

# Catholic Online School

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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 2024



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 1, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Wednesday, May 1st, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 15:1-6

1 Then some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, 'Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved.'

2 This led to disagreement, and after Paul and Barnabas had had a long argument with these men it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and others of the church should go up to Jerusalem and discuss the question with the apostles and elders.

3 The members of the church saw them off, and as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria they told how the gentiles had been converted, and this news was received with the greatest satisfaction by all the brothers.

4 When they arrived in Jerusalem they were welcomed by the church and by the apostles and elders, and gave an account of all that God had done through them.

5 But certain members of the Pharisees' party who had become believers objected, insisting that gentiles should be circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses.

6 The apostles and elders met to look into the matter,

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

1 [Song of Ascents Of David] I rejoiced that they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of Yahweh.'

2 At last our feet are standing at your gates, Jerusalem!

3 Jerusalem, built as a city, in one united whole,

4 there the tribes go up, the tribes of Yahweh, a sign for Israel to give thanks to the name of Yahweh.

5 For there are set the thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David.



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## Gospel, John 15:1-8

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more.

3 You are clean already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you.

4 Remain in me, as I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing.

6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a branch -- and withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire and are burnt.

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it.

8 It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 1, 2024

1. In our first Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the book which details the Way of Life and missionary activity of the early Church, we are presented with a vital historic moment in Church history, the Council of Jerusalem. Jesus promised He would send the "Spirit of Truth" who would guide the Church in all truth. And this is an example of Him fulfilling that promise. The first Council of the Church is a sign of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit, guiding the Church, the Body of Christ, into all truth.

Some of the early Jewish believers insist that all Gentile converts must first be circumcised and embrace and abide by all the Law of Moses. They are sometimes referred to as "the Judaizers". But remember most of the early Christians were Jews. It was a segment of those from the party of the Pharisees. Paul and Barnabas are sent to Jerusalem to submit the issue to Peter and the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

How do we view the Councils of the Church? Do we see them as a sign of the Lords continued care for His Body, the Church? Do we know the importance of the early Church Councils? Have we taken the time to study them? We should. Do we really believe the Church is God's plan and that we can trust her judgement?

2. David the Psalmist loved to go to Jerusalem, to the House of the Lord. Notice how he sings of it with great joy? "I rejoiced that they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of Yahweh. 'At last, our feet are standing at your gates, Jerusalem!'"

How about you and me? Do we rejoice when we have the privilege to go to the House of the Lord and participate in Holy Mass? Think about it. We hear the Word of the Lord and are instructed from it. We enter into the Mystery of Mysteries in the Holy Sacrifice at the Altar and receive Jesus, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Do we view our attendance at Mass as only an obligation, which it is, or do we go further and see it as an invitation, a gift, a cause for rejoicing?

3. The Image of the Vine runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, to refer to the people of Israel, the people of the Covenant, God's people. Jesus uses this same Image in our Gospel to describe how we must be joined to Him to form the New Israel, the Church, of which He is the Head. There, the sap of the Vine that gives life, the grace we need, is given to us.



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The Church is not some-thing but SOME-ONE, in whom we now live. Jesus. In Catholic theology and practice, we teach -and we are called to practice - the truth that the early fathers, Saints and Councils throughout the ages have affirmed; to belong to Jesus is to belong to His Body.

Our membership in the Church is a very real participation in the very life of God; what the Apostle Peter referred to as a "participation in the Divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) This kind of real, tangible experience of life in the Church is meant to be the lived experience of every Baptized Christian. For that to happen, we need, above all else, to pray.

In its treatment of this "mystery" of the Church, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

"845 To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark,

which alone saves from the flood. [St. Augustine, Sermon 96, 7, 9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, De virg. 18, 118: PL 16, 297B; cf. already 1 Pet 3:20-21] [30, 953, 1219]"

Of course, until the Lord returns, this Church is still composed of human members and thus, she is both human and divine. She is wounded and in need of healing.

However, she is the means through which we participate in the very life of God and the balm for healing the Nations. To her has been entrusted the Sacraments and the Word, the gift of a teaching office and the very means of salvation. The Church is the Body of Christ.

The Church is not an optional "extra" that we add on to our lives. She is our life now because we live in Christ, from whose wounded side she was birthed at the tree of Calvary, the altar for the new world. We are joined to Him as unto a Vine.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 2, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Thursday, May 2nd, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 15:7-21

7 and after a long discussion, Peter stood up and addressed them. 'My brothers,' he said, 'you know perfectly well that in the early days God made his choice among you: the gentiles were to learn the good news from me and so become believers.

8 And God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us.

9 God made no distinction between them and us, since he purified their hearts by faith.

10 Why do you put God to the test now by imposing on the disciples the very burden that neither our ancestors nor we ourselves were strong enough to support?

11 But we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.'

12 The entire assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul describing all the signs and wonders God had worked through them among the gentiles.

13 When they had finished it was James who spoke. 'My brothers,' he said, 'listen to me.

14 Simeon has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name out of the gentiles.

15 This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets, since the scriptures say:

16 After that I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; I shall make good the gaps in it and restore it.

17 Then the rest of humanity, and of all the nations once called mine, will look for the Lord, says the Lord who made this

18 known so long ago.

19 'My verdict is, then, that instead of making things more difficult for gentiles who turn to God,

20 we should send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from illicit marriages, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.



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21 For Moses has always had his preachers in every town and is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath.'

## **Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3, 10**

1 Sing a new song to Yahweh! Sing to Yahweh, all the earth!

2 Sing to Yahweh, bless his name! Proclaim his salvation day after day,

3 declare his glory among the nations, his marvels to every people!

10 Say among the nations, 'Yahweh is king.' The world is set firm, it cannot be moved. He will judge the nations with justice.

## **Gospel, John 15:9-11**

9 I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

10 If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

11 I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 2, 2024

1. Peter's address at the first Church Council, the Council of Jerusalem, is decisive. He shares his profound experience and shows how it all fulfills the promises of the Scripture. The Lord Jesus had told Him he would serve in such a vital role and the earliest witness, in both the Biblical texts and the writings of the early Fathers and Church sources, confirms it. The Holy Spirit which Jesus promised was indeed leading the Church and has, since then.

And, the resolution of the dispute was accepted and sent out as a decree, a letter, to the early Christian communities. An encyclical of sorts.

The word "encyclical" simply means circulating letter. They had no internet. This decree, with the authority of the Apostles behind it, went out to all the churches and was circulated. The Gentiles were full heirs with the Jews, by grace through Faith. This first General Council was probably held in the year 49 or 50 AD. It is also a prototype of all ecumenical councils to follow.

This is a turning point in the history of the Church and a wonderful example of the Lord at work through His Body, the Church, of which He is the head.

2. "Sing a New Song to the Lord" the Psalmist exhorts us!

Saint Augustine, in a beautiful homily he preached during the Easter Season, explained:

"We are urged to sing a new song to the Lord, as new men who have learned a new song. A song is a thing of joy; more profoundly, it is a thing of love. Anyone, therefore, who has learned to love the new life has learned to sing a new song, and the new song reminds us of our new life. The new man, the new song, the new covenant, all belong to the one kingdom of God, and so the new man will sing a new song and will belong to the new covenant."

He continues, connecting the singing to a way of life:

"My dear brothers and sons, fruit of the true faith and holy seed of heaven, all you who have been born again in Christ and whose life is from above, listen to me; or rather, listen to the Holy Spirit saying through me: Sing to the Lord a new song. Look, you tell me, I am singing. Yes indeed, you are singing; you are singing clearly, I can hear you. But make sure that your life does not contradict your words. Sing with your voices, your hearts, your lips and your lives: Sing to the Lord a new song'."

Let us sing that new song, with our words and our witness of life

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3. Remaining, living, abiding in Jesus, calls us to find our home in His Church. The Church is meant to become the home of the whole human race. The early Fathers had this kind of relational view of the Church. Here are two more examples:

"Let us love the Lord our God; let us love His Church. Let us love Him as our Father and her as our mother." (St. Augustine) "No one can have God as his Father who does not have the Church as his Mother." (St. Cyprian)

"For where the Church is, there the Spirit of God is also; and where the Spirit of God is, there the Church is, and all grace. And the Spirit is truth." (St. Irenaeus of Lyons)

Have we experienced this kind of communion with the Church? Do we view her as a mother? Do we understand that we actually don't just go to Church we live in the Church and go into the world? Have we come to perceive the Church as Some - One more than some-thing?

Or is this all supposed to only be the experience of the mystics, the talk of the Saints and Fathers? The answer is clear. It is supposed to be the common experience of every Christian. By the power of the Holy Spirit, it can be.

Catholic theology teaches what the early fathers, Saints and Councils throughout the ages have all affirmed; to belong to Jesus is to belong to His Body, the Church. Our membership in the Church is a participation in the life of God; what the Apostle Peter referred to as a "participation in the Divine nature". (2 Peter 1:4)

The Church is not some - thing - outside of us, which we try to fix or have our issues with. Through our Baptism the Church becomes our home, our mother, the place in which we now live our lives in Christ. That is not to say we do not sometimes have struggles with our mother. However, she always remains our mother.

To live this understanding of life in the Church requires a continuing and dynamic conversion. We are sons and daughters of the Church.

In living our lives in her we carry forward in time the continuing redemptive mission of Jesus Christ who is the Head of His Body. In its treatment of this mystery of the Church, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

"To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled."

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"She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood."(CCC #845)

We are all called to live in the heart of Church for the sake of the world. This is how we remain in the Lord. Then, we are sent on a rescue mission, to bring the whole world back home, into Him.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 3, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Friday, May 3rd, 2024

### Reading 1, First Corinthians 15:1-8

1 I want to make quite clear to you, brothers, what the message of the gospel that I preached to you is; you accepted it and took your stand on it,

2 and you are saved by it, if you keep to the message I preached to you; otherwise your coming to believe was in vain.

3 The tradition I handed on to you in the first place, a tradition which I had myself received, was that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures,

4 and that he was buried; and that on the third day, he was raised to life, in accordance with the scriptures;

5 and that he appeared to Cephas; and later to the Twelve;

6 and next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still with us, though some have fallen asleep;

7 then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles.

8 Last of all he appeared to me too, as though I was a child born abnormally.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 19:2-3, 4-5

2 day discourses of it to day, night to night hands on the knowledge.

3 No utterance at all, no speech, not a sound to be heard,

4 but from the entire earth the design stands out, this message reaches the whole world. High above, he pitched a tent for the sun,

5 who comes forth from his pavilion like a bridegroom, delights like a champion in the course to be run.



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## Gospel, John 14:6-14

6 Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

7 If you know me, you will know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.

8 Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' Jesus said to him,

9 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, "Show us the Father"?'

10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works.

11 You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe it on the evidence of these works.

12 In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.

13 Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 3, 2024

1. Paul's message to the Christians in Corinth are what is called in Greek, the Kerygma, the Apostolic proclamation of Jesus Christ. This brief proclamation contains the core of the Gospel.

Catholics are often not familiar with the term kerygma. Literally, the word means "preaching". Paul reminds us in Romans 10:14 "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Paul preached what was handed down to him. That is Sacred Tradition.

When Paul preached the kerygma, it was not just him giving a sermon or an instruction on a particular aspect of the Christian faith. Rather it was explaining the very the foundation of the faith, the message of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection - what it means as the very means of our Salvation - and how we must respond. And, not just once, but continually.

Notice the primacy of the Resurrection! To be an apostle one must have been a "witness to the Resurrection". Paul was, but, as he says, "out of the Ordinary Course". Jesus appeared to Paul after He had been raised in that encounter on the Damascus Road.

How often do we hear the Kerygma preached or taught? How often do we share it with others? Are we witnesses of the Resurrection? We can be. Jesus is Alive! People need preachers today.

2. In verse one of the Psalm of David which we recite or chant in today's Liturgy, David exclaimed "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork" When found in the Bible, the word firmament refers to the expanse of the Universe. David saw the beauty of the created order as revelatory of the glory of God. Do we?

Creation is a grand masterpiece by the Divine Artist. He created the world out of love and for all who dwell upon it can become a manifestation of His Beauty. There is a connection between beauty and the Christian vocation to manifest the presence of the living God in this world which He still loves. To be fully Christian is to be fully human.

In Saint John Paul's "Letter to Artists" he called for the creation of "epiphanies of beauty" and encouraged the flourishing of all the arts in a great renewal of humanity for our age. His letter began with these words from the Book of Genesis: "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31)." It still is.

How do we view creation?

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3. The first verse of the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass is the response Jesus gives to Thomas.

Jesus has just finished telling the disciples that is going to prepare a place for them. He says, "You know the way where I am going". Thomas says "Lord we don't know where you are going, how can we know the way? Then Jesus answers " I am the Way; I am the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him."

Then we have the dialogue with Phillip. Jesus the Christ explains that He fully reveals the Father. Jesus is the face of God! He is the full revelation of the Father. WOW!

One cannot come into an awareness of the fullness of this revelation without the gift of faith. And, not at once either. That is why we need to continually ask the Lord for the gift of living faith. Have we done so today?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 4, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Saturday, May 4th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 16:1-10

1 From there he went to Derbe, and then on to Lystra, where there was a disciple called Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and had become a believer; but his father was a Greek.

2 The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him,

3 and Paul, who wanted to have him as a travelling companion, had him circumcised. This was on account of the Jews in the locality where everyone knew his father was a Greek.

4 As they visited one town after another, they passed on the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with instructions to observe them.

5 So the churches grew strong in the faith, as well as growing daily in numbers.

6 They travelled through Phrygia and the Galatian country, because they had been told by the Holy Spirit not to preach the word in Asia.

7 When they reached the frontier of Mysia they tried to go into Bithynia, but as the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them,

8 they went through Mysia and came down to Troas.

9 One night Paul had a vision: a Macedonian appeared and kept urging him in these words, 'Come across to Macedonia and help us.'

10 Once he had seen this vision we lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to bring them the good news.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 100:1-2, 3, 5

1 [Psalm For thanksgiving] Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth,

2 serve Yahweh with gladness, come into his presence with songs of joy!

3 Be sure that Yahweh is God, he made us, we belong to him, his people, the flock of his sheepfold.



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5 For Yahweh is good, his faithful love is everlasting, his constancy from age to age.

## **Gospel, John 15:18-21**

18 If the world hates you, you must realise that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because my choice of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why the world hates you.

20 Remember the words I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well.

21 But it will be on my account that they will do all this to you, because they do not know the one who sent me.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 4, 2024

1. As we continue on in our readings taken from the Acts of the Apostles, we follow the Apostle Paul as he is guided by the Holy Spirit. In today's account, he selects Timothy, a disciple who will later play a very significant role in the early Church. Paul will disciple this young man, and later establish him over an early Christian community as an elder and write two pastoral epistles or letters to him which become a part of the New Testament Canon.

Paul is passing on the Letter of the decision of the first Church Council, the Council of Jerusalem, to the early Christian communities. And He is relying on the Holy Spirit to guide him. And, that reliance was well placed. Noticed how Paul, using the spiritual gift of discernment, hears the Holy Spirit actually direct him where to preach and where not to preach.

That same Holy Spirit is at work today in the Church. That same Holy Spirit was given to us in Baptism and Confirmation. Do we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us on who we share the Gospel with? It was an encounter with the Holy Spirit many years ago which led me back home to the Catholic Church into which I had been baptized as a child. The Holy Spirit is all too often treated like the forgotten Person of the Holy Trinity.

Chapter 19 of the Acts of the Apostles begins with these words, "While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came (down) to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19: 1, 2)

Too often we live our lives like those disciples in Ephesus. We act as though we did not realize there even is a Holy Spirit, still at work, still pouring out gifts and still making it possible for us to bear spiritual fruit. The same Holy Spirit still changing each one of us, individually and collectively, into the Image of Jesus Christ. The same Holy Spirit calling us to make disciples of all the Nations.

Do we believe this?

2. As we sing our Psalm of Praise, we are praising the One God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In a few days, we will commemorate the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church on Pentecost. An examination of the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament reveals the essential role of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Church - and in the life and mission of every individual believer. A study of the Tradition, the magisterial teachings of the Church and the Catholic Catechism underscores that this reality is meant to continue. It was not a onetime event.



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The purpose of Pentecost was - and still is - the empowering of the Christian Church, with the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead! The Holy Spirit draws us into communion with the Lord and a participation in His Divine Life and mission. That communion is lived in the Church. The Catholic Catechism, quoting St Augustine, affirms "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church." (CCC # 797)

Do we understand what this really means?

3. Our Gospel text immediately follows upon the admonition and teaching Jesus gives the disciples about becoming His friends by loving one another with the same love with which He loves us. In other words, a self-emptying love, a love which will be poured out for the other. Now he tells them - and us, - remember, we are His Disciples in today's world - they will be hated and persecuted.

This is an excerpt from the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of Saint John. The last to be written, it reflects the deepest theological reflection on the sayings and actions of Jesus. The fourth Gospel contains a stirring promise of the Bible. It is rarely recounted by some contemporary preachers who often refer to the "promises" of the Bible in a manner that seems to imply we can all be "healthy, wealthy and wise" if we simply "claim" them. However, this promise is found in all of the Gospel accounts and comes right from the mouth of the Lord Himself:

"If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:18-20)

There is no doubt; we are living in an age of growing persecution against Christians. This is an age of martyrdom. The Greek word from which we derive the English word martyr means witness.

In some places, our brothers and sisters are literally shedding their blood for the faith. In others, there is a growing soft martyrdom, where those who bear the name Christian are suffering under a soft persecution, a growing discrimination which seeks to squeeze them out of the public square and compel them to bend the knee to a new Caesar. The Holy Spirit will give us the power and grace we need to embrace this promise of the Bible as well if we ask.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 5, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Sunday, May 5th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

25 and as Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, fell at his feet and did him reverence.

26 But Peter helped him up. 'Stand up,' he said, ' after all, I am only a man!'

34 Then Peter addressed them, 'I now really understand', he said, 'that God has no favourites,

35 but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

44 While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners.

45 Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on gentiles too,

46 since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said,

47 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'

48 He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

1 [Psalm] Sing a new song to Yahweh, for he has performed wonders, his saving power is in his right hand and his holy arm.

2 Yahweh has made known his saving power, revealed his saving justice for the nations to see,

3 mindful of his faithful love and his constancy to the House of Israel. The whole wide world has seen the saving power of our God.

4 Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth, burst into shouts of joy!



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## Reading 2, First John 4:7-10

7 My dear friends, let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

8 Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love.

9 This is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him.

10 Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son to expiate our sins.

## Gospel, John 15:9-17

9 I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

10 If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

11 I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.

12 This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.

13 No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.

14 You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

15 I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.

16 You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.

17 My command to you is to love one another.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 5, 2024

1. In our first reading, taken from the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we heard of the encounter between Peter and the Centurion named Cornelius. It is in Cornelius' household that Peter will preach the Gospel to a group of gentiles, and they will receive the Holy Spirit and manifest the gifts of the Spirit. They will also be baptized.

This marks a major development in the history of the Church. Prior to this, the Gospel was directed to the Jews. Of course, we have accounts throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus when Gentiles hear the Good News, and He ministers to them. This was and is the Lord's plan, that all men and women will hear the Gospel, convert, be Baptized, and enter the Church. The Church is meant to become the home of the whole human race. Do we believe this? Are we participating in the Lord's plan by sharing the Gospel with the people in our own lives? Every Christian is called to do so.

2. In our second reading, an excerpt from the first letter of St. John, the Apostle, the author of the Fourth Gospel, which bears his name, the one called the beloved disciple, teaches us of the love of God and reminds us that we are called to love one another with that same love. In fact, when we do so, that is how we bring all men and women to the knowledge of the Lord because God is love. Our motivation for sharing the Gospel with others is Love.
3. Our Gospel for today's Mass explains this profound truth even more clearly. Jesus teaches His disciples - and always remember when you hear the teachings Jesus gives His disciples that we are His contemporary disciples - He teaches US how we can remain in His love or live in His Love. By keeping His Commandments. We did not choose Him, but He chose us and appointed us to bear fruit for the kingdom, to bring all men and women to Him, to participate in His continuing redemptive mission.

The fullest manifestation of Divine Love is to lay down our lives for our friends as He laid down His Life for us. When we choose to live this way, the Way of Love, He gives us the grace to do so. And we experience true joy. We also grow in Holiness and make Him present in the lives of others because He loves through us.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 6, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Monday, May 6th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 16:11-15

11 Sailing from Troas we made a straight run for Samothrace; the next day for Neapolis,

12 and from there for Philippi, a Roman colony and the principal city of that district of Macedonia.

13 After a few days in this city we went outside the gates beside a river as it was the Sabbath and this was a customary place for prayer. We sat down and preached to the women who had come to the meeting.

14 One of these women was called Lydia, a woman from the town of Thyatira who was in the purple-dye trade, and who revered God. She listened to us, and the Lord opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying.

15 After she and her household had been baptised she kept urging us, 'If you judge me a true believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay with us.' And she would take no refusal.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 149:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 9

1 Alleluia! Sing a new song to Yahweh: his praise in the assembly of the faithful!

2 Israel shall rejoice in its Maker, the children of Zion delight in their king;

3 they shall dance in praise of his name, play to him on tambourines and harp!

4 For Yahweh loves his people, he will crown the humble with salvation.

5 The faithful exult in glory, shout for joy as they worship him,

6 praising God to the heights with their voices, a two-edged sword in their hands,

9 to execute on them the judgement passed -- to the honour of all his faithful.



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## Gospel, John 15:26--16:4

26 When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness.

27 And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.

1 I have told you all this so that you may not fall away.

2 They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy service to God.

3 They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or me.

4 But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes you may remember that I told you. I did not tell you this from the beginning, because I was with you;



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## Questions for Reflection for May 6, 2024

1. This account of the Apostle Paul meeting in Philippi with a group of local women, preaching the Gospel to them, and baptizing Lydia and her whole household is a great example of the special role that women played in the ministry of the early Church. Contrary to the mistaken claim, put forth too often, that the Church has no real regard for women, this is an example of just how uniquely the Church reached out to women and included them in the mission.

In fact, the first fruit of Christianity in Europe is the response of Lydia to this encounter. In 1988 now Saint John Paul II released a beautiful apostolic letter on the Dignity of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem in Latin). He wrote this about the women who became disciples of the Lord:

"In the history of the Church, even from earliest times, there were side-by-side with men a number of women, for whom the response of the Bride to the Bridegroom's redemptive love acquired full expressive force. First, we see those women who had personally encountered Christ and followed him. After his departure, together with the Apostles, they "devoted themselves to prayer" in the Upper Room in Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost. "On that day the Holy Spirit spoke through "the sons and daughters" of the People of God, thus fulfilling the words of the prophet Joel (cf. Acts 2: 17). These women, and others afterwards, played an active and important role in the life of the early Church, in building up from its foundations the first Christian community - and subsequent communities - through their own charisms and their varied service..."

He continued, "The same thing is repeated down the centuries, from one generation to the next, as the history of the Church demonstrates. By defending the dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has shown honour and gratitude for those women who - faithful to the Gospel - have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God. They are the holy martyrs, virgins, and mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to their faith and passed on the Church's faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel."

2. The Psalmist proclaims that we should "sing a new song to the Lord." In a beautiful sermon on this Psalm, Saint Augustine once proclaimed these words: "Sing to the Lord a new song; his praise is in the assembly of the saints. We are urged to sing a new song to the Lord, as new men who have learned a new song. A song is a thing of joy; more profoundly, it is a thing of love. Anyone, therefore, who has learned to love the new life has learned to sing a new song, and the new song reminds us of our new life. The new man, the new song, the new covenant, all belong to the one kingdom of God, and so the new man will sing a new song and will belong to the new covenant."

As new men and women, redeemed and being re-created in Christ, let us join in the song today!

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3. Jesus promised to send the Paraclete, an English version of a Greek word which means Counselor and Advocate. And He did, the Holy Spirit. And soon, on the Feast of Pentecost, we will commemorate that great event. But note, after that promise, he told the disciples that the persecution will become so great that even some would take their lives, thinking they were doing a good thing.

We need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit capacitated the early followers of Jesus to go from being a frightened fraternity to a band of brothers and sisters of whom it was said "they turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) They were empowered to carry forward in time the ongoing mission of Jesus Christ until he returns to complete the work of redemption.

A few verses later in the Gospel of John, Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit will help them and keep them from falling away when such difficulties come. He tells them,

"...it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. " (John 16:7-11)

The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not a thing of the past. We need the Holy Spirit NOW! We need to pray for a New experience of Pentecost for the WHOLE Church in this hour! We need more of the Holy Spirit for the work of the New Evangelization within the Church so she can take the mission to the whole world. We need to be Baptized afresh in the Holy Spirit in order to take our role as a member of the Body of Christ in this new missionary age.

The Church needs to rise up in this hour with the same power with which she transformed the world of the first centuries. She can...by the power of the Holy Spirit!



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 7, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Tuesday, May 7th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 16:22-34

22 The crowd joined in and showed its hostility to them, so the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be flogged.

23 They were given many lashes and then thrown into prison, and the gaoler was told to keep a close watch on them.

24 So, following such instructions, he threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 In the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises, while the other prisoners listened.

26 Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations. All the doors flew open and the chains fell from all the prisoners.

27 When the gaoler woke and saw the doors wide open he drew his sword and was about to commit suicide, presuming that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul shouted at the top of his voice, 'Do yourself no harm; we are all here.'

29 He called for lights, then rushed in, threw himself trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas,

30 and escorted them out, saying, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

31 They told him, 'Become a believer in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and your household too.'

32 Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all his household.

33 Late as it was, he took them to wash their wounds, and was baptised then and there with all his household

34 Afterwards he took them into his house and gave them a meal, and the whole household celebrated their conversion to belief in God.



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## Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3, 7-8

1 [Of David] I thank you, Yahweh, with all my heart, for you have listened to the cry I uttered. In the presence of angels I sing to you,

2 I bow down before your holy Temple. I praise your name for your faithful love and your constancy; your promises surpass even your fame.

3 You heard me on the day when I called, and you gave new strength to my heart.

7 Though I live surrounded by trouble you give me life -- to my enemies' fury! You stretch out your right hand and save me,

8 Yahweh will do all things for me. Yahweh, your faithful love endures for ever, do not abandon what you have made.

## Gospel, John 16:5-11

5 but now I am going to the one who sent me. Not one of you asks, 'Where are you going?'

6 Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this.

7 Still, I am telling you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going, because unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

8 And when he comes, he will show the world how wrong it was, about sin, and about who was in the right, and about judgement:

9 about sin: in that they refuse to believe in me;

10 about who was in the right: in that I am going to the Father and you will see me no more;

11 about judgement: in that the prince of this world is already condemned.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 7, 2024

1. In spite of being brutally flogged and thrown in chains into the inner prison, we read "In the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises, while the other prisoners listened." WOW!

How is that possible? By the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, these two followers of Jesus demonstrated another sign of the Holy Spirit at work in them when they actually reached out to the Jailer, their persecutor, who was so upset when they were rescued by the power of God that he sought to take his own life. They preached the Gospel to him and his whole family and baptized them all. Then, look what happens. The family made them a meal, which they shared, and they spend the night, as brothers and sisters in Christ, as a new family together in the Holy Spirit!

This kind of story continues to be told across the millennia because the same Holy Spirit which worked in and through Paul and Silas is at work in the Church. As the hostility toward Jesus Christ and His Church continues to grow in the West, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to fall afresh upon the Church. We are increasingly being placed at risk for living our faith - at least when we do so in fidelity to the Gospel and the teaching office of the Church. The same Holy Spirit which has protected and led the Church throughout the ages is at work in the Church today. Do we believe this?

I believe that miracles are constantly occurring. The real question is do we see them? Do we have the eyes of living faith which recognize the hand of the Lord at work? Do we ask for them? If we do see and experience miracles, are we responding to these great acts of Love and signs of the kingdom? Are we living life differently as a result? Are we finding the true joy and freedom which comes from repentance and conversion?

Are we sharing our living faith in Jesus Christ with those around us who hunger for meaning in their lives? Do we believe that the same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead is at work in the Church which is His Body? Do we pray for miracles?

2. In our Responsorial Psalm David sings "In the presence of angels I sing to you". Does God still visit men and women? Does he still send "angels" or messengers to reveal His plans? Does he send them to us to speak His words to specific people? The answer to all these questions is "Yes"!

The Latin word translated "angel" is angelu and the Greek is aggelos. Both are found in the ancient translations of the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

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They are variations of a more ancient word found in the Hebrew texts of the Bible. It is literally translated as "one going," or "one sent".

Angels "go" for God. They carry His word and initiate His actions. We could also call them messengers and ministers.

Angels are mentioned throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Bible. They are also found throughout the Christian Tradition and the teaching of the Church. In our contemporary age there is a "rediscovery" of angels and a growing interest in their actions in our midst. This is evidenced in our popular culture on television, at the Movies and in our bookstores. This interest reflects a deepening hunger for God and a desire to hear his message.

The public life, ministry and words of Jesus Christ are filled with references to the Angels. Even more present are the tales of their actions. They ministered to the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, where He suffered his anguish before the final act of selfless love at Calvary. They attended to Him in the Victory of the Resurrection and announced the meaning of the event to His followers who came to the empty tomb.

In the earliest account of the New Testament Christian community called the "Acts of the Apostles" and in the letters to the early Churches, found after the Gospel accounts in the New Testament, the presence and actions of the angels are everywhere.

Finally, in the last Book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation, they are woven throughout the Biblical texts and in a very unique way their territoriality is explained and revealed. For example, there are Angels delegated for each one of the early Churches.

If one were to remove the references to angels from the sacred texts of the Old and New Testament, not only would substantial amounts of the Bible be removed but even more of its meaning would be lost due to the role the very understanding that the existence of Angels plays in the world view that lies at the heart of the Christian revelation.

Let us join with David and sing to the Lord in the presence of the Angels.

3. In an ancient and beautiful prayer of the Catholic Church we pray these words:

"Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

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"O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen."

In the Gospel appointed for today's Mass, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit. He is still sending the Holy Spirit, to all who ask.

The Church was empowered by the Holy Spirit to live differently in the midst of a world awaiting the fullness of redemption; to lead the world back to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Can we live this kind of transformed Christian life in the stuff of our own daily lives? Yes, by living them, right now, today, in the heart of the Church and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do we ask for the Lord to fill us with the Holy Spirit every day?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 8, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Wednesday, May 8th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 17:15, 22--18:1

15 Paul's escort took him as far as Athens, and went back with instructions for Silas and Timothy to rejoin Paul as soon as they could.

22 So Paul stood before the whole council of the Areopagus and made this speech: 'Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters,

23 because, as I strolled round looking at your sacred monuments, I noticed among other things an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. In fact, the unknown God you revere is the one I proclaim to you.

24 'Since the God who made the world and everything in it is himself Lord of heaven and earth, he does not make his home in shrines made by human hands.

25 Nor is he in need of anything, that he should be served by human hands; on the contrary, it is he who gives everything -- including life and breath -- to everyone.

26 From one single principle he not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed the times and limits of their habitation.

27 And he did this so that they might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him; and indeed he is not far from any of us,

28 since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist, as indeed some of your own writers have said: We are all his children.

29 'Since we are the children of God, we have no excuse for thinking that the deity looks like anything in gold, silver or stone that has been carved and designed by a man.

30 'But now, overlooking the times of ignorance, God is telling everyone everywhere that they must repent,

31 because he has fixed a day when the whole world will be judged in uprightness by a man he has appointed. And God has publicly proved this by raising him from the dead.'

32 At this mention of rising from the dead, some of them burst out laughing; others said, 'We would like to hear you talk about this another time.'

33 After that Paul left them,





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34 but there were some who attached themselves to him and became believers, among them Dionysius the Aeropagite and a woman called Damaris, and others besides.

1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth,

## **Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 148:1-2, 11-12, 13, 14**

1 Alleluia! Praise Yahweh from the heavens, praise him in the heights.

2 Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!

11 kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all judges on earth,

12 young men and girls, old people and children together.

13 Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for his name alone is sublime, his splendour transcends earth and heaven.

14 For he heightens the strength of his people, to the praise of all his faithful, the children of Israel, the people close to him.

## **Gospel, John 16:12-15**

12 I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you to bear now.

13 However, when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord, but will say only what he has been told; and he will reveal to you the things to come.

14 He will glorify me, since all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine.

15 Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 8, 2024

1. In this account of the Apostle Paul's visit to Athens we encounter a powerful lesson for our work today, living as we do in an age which has all but forgotten God, the true God, and fashioned for itself new idols. Paul could have entered the Athenian temple, smashed the idols, and left, kicking the dust off of his feet. And maybe felt somehow "justified". But he did not. Instead, he followed the Holy Spirit. He engaged the Athenians in a dialogue, trusting that the Holy Spirit would lead him and draw those who were sincerely seeking the true God toward the truth.

This is an example of what is called "apologetics". The word does not mean apologizing. Rather, it means defending the truths of the faith. The Apostle Peter would later explain in the letter which bears his name: "in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you yet do it with gentleness and reverence." (1 Peter 3:15)

Paul finds the statue to the "unknown god" and uses it to proclaim the Gospel message. This required of Paul, and it requires of us, a belief that the Lord has planted within every man and women a hunger for Him. And a deep conviction that truth is attractive. The Catholic Catechism teaches: "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for..." (CCC# 27)

How do we reach out to "modern pagans" in our own day? Do we show reverence and respect? Do we seek to engage them in this kind of dialogue? Do we know how?

2. As the Psalmist reminds us, all Nations are called to worship the One and True God. That is His loving plan.

"Alleluia! Praise Yahweh from the heavens, praise him in the heights.  
Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!

kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all judges on earth,  
young men and girls, old people and children together.

Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for his name alone is sublime, his splendor transcends earth and heaven.

For he heightens the strength of his people, to the praise of all his faithful, the children of Israel, the people close to him."

Do we believe this? Do we live as though we do?

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3. Jesus speaks to his disciples, including us, in the Gospel of today's Mass, "...when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth." In fact, Truth is available to all men and women and is made completely revealed and visible in Jesus Himself who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)

Yet, today, we live in an age which rejects the very idea that Truth exists and can be known. In a homily given on April 18, 2005, by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger at the eve of the convocation which would elect him to be the successor of Peter, he made this astute observation concerning this age:

"...How many winds of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking... The small boat of thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves - thrown from one extreme to the other: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism, and so forth.

"Every day new sects are created and what Saint Paul says about human trickery comes true, with cunning which tries to draw those into error (cf Eph 4, 14). Having a clear faith, based on the Creed of the Church, is often labeled today as a fundamentalism. Whereas relativism - which is letting oneself be tossed and "swept along by every wind of teaching" - looks like the only attitude which is acceptable in today's standards. We are moving towards a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires."

St. John 8:32 records these words of Jesus concerning the indispensable connection between true freedom and believing that truth exists and can be known, "Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

As Christians, we are called to expose and reject the dictatorship and proclaim afresh the Truth revealed in Jesus Christ. It is the only path to true freedom in a world which is enslaved by sin.

Do we believe this? Will we do it?

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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 9, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Thursday, May 9th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 1:1-11

1 In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning

2 until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven.

3 He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God.

4 While at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is', he had said, 'what you have heard me speak about:

5 John baptised with water but, not many days from now, you are going to be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

6 Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

7 He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority,

8 but you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end.'

9 As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight.

10 They were still staring into the sky as he went, when suddenly two men in white were standing beside them,

11 and they said, 'Why are you Galileans standing here looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go to heaven.'

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

2 For Yahweh, the Most High, is glorious, the great king over all the earth.



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3 He brings peoples under our yoke and nations under our feet.

6 Let the music sound for our God, let it sound, let the music sound for our king, let it sound.

7 For he is king of the whole world; learn the music, let it sound for God!

8 God reigns over the nations, seated on his holy throne.

9 The leaders of the nations rally to the people of the God of Abraham. The shields of the earth belong to God, who is exalted on high.

## Reading 2, Ephesians 1:17-23

17 May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him.

18 May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people,

19 and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers; this accords with the strength of his power

20 at work in Christ, the power which he exercised in raising him from the dead and enthroning him at his right hand, in heaven,

21 far above every principality, ruling force, power or sovereignty, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

22 He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as he is above all things, the head of the Church;

23 which is his Body, the fullness of him who is filled, all in all.

## Gospel, Mark 16:15-20

15 And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.

16 Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.



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17 These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues;

18 they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.'

19 And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place,

20 while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 9, 2024

1. Our first reading, taken from the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles gives us St. Luke's account of the Ascension.

Throughout most of the Catholic Church around the world we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord on Thursday. In some places, the Feast is transferred to Sunday. However, whether celebrated on Thursday or Sunday, it is meant to be a cause for celebration. It can be - IF we allow the Holy Spirit to show us what it really means. The Feast has lost its meaning in the experience of too many Catholics and other Christians.

The Feast of the Ascension reveals the meaning of our lives and points to the plan of God for the tire created order.

Is that how we understand the Feast? I think we more commonly think of the Ascension as some kind of intermission or last act. Now, we must strive to do the best we can until Jesus returns.

However, the Ascension is not an intermission at all. Nor is it a last act. The event we remember in this Feast reveals the mission of the Church - and our call to participate in it - right now. It also offers the portal to eternity.

Jesus Christ has not left us. He is continuing His loving, redemptive plan through His Body, the Church, of which we are members. The Head and the Body cannot be separated. He lives His life through us!

The great western Bishop Augustine proclaimed these words in a homily he preached on the Feast of the Ascension:

"Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him. Listen to the words of the Apostle: If you have risen with Christ, set your hearts on the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For just as he remained with us even after his ascension, so we too are already in heaven with him, even though what is promised us has not yet been fulfilled in our bodies."

When we passed through the waters of the Font of Baptism we were incorporated into Jesus Christ and became members of His Body, the Church.

Therefore, as Augustine also wrote, "Where the Head is, there is the Body, where I am, there is my Church, we too are one; the Church is in me and I in her and we two are your Beloved and your Lover."



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Augustine, reflecting the clear teaching of the early Church Fathers, reminds us that the Head and the Body united are the "One Christ." In other words, we ascended with the Lord! He is the Head, and we are members of His Body. We cannot be separated.

So, this is our Feast as well!

2. Our second reading gives us a portion of the first chapter of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It is a prayer. The Apostle asks that our eyes of our hearts would be enlightened, so that we can see the deeper meaning of the Resurrection and the Ascension, the establishing of the Kingdom through the Church. Jesus is the Head of the Church and all authority has been given to Him.

When we commemorate these great events, such as the Ascension, we are not just remembering something which happened 2000 years ago. We are invited to enter into the deeper meaning. The Ascension does not mark the end of Jesus' relationship with His Church but the beginning of a new way of His relating to the world - in and through His Church.

This way includes every one of us who now bear His name. When viewed with the eyes of living faith the Ascension can begin to change the way we view ourselves and live our daily lives.

3. The Gospel appointed for the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord for this year is taken from the Gospel of St. Mark. Notice what Jesus says before He Ascends "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature," He also promises that the same signs which were demonstrated in His earthly ministry, the same manifestation of the power of God, will continue through His mystical Body, the Church, of which we are all members through our Baptism. Do we live our lives as though we believe this?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 10, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Friday, May 10th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 18:9-18

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, 'Be fearless; speak out and do not keep silence:

10 I am with you. I have so many people that belong to me in this city that no one will attempt to hurt you.'

11 So Paul stayed there preaching the word of God among them for eighteen months.

12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a concerted attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying,

13 'We accuse this man of persuading people to worship God in a way that breaks the Law.'

14 Before Paul could open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'Listen, you Jews. If this were a misdemeanour or a crime, it would be in order for me to listen to your plea;

15 but if it is only quibbles about words and names, and about your own Law, then you must deal with it yourselves -- I have no intention of making legal decisions about these things.'

16 Then he began to hustle them out of the court,

17 and at once they all turned on Sosthenes, the synagogue president, and beat him in front of the tribunal. Gallio refused to take any notice at all.

18 After staying on for some time, Paul took leave of the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut off, because of a vow he had made.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 47:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

2 For Yahweh, the Most High, is glorious, the great king over all the earth.

3 He brings peoples under our yoke and nations under our feet.

4 He chooses for us our birthright, the pride of Jacob whom he loves.

5 God goes up to shouts of acclaim, Yahweh to a fanfare on the ram's horn.

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6 Let the music sound for our God, let it sound, let the music sound for our king, let it sound.

7 For he is king of the whole world; learn the music, let it sound for God!

## **Gospel, John 16:20-23**

20 'In all truth I tell you, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy.

21 A woman in childbirth suffers, because her time has come; but when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering in her joy that a human being has been born into the world.

22 So it is with you: you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you.

23 When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 10, 2024

1. In our first reading, taken from the 18th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostle Paul is in Corinth, and the Lord speaks to Him in a vision. The early believers were so close to the Lord, they expected such things. Do we? The Lord is with us to guide us every day, if we are open to His presence and ask Him to speak to us.

What did the Lord say to Paul? "Be fearless; speak out and do not keep silence: I am with you. I have so many people that belong to me in this city that no one will attempt to hurt you."

These are words we should take to heart today - for ourselves. We are His contemporary disciples, and we should "be fearless, speak out and not be silenced. The message we bring is the only message that can truly set men and women free. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The Psalmist David was fearless for the Lord. All of us remember him, as a young man, slaying the giant Goliath with a slingshot. As his life went on, he sinned and made some horrid mistakes. But he always repented and turned back to the Lord. One of the keys to his resiliency was his continual praise and worship. Let us join his song today "God goes up to shouts of acclaim, Yahweh to a fanfare on the ram's horn. Let the music sound for our God, let it sound, let the music sound for our king, let it sound.

For he is king of the whole world; learn the music, let it sound for God!"

3. Our Gospel for today is taken from the 16th chapter of John's Gospel. The Lord is preparing His disciples for His coming passion, and death, and resurrection. He is telling them that they will be hated and persecuted, but that their sorrow will turn into joy.

He compares what is to come to a woman in childbirth. Hear the words of Jesus "A woman in childbirth suffers, because her time has come; but when she has given birth to the child, she forgets the suffering in her joy that a human being has been born into the world. So, it is with you: you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you.

When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name."

So, it can be with us. As followers of the Lord, we will be rejected as He is being rejected. But our joy comes not from the approval of men, but rather, the approval of the Lord.

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The older I get, the more I realize that word - Joy - had a special meaning when used by Jesus to address the disciples. It still does. After all, we are his contemporary disciples. He still walks with us, instructs us and leads us in the Way.

Difficulties, stress, and painful experiences which, at first glance, can cause us to respond with anything but joy, can be transformed in the life of a believer when we have living faith. They can become its very source through the power of the Holy Spirit. They can contribute to what I am calling Gospel Joy. That is, if we invite the Holy Spirit to enlighten us in the midst of them, opening our eyes to find their purpose and lesson. Yes, also pray for them to either be removed or, if they are not, trust that the Lord Jesus Christ will accompany us through them.

Remember, the word translated Gospel in English literally means Good News. Are we living in a way which gives testimony to the fact that living for Jesus Christ brings joy?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 11, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Saturday, May 11th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 18:23-28

23 where he spent a short time before continuing his journey through the Galatian country and then through Phrygia, encouraging all the followers.

24 An Alexandrian Jew named Apollos now arrived in Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, with a sound knowledge of the scriptures, and yet,

25 though he had been given instruction in the Way of the Lord and preached with great spiritual fervour and was accurate in all the details he taught about Jesus, he had experienced only the baptism of John.

26 He began to teach fearlessly in the synagogue and, when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they attached themselves to him and gave him more detailed instruction about the Way.

27 When Apollos thought of crossing over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote asking the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived there he was able by God's grace to help the believers considerably

28 by the energetic way he refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 47:2-3, 8-9, 10

2 For Yahweh, the Most High, is glorious, the great king over all the earth.

3 He brings peoples under our yoke and nations under our feet.

8 God reigns over the nations, seated on his holy throne.

9 The leaders of the nations rally to the people of the God of Abraham. The shields of the earth belong to God, who is exalted on high.



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## **Gospel, John 16:23-28**

23 When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name.

24 Until now you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete.

25 I have been telling you these things in veiled language. The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in veiled language but tell you about the Father in plain words.

26 When that day comes you will ask in my name; and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you,

27 because the Father himself loves you for loving me, and believing that I came from God.

28 I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I am leaving the world to go to the Father.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 11, 2024

1. Before they were called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26) the early followers of Jesus Christ were often referred to as “the Way”. The Apostle Paul, in recounting his own conversion, speaks of having persecuted “this Way” (Acts 22: 3-16) prior to his encounter with the Risen Lord on the Road to Damascus. This expression “the Way” reveals a profoundly important aspect of the understanding of the early Christians. They believed and proclaimed that the Christian faith was to be expressed in a new way of living.

It still is. Our relationship with Jesus Christ and membership in His Body, the Church, is meant to effect change in every aspect of our lives as human persons.

In our first reading, we read of Apollos, a new disciple, receiving more and more instruction about "The Way". Too often, Christians, baptized as children, do not receive a lot of instruction on living Christianity as a Way of Life. Our relationship with Jesus Christ and membership in His Body, the Church, is meant to effect change in every aspect of our lives as human persons and influence the way in which we participate in our families, our associational groups, our work, commerce, civil society.

All too often, we can approach our lives in a manner that fails to understand the implications of the Incarnation. For example, this occurs when we assign the teaching of the Scriptures and Magisterium of our Church to only the perceived “religious” or “spiritual” part of our lives. Faith is meant to be a light which presides over the entirety of our life. How do we understand our vocation as Christians? Is it just to go to Mass on Sunday and try to live a good life? Or do we understand it as a call to a whole new way of life?

2. David sings of the Lord as the Great King over all the earth. In the New Testament, Jesus speaks regularly about the "kingdom of God". He uses image after image to communicate to the disciples the meaning of that poignant and powerful phrase. The phrase Kingdom of God can also be translated Reign of God in English. I have always found that translation very helpful.

In Jesus Christ, the Reign of God has already come and is coming. It will come in its fullness only upon His glorious Return. In the interim, we are invited to live in, anticipate and spread that kingdom. We do so most fruitfully when we live in the heart of the Church, which is a seed of the kingdom, for the sake of the world.

In the back of the Catechism of the Catholic Church there is a Glossary with a helpful summary of the phrase Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven). It contains citations to the sections in the Catechism which break open the deep meaning of the phrase:

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"KINGDOM OF GOD (OF HEAVEN): The reign or rule of God: "the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). The Kingdom of God draws near in the coming of the Incarnate Word; it is announced in the Gospel; it is the messianic Kingdom, present in the person of Jesus, the Messiah; it remains in our midst in the Eucharist.

"Christ gave to his Apostles the work of proclaiming the Kingdom, and through the Holy Spirit forms his people into a priestly kingdom, the Church, in which the Kingdom of God is mysteriously present, for she is the seed and beginning of the Kingdom on earth. In the Lord's Prayer ("Thy Kingdom come") we pray for its final glorious appearance, when Christ will hand over the Kingdom to his Father (CCC# 541-554, 709, 763, 2816, 2819).

So, this kingdom, this reign of God, has already come, it is coming and, when the King returns, it will be finally and fully revealed. So, where is it now in our daily lives? Does the Lord reign as King in every area of our lives?

3. In the Gospel passage offered for our reflection this day, Jesus tells us that we can speak directly to the Father. In fact, as we regularly pray, He teaches us to address God as "Our Father". We can have the same relationship Jesus has with the Father, the intimate communion the disciples witnessed when they came upon Him in prayer. The same relationship they witness as they walked with Him daily. We also walk with Him daily.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that "Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son." He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church." (CCC#1997)

As we stand in Jesus, we stand in the relationship which He has with His Father. We become partakers of the Divine Nature. (2 Peter 1:4) We actually become sons (and daughters) in the Son. This is called Divine Filiation.

By receiving Jesus, we receive "the power to become the sons (and daughters) of God." (John 1:12) This gift of Divine filiation is the heart of the Christian message. God is our Father. His fatherly love invites us to continual transformation, as we cooperate with grace, into the Image and likeness revealed fully in the Beloved Son.

Do we speak to God as our Father? Do we see ourselves as sons and daughters, in the Son?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 12, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Sunday, May 12th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

15 One day Peter stood up to speak to the brothers -- there were about a hundred and twenty people in the congregation,

16 'Brothers,' he said, 'the passage of scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit, speaking through David, foretells the fate of Judas, who acted as guide to the men who arrested Jesus-

17 after being one of our number and sharing our ministry.

20 Now in the Book of Psalms it says: Reduce his encampment to ruin and leave his tent unoccupied. And again: Let someone else take over his office.

21 'Out of the men who have been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was living with us,

22 from the time when John was baptising until the day when he was taken up from us, one must be appointed to serve with us as a witness to his resurrection.'

23 Having nominated two candidates, Joseph known as Barsabbas, whose surname was Justus, and Matthias,

24 they prayed, 'Lord, you can read everyone's heart; show us therefore which of these two you have chosen

25 to take over this ministry and apostolate, which Judas abandoned to go to his proper place.'

26 They then drew lots for them, and as the lot fell to Matthias, he was listed as one of the twelve apostles.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20

1 [Of David] Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being, his holy name;

2 bless Yahweh, my soul, never forget all his acts of kindness.

11 As the height of heaven above earth, so strong is his faithful love for those who fear him.



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12 As the distance of east from west, so far from us does he put our faults.

19 Yahweh has fixed his throne in heaven, his sovereign power rules over all.

20 Bless Yahweh, all his angels, mighty warriors who fulfil his commands, attentive to the sound of his words.

## Reading 2, First John 4:11-16

11 My dear friends, if God loved us so much, we too should love one another.

12 No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love one another God remains in us and his love comes to its perfection in us.

13 This is the proof that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us a share in his Spirit.

14 We ourselves have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as Saviour of the world.

15 Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God.

16 We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

## Gospel, John 17:11-19

11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.

12 While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except one who was destined to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures.

13 But now I am coming to you and I say these things in the world to share my joy with them to the full.

14 I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world.

15 I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One.



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16 They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

17 Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.

18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world,

19 and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 12, 2024

1. In some places in the Catholic World, the Feast of the Ascension is transferred from Thursday to Sunday. We are hearing the readings for the Seventh Sunday of Easter because we offered the readings from Ascension on the traditional Ascension Thursday. So, today I will share some thoughts on the seventh Sunday of Easter readings.

In our first reading, we heard that after Jesus has ascended to the Father, the apostles, disciples, with the women who traveled with them and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, followed His instructions to travel to Jerusalem, to the upper room, where they were to POWER from on high, the Holy Spirit.

First, they had to deal with a problem. Judas, one of the twelve had betrayed them. Then, taken his own life. So, with their number down to eleven, they had to replace him with someone who had been a witness to the Resurrection. Both the loss of Judas, and the manner of choosing his replacement, were assisted by their finding spirit led direction in the Psalms and in the Hebrew Scriptures. They drew lots, and replaced him with Matthias, and he was enrolled with the other apostles.

The Apostles continued the redemptive mission of Jesus. He had chosen them - and now that He had been raised from the dead, He worked through them. He still does. The Bishops are the successors of the Apostles. The Church is still apostolic.

2. In our second reading, which is taken from the First Letter of St. John, we heard the beloved disciple John's words that when we love one another, God, who is Love, remains or lives in us. And His love is brought to perfection - which means, in biblical language, completion - in Him. When we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is our Savior, God comes to dwell, to live, within us and remains in us. WOW!!! When we remain in love, we remain in God and God lives in and through us for others. That is the heart of the Gospel message. Do we believe this! If so, let us choose to live it.
3. In the Gospel text appointed for this Seventh Sunday of Easter, we heard a portion of the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus Christ to the Father. He prays that we may be one as He and the Father are one, so that the world may believe that He was sent by the Father as Savior. Division is not God's plan. It is the result of sin. When we turn to the Lord and away from sin, we begin to see the divisions within us and around us healed. True unity is a fruit of living in and for the Lord and letting Him live in and through us.

We do not belong to "this world" but we belong to the Lord. The Apostle Paul, in a letter to the Philippians, would remind those early Christians that their citizenship is in heaven. (Phil. 3:20)



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 13, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Monday, May 13th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 19:1-8

1 It happened that while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul made his way overland as far as Ephesus, where he found a number of disciples.

2 When he asked, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' they answered, 'No, we were never even told there was such a thing as a Holy Spirit.'

3 He asked, 'Then how were you baptised?' They replied, 'With John's baptism.'

4 Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance; but he insisted that the people should believe in the one who was to come after him -- namely Jesus.'

5 When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus,

6 and the moment Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak with tongues and to prophesy.

7 There were about twelve of these men in all.

8 He began by going to the synagogue, where he spoke out fearlessly and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. He did this for three months,

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 68:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

2 You disperse them like smoke; as wax melts in the presence of a fire, so the wicked melt at the presence of God.

3 The upright rejoice in the presence of God, delighted and crying out for joy.

4 Sing to God, play music to his name, build a road for the Rider of the Clouds, rejoice in Yahweh, dance before him.

5 Father of orphans, defender of widows, such is God in his holy dwelling.

6 God gives the lonely a home to live in, leads prisoners out into prosperity, but rebels must live in the bare wastelands.

7 God, when you set out at the head of your people, when you strode over the desert,

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## Gospel, John 16:29-33

29 His disciples said, 'Now you are speaking plainly and not using veiled language.

30 Now we see that you know everything and need not wait for questions to be put into words; because of this we believe that you came from God.'

31 Jesus answered them: Do you believe at last?

32 Listen; the time will come -- indeed it has come already -- when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

33 I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 13, 2024

1. Too often we live our lives like those disciples in Ephesus we heard about in our first reading for today's Mass. We act as though we did not realize there even is a Holy Spirit, still at work, still pouring out gifts and still making it possible for us to bear spiritual fruit. The same Holy Spirit still changing each one of us, individually and collectively, into the Image of Jesus Christ. The same Holy Spirit calling us to make disciples of all the Nations. That same Holy Spirit giving us the promised Spiritual gifts.

In many respects, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, seems mysterious to many Christians in our own day. When I consider this reality, I am reminded of one of the many missionary stories recounted in the Acts of the Apostles.

Chapter 19 of Acts begins with these words, "While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came (down) to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19: 1, 2)

What characterized the experience of the early Church after experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit can still be our experience. The Holy Spirit is at work, RIGHT NOW. The Acts of the Apostles begins with these words Jesus spoke to the disciples right before He ascended:

"So, when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power (GREEK - DUNAMUS) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)

The Greek word for power is the root of our English word DYNAMITE. It connotes a DYNAMIC encounter with the Holy Spirit. Have you asked the Lord to give you that kind of experience of the Holy Spirit? NOW IS THE TIME TO DO SO. Come, Holy Spirit!

2. As is often the case, only portions of the particular Psalm are used as the Responsorial Psalm. Today, we have portions of Psalm 68. The Psalm is one of the most ancient compositions. It begins with these words:

"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those who hate Him flee before Him" Then, we pick up with "You disperse them like smoke".



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Israel knew the reality of being opposed. sometimes violently, by the enemies of Israel and Israel's God. They also knew that God fought for them! He still does!

We are living in an age of growing hostility toward Christianity. Often, the hostility we face is what could be called a "soft persecution". Although, in many places around the world people who proclaim the name of Jesus, or those who stand in the Covenant God made with Abraham, are shedding their blood. We must always remember that God will fight for us.

We need to learn from David and keep turning to the Lord. Keep Praising Him. Keep trusting Him. As we do, the joy becomes the wind that moves us forward.

3. Jesus tells His disciples they will be scattered and face great struggles. And indeed, they were. But He assures them that He has conquered, or in another translation, overcome the world. He is not speaking of the created order. It was fashioned through Him, as the Father spoke the word. And it is good. He was - and is - speaking of a system which has squeezed God out of the center, a system which has rejected Him.

There is a lot of confusion about how Christians, followers of Jesus, should relate to "the world" Some of the confusion concerning our relationship to the world comes from the remnants of one of the early heresies in Christian history, Manichaeism. The followers of this error believed that all matter itself was evil. That is NOT a Christian belief. We profess in our Creed a belief in a bodily resurrection and the coming of a new heaven and new earth! Yet this error of viewing matter as evil still infects and can lead to a kind "ghetto mentality" whereby Christians withdraw from the world. Some confusion also comes from ways the term or phrase "the world" is used in the New Testament.

There is "the world" that God created and looked upon and said, "it is good". (See e.g. Genesis, chapter 1). That world is still good. It is filled with beauty and reflects the Divine artist and architect who made it. That world He entrusted to the crown of his creation - man and woman.

Then there is a system, that culture of death and use, which has squeezed God out of His rightful place and substituted idols.

That system is also called "the world" in the bible. (See, e.g. James 4:4). We are not to "love" that world, in the sense of giving ourselves over to its dominion. We are to reject that system in order to free those enchained by its lies. However, the Father wants to bring the entire human race back into a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. Those of us who live in Christ are sent on that mission into the world.

The power to effect redemptive change in the world comes from the life of God within us. It is amazing how little leaven it takes to raise a loaf of bread. That is because within those little

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particles of yeast is found the power to ferment, to change the lump of wet dough into a loaf of aromatic, tasty, nourishing bread. However, the power contained within that yeast is not activated unless it is mixed and kneaded into the dough.

Once you work the leaven in, it is still hidden to the eye but how it transforms that loaf! So, it is with Christians within human culture! The power within us is the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead (See Romans 8:11)! All we are asked to do is to mix it up. We have to get in the loaf. We must be in the world - where Jesus is - in order to be used by Him to accomplish His ongoing work of redemption.

Leaven or yeast that is not used in time spoils and loses its capacity to ferment that dough; it must be active, or it becomes useless. That leaven must be in the dough to effect its extraordinary change. So, it is with us. We must be "in the world" to effect its transformation. Once hidden in the loaf, leaven always raises the dough. It also takes human effort - it must be kneaded and worked into the loaf.

So, it is with our lives of faith. Faith is a verb; it must be exercised. By living in the heart of the Church in the center of the world we bring the world back to God. This kind of missionary mindset has inspired great missionary ages in the past and brought extraordinary changes to entire cultures. It can once again! However, it always begins one person, one grain, at a time.

The seed of the kingdom, the living Word, has been planted within us. And now, we become the seed, the salt and the leaven for the Divine Sower who continues His redemptive mission in a world waiting to be reborn in Him. He now spreads us in the field of the world to bear a harvest for the Kingdom to come. We are called to live at the crossroads of that world and become missionaries of the new world, of which the Church is a seed and sign.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 14, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Tuesday, May 14th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

15 One day Peter stood up to speak to the brothers -- there were about a hundred and twenty people in the congregation,

16 'Brothers,' he said, 'the passage of scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit, speaking through David, foretells the fate of Judas, who acted as guide to the men who arrested Jesus-

17 after being one of our number and sharing our ministry.

20 Now in the Book of Psalms it says: Reduce his encampment to ruin and leave his tent unoccupied. And again: Let someone else take over his office.

21 'Out of the men who have been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was living with us,

22 from the time when John was baptising until the day when he was taken up from us, one must be appointed to serve with us as a witness to his resurrection.'

23 Having nominated two candidates, Joseph known as Barsabbas, whose surname was Justus, and Matthias,

24 they prayed, 'Lord, you can read everyone's heart; show us therefore which of these two you have chosen

25 to take over this ministry and apostolate, which Judas abandoned to go to his proper place.'

26 They then drew lots for them, and as the lot fell to Matthias, he was listed as one of the twelve apostles.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 113:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

1 Alleluia! Praise, servants of Yahweh, praise the name of Yahweh.

2 Blessed be the name of Yahweh, henceforth and for ever.

3 From the rising of the sun to its setting, praised be the name of Yahweh!

4 Supreme over all nations is Yahweh, supreme over the heavens his glory.



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5 Who is like Yahweh our God? His throne is set on high,

6 but he stoops to look down on heaven and earth.

7 He raises the poor from the dust, he lifts the needy from the dunghill,

8 to give them a place among princes, among princes of his people.

## **Gospel, John 15:9-17**

9 I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

10 If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

11 I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.

12 This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.

13 No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.

14 You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

15 I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.

16 You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.

17 My command to you is to love one another.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 14, 2024

1. Our first reading presents us with two excerpts from the selection of a replacement for Judas, the one who betrayed the Lord. It tells us much about the structure of the early Church and the special role that Peter played among the Apostles. The initiative for replacing Judas, so that the number of Apostles remained as twelve, came from Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Just as Israel had twelve tribes, this New Israel, the Church, the Body of Christ, has twelve Apostles. Luke reserves the term "Apostles" for the twelve as we see in the 6th chapter of the Book when the twelve prayed and laid their hands on, ordaining, the first Deacons of the Church. He also shows the special place given to Peter early on, as evident in Acts chapter 2 and verse 14: "Peter, standing with the Eleven" speaks publicly on their behalf.

The structure of the Church is not something unimportant. In fact, it was led of the Holy Spirit. Within the first two centuries we will see the Orders of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, clearly evident, Bishop, Priest and Deacon. The Church is Gods loving plan for the whole human race.

In its treatment of the Church, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, citing the Scriptures, Saint Augustine and Saint Ambrose explains:

"845 To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood. [St. Augustine, Serm. 96, 7, 9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, De virg. 18, 118: PL 16, 297B; cf. already 1 Pet 3:20-21] [30, 953, 1219]"

How do we view the Church? Do we believe that she has been ordered, structured, and built by the Lord?

Of course, until the Lord returns, this Church is still composed of human members and thus, she is both human and divine. She is wounded and in need of healing.

However, she is the means through which we participate in the very life of God and the balm for healing the Nations. To her has been entrusted the Sacraments and the Word, the gift of a teaching office and the very means of salvation. The Church is the Body of Christ.



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The Church is not an optional “extra” that we add on to our lives. She is our life now because we live in Christ, from whose wounded side she was birthed at the tree of Calvary, the altar for the new world. Through faith we are invited, daily, more deeply into this mystery; and it is by grace that we will begin to comprehend it and live it. To love the Lord is to love the Church.

2. The Psalmist sings in our Responsorial Psalm for today’s Holy Mass: "Supreme over all nations is Yahweh, supreme over the heavens his glory. Who is like Yahweh our God? His throne is set on high, but he stoops to look down on heaven and earth."

This sovereignty of God is an essential part of the faith. Nations will come and go. Only the Kingdom of God is eternal. So, how do we understand the Kingdom of God?

The phrase Kingdom of God can also be translated Reign of God in English. I have always found that translation very helpful.

In Jesus Christ, the Reign of God has already come and is coming. It will come in its fullness only upon His glorious Return. In the interim, we are invited to live in, anticipate and spread that kingdom. We do so most fruitfully when we live in the heart of the Church, which is a seed of the kingdom, for the sake of the world.

In the back of the Catechism of the Catholic Church there is a Glossary with a helpful summary of the phrase Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven). It contains citations to the sections in the Catechism which break open the deep meaning of the phrase:

"KINGDOM OF GOD (OF HEAVEN): The reign or rule of God: "the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). The Kingdom of God draws near in the coming of the Incarnate Word; it is announced in the Gospel; it is the messianic Kingdom, present in the person of Jesus, the Messiah; it remains in our midst in the Eucharist.

Christ gave to his Apostles the work of proclaiming the Kingdom, and through the Holy Spirit forms his people into a priestly kingdom, the Church, in which the Kingdom of God is mysteriously present, for she is the seed and beginning of the Kingdom on earth. In the Lord's Prayer ("Thy Kingdom come") we pray for its final glorious appearance, when Christ will hand over the Kingdom to his Father (CCC# 541-554, 709, 763, 2816, 2819).

So, this kingdom, this reign of God, has already come, it is coming and, when the King returns, it will be finally and fully revealed."



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3. In its dogmatic constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, (Light to the Nations) the Second Vatican Council affirmed the teaching of Jesus Christ, the clear teaching and witness of the early Church and the consistent teaching of Church Councils throughout the ages - holiness of life is not an option, for any member of the Church. We are all called to Christian perfection, "all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect" (Lumen Gentium, Light to the Nations, 11).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (CCC #2013) Christians are saved from sin, death, and separation from God, through Jesus Christ.

We are called for holy living. We are to live differently - beginning right now- because we live our lives now in Jesus Christ. We are to love differently, because we are capacitated by grace to love in Jesus Christ, and with His Love. And all of this is made possible, as we cooperate with grace. The character of Christ is being formed in us as we cooperate with grace.

Our Gospel passage chosen for today's Holy Mass reminds us that the Lord first chose us, and we respond. He calls us to live in Him and allow Him to live His life through us, reaching out to love all men and women. We can do that if we, in His words, "Remain in His Love."



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 15, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Wednesday, May 15th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 20:28-38

28 'Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you the guardians, to feed the Church of God which he bought with the blood of his own Son.

29 'I know quite well that when I have gone fierce wolves will invade you and will have no mercy on the flock.

30 Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them.

31 So be on your guard, remembering how night and day for three years I never slackened in counselling each one of you with tears.

32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace that has power to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all the sanctified.

33 'I have never asked anyone for money or clothes;

34 you know for yourselves that these hands of mine earned enough to meet my needs and those of my companions.

35 By every means I have shown you that we must exert ourselves in this way to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, who himself said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving." '

36 When he had finished speaking he knelt down with them all and prayed.

37 By now they were all in tears; they put their arms round Paul's neck and kissed him;

38 what saddened them most was his saying they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.



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## Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 68:29-30, 33-35, 35-36

29 from your temple high above Jerusalem. Kings will come to you bearing tribute.

30 Rebuke the Beast of the Reeds, that herd of bulls, that people of calves, who bow down with ingots of silver. Scatter the people who delight in war.

33 the Rider of the Heavens, the primeval heavens. There he speaks, with a voice of power!

34 Acknowledge the power of God. Over Israel his splendour, in the clouds his power.

35 Awesome is God in his sanctuary. He, the God of Israel, gives strength and power to his people. Blessed be God.

## Gospel, John 17:11-19

11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.

12 While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except one who was destined to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures.

13 But now I am coming to you and I say these things in the world to share my joy with them to the full.

14 I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world.

15 I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One.

16 They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

17 Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.

18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world,

19 and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 15, 2024

1. We hear more of the Apostle Paul's goodbye address to the elders and faithful of Ephesus. You can sense the genuine fatherly love this great Apostle has for the Church. You can also feel the bonds of genuine affection the faithful have for him. This was characteristic of the early Christian communities. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, the love you have for one another." (John 13:35) Love was the binding force of the relational identity of the early church. Tertullian wrote that the Romans would exclaim, "See how they love one another!"

Justin Martyr wrote of this love: "We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies."

Paul, as their father in the faith, also warned of the hardships they would suffer. He warned of the "wolves" who would come with false teachings. And his warnings were accurate. One of the greatest dangers to the Church of the first three centuries was such false teaching. It is still one of the greatest dangers to the Church in our time. The Church is a relational reality. Christianity is not "Me AND Jesus". Rather, its "Me in Jesus, and in Jesus with you, for the sake of the world." Do we view our relationships with other Christians in this way? Do we have genuine affection for them as brothers and sisters? Do we guard the teaching we have received from the Scriptures, the Catechism, and the teaching office of the Church? How important is it to us to be Catholic Christians?

2. Do we, like the Psalmist David regularly "Acknowledge the power of God"? Do we look to Him to receive the strength and power that we need? What role does God actually have in our daily lives? Is He Central? Or do we have a sort of "God on the shelf", someone we turn to when we feel incapable of handling things. Do we take Him off the shelf and call on Him?

The Church reminds us, in the Catholic Catechism, "Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything." (CCC #268) and, in the next paragraph, "...He is the Lord of the universe, whose order he established, and which remains wholly subject to him and at his disposal. He is master of history, governing hearts and events in keeping with his will."

We need to acknowledge the omnipotence of God and begin to realize more and more who He truly is. Only then will we come to understand who we are.



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3. Jesus continues His heartfelt priestly prayer to the Father in the Gospel text appointed for today's Holy Mass. He knows what is coming as he walks toward the day when He will stretch His arms out on the Cross and embrace the fallen world. He knows that He will defeat Death, Rise and that He will return to the father. He wants those whom He loves to experience unity with Him, and with the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom He loves includes you and me!

He prays: "I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One.

They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth."

To be consecrated is to be set apart, to be dedicated. Jesus asks the Father to set us apart from this world by setting us apart for the Truth. Jesus set us apart by giving Himself to us completely, redeeming us from the grip of the evil one and freeing us from the penalty of sin, the separation it brings. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He also invites us to continue on in the Truth, to take an active role by living a consecrated life, a life set apart for God. Hear his words, "'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'" (John 8:32)

Do we understand what it means to be set apart for God? To be consecrated in Truth? Do we stay in His word?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 16, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Thursday, May 16th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 22:30; 23:6-11

30 The next day, since he wanted to know for sure what charge the Jews were bringing, he freed Paul and gave orders for a meeting of the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin; then he brought Paul down and set him in front of them.

6 Now Paul was well aware that one party was made up of Sadducees and the other of Pharisees, so he called out in the Sanhedrin, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee and the son of Pharisees. It is for our hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.'

7 As soon as he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was split between the two parties.

8 For the Sadducees say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, while the Pharisees accept all three.

9 The shouting grew louder, and some of the scribes from the Pharisees' party stood up and protested strongly, 'We find nothing wrong with this man. Suppose a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel?'

10 Feeling was running high, and the tribune, afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered his troops to go down and haul him out and bring him into the fortress.

11 Next night, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Courage! You have borne witness for me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome.'

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

1 [In a quiet voice Of David] Protect me, O God, in you is my refuge.

2 To Yahweh I say, 'You are my Lord, my happiness is in none

5 My birthright, my cup is Yahweh; you, you alone, hold my lot secure.

7 I bless Yahweh who is my counsellor, even at night my heart instructs me.

8 I keep Yahweh before me always, for with him at my right hand, nothing can shake me.

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9 So my heart rejoices, my soul delights, my body too will rest secure,

10 for you will not abandon me to Sheol, you cannot allow your faithful servant to see the abyss.

11 You will teach me the path of life, unbounded joy in your presence, at your right hand delight for ever.

## **Gospel, John 17:20-26**

20 I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me.

21 May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.

22 I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one.

23 With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me.

24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

25 Father, Upright One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me.

26 I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 16, 2024

1. The courageous witness of the Apostle Paul continues as we follow along in the Acts of the Apostles. This former persecutor of the early Church knew well what could happen to him for preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus. But His living faith overcame his fear, and he exhibited the holy boldness which was characteristic of the early Church.

In these verses, he is hauled before the Chief Priests and the council of elders, the Sanhedrin. Knowing of the split in their ranks concerning whether or not they believed in the Resurrection of the dead, Paul exercises discernment and sets his own mistreatment in a context which he knew would further advance his objective. And that objective was clear, to preach the full Gospel of Jesus Christ to all who would listen.

And, that night, the Lord appears to him and said "Courage!

You have borne witness for me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome." And indeed, that is what happens. The same Holy Spirit which gave the Apostle Paul the courage, the "holy boldness" has been given to each one of us. Are we choosing to put Jesus and preaching His Gospel first? Or are we falling for one of the what the Fathers of the Last Council, the Second Vatican Council, called the "separation between faith and life"?

2. In our Psalm response, we are invited to join David in extolling the Lord as the very source of our true happiness. His intimate communion with the Lord is clear in all of his Psalms. He sings these words: "You will teach me the path of life, unbounded joy in your presence, at your right-hand delight forever."

An old priest friend, who is now with the Lord, use to tell me as a young man that the source of true joy could be found in the turning the word JOY into an acronym. J. O. Y.

Jesus, Over, You

When we put Jesus, the fullness of Gods revelation of Himself, over us, in every area of our life. When we choose to make Him the LORD of every area of our lives. When we invite Him to reign in every area of our lives...then we find the true joy of living in an intimate communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Will we do that today?



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3. The Gospel text appointed for today's Holy Mass is one more portion of the beautiful Priestly prayer of Jesus for those who follow Him, for His disciples. That includes you! That includes Me! In fact, the portion of the prayer which we heard at Holy Mass today makes it very clear. Hear the words of the Master: "I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me."

We believe because the Apostles, down through the ages, stayed faithful to teaching and passing on what scripture and the catechism call the "deposit of faith". The Catholic Catechism teaches:

"The apostles entrusted the "Sacred deposit" of the faith (the depositum fidei), contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. "By adhering to [this heritage] the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practicing, and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful." (CCC #84)

And it goes on to explain the term "Magisterium" or "teaching office", and its importance with these words. "The Magisterium of the Church." "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

"Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith."

"Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: "He who hears you, hears me", 49 the faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms." (CCC #85-87)

As we profess in the Creed, we believe that the Church is "Apostolic". Part of what that means is that the Apostolic office of the Bishops, established by the Lord Himself, continues in our midst. Do we believe and receive this great gift as Catholic Christians?

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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 17, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Friday, May 17th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 25:13-21

13 Some days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus.

14 Their visit lasted several days, and Festus put Paul's case before the king, saying, 'There is a man here whom Felix left behind in custody,

15 and while I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and elders of the Jews laid information against him, demanding his condemnation.

16 But I told them that Romans are not in the habit of surrendering any man, until the accused confronts his accusers and is given an opportunity to defend himself against the charge.

17 So they came here with me, and I wasted no time but took my seat on the tribunal the very next day and had the man brought in.

18 When confronted with him, his accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected;

19 but they had some argument or other with him about their own religion and about a dead man called Jesus whom Paul alleged to be alive.

20 Not feeling qualified to deal with questions of this sort, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried there on this issue.

21 But Paul put in an appeal for his case to be reserved for the judgement of the emperor, so I ordered him to be remanded until I could send him to Caesar.'

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20

1 [Of David] Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being, his holy name;

2 bless Yahweh, my soul, never forget all his acts of kindness.

11 As the height of heaven above earth, so strong is his faithful love for those who fear him.

12 As the distance of east from west, so far from us does he put our faults.



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19 Yahweh has fixed his throne in heaven, his sovereign power rules over all.

20 Bless Yahweh, all his angels, mighty warriors who fulfil his commands, attentive to the sound of his words.

## **Gospel, John 21:15-19**

15 When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'

16 A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.'

17 Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'

18 In all truth I tell you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.'

19 In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 17, 2024

1. Next, this wonderful Apostle named Paul, appeals to Caesar. He knew, once again, that because he was a Roman citizen, he had certain "civil rights". And he used that fact to further the real mission, to preach the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. He exercised prudence, a gift of the Spirit, and was strategic. A true Christian leader.

In 1991, as a practicing Constitutional Lawyer, dedicated to the defense of Pro-Life, Pro-Family and Religious Liberty causes and cases, I accepted an invitation to build the American Center for Law and Justice, or A.C.L.J, a public interest law firm which would defend the rights of believers. First, I knew the Lord was inviting me after much discernment. But I also knew the importance of using the courts to ensure that Christians would be free to do their missionary work in this current age.

I spent seven years at the helm of that Law Firm. In the last year, I was ordained as a Deacon, and everything began to change. The Lord had a new mission for me, and I was happy to once again say yes. But during those years, I had the privilege of joining with great lawyers, like Jay Sekulow, the Chief Counsel, in defending Pro-Life and Religious Freedom cases, all the way through to the Supreme Court. To keep the door open for the Church to do her work. Helping Christians to, like Saint Paul, use their Civil Rights, to appeal in a sense to the new Rome.

Fortunately, the ACLJ continued, and many other Christian groups have taken up this important mission. All of us who bear the name Christian have an obligation to use every opportunity to proclaim the Truth which will set all men and women free and to use everything, including the Courts, when necessary, to keep the doors open for the witness of Christians in this age. I believe we need some of Saint Paul's Holy Boldness in this hour. Do you agree?

2. The Psalmist David affirms the most important truth - for every man and woman in the whole world to hear - in these wonderful words taken from today's responsorial Psalm:

"As the height of heaven is above the earth, so strong is his faithful love for those who fear him.  
As the distance of east from west, so far from us does he put our faults."

When the Lord forgives us, he puts our faults away, as far as the East is from the West!

As Catholics, we have a wonderful vehicle through which to experience this forgiveness on the deepest way, the Sacrament of Confession, also called Penance or reconciliation.

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In the last chapter of his Autobiography entitled *The Man with a Golden Key*, one of my favorite writers, GK Chesterton, a Catholic convert, wrote: "When people ask me, or indeed anybody else, "Why did you join the Church of Rome?" the first essential answer, if it is partly an elliptical answer, is, "To get rid of my sins."

"For there is no other religious system that does really profess to get rid of people's sins. It is confirmed by the logic - which to many seems startling - by which the Church deduces that sin confessed and adequately repented is actually abolished; and that the sinner does really begin again as if he had never sinned."

"When a Catholic comes from Confession, he does truly, by definition, step out again into that dawn of his own beginning and look with new eyes across the world to a Crystal Palace that is really of crystal. He believes that in that dim corner, and in that brief ritual, God has really remade him in His own image."

"He is now a new experiment of the Creator. He is as much a new experiment as he was when he was really only five years old. He stands, as I said, in the white light at the worthy beginning of the life of a man. The accumulations of time can no longer terrify. He may be grey and gouty; but he is only five minutes old."

When was the last time you went to confession? The door of freedom is always open.

3. Among the Post-Resurrection accounts of Jesus in the New Testament, this is the one from the Gospel of St John which challenges me the most. It comes at the end and involves an encounter between the Risen Jesus and Peter. We are most familiar with the first part:

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep".

However, it is what follows in this encounter between Peter and the Lord which has come to mean so much to me as I have grown older.

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I have shared a perspective on this text with many people I care about. Many were passing through difficult times. Others were trying to understand trouble and failure in the Christian life. Jesus continued speaking to Peter,

"Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, follow me." (John 21:1-19)

Another translation says, "when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will tie a belt around you and lead you where you do not want to go." It is from this translation that I have derived my often-used expression in my teaching and writing on this passage, the brotherhood of the belt.

As the years have unfolded, this encounter between Peter and the Risen Lord has taken on a deeper meaning for me. Reflecting upon it invites me into an examination of how I respond to the struggle, failure, disappointment, and difficulties which happen in daily life. Let's be honest, we will make wrong choices, we will fall, fail, and face struggles in life. The only question is how we will respond. Will we get up - and allow these experiences to change us? Will we join Peter in this brotherhood of the belt? Will we allow ourselves to be pulled along by the Lord - affirming that He knows what is best?

John's Gospel was the last to be written and reveals the mature reflections of the early Church concerning the deeper meaning of the Incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and teaching of Jesus Christ the Messiah. In his treatment of this post-resurrection appearance of Jesus, he focuses us on Peter for many reasons. The early Fathers of the Church drew beautiful insights from the three questions asked by the Risen Lord, as well as from Peter's three-fold response.

They taught that though this dialogue represented the undoing of his former threefold denial, it was also about much more. It was an affirmation of his specific call to leadership Peter would be given over the Church, the Body of Christ. It was about how he would die a martyr's death. It also shows the real mettle of the man. His response to Jesus becomes our invitation.

The encounter reaches down to the depths of the mystery of human freedom. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church so succinctly expresses "Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself" (CCC #1861) Sin is an abuse of freedom, a wrong choice. Peter's wrong choices were not the end of the story of God's plan for his life.

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Peter's denial crippled Peter emotionally and spiritually. He lost his way. That was until he encountered the Risen Christ. There, in that encounter, he allowed the belt of discipleship to be tied around him. It led him through life and pulled him even to death, on a cross, in imitation of the Savior whom he loved.

We will lose our way as well. We will make wrong choices. We will fall. However, what matters most is what we do afterward. Will we respond to the invitations of grace to get up and begin again? Peter shows us the way into the brotherhood of the belt. By encountering the Risen Lord and letting him pull us forward and toward His loving plan in our own lives.

The only path out of Peter's plight was repentance and then, making a new choice - one rooted in faith and trust rather than fear and failure. The Risen Jesus came and stood in front of Him, gazing upon Him in love, showing Him the way of new life, inviting him into the brotherhood of the belt.

The same Risen Jesus does the same thing for each one of us. Are we ready to be led about by the Lord? To join Peter in the "brotherhood of the belt"?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 18, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Saturday, May 18th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 28:16-20, 30-31

16 On our arrival in Rome Paul was allowed to stay in lodgings of his own with the soldier who guarded him.

17 After three days he called together the leading Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, 'Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.

18 They examined me and would have set me free, since they found me guilty of nothing involving the death penalty;

19 but the Jews lodged an objection, and I was forced to appeal to Caesar, though not because I had any accusation to make against my own nation.

20 That is why I have urged you to see me and have a discussion with me, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear this chain.'

30 He spent the whole of the two years in his own rented lodging. He welcomed all who came to visit him,

31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete fearlessness and without any hindrance from anyone.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 11:4, 5, 7

4 Yahweh in his holy temple! Yahweh, his throne is in heaven; his eyes watch over the world, his gaze scrutinises the children of Adam.

5 Yahweh examines the upright and the wicked, the lover of violence he detests.

7 For Yahweh is upright and loves uprightness, the honest will ever see his face.

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## Gospel, John 21:20-25

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them -- the one who had leant back close to his chest at the supper and had said to him, 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?'

21 Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'What about him, Lord?'

22 Jesus answered, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me.'

23 The rumour then went out among the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die,' but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come.'

24 This disciple is the one who vouches for these things and has written them down, and we know that his testimony is true.

25 There was much else that Jesus did; if it were written down in detail, I do not suppose the world itself would hold all the books that would be written.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 18, 2024

1. As the book of the Acts of the Apostles comes to an end, we find the Apostle Paul continuing his passionate preaching and ministry. Here he is in Rome, having appealed to Caesar to have his case heard. He is guarded by a Roman soldier, living in a home which he secured and paid for. Paul was a tentmaker, a profession he often picked back up so he would never be seen as a burden by any of the churches which he visited.

His seemingly boundless energy and fidelity to sharing the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, is a model which every Christian believer should seriously consider and, imitate. Again, this reading is a periscope, an extract from a biblical text. It skips from verse 20 to verse 30. In that section, we read that Paul continually received crowds of people in his rented lodgings on a daily basis.

For example, we read in verses 23-25:

"When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved..."

What was it that gave Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Stephen, Phillip... and so many others whom we encounter in the Acts of the Apostles such conviction, such power, such perseverance? The Holy Spirit, the very power Jesus promised they would receive. They not only knew ABOUT THE LORD. They KNEW the Lord. They lived their life in Him and let Him live His life through them.

What about us? Do we know ABOUT the Lord? Or do we really KNOW the Lord?

2. The Psalmist David also encountered the Lord and knew Him. In fact, the Psalms are the greatest hymnal, the greatest songbook, ever offered to the People of God. That is why it has informed the formal worship of both the Jewish people, and the Christian Church. Collectively it is called "The Psalter" which means "Praises". Speaking of the Psalms as the Prayer of the Assembly, the Catholic Catechism explains:

"From the time of David to the coming of the Messiah texts appearing in these sacred books show a deepening in prayer for oneself and in prayer for others. Thus, the Psalms were gradually collected into the five books of the Psalter (or "Praises"), the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament.



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"The Psalms both nourished and expressed the prayer of the People of God gathered during the great feasts at Jerusalem and each Sabbath in the synagogues. Their prayer is inseparably personal and communal; it concerns both those who are praying and all men. The Psalms arose from the communities of the Holy Land and the Diaspora but embrace all creation. Their prayer recalls the saving events of the past, yet extends into the future, even to the end of history; it commemorates the promises God has already kept and awaits the Messiah who will fulfill them definitively. Prayed by Christ and fulfilled in him, the Psalms remain essential to the prayer of the Church.

"The Psalter is the book in which The Word of God becomes man's prayer. In other books of the Old Testament, "the words proclaim [God's] works and bring to light the mystery they contain." The words of the Psalmist, sung for God, both express and acclaim the Lord's saving works; the same Spirit inspires both God's work and man's response. Christ will unite the two. In him, the psalms continue to teach us how to pray.

"The Psalter's many forms of prayer take shape both in the liturgy of the Temple and in the human heart. Whether hymns or prayers of lamentation or thanksgiving, whether individual or communal, whether royal chants, songs of pilgrimage or wisdom meditations, the Psalms are a mirror of God's marvelous deeds in the history of his people, as well as reflections of the human experiences of the Psalmist. Though a given psalm may reflect an event of the past, it still possesses such direct simplicity that it can be prayed in truth by men of all times and conditions."

The Catechism continues: "Certain constant characteristics appear throughout the Psalms: simplicity and spontaneity of prayer; the desire for God himself through and with all that is good in his creation; the distraught situation of the believer who, in his preferential love for the Lord, is exposed to a host of enemies and temptations, but who waits upon what the faithful God will do, in the certitude of his love and in submission to his will. The prayer of the psalms is always sustained by praise; that is why the title of this collection as handed down to us is so fitting: "The Praises." Collected for the assembly's worship, the Psalter both sounds the call to prayer and sings the response to that call: Hallelu-Yah! ("Alleluia"), "Praise the Lord!"

Finally, quoting St Ambrose, the Catechism offers us this powerful insight:

"What is more pleasing than a psalm? David expresses it well: "Praise the Lord, for a psalm is good: let there be praise of our God with gladness and grace!" Yes, a psalm is a blessing on the lips of the people, praise of God, the assembly's homage, a general acclamation, a word that speaks for all, the voice of the Church, a confession of faith in song". (CCC# 2585-2589)

Faithful Jews and the early Christians committed the Psalter to memory. For two millennia the Church has used the Psalter as the framework for its Liturgy of the Hours, its formal prayer. Do we read the Psalms? Do we pray the Psalms?



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3. The Beloved disciple, John the Apostle, wrote his Gospel last. It reflects the maturation of the understanding of who Jesus was and is - and what His message really means. It is the most profound of the four gospels theologically and it is assembled in a very different manner than the other three Gospels. Collectively, the other three are called the "Synoptic Gospels", from a word which means similar. The Gospel of John is quite unique.

Throughout the whole of John's account, He is teaching the deeper understanding of the Paschal Mystery, a phrase which means the entirety of the conception, birth, saving life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the miracles John selects to recount, and the manner in which he recounts them, was deliberate and theological. They were presented as "signs" of the Kingdom of God breaking through in History through Jesus Christ.

The last sentence of the last chapter of the last Gospel reads as follows:

"There was much else that Jesus did; if it were written down in detail, I do not suppose the world itself would hold all the books that would be written."

John explains in the chapter right before this one:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."

We should regularly and prayerfully read this beautiful Gospel. It has inspired and led men and women throughout the history of the Church into a deep and transformational relationship with the Risen Lord. Do we want that kind of relationship? If we do, as the young St. Augustine heard the Lord say: "take up and read."



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 19, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Sunday, May 19th, 2024

### Reading 1, Acts 2:1-11

1 When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together,

2 when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting;

3 and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.

4 They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.

5 Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven,

6 and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language.

7 They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely,' they said, 'all these men speaking are Galileans?

8 How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language?

9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; residents of Rome-

11 Jews and proselytes alike -- Cretans and Arabs, we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.'

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

1 Bless Yahweh, my soul, Yahweh, my God, how great you are! Clothed in majesty and splendour,

24 How countless are your works, Yahweh, all of them made so wisely! The earth is full of your creatures.

29 Turn away your face and they panic; take back their breath and they die and revert to dust.



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30 Send out your breath and life begins; you renew the face of the earth.

31 Glory to Yahweh for ever! May Yahweh find joy in his creatures!

34 May my musings be pleasing to him, for Yahweh gives me joy.

## Reading 2, First Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

3 Because of that, I want to make it quite clear to you that no one who says 'A curse on Jesus' can be speaking in the Spirit of God, and nobody is able to say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit.

4 There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit;

5 there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord.

6 There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all.

7 The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good.

12 For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts -- all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body -- so it is with Christ.

13 We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink.

## Gospel, John 20:19-23

19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,'

20 and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord,

21 and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

22 After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained.

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## Questions for Reflection for May 19, 2024

1. On Pentecost, the early followers of Jesus gathered as their Lord had instructed them, expecting the fulfillment of the promise he had made to send the Holy Spirit. We refer to Pentecost as the birthday of the missionary church for a good reason. Their encounter with the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room changed them. The Holy Spirit capacitated the early followers of Jesus to go from being a frightened fraternity to a band of brothers and sisters of whom it was said "they turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6)

In the encounter with the Holy Spirit, they manifested "charisma", a Greek word that simply means "gifts of grace". One of these gifts, the gift of tongues. Another, the gift of prophecy. They were empowered to carry forward in time the ongoing mission of Jesus Christ until he returns to complete the work of redemption. Every year, this celebration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is an invitation to each one of us to have the very same encounter.

The Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church began with a prayer for a New Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost and continues to be poured out on, in, and through the Church, for the sake of her mission in the world. Pentecost was and is the birthday of the Church. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and the source of her power for mission.

We need to pray for a New Pentecost for the Church in this hour! We need more of the Holy Spirit for the New Evangelization of the Church - so that a renewed Church can engage in the missionary task of the Third Christian Millennium. We each need to be Baptized afresh in the Holy Spirit in order to take up our role as a member of the Body of Christ in this new missionary age. The whole Catholic Church needs to rise up in this hour, clothed with the same power with which she transformed the world of the first centuries. We, through our Baptism, are now members of that Church. We need to ask the Lord to Baptize us afresh with the Holy Spirit and send us on mission.

2. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were clearly manifested in the early churches. That includes the "charismatic" gifts, such as the gift of tongues and prophecy. In addition, as the church spread, the miracles of Jesus, including healing and deliverance from evil, continued, at the hands of the Apostles. They were signs of the Kingdom. Jesus promised that would happen, and it did happen.

In our second reading, we heard a portion of the Apostle Paul having to correct some abuses of the use of the "charismatic" gifts in the Assembly. He offers a vital principle which is still taught by the Church - all spiritual gifts are given for the "common good" of the Body of Christ.

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To build up the Church. There was some disordered and disruptive use of these gifts occurring in the Church at Corinth. Also, Paul taught, and the Church still teaches, that the greatest gift of all, and the only one that will endure eternally, is the gift of Love.

Often, I am asked whether I still believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available for ordinary Christians? Yes. In fact, they are emphasized in the catechesis, the teaching given in preparing young men and women for the Sacrament of Confirmation, called Chrismation in Eastern Christianity, both Catholic and Orthodox. But we emphasize two sets of spiritual gifts. The gifts set forth in the Prophet Isaiah, of which the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, "The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. (Is. 11:1-2) They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations."

And, additionally, what are called the charismatic gifts, which the same Catholic Catechism explains with great insight and lived maturity in a section entitled "the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit" which should be read by every who wants to grow in understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit.

This excellent teaching source is full of the biblical texts, quotes from the early fathers of the Church (what is meant by patristic sources) and good, solid teaching from the centuries of the history of the Church. It reflects on these gifts and their role in the life of a Christian, as well as the mission of the whole Body of Christ. (See, Catholic Catechism #797-801)

In its section on the Charisms, we read:

"Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

"Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.

"It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds.



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"Their office [is] not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good," so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together "for the common good."

Do we ask the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual gifts in order to serve the work of the Church? We should.

3. In the Gospel text appointed for today's Feast of Pentecost, we are given John's account of a post resurrection appearance of Jesus. He shows them his glorified wounds. He then commissions them to continue His Mission and go into the whole world.

Then, he confers the Holy Spirit on them by breathing on the Apostles and saying "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." The Church continues the mission of Jesus by forgiving sins and bringing men and women, through the waters of Baptism, into new life in Christ Jesus. The Sacraments are the continuing ministry of Jesus the Head, administered through the Body.

Once again, this deep insight set forth in the Fourth Gospel reflects the deeply theological nature of John's Gospel. The image of the Holy Spirit as the Breath of God, the life of God, hearkens all the way back to the creation of our first parents. In the creation account in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, the first Book of the Bible, we read these words, "the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7)

The Catholic Catechism explains:

"The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts, the Spirit of his Son, is truly God. Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world. In adoring the Holy Trinity, life-giving, consubstantial, and indivisible, the Church's faith also professes the distinction of persons. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him. "  
(CCC #689)



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 20, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Monday, May 20th, 2024

### Reading 1, James 3:13-18

13 Anyone who is wise or understanding among you should from a good life give evidence of deeds done in the gentleness of wisdom.

14 But if at heart you have the bitterness of jealousy, or selfish ambition, do not be boastful or hide the truth with lies;

15 this is not the wisdom that comes from above, but earthly, human and devilish.

16 Wherever there are jealousy and ambition, there are also disharmony and wickedness of every kind;

17 whereas the wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it is also peaceable, kindly and considerate; it is full of mercy and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it.

18 The peace sown by peacemakers brings a harvest of justice.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 15

8 The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes.

9 The fear of Yahweh is pure, lasting for ever; the judgements of Yahweh are true, upright, every one,

10 more desirable than gold, even than the finest gold; his words are sweeter than honey, that drips from the comb.

### Gospel, Mark 9:14-29

14 As they were rejoining the disciples they saw a large crowd round them and some scribes arguing with them.

15 At once, when they saw him, the whole crowd were struck with amazement and ran to greet him.



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16 And he asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?'

17 A man answered him from the crowd, 'Master, I have brought my son to you; there is a spirit of dumbness in him,

18 and when it takes hold of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid. And I asked your disciples to drive it out and they were unable to.'

19 In reply he said to them, 'Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.'

20 They brought the boy to him, and at once the spirit of dumbness threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at the mouth.

21 Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' 'From childhood,' he said,

22 'and it has often thrown him into fire and into water, in order to destroy him.

23 But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.'

24 'If you can?' retorted Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who has faith.' At once the father of the boy cried out, 'I have faith. Help my lack of faith!'

25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd was gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit. 'Deaf and dumb spirit,' he said, 'I command you: come out of him and never enter him again.'

26 Then it threw the boy into violent convulsions and came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a corpse that most of them said, 'He is dead.'

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he was able to stand.

28 When he had gone indoors, his disciples asked him when they were by themselves, 'Why were we unable to drive it out?'

29 He answered, 'This is the kind that can be driven out only by prayer.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 20, 2024

1. Our first reading, a selection from the Letter of the Bishop of Jerusalem, James, to all of the Churches, continues to challenge us to "walk the talk", to live the faith we profess in demonstrable ways. Then he tells us the difference between the "wisdom of this world" and the wisdom that comes from above. It is clear in the way we live.

So where do we obtain this "wisdom that comes from above".

In the first chapter of powerful letter, St James writes:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him."

We obtain this wisdom through prayer and fidelity to the Lord. Through living in communion with the Lord.

And, he gives us this direction on how we should ask the Lord for such wisdom: "let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.

Are we asking the Lord for such heavenly wisdom?

2. Our Responsorial Psalm further instructs us on how to grow in heavenly wisdom. By following the precepts and the commandments of the Lord. They will give us the needed light to guide our steps. And by devouring His Word. He tells us it is sweet as honey. How often do we prayerfully read and study the written word of God, the holy Bible?
3. Our Gospel text is taken from the ninth chapter of St. Mark. It immediately follows the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ, the full revelation of who He is...the promised Messiah. The One who came to defeat death and the Devil.

Now, a loving father presents his son, sadly besieged by demons, and asks Jesus, the Messiah, to defeat those demons and set his son free.

And, He does. And he tells his disciples "All things are possible to those who believe."



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The disciples ask, after the powerful exorcism, why they could not drive out the demon, and Jesus instructs them "these kind only come out through prayer and fasting".

So too in our own lives, only through prayer, and asceticism, like fasting, can we overcome the obstacles that all too often impede us from making progress in the Christian life. Overcome the temptations that so often accompany disordered appetites and wrong choices.

Soon, we will begin Lent. Lent is an invitation of God's grace, which, if we enter into with our entire person, can draw us, especially at its' closure, into a deeper embrace of the power of the Resurrection.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 21, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Tuesday, May 21st, 2024

### Reading 1, James 4:1-10

1 Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves?

2 You want something and you lack it; so you kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. It is because you do not pray that you do not receive;

3 when you do pray and do not receive, it is because you prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions.

4 Adulterers! Do you not realise that love for the world is hatred for God? Anyone who chooses the world for a friend is constituted an enemy of God.

5 Can you not see the point of the saying in scripture, 'The longing of the spirit he sent to dwell in us is a jealous longing.'?

6 But he has given us an even greater grace, as scripture says: God opposes the proud but he accords his favour to the humble.

7 Give in to God, then; resist the devil, and he will run away from you.

8 The nearer you go to God, the nearer God will come to you. Clean your hands, you sinners, and clear your minds, you waverers.

9 Appreciate your wretchedness, and weep for it in misery. Your laughter must be turned to grief, your happiness to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 55:7-8, 9-10, 10-11, 23

7 How far I would escape, and make a nest in the desert!

8 I would soon find a refuge from the storm of abuse, from the

9 destructive tempest, Lord, from the flood of their tongues. For I see violence and strife in the city,



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10 day and night they make their rounds along the city walls, Inside live malice and mischief,

11 inside lives destruction, tyranny and treachery never absent from its central square.

23 You, God, will thrust them down to the abyss of destruction, men bloodthirsty and deceptive, before half their days are spent. For my part, I put my trust in you.

## **Gospel, Mark 9:30-37**

30 After leaving that place they made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know,

31 because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of man will be delivered into the power of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.'

32 But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.

33 They came to Capernaum, and when he got into the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?'

34 They said nothing, because on the road they had been arguing which of them was the greatest.

35 So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.'

36 He then took a little child whom he set among them and embraced, and he said to them,

37 'Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 21, 2024

1. In our first reading, an excerpt from the letter of St James to all of the early churches, the Apostle answers some of the questions which we still hear. For example, where do wars come from. He tells us. From us. Listen to these words "Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? You want something and you lack it; so you kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force."

He then reminds them, and us, of the importance of prayer and how we are to pray to actually get a response. "It is because you do not pray that you do not receive; when you do pray and do not receive, it is because you prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions."

What an important message. And there is so much more in this reading. He warns us of becoming a friend of "this world". He tells us to resist the devil and He will flee. He tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.

The Bible, the Word of God, is an instructional manual of sorts, for the Christian life.

Do we read it regularly?

2. In our responsorial Psalm, David laments before the Lord, bemoaning, and understandably so, the storm of abuse, the wagging tongues of enemies. He speaks of the violence, tyranny and treachery in the world of his hour. Sound familiar?

But, more importantly, he reminds all of us, that if we put our trust in the Lord, He will protect us. Do we?

3. Jesus instructs his disciples concerning greatness in the kingdom of God in this Gospel text. It is the way of the child, the way of becoming the servant of all. he demonstrates that way, in His Incarnation, in His Life of being poured out for others, and in His gift of His Life in His suffering, passion and death, so that we might be born again.

Pope St. Leo wrote of Jesus: "He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing his divinity.

He continues: "He emptied himself; though invisible he made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things he chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence. So, he, who in the nature of God had created man, became in the nature of a servant, man himself."



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 22, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Wednesday, May 22nd, 2024

### Reading 1, James 4:13-17

13 Well now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we are off to this or that town; we are going to spend a year there, trading, and make some money.'

14 You never know what will happen tomorrow: you are no more than a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears.

15 Instead of this, you should say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we shall still be alive to do this or that.'

16 But as it is, how boastful and loud -- mouthed you are! Boasting of this kind is always wrong.

17 Everyone who knows what is the right thing to do and does not do it commits a sin.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 49:2-3, 6-7, 8-10, 11

2 people high and low, rich and poor alike!

3 My lips have wisdom to utter, my heart good sense to whisper.

6 They trust in their wealth, and boast of the profusion of their riches.

7 But no one can ever redeem himself or pay his own ransom to God,

8 the price for himself is too high; it can never be

9 that he will live on for ever and avoid the sight of the abyss.

10 For he will see the wise also die no less than the fool and the brute, and leave their wealth behind for others.

11 For ever no home but their tombs, their dwelling-place age after age, though they gave their name to whole territories.



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## **Gospel, Mark 9:38-40**

38 John said to him, 'Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.'

39 But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him; no one who works a miracle in my name could soon afterwards speak evil of me.'

40 Anyone who is not against us is for us.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 22, 2024

1. Our first reading for today's Holy Mass is an excerpt from the 4th chapter of the Letter of St James. This letter is one of what are called the "Catholic Epistles", this letter was written by James and intended for all of the early Christian churches. In a particular way, it was written to the Jewish believers. The Letter is directive, emphasizing that it is not enough to be a "hearer of the word". We must be "doers of the Word". Otherwise, we are not putting our faith into action.

This excerpt continues that admonition. The Apostle warns against boasting and being lazy. He tells the early Christians - and he tells all of us - we must not fall into arrogant boasting. Rather, we should put the Lord and His plan first, front and center. We need to heed these words "...For one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin". An offense against God. How are we doing?

2. Our Canticle, the responsorial Psalm, is taken from Psalm 49 "Blessed are the poor in spirit for the kingdom of God is theirs". The Psalmist reminds us that we cannot redeem ourselves. Further, that we cannot boast in our wealth. We need the Lord.
3. The Gospel for today is a short passage from the 9th chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. The Apostle John tells the Lord that they saw someone casting out demons in the name of Jesus, but, because he was not of their company, they tried to prevent him from doing so. Jesus says "Do not prevent him." He explained to John and the other disciples that no-one who performs a mighty deed in the name of Jesus can speak ill of Him. For "whoever is not against us is for us?"

How do we view other Christians? Particularly those who are not in the full communion of the Catholic Church? Do we see them as "brothers and sisters in Christ?"

Catholic teaching on the nature of the Church is rooted in an ecclesiology of communion. All who are validly Baptized already have a form of imperfect communion. We are invited to make the prayer of Jesus for full communion and visible unity (John 17:21) our own in the way we relate to other Christians. We should learn - and use - the language of communion which the Catholic Church now encourages. Saint John Paul II wrote in his encyclical letter on unity (Ut Unum Sint, May They Be One):

"It happens for example that, in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, Christians of one confession no longer consider other Christians as enemies or strangers but see them as brothers and sisters. Again, the very expression "separated brethren" tends to be replaced today by expressions which more readily evoke the deep communion linked to the baptismal character which the Spirit fosters in spite of historical and canonical divisions."



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"Today we speak of "other Christians", "others who have received Baptism", and "Christians of other Communities".

This does not mean we do not acknowledge our important differences. They are real and significant. However, we should welcome what joins us together, Jesus Christ and a common Baptism, and seek to cooperate.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 23, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Thursday, May 23rd, 2024

### Reading 1, James 5:1-6

1 Well now, you rich! Lament, weep for the miseries that are coming to you.

2 Your wealth is rotting, your clothes are all moth-eaten.

3 All your gold and your silver are corroding away, and the same corrosion will be a witness against you and eat into your body. It is like a fire which you have stored up for the final days.

4 Can you hear crying out against you the wages which you kept back from the labourers mowing your fields? The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Sabaoth.

5 On earth you have had a life of comfort and luxury; in the time of slaughter you went on eating to your heart's content.

6 It was you who condemned the upright and killed them; they offered you no resistance.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 49:14-15, 15-16, 17-18, 19-20

14 They are penned in Sheol like sheep, Death will lead them to pasture, and those who are honest will rule over them. In the morning all trace of them will be gone, Sheol will be their home.

15 But my soul God will ransom from the clutches of Sheol, and will snatch me up.

16 Do not be overawed when someone gets rich, and lives in ever greater splendour;

17 when he dies he will take nothing with him, his wealth will not go down with him.

18 Though he pampered himself while he lived -- and people praise you for looking after yourself-

19 he will go to join the ranks of his ancestors, who will never again see the light.

20 In prosperity people lose their good sense, they become no better than dumb animals.



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## Gospel, Mark 9:41-50

41 'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not lose his reward.

42 'But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone hung round his neck.

43 And if your hand should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that can never be put out.

44

45 And if your foot should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.

46

47 And if your eye should be your downfall, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell

48 where their worm will never die nor their fire be put out.

49 For everyone will be salted with fire.

50 Salt is a good thing, but if salt has become insipid, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 23, 2024

1. In our readings today, the Lord instructs us all on the right approach to money and the goods of this earth. And he strongly admonishes those who do not understand our obligation to the poor in all of their manifestations. Poverty is not just material.

The passage is the first six verses of Chapter Five of the Letter of St James to the early churches. And the words are harsh: '...your wealth is rotting; your clothes are all moth eaten.'

In what way can we be more generous to spreading the Kingdom of God - which will never rot away?"

Money itself is not evil. It is one of the goods of this earth entrusted to us by a loving God. But it has an obligation attached, an obligation in solidarity and stewardship. Neither is having a great deal of money proof of God's blessing and favor. That view insults many Christians who struggle daily to survive. Both errors are rooted in a mistaken foundation. They are self-centered rather than centered on God and others.

The phrase "love of money" speaks to the heart. These are the words St Paul uses in his letter to Timothy. (1 Tim. 6:10) The verse does NOT SAY "Money is the root of all evil. It says the "love of money". In the biblical language, the heart is the place where people make the major decisions of life.

When we love the goods of the earth more than we love the One who created them and gave them to us to use in His service, we commit the sin of idolatry. Remember, a destitute person can be just as obsessed with greed as a wealthy one. Greed is a form of idolatry. In a letter written to the Philippians, Paul explained his own approach to material things:

"I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. (Philippians 4:12)"

Paul was free from the love of money. We need to be as well. As one of the goods of the earth, money is entrusted to us so we can participate in the ongoing mission of the Church, the Body of Christ. How are we doing?

2. The Responsorial Psalm says, 'when he dies, he will take nothing with him.' What do you need to practice detachment from? How can we make more room for God in our life? What is our approach to money and the goods of the earth?



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3. In the Gospel passage appointed for today, Jesus warns of the temptations to sin which confront all of us. He reminds his disciples of the importance of living radically for Him and turning away from all such temptations. These warnings all apply to each one of us. We are His contemporary disciples.

As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote in their wonderful document on the Mission of the Church in the Modern World, "Authentic freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image within man." (Gaudium et Spes, "Joy and Hope," #17).

The Catholic Catechism addresses the sobering implications of the wrong exercise human freedom when it reminds us that "Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself." (CCC, 1861.)

In other words, what we choose truly does matter. Authentic Human Freedom can never be realized in decisions made against God, against the good, against what is true, and against the Natural Law. In fact, such a misuse of freedom leads us to what the Apostle Paul calls "the slavery of sin."

Choosing the good is the pathway to the realization of the fullness of authentic human freedom, human flourishing and real happiness. Again, the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, the more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin." (Cf. Rom 6:17) (CCC 1733)



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 24, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Friday, May 24th, 2024

### Reading 1, James 5:9-12

9 Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates.

10 For your example, brothers, in patiently putting up with persecution, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name;

11 remember it is those who had perseverance that we say are the blessed ones. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and understood the Lord's purpose, realising that the Lord is kind and compassionate.

12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear by heaven or by the earth or use any oaths at all. If you mean 'yes', you must say 'yes'; if you mean 'no', say 'no'. Otherwise you make yourselves liable to judgement.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 8-9, 11-12

1 [Of David] Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being, his holy name;

2 bless Yahweh, my soul, never forget all his acts of kindness.

3 He forgives all your offences, cures all your diseases,

4 he redeems your life from the abyss, crowns you with faithful love and tenderness;

8 Yahweh is tenderness and pity, slow to anger and rich in faithful love;

9 his indignation does not last for ever, nor his resentment remain for all time;

11 As the height of heaven above earth, so strong is his faithful love for those who fear him.

12 As the distance of east from west, so far from us does he put our faults.



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## Gospel, Mark 10:1-12

1 After leaving there, he came into the territory of Judaea and Transjordan. And again crowds gathered round him, and again he taught them, as his custom was.

2 Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' They were putting him to the test.

3 He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?'

4 They replied, 'Moses allowed us to draw up a writ of dismissal in cases of divorce.'

5 Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so hard hearted that he wrote this commandment for you.

6 But from the beginning of creation he made them male and female.

7 This is why a man leaves his father and mother,

8 and the two become one flesh. They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh.

9 So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.'

10 Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this,

11 and he said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her.

12 And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 24, 2024

1. In our first reading we continue to hear from the Letter of St. James. This Letter was written by the Apostle whose name it bears and was intended for all of the churches. The theme running throughout is that we must not simply be "hearers of the word", but "doers of the word" and, in the Apostles words "faith without deeds is dead". (James 2:15-26).

In the passage we heard today the Apostle is telling the early Christians, and telling us, that we should not complain. Rather, we should bear our hardships patiently like the prophets of old.

How do we bear our hardships?

2. The Psalm for today, Psalm 103 builds on this theme of living differently, because we believe. Our example is how the Lord treats us. The Psalmist David writes 'as far as the east is from the west, so far from us does He put our faults.'

How do we forgive others? When was the last time we went confession and experienced God's great mercy?

3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass Jesus is questioned on the subject of divorce. He uses this opportunity to teach about the indissolubility of Marriage. He refers back to the first Book of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Book of Genesis. From the beginning "God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate".

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states with clarity:

"The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws... God himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator."

We live in an age when marriage as solely possible between one man and one woman, always open to new life and formative of family is under assault. What are we doing about it?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 25, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Saturday, May 25th, 2024

### Reading 1, James 5:13-20

13 Any one of you who is in trouble should pray; anyone in good spirits should sing a psalm.

14 Any one of you who is ill should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him.

15 The prayer of faith will save the sick person and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

16 So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another to be cured; the heartfelt prayer of someone upright works very powerfully.

17 Elijah was a human being as frail as ourselves -- he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell for three and a half years;

18 then he prayed again and the sky gave rain and the earth gave crops.

19 My brothers, if one of you strays away from the truth, and another brings him back to it,

20 he may be sure that anyone who can bring back a sinner from his erring ways will be saving his soul from death and covering over many a sin.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 141:1-2, 3, 8

1 [Psalm Of David] Yahweh, I am calling, hurry to me, listen to my voice when I call to you.

2 May my prayer be like incense in your presence, my uplifted hands like the evening sacrifice.

3 Yahweh, mount a guard over my mouth, a guard at the door of my lips.

8 To you, Yahweh, I turn my eyes, in you I take refuge, do not leave me unprotected.

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## Gospel, Mark 10:13-16

13 People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples scolded them,

14 but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

15 In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'

16 Then he embraced them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 25, 2024

1. The reading from the fifth chapter of the Letter of Saint James exhorts us to pray for one another. In particular, it calls us to pray for one another when someone is sick. Do we do this? Do we still believe the Lord can heal? He does.

If you have children. When they are sick, do you place your hand upon them and pray? Do you ask the Lord to heal and comfort them? The teaching of the Bible and the Church on this is clear. When your spouse is sick, do you do the same?

Is there someone in your life who is sick, away from the church, or suffering in some way? The church encourages intercessory prayer. We need each other. Who can you pray for today?

2. Our Responsorial Psalm picks up on this theme of the power and the beauty of prayer. "Let my prayer come like incense before you," sings David.

God holds nothing back from those whom He loves. He gives us the Holy Spirit, His life and energy. The same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead will even quicken our own mortal bodies! (Romans 8:11)

Living faith mediates the mystery of God's loving plan. It grows in and through us by prayer. Prayer opens our spiritual eyes to behold the Divine Design in our own lives. We see that we walk with Him, and He guides our path along a plan and a pattern. Prayer brings down the power of the Holy Spirit and changes everything.

3. In the Gospel, Jesus rebukes the disciples. Why? Because they seek to send children away. Children whom people brought to Jesus to receive His blessing. Jesus wants the children brought to Him. Are you a parent, teacher, godparent, aunt, or uncle, or have little children in your life; how can you bring that little child close to Our Lord?

Jesus goes further, he uses the attitude of the children as an example for those who had gathered. He tells them. He tells us, "Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it".

Do we accept the kingdom of God like a child?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 26, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Sunday, May 26th, 2024

### Reading 1, Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

32 'Put this question, then, to the ages that are past, that have gone before you, from when God created the human race on earth: Was there ever a word so majestic, from one end of heaven to the other? Was anything like it ever heard?

33 Did ever a people hear the voice of the living God speaking from the heart of the fire, as you have heard it, and remain alive?

34 Has it ever been known before that any god took action himself to bring one nation out of another one, by ordeals, signs, wonders, war with mighty hand and outstretched arm, by fearsome terrors -- all of which things Yahweh your God has done for you before your eyes in Egypt?

39 'Hence, grasp this today and meditate on it carefully: Yahweh is the true God, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other.

40 Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today, so that you and your children after you may prosper and live long in the country that Yahweh your God is giving you for ever.'

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22

4 The word of Yahweh is straightforward, all he does springs from his constancy.

5 He loves uprightness and justice; the faithful love of Yahweh fills the earth.

6 By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made, by the breath of his mouth all their array.

9 for, the moment he spoke, it was so, no sooner had he commanded, than there it stood!

18 But see how Yahweh watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his faithful love,

19 to rescue them from death and keep them alive in famine.

20 We are waiting for Yahweh; he is our help and our shield,

22 Yahweh, let your faithful love rest on us, as our hope has rested in you.

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## Reading 2, Romans 8:14-17

14 All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God;

15 for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!'

16 The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God.

17 And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory.

## Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20

16 Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them.

17 When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated.

18 Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 26, 2024

1. On this Feast of the Most Holy Trinity in the liturgical calendar, I am always struck by the profundity and deep implications of the central mystery which the Catholic Church proclaims - and calls us to not so much grasp - but be grasped by - that the God who is One is also three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So central to the Christian faith is this doctrine of the Holy Trinity that the entire first section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is dedicated to an exposition of the biblical and patristic roots of the truth. It should be read, re-read, prayed through and then read again.

The Catechism affirms: 'The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the hierarchy of the truths of faith.

'The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin.'" (CCC# 234, 235)

In our first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, and our response, from Psalm 33, we heard how God communicated Himself, revealed Himself, to Israel. Our God wants to be known by the whole world. So, He chose Israel and intended for her to lead all the Nations to Him.

2. In our second reading, Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, we read these wonderful words, "...All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God; for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father! 'The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory."

The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from the penalty our sins deserved, to make us new, by His Blood. The father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to reveal themselves to us, and all men and women can now become sons and daughters of God!

3. And this year, on the wonderful Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we heard the last verses of Gospel of St. Matthew, the Great Commission. Right before He ascended, Jesus commissioned all of His disciples - and that includes you and Me - to make disciples of every Nation and, through Baptism, bring them into the Church, the New Israel, the fulfillment of His loving plan of salvation for every Nation and for all men and women.

And we baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 27, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Monday, May 27th, 2024

### Reading 1, First Peter 1:3-9

3 Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

4 and into a heritage that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away. It is reserved in heaven for you

5 who are being kept safe by God's power through faith until the salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the final point of time.

6 This is a great joy to you, even though for a short time yet you must bear all sorts of trials;

7 so that the worth of your faith, more valuable than gold, which is perishable even if it has been tested by fire, may be proved -- to your praise and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

8 You have not seen him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described;

9 and you are sure of the goal of your faith, that is, the salvation of your souls.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 111:1-2, 5-6, 9, 10

1 Alleluia! I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart, in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly.

2 Great are the deeds of Yahweh, to be pondered by all who delight in them.

5 He gives food to those who fear him, he keeps his covenant ever in mind.

6 His works show his people his power in giving them the birthright of the nations.

9 Deliverance he sends to his people, his covenant he imposes for ever; holy and awesome his name.

10 The root of wisdom is fear of Yahweh; those who attain it are wise. His praise will continue for ever.



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## **Gospel, Mark 10:17-27**

17 He was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

18 Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.'

19 You know the commandments: You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not give false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.'

20 And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these since my earliest days.'

21 Jesus looked steadily at him and he was filled with love for him, and he said, 'You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'

22 But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

23 Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!'

24 The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, 'My children,' he said to them, 'how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!'

25 It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

26 They were more astonished than ever, saying to one another, 'In that case, who can be saved?'

27 Jesus gazed at them and said, 'By human resources it is impossible, but not for God: because for God everything is possible.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 27, 2024

1. In the first reading, Saint Peter speaks of trials, so that our faith having been tested may be proven. Does this passage help you to look at the trials in your life in a new way? How can trials become productive? How can our persevering through them contribute to our progress in the Christian life and help us in our journey to Heaven? Through faith. Faith is like a muscle. It grows when it is used. It atrophies when it is not used. We are called to walk by faith and not sight. (2 Cor. 5:7) How are we doing?
2. Our Responsorial Psalm tells us one of the ways we can grow in faith. By regularly giving thanks and praise to the Lord. By recounting the great things he has done for us and thanking Him. Do we do this?
3. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark both describe an encounter between Jesus and a wealthy young man.

This young man had followed the commandments since his youth, but Jesus told him it was not enough. He instructed the young man to give up his possessions and follow Him. We read that the man refused and went away sad because his possessions possessed him.

Consider these sobering words which follow this encounter:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.' (Matthew 19, Mark 10).

The problem this young man faced was not his wealth. It was his heart. He made his possessions the center of his life, rather than the Lord. His possessions possessed him. The Gospel speaks about 'getting into Heaven' being difficult. How can keep your eyes on Heavenly treasures more and on Earthly treasures less? By keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 28, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Tuesday, May 28th, 2024

### Reading 1, First Peter 1:10-16

10 This salvation was the subject of the search and investigation of the prophets who spoke of the grace you were to receive,

11 searching out the time and circumstances for which the Spirit of Christ, bearing witness in them, was revealing the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow them.

12 It was revealed to them that it was for your sake and not their own that they were acting as servants delivering the message which has now been announced to you by those who preached to you the gospel through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even the angels long to catch a glimpse of these things.

13 Your minds, then, must be sober and ready for action; put all your hope in the grace brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

14 Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance,

15 but as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us,

16 since scripture says, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

1 [Psalm] Sing a new song to Yahweh, for he has performed wonders, his saving power is in his right hand and his holy arm.

2 Yahweh has made known his saving power, revealed his saving justice for the nations to see,

3 mindful of his faithful love and his constancy to the House of Israel. The whole wide world has seen the saving power of our God.

4 Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth, burst into shouts of joy!



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## **Gospel, Mark 10:28-31**

28 Peter took this up. 'Look,' he said to him, 'we have left everything and followed you.'

29 Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel

30 who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land -- and persecutions too -- now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.

31 Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 28, 2024

1. Our first reading for today's Holy Mass is an excerpt from the first letter of the Apostle Peter to the "exiles of the dispersion" (1 Peter 1: 1b). This letter (also called an epistle) is one of the "catholic Epistles) named after its author. That is because it was addressed to Christians in many of the early churches.

The early Church had already come under horrid persecution. As a result, many Christians were "dispersed". The Apostle is writing to encourage them. He does so by reminding them that this kind of treatment is a part of following the Lord. By the way, it still is.

The Apostle seeks to give them hope by reminding them that their faith is precious, and it is being tried so it may grow even stronger. In these particular verses, the Apostle encouraged the faithful to "...gird up the loins of their mind, live soberly, and set your hopes completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

We live in an age which is increasingly persecuting faithful Catholics and other Christians. In some cases, like in the West, it has not yet meant the shedding of blood. It is often called a "soft" persecution. But, in other places it has led to the shedding of blood.

We need to hear these words from St Peter and learn from our brethren in the early Church. How are we facing the growing hostility in the cultures in which we live? How do we deal with people opposing us with hostility because we stand for the truth of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church?

2. David the Psalmist, in Psalm 98, our Responsorial Psalm or canticle, reminds us that we "sing to the Lord a New Song..." - when we praise Him continually for all of His wondrous deeds. We not only honor Him, we lift our own spirits toward heaven and we are set free by doing so.

Praise is a powerful weapon against despair. It is a powerful weapon against the devil who seeks to discourage us. How often do we praise God? Have we done so today?

3. I have a dear friend, a Melkite Catholic Bishop. I haven't seen him in many years. But he used to tell me, in his heavy Lebanese accent, "Deacon, there are two types of people in this world, those who wake up in the morning and say "Good Morning Lord!", and those who wake up in the morning and say "Good Lord, Its Morning".

Let's choose the way of gratitude.



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In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, after Jesus had encountered the rich young man and told him to "give away all of his possessions and follow Him". And, after Jesus had told those listening, "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God", Peter said to Jesus "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus tells him "... everyone who gives up everything will receive more, in this life and in the life to come."

Once again, Jesus is speaking to the heart. The Rich young man went away sad, not because he had possessions, but because they had him. When we put possessions, or even our natural and good family relations before the Lord, our hearts are not given over completely to the Lord and His Kingdom. We were made for the Lord and, in the words of St Augustine "Our hearts are restless, until they rest in Him"

How are we doing? What is first in our lives?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 29, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Wednesday, May 29th, 2024

### Reading 1, First Peter 1:18-25

18 For you know that the price of your ransom from the futile way of life handed down from your ancestors was paid, not in anything perishable like silver or gold,

19 but in precious blood as of a blameless and spotless lamb, Christ.

20 He was marked out before the world was made, and was revealed at the final point of time for your sake.

21 Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for this very purpose -- that your faith and hope should be in God.

22 Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves so that you can experience the genuine love of brothers, love each other intensely from the heart;

23 for your new birth was not from any perishable seed but from imperishable seed, the living and enduring Word of God.

24 For all humanity is grass, and all its beauty like the wild flower's. As grass withers, the flower fades,

25 but the Word of the Lord remains for ever. And this Word is the Good News that has been brought to you.

### Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20

12 Praise Yahweh, Jerusalem, Zion, praise your God.

13 For he gives strength to the bars of your gates, he blesses your children within you,

14 he maintains the peace of your frontiers, gives you your fill of finest wheat.

15 He sends his word to the earth, his command runs quickly,

19 He reveals his word to Jacob, his statutes and judgements to Israel.

20 For no other nation has he done this, no other has known his judgements.

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## Gospel, Mark 10:32-45

32 They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem; Jesus was walking on ahead of them; they were in a daze, and those who followed were apprehensive. Once more taking the Twelve aside he began to tell them what was going to happen to him,

33 'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the gentiles,

34 who will mock him and spit at him and scourge him and put him to death; and after three days he will rise again.'

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him. 'Master,' they said to him, 'We want you to do us a favour.'

36 He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?'

37 They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.'

38 But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I shall drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I shall be baptised?'

39 They replied, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I shall drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I shall be baptised you shall be baptised,

40 but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.'

41 When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John,

42 so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the gentiles those they call their rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt.

43 Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant,

44 and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all.

45 For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'



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## Questions for Reflection for May 29, 2024

1. In our first reading, St. Peter reminds us that we have been ransomed from death by the precious blood of Christ, the innocent Son of God made man, the spotless lamb offered on the cross for our salvation.

Peter tells us that through faith in Christ, our hope now lies in God. But what is that hope, exactly? It is hope in the promises of Christ, which include the resurrection of our bodies from the dead, everlasting life, and heaven as our happiness. This hope, which we call the virtue of hope, is a gift that God himself infuses into our soul through repentance, faith in Christ, prayer, and the sacrament of baptism. It is this hope that keeps us from discouragement and directs our focus to the kingdom of God.

How strong is your hope?

2. Our responsorial Psalm calls us to praise the Lord, who first revealed himself to his chosen people, the people Israel. The Psalmist tells us that God sent his word to the earth and he has revealed his judgments.

When we think of the Lord sending his word to the earth, we recall that the eternal Word, the Son of God, became man in the Virgin Mary's womb and was born into the little village of Bethlehem. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh and the fullness of revealed truth, for he is the perfect image of God the Father. We must be obedient to the commands of Christ, live our life in him, and walk in his ways.

3. In today's gospel, Jesus takes his disciples aside and gives them shocking news: the gentiles will torture him and put him to death. But after three days, he will rise again from the dead.

It is in this context that James and John ask Jesus to allow them to sit at his right and left in his kingdom of glory. Jesus addresses their bold request by pointing out that they fail to understand what they are asking. Are they prepared to follow Jesus? Do they understand the suffering it will require? Do they truly grasp the fact that Jesus came to offer up his life as a ransom for all?

The other disciples began to feel indignant with James and John. Perhaps they thought these two brothers wanted to rule over everyone, including them! Jesus then reminds them that those who enter the kingdom of heaven do not do so as earthly rulers who lord themselves over others as the Gentiles do. Those who desire true greatness must take a different path, which is one of service and sacrifice to others.



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Jesus tells them, "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The message here for us is this: If we desire to follow Jesus and be called great, we too must offer up our lives in service to others. We must love Christ and we must love others in Christ. The point is, our perspective on life must be based on the life and mission of Christ, not on worldly standards.

Is this your perspective?



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 30, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Thursday, May 30th, 2024

### Reading 1, 1 Peter 2: 2-5, 9-12

2 Like new-born babies all your longing should be for milk -- the unadulterated spiritual milk -- which will help you to grow up to salvation,

3 at any rate if you have tasted that the Lord is good .

4 He is the living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him

5 so that you, too, may be living stones making a spiritual house as a holy priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

9 But you are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 Once you were a non-people and now you are the People of God; once you were outside his pity; now you have received pity.

11 I urge you, my dear friends, as strangers and nomads, to keep yourselves free from the disordered natural inclinations that attack the soul.

12 Always behave honourably among gentiles so that they can see for themselves what moral lives you lead, and when the day of reckoning comes, give thanks to God for the things which now make them denounce you as criminals.

### Responsorial Psalms, Psalm 100: 2, 3, 4, 5

2 serve Yahweh with gladness, come into his presence with songs of joy!

3 Be sure that Yahweh is God, he made us, we belong to him, his people, the flock of his sheepfold.

4 Come within his gates giving thanks, to his courts singing praise, give thanks to him and bless his name!

5 For Yahweh is good, his faithful love is everlasting, his constancy from age to age.



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## Gospel, Mark 10:46-52

46 They reached Jericho; and as he left Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus -- that is, the son of Timaeus -- a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road.

47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and cry out, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.'

48 And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me.'

49 Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.' So they called the blind man over. 'Courage,' they said, 'get up; he is calling you.'

50 So throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus.

51 Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'Rabbuni, let me see again.'

52 Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has saved you.' And at once his sight returned and he followed him along the road.



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## Questions for Reflection for May 30, 2024

1. In our first reading Peter urges us to long for pure spiritual milk, that we may grow into salvation. In other words, we must long to receive, abide by, and live the life of Christ. This entails living a life of virtue and holiness and persevering in the faith, that we may attain spiritual maturity.

Peter admonishes us to keep away from worldly desires. As attractive as these things may be, they wage war against the soul and are thus incompatible with life in the kingdom of heaven. Live the gospel life and walk in fellowship with Christ.

Is that your life?

2. Our responsorial psalm urges us to take joy in the Lord. For it is the Lord who made us, fashioning us for a very great purpose: to share in his own blessed life. We must live as his people, as the flock he tends, for he is our God. Finally, the Lord is good and his plan for us is indeed the very best plan. We should therefore place ourselves in the hands of our loving God, for he is faithful forever.

How strong is your trust in God?

3. In our gospel reading, the blind man Bartimaeus sits by the roadside, distressed, and calls out, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Hearing this, the disciples rebuke him. Apparently they think he's being obnoxious and bothering Jesus. Nevertheless, he calls out all the more until Jesus notices him and tells his disciples to bring him over to see him.

The disciples go to Bartimaeus and tell him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He then throws his cloak aside, springs up, and goes to Jesus.

There are several important points we can learn from this exchange. First, just as Jesus called Bartimaeus, he calls each and every one of us. At this very moment, he calls you. What is your response? Will you spring up, set what is unimportant in your life aside, and rush to meet Jesus? On the other hand, is your response indifferent or sluggish?

Notice also that Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants him to do. This is immensely important to understand: our Lord does not impose himself on anyone. If we truly desire him, he will give himself to us. If we desire other things, he will let us have our own way. What do you want Jesus to do for you?



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Bartimaeus asks Jesus to heal him, saying, “Master, I want to see.” Of course, we all desire physical healing if we’re suffering from an illness or an injury. And there’s nothing wrong with that. But what is most important? Physical healing or life with Christ?

Jesus then responds to Bartimaeus in a way that gets to the heart of the matter, saying: “Go on your way; your faith has saved you.” Mark tells us that Bartimaeus received his sight and followed Jesus.

Faith in Christ saves. Set your sights on what is most important in life: Jesus is calling you. Rush to him and cling to him in faith that you may be saved. Then, follow him in his way, setting aside your own ways.



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## Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

May 31, 2024



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## Daily Reading for Friday, May 31st, 2024

### Reading 1, Zephaniah 3:14-18

14 Shout for joy, daughter of Zion, Israel, shout aloud! Rejoice, exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem!

15 Yahweh has repealed your sentence; he has turned your enemy away. Yahweh is king among you, Israel, you have nothing more to fear.

16 When that Day comes, the message for Jerusalem will be: Zion, have no fear, do not let your hands fall limp.

17 Yahweh your God is there with you, the warrior-Saviour. He will rejoice over you with happy song, he will renew you by his love, he will dance with shouts of joy for you,

18 as on a day of festival. I have taken away your misfortune, no longer need you bear the disgrace of it.

### Responsorial Psalm, Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

2 Look, he is the God of my salvation: I shall have faith and not be afraid, for Yahweh is my strength and my song, he has been my salvation.'

3 Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of salvation

4 and, that day, you will say, 'Praise Yahweh, invoke his name. Proclaim his deeds to the people, declare his name sublime.

5 Sing of Yahweh, for his works are majestic, make them known throughout the world.

6 Cry and shout for joy, you who live in Zion, For the Holy One of Israel is among you in his greatness.'

### Gospel, Luke 1:39-56



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39 Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah.

40 She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth.

41 Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

43 Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?

44 Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.

45 Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

46 And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;

48 because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed,

49 for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name,

50 and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him.

51 He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart.

52 He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly.

53 He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty.

54 He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love

55 -according to the promise he made to our ancestors -- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.

56 Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home.

## Questions for Reflection for May 31, 2024



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1. On this Feast of the Visitation, when we recount the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, and the JOY which caused Elizabeth's child in the womb, John, the precursor, to leap for joy, we hear this powerful passage from the Old Testament Prophet Zephaniah. The Holy Spirit exhorted Israel to shout for JOY because the day was coming when the "Warrior Savior" would come. And, with the Incarnation of the Word made flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, that promise was and is fulfilled.

In his wonderful reflections of the joyful mysteries of the Holy Rosary, Saint John Paul II once wrote:

The "joyful mysteries" are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation. This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth is linked to an invitation to messianic joy: "Rejoice, Mary". The whole of salvation history, in some sense the entire history of the world, has led up to this greeting. If it is the Father's plan to unite all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10), then the whole of the universe is in some way touched by the divine favor with which the Father looks upon Mary and makes her the Mother of his Son. The whole of humanity, in turn, is embraced by the fiat with which she readily agrees to the will of God. (St John Paul II)

Do we manifest the JOY of the Lord? If not, why not?

2. The Prophet Isaiah continues the exhortation to JOY in our responsorial today, on this Feast of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth with these words:

"Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of salvation and, that day, you will say, 'Praise Yahweh, invoke his name. Proclaim his deeds to the people, declare his name sublime.

"Sing of Yahweh, for his works are majestic, make them known throughout the world. Cry and shout for joy, you who live in Zion, For the Holy One of Israel is among you in his greatness.' "

The Lord is still among us. He lives within us. He is present in His Word. He gives Himself to us, Body, Blood. Soul and Divinity, in the Most Holy Eucharist.

Are we drawing the Living waters Joyfully from the waters of Salvation?

3. Mary is the First Disciple. Today is the Feast of the Visitation. Our Gospel tells the beautiful story. Mary goes to the hill country to visit her cousin Elizabeth. And, in her greeting, we see what the Holy Spirit does! The baby in Elizabeth's womb, John the Baptizer, leaps for joy!



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Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. Mary's profound Prayer, her "Fiat" (Let it be done) in response to the visitation from the messenger of heaven, the angel, provides a pattern of prayer and a way to live for every Christian. It issues forth in her song of praise, her "Magnificat." This song begins with the words "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke 1:46-55). However, the "Fiat" is more than a prayer and the "Magnificat" more than a hymn of praise. Together they reveal the Way of the first disciple, Mary, and together they constitute a lesson book, a guide, for this journey called life that we all walk.

Our lives, so real and human, with all of the blessings and all of the pain, can be packed with meaning, purpose and destiny, if we have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to respond with the kind of voluntary surrender that was so beautifully expressed by the Virgin of Nazareth in her continuing surrender to God's invitation. This lesson book is desperately needed by Christians, indeed all people of good will, in this age so characterized by pride and arrogance.

The pattern of that prayer and song was the pattern of Mary's entire life. She continues, in her place within that great communion of saints, to invite us to follow Her Son. Mary, the first disciple, lived a trajectory of surrendered love. As it was with her, so it can be with us. It begins with God's gift and invitation, invites our response, leads to praise and is intended to bear the fruit of a meaningful life.



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