altar of sacrifice, celebrated its dedication by offering holocausts and sacrifices of deliverance. All people gathered and praised God who had delivered them from persecution. And they decreed that this day of dedication should be observed every year as day of rejoicing.

Be grateful for your freedom. Remember, with gratitude, people who suffered and sacrificed for your freedom.

I Chronicles 29:10-12

**Blessed are you O Lord,
God of Israel, our father from eternity to eternity.
Yours, O Lord, are grandeur and power,
majesty, splendor and glory.**

Luke 19:45-48

Jesus cleanses the temple which had been turned into a marketplace. Place of worship had become place of abuse and exploitation, especially of the poor and the marginalized in the community. The house of God was being used to exploit the worshippers. Jesus was moved with a passion for justice, honor, respect - for real worship, which means giving God God's worth and giving God's people their worth.

Reflect on being called to deeply respect and revere the temple of God – all that we know as the temple, the house of God; all that we know as God's dwelling place.

You are the temple of.....so is your brother and your sister.....respect, revere and honor yourself and your brother and your sister and that's a sure way of honoring God!

Saint of the Day, November 24 - St. Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions and 146 other saints are remembered this day.

Andrew was born Trần An Dũng in 1795 in Vietnam, taking the name Andrew at his baptism (Anrê Dũng) and was ordained a priest on March 15, 1823. During persecution, Andrew Dũng changed his name to Lạc to avoid capture, and thus he is memorialised as Andrew Dũng-Lạc (Anrê Dũng Lạc).

Andrew Dung-Lac was one of 117 people martyred in Vietnam between 1820 and 1862. Members of the companions group gave their lives for Christ in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, and received beatification during four different occasions between 1900 and 1951. All were canonized during the papacy of Saint John Paul II.

Christianity came to Vietnam through the Portuguese. Jesuits opened the first permanent mission at Da Nang in 1615. They ministered to Japanese Catholics who had been driven from Japan. Severe persecutions were launched at least three times in the 19th century. During the six decades after 1820, between 100,000 and 300,000 Catholics were killed or subjected to

great hardship. Foreign missionaries martyred in the first wave included priests of the Paris Mission Society, and Spanish Dominican priests and tertiaries.

In 1832, Emperor Minh-Mang banned all foreign missionaries, and tried to make all Vietnamese deny their faith by trampling on a crucifix. Like the priest-holes in Ireland during English persecution, many hiding places were offered in homes of the faithful. Persecution broke out again in 1847, when the emperor suspected foreign missionaries and Vietnamese Christians of sympathizing with a rebellion led by one of his sons. The last of the martyrs were 17 laypersons, one of them a 9-year-old, executed in 1862. That year a treaty with France guaranteed religious freedom to Catholics, but it did not stop all persecution.

November 25 - Saturday, Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**Gratefully emulate people who are steadfast,
people whose inner strength urges them to share their love generously, even
when it costs them much.**

I Maccabees 6:1-13

King Antiochus continued his pursuit of wealth, but he met with failures and had to withdraw into Babylon. The Israelites grew stronger and began to defend themselves and the King became sick with fear. He was overcome with guilt over the evil he had caused on Jerusalem. He expressed bitter grief over the injustices he had done for God's people as he is about to die. Things did not work out the way King Antiochus had planned. God's ways are different from that of man. Pursuit of wealth at the cost of other's needs and injustice and other social evils inflicted on innocent people never bring peace and prosperity.....they bring disaster!

Pursue justice and peace! God's ways are ways of justice and peace for all people!

Psalm 9

**I will give thanks to you O Lord with all my heart;
I will declare all your wondrous deeds.
I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, Most High.**

Luke 20: 27-40

The Sadducees asked Jesus about the law of the "Levirate" marriage, which requires that if a man died leaving no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise posterity to his brother. The reason for

this law was to provide for the widow, preserve the family name and the inheritance. The concern of the Sadducees was not the law itself or its legality or validity. They wanted to ridicule Jesus about his teaching on Resurrection and eternal life. Their question was about how relationships will be sorted out in the resurrection. The response of Jesus was very simple: no one needs to worry about such human matters in the resurrection because God is the God of life not of death.

Death comes to a close - living goes on and on.....death is the door to eternity.... all are alive in God.

Saint of the Day, November 25 - St. Catherine of Alexandria and 6 other saints are remembered this day

Saint Catherine of Alexandria, or Saint Katharine of Alexandria, also known as Saint Catherine of the Wheel and The Great Martyr Saint Catherine, is, according to tradition was martyred in the early 4th century at the hands of the pagan emperor Maxentius. According to her hagiography, she was both a princess and a noted scholar, who became a Christian around the age of 14, converted hundreds of people to Christianity, and was martyred around the age of 18. More than 1,100 years after Catherine's martyrdom, Joan of Arc identified her as one of the saints who appeared to and counselled her.

The Eastern Orthodox Church venerates her as a Great Martyr and celebrates her feast day on November 24 or 25, depending on the regional tradition. In Catholicism she is traditionally revered as one of **the Fourteen Holy Helpers*****. In 1969 the Roman Catholic Church removed her feast day from the General Roman Calendar; however, she continued to be commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on 25 November. In 2002, her feast was restored to the General Roman Calendar as an optional memorial.

*****Fourteen Holy Helpers.** Saints Acacius, Barbara, Blaise, Christopher, Cyriacus, Catherine of Alexandria, Denis, Erasmus of Formiae, Eustace, George, Giles, Margaret of Antioch, Pantaleon, and Vitus. The Fourteen Holy Helpers are a group of saints venerated together in Roman Catholicism because their intercession is believed to be particularly effective, especially against various diseases.

In the middle of the 14th century, the plague - also called "The Black Death" - also called "The Greatest Catastrophe Ever" - ravaged Europe, killing 50 million people, or about 60% of the population (a vastly higher death rate than coronavirus), within a few years. Lacking the advances of modern medicine and layering dead bodies in pits like "lasagne with layers of pasta and cheese," the people had no choice but to cling to their faith. It was at this time that the Fourteen Holy Helpers - Catholics saints, all but one of whom were early martyrs - came to be invoked by Catholics against the plague and other misfortunes. According to New Liturgical Movement, devotion to these 14 saints started in Germany at the time of the plague, and they were called "Nothelfer," which in German means "helpers in need." As bouts of the plague resurfaced over the decades, devotion to the Holy Helpers spread to other countries, and eventually Nicholas V declared that devotion to the saints came with special indulgences.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Do not be satisfied with anything less than Truth and Love,
do not be content with anything less than Christ.
(Pope Benedict XVI)**